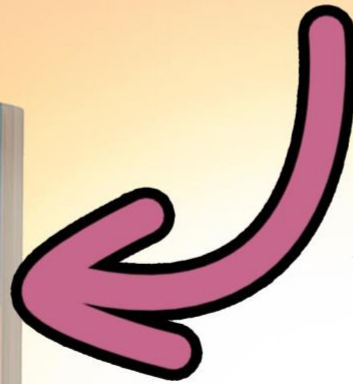
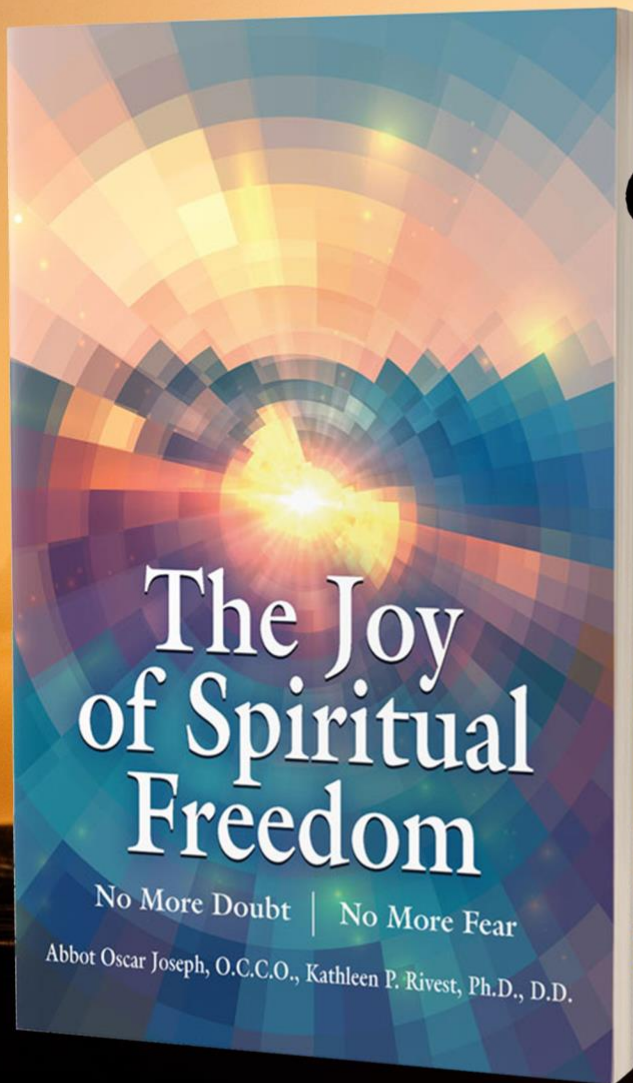


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*by Abbot Oscar Joseph, O.C.C.O.*

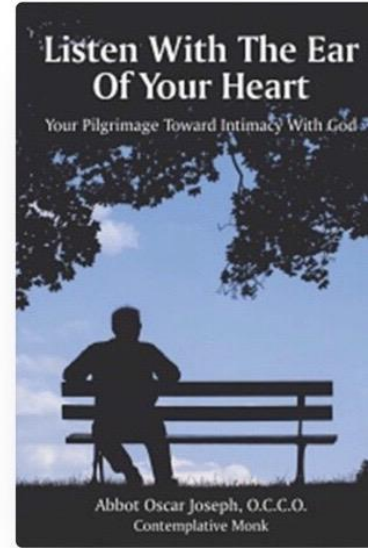
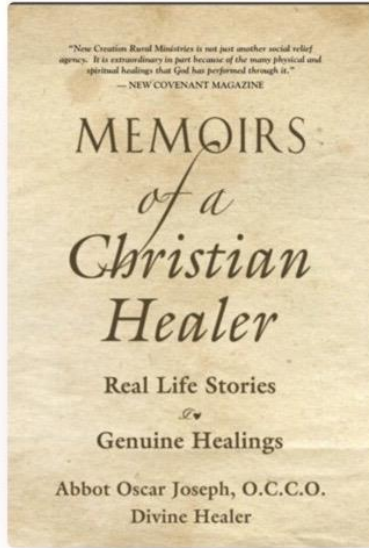
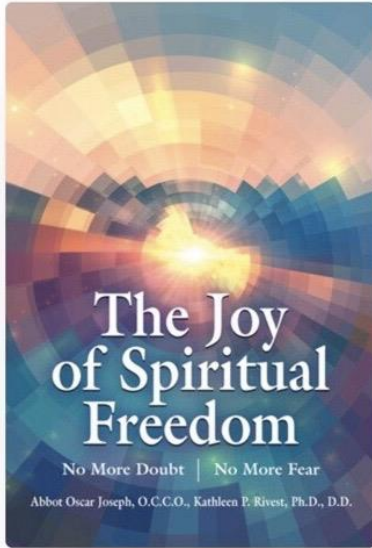
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Dear Readers:

Thank you for joining me on this joy-filled Spiritual Freedom

I have received many compliments on this book and have used it to reference Spiritual Direction. I have noticed that people were reading it rather casually and consequently not getting the full benefit. So I have incorporated this companion work to be able to accompany you via the reflections on your journey.

May our Almighty God bless you, keep you from every evil and bring you to everlasting life.

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## **Introduction, p.1.**

*“Before we begin, let us define some of our terms and thus the direction of this book.*

**Joy** is an interior condition that transcends the immediate and brings stability to the individual.

**Joy** is not influenced by our success or failures.

**Joy** is not the absence of troubles or difficulties.

**Joy** helps us to focus on our true situation and to overcome adversity.

**Joy** is the product of having interior peace.

**Joy** is the fruit of a sustained Godly relationship.

**Spiritual** is a focus upon God's presence.

**Spiritual** is giving rightful importance to emotional health.

**Spiritual** is giving rightful importance on the material world.

**Freedom** is giving of ourselves over to God, a Supreme Being.

**Freedom** is other-centered.

**Freedom** is the ability to overcome adversity.

**Doubt** is a product of self-focus.

**Doubt** is a product of defining our reality according to our definitions.

**Doubt** is a product of making ourselves gods.

**Fear** is a consequence of the failure of our self-definitions.

**Fear** is a consequence of our emotional and social isolation.

**Fear** is a consequence of our lack of realizing God's loving presence.”

When I originally wrote these words for the Freedom book, I prayed first and asked for God's Joy definition. I did not look them up in a dictionary. I ask you to list what you believe joy is to you. Then compare them to what I wrote. What did you discover?

## **Chapter 1, p.4.**

*“Basic survival needs and the lure of the world with its lying whisper of security entrapped H.G. and his family. Despite all his efforts to obtain happiness through materialism, he knew something was missing. After a terrible struggle, H.G. was able to plead, “Search me O God and know my heart: try me and know my thought, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23–24).”*

What material things give you comfort? I like having stashes (extras) of practically everything quickly and readily available.

### **Chapter 1, pgs.4-5.**

*“The removal of blocks to love is a form of death and resurrection/transformation. We speak of healing as removing any blocks within us that prevent God’s love from working in and through us, from giving and receiving love. Love, divine, and human is the agent of healing. The more we can give and receive love, the more we will be able to enjoy spiritual freedom.”*

Healing is a whole-person event. Not an easy one but the road to transformation is worth the journey. I ask you to reflect on your resistance to change. What are you holding onto that appears to be giving you life when in fact, it is causing death?

### **Chapter 1, p.5.**

*“Jesus said that illness is caused by sin and Satan. We believe this to be true. The sin explained through the Adam and Eve story was a sin against the natural order. Adam and Eve were seeking to be like God. They attempted to become more than they naturally were. This created a reversal of the natural order. Humans had placed themselves before God. This reversal continues into the twentieth century, as exemplified in the emphasis on material gain and drug dependency. Man has allowed matter to rule. The correct order established by God was first God, then man, followed by nature. It appears now, through sin, to be matter, man and lastly, God.”*

Dear friend, please let me challenge you. How much do you let matter rule? How much do you want to be in control? What do you think about most? Take a moment and write the answers.

### **Chapter 1, p.6.**

*“We are all in need of healing. We all have blocked God’s love from working in and through us. We all have blocks to giving and receiving love. It also seems that as soon as one block is healed, a deeper one is revealed. This is called spiritual maturation, which continues over a lifetime. Even the most religious person can have blocks to physical or inner healing. These blocks can come in the form of being self-absorbed, self-critical, defining our reality according to our definitions, and social and emotional isolation.”*

Whether you are spiritually immature or mature, we all live in massive denial. We would rather avoid any pain than face the truth of who we are. Dear friend, what are you denying?

### **Chapter 1, p.7.**

*“The need to forgive, to put others before ourselves, is the most frequent blockage to healing. Forgiving is an act of the will. I will to forgive someone and wish to be forgiven. Even when we will to forgive, sometimes the pain remains. Healing of memories may be useful. We may need to have someone help us discover where our pain really comes from.”*

I have some people that I still have not entirely forgiven. Yes, I pray for them and ask God to bless them. If I were to see them, I might say hi and then go. This reflection is inspiring me to look deeper to see what is missing.

I have yet to think of them kindly, perhaps as God's children.

### **Chapter 1, p.7.**

*"Two misconceptions about healing deal with faith and worthiness. We believe that the only faith necessary to obtain healing, and healing, is enough faith to ask."*

This is true. Please, examine yourself and look for the times that you faulted yourself when things, or prayers, did not go your way.

### **Chapter 1, p.7.**

*"It is an injustice to say, "I have said the healing prayer. God answers all prayers. Therefore, you are healed if you believe that you shall receive." What effectively is being said is, "I have done my part; we can trust God to do His part, now how about you do your part? You must have enough faith." If the person is not obviously healed, he now has two problems: the illness and the guilt that his faith was not adequate. Once again, we have made ourselves God."*

A current exercise in power is applying guilt to persons, places, and things. We must measure up to a standard set by others to receive approval. All too often, we believe that God does the same thing.

Let's make it clear. When we were at our worst, God sent us His Son not to judge but to redeem us. The cross illustrates God's love. He has already given His love to us. We are already approved.

### **Chapter 1, p.8.**

*"As mentioned above, another obstacle people place between themselves and healing is an awful sense of unworthiness. We are indeed dusty sinners, but once again, God took the initiative and sent His Son to take care of that. As Jesus was raised upon the cross, we were raised from the dust. We feel that perhaps those people who refuse to appreciate this wonderful gift and cling to their unworthiness are harboring a false sense of pride."*



I spend a lot of time and effort debunking the lies regarding the lack of personal worth. The truth: I, you, and everyone are not worthy of God's love. Get over it! God has made us worthy. If you get to know Him, you will understand and appreciate His gift of love.

### **Chapter 1, p.8.**

*“Letting go, giving over, is difficult, particularly when we are hurting. Everything in us wants to be in control because we are afraid. This being in control can take on the semblance of witchcraft. By that, I mean we perform actions with the intent of controlling God. We want God to respond to our faith, our claiming, and our whatever. But God responds because He loves us, not because of what we do or fail to do.”*

Please reflect on your life. How many times have you offered God a bribe? What would have been the better thing to do?

### **Chapter 2, p.13.**

*“If we act in accordance with the will of God, we can be guaranteed success. Although seldom do we state it directly, we are asking, “What is God’s will for me?” Usually, that question is disguised by other questions, such as, “What shall I do?” “What are my options?” “How do I save my marriage?” “Why did my child die?” “How do I handle my cancer?” If we could establish God’s answer, God’s will, it would ease the pain and empower us. The knowledge and acceptance of God’s will provide graces, more than sufficient, to be transformed beyond the problem at hand.”*

Be assured that once we have clearly understood God’s perfect will for us and do it, He will give us the grace to bring His will to completion. That does not mean that the journey will be easy, but it will be fruitful.

### **Chapter 2, p.13.**

*“We call Scripture the Word of God and yet fail to ask God, in His Word, what He has in mind for His people. The implication is that God created us, but, just as quickly, He abandoned us to live in darkness and pain. Let me assure you; this is not the case. The living God can be found in His creation, His people, and His Word. God is always with us. We need to realize that we are already walking in, with and through Him.”*

I don't believe that many of us take Scripture seriously. If indeed it is the Word of God, then why do we feel free to interpret it any that we wish to meet our own needs or prejudices?

If we took it seriously and thought it had something to contribute to our lives positively, wouldn't we spend more time reading it?  
If we took it seriously, wouldn't we see the Church leading our lives rather than the government?

If we took it seriously, then wouldn't we be loving and caring for each other?

### **Chapter 2, p.13.**

*“The Word of God reveals that God has a general will for all Christians and within that, a specific will for each individual”.*

For example, the general will would be that all be reconciled to Himself through Baptism, amendment of life, worship, and knowledge, and following the teachings of the Church which Jesus founded.

God's specific will for us is exactly that. What does He want us to do beyond the general will? Discovering the specific will can be a difficult process that involves others to help us discover. A true believer will make an effort and sacrifice to discover and be obedient to God's specific will.

### **Chapter 2, p.14.**

*“We are further directed to know “the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Tim. 3:14–17).”*

The Christian faith is not all hugs and kisses. There are things that must be believed and things that we need to change within ourselves and the world about us. What is it that you need to change?

### **Chapter 2, p.14.**

*“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord holdeth him in His hand. I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Ps. 37:23-25).It is clear that every step is directed by God, but not every person's step. The keywords here are good man which is further defined as righteous.”*

Our pilgrimage toward intimacy with God does have ups and downs. Sometimes we fail, including sinning miserably. I understand this quote to say that although we screw up that not all is lost. We can repent and change our ways and continue to move forward. A man should be judged for what he is currently doing, not from past sins.

At the same time that I proclaim the above, I have to say that people, even Christian people, including the official Church, often hold past sins against us. And that can be very painful. Please remember that God does not hold repentant sin against you when that happens to you.

**Chapter 2, p.16.**

*“The Word of God says that we can discover the will of God through prayer, fasting, submission to the Spirit, circumstance and counsel.”*

It would take another book to discuss the above. Let us remember that the will of God is found in the community, not strictly by ourselves. If we are not already living a holy life, we will not be able to discover His perfect will for us.

Many people come to God when they are in trouble and expect to hear God's words. They screwed up their lives. The first step is to get right with God's general will; then, you will be able to hear and follow his specific will.

Be careful about the circumstance. Not every circumstance is God speaking. Would you please not test God like throwing down a fleece? That was one circumstance in the OT, not directions for us to do the same. It is arrogantly sinful to test God.

**Chapter 2, p.16.**

*“Ye ask amiss (James 4:3)” is a central issue. The pain of our sin and conflict of Spirit not only drives us as the waves but makes us doubt and fear. Our central focus is survival through a crisis. We consume the will of God for our lust to serve our ends. The Word guarantees that we will not receive from God; consequently, we feel abandoned by the very God from whom we seek relief.”*

What a great book. It is so full of common sense. Yes, when we are terribly upset and filled with emotions, we cannot hear clearly. Our focus is on fight or flight. We have all had this experience. When we are in that state, all we want is our will to be done. Here is an excellent time to be seeking outside help and not try to ride out difficulties by ourselves.

**Chapter 2, p.16.**

*“We need to learn that prayer is self-abandonment for the purpose of becoming one with God. The goal is to create a relationship with the Creator. When this occurs, the Creator freely gives of Himself, and the created freely receives. What God wants to give are the qualities of His own character; for example, wisdom.”*

Prayer is lifting our heart and mind to God. It is self-abandonment, NOT all petitions for ourselves or others. I know several people who make lists of things to ask from God and speak that list every day, and they think that is sufficient prayer.

My book, *Listen with the Ear of Your Heart*, will give instructions on how to pray. Get quiet, say quietly, "Here I am, Lord," and shut up. Be still.

### **Chapter 2, p.16.**

*"Fasting provides an opportunity to spend more time in prayer as one abstains from some important and necessary activity. The time otherwise spent sleeping (2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27)"*

In ancient times food preparation took up most of their daily schedule. Today we can prepare food in moments, so we are not aware of much time is being spent. Would you please keep in mind that fasting is not just doing without but doing more of something, particularly prayer?

### **Chapter 2, p.17.**

*"Isaiah's words "here I am; send me" speak of the personal submission necessary to know the will of God. This kind of submission is not possible for the unsaved. Rather it is our response to a call previously given by the Father. As Isaiah responded to his call, when a repenting sinner receives Christ by faith, the Holy Spirit immediately does five things: regenerates the believer; that is, gives a new nature (John 3:5-6), baptizes the believer into the Body of Christ (1 Cor.12:13), dwells in the believer (Rom. 8:9, 1 Cor. 6:19), seals the believer (Eph. 1:13, 4:30) and fills the believer (Acts 2:4, 4:8, 7:55, 13:52)."*

The above quote needs to be reflected on very carefully. It is filled with beautiful things. Please remember that as a believer you are very, very different from nonbelievers. as a believer. You need to appreciate and honor that. Because you are so very different, you must behave differently. Indeed, you would not go to a nonbeliever for guidance or council.

The empowerment of the Holy Spirit is alive within us that we can say, "Here I am, Lord, do with me as you will."

### **Chapter 2, p.17.**

*"The believer can depend on the Spirit for convicting him of sins (Ps.19:12-14; 139:29) and can depend on the Spirit to empower him to serve Christ (Acts 1:8; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 3:16)."*

The other day I heard a person's confession. I asked them what their sins were. They responded that they have no sins. Well, that is impossible. Yes, we can lead wholesome holy lives, but every moment is still filled with evil. Such things as examples are fear, anxiety, doubt, anger, need to forgive others. The list goes on. I am not suggesting that such persons are dumb to the Holy Spirit but that they need some help discovering their sins.

The use of a daily examination of conscience is very helpful. Usually, this is a prayer aiding in discovery or an actual list of sins. I have both in my book, *Listen with the Ear of Your Heart*.

### **Chapter 2, p.17.**

*“A Christian can know the will of God through circumstances: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). This quote is frequently misunderstood. We misinterpret “all things” to mean literally all things including our sin. Following that logic, lying, cheating, stealing, and fornication and so on will all work out “for good.” One’s sin of drunkenness, for example, causes a family to break up. We respond incorrectly, “Oh, well, it will all work out for the best.”The error is thinking that evil produces good. This is far from the meaning of the Scripture passage.”*

Here is another common-sense passage that has been misinterpreted. It is clearly saying that all things will work out for good IF we are doing God's perfect will. If we screw up (sinning), then we are into sowing and reaping. Sow bad get bad. Evil does not produce good.

If we learn from our sinfulness, by repenting and changing our ways, God will give us the strength to move on and do His will. He may not fix our screw-up. It was ours, after all.

### **Chapter 2, p.17.**

*“Christians can take heart and live joyfully above their circumstances, while remaining aware of them, realizing that God often works through circumstances to reveal His will.”*

This has happened to me almost daily. Something awful will happen. I do my best to take care of it and move to do the work that God has given me to do. Soon enough, I am in a better place. I can see the difficult situation more clearly, put it into perspective, and perhaps learn something from it. My favorite prayer is, "God help me see this person or situation as you do."

So, living above problems does NOT mean pretending that they are not there. It means getting into Christ's perspective and continuing with the work He has given you to do.

Please do NOT think that God created or gave you the problem so you could learn something. God does not play games with His loved ones. Bad things happen because of sin, Satan, or persecution.

### **Chapter 3, p.19.**

*“Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?” (Ps. 10:1). Many of us have spoken these words. The anguish of abandonment and our powerlessness signals the presence of doubt. Doubt is seated in self-focus and defining our reality according to our definitions. Doubt is uncertainty of belief or lack of confidence in something. In this case, doubt is the unbelief in God and His Word. Doubt can be expressed over the existence of God (Ps. 14:1), one’s personal salvation, salvation after sinning (1 John 3:9) and God’s sovereignty or goodness. All doubt can be traced to the unbelief in the Word of God, which affirms beyond doubt the character of God.”*

Doubt is challenging to overcome. The key to overcoming is in the above. We doubt because we want things our way, not God's. We doubt because we are depressed, angry, or have other chemical imbalances. We doubt because we have not previously spent enough time in Scripture, prayer, and submitting to God before this lousy moment.

### **Chapter 3, pgs.19,20.**

*“Satan causes Eve to doubt by questioning God's Word. Satan is the source of doubt. Through doubt, Satan tries to devour Christians (1Pet. 5:8). Worldly systems such as philosophies and governments sometimes cause doubt because they have their own set of values and objectives in opposition to God (1 Cor. 2:6). Worldly wisdom stands in direct opposition to the wisdom of God taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.2:13; 1 Tim. 6:20). Spiritual immaturity, double-mindedness, and instability (James1:8) cause doubt. "Children" in faith are easily deceived (Eph. 4:14). Doubt needs to be confessed as sin. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). "But without faith, it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). The sin is unbelief in God and His Word. We will be troubled with doubt until we are assured of our salvation (2 Cor. 13:5; Heb. 6:1–9). It may be necessary to receive further instruction on the meaning of salvation. We may need to be instructed in the continued study of the Word (Rom. 10:17; 1 Tim. 4:13, 16; 2 Tim. 3:16; Tit. 2:1, 10). The following letter gives evidence that the surest way to face doubts when they come is to have an extensive past history of answered prayers.”*

There is a lot of material in the above quote. Please read it carefully. Make a list of each topic that causes doubt and then a list of each issue to avoid doubt. Everything around us is designed to make us doubt God. The resolution is for us to be mature, know him, and have an active life with Him as the center.

#### **Chapter 4, p.23.**

*“Finally, we come to the central issue. Why is there suffering? Many scholars have gone to the Book of Job searching for the answer and have come away with erroneous conclusions.”*

Scholars, preachers, and laypersons have all misused Job and have offered it as a model for looking at difficulties rather than Wisdom Literature just trying to figure things out. The last Chapter of Job says that all of Job's questions are meaningless in the light of God.

Additionally, God does not make deals with Satan, certainly not to hurt one of His people.

#### **Chapter 4, p.23.**

*“Job finds no answers but rather illustrates the bankruptcy of human wisdom before evil. Job must accept both the world and accept God as He is. The author does not offer Job’s experiences to understand evil, but as a way to live with it”*

*"Job ends with the conviction that only faith makes evil tolerable, faith which brings insight through the experience of God which is within reach of one who desires it."*

We must read the entire Chapter or Book before using a small section to make a sweeping statement. A point to remember is that if a single item does not conform to the entirety of Scripture, the interpretation is wrong.

#### **Chapter 4, p.24.**

*Over the centuries, many False pieties developed concerning suffering. These pieties are founded in Old-Testament thinking, with particular reference to the Book of Job. Unfortunately, this faulty thinking is still prevalent today, and it has consequently crippled the Christian population. The following list was taken from a Presbyterian and Methodist Sunday School texts written for both children and adults.*

*“God may allow Satan to buffet us.”*

*“Suffering can lead to a deeper relationship with God.”*

*“God allows His people to walk the dark valley of suffering.”*

*"We must accept God's providential leading graciously, even though it results in suffering."*

*“Suffering is for our ultimate good.”*

*“God uses suffering so that we might be conformed to the image of His Son.”*

*“If we accept suffering as God’s special training, we will know God’s grace and strength as we go through the trial.”*

*“We should rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer.”*

*“If we recognize God’s hand in the good things that happen to us, we must be willing to recognize that He also has a reason for allowing undesirable events.”*

*“God’s permitting Satan to test Job is a good example of God allowing a creature to do evil so that God might receive greater glory.”*

*“It is not always profitable to attempt to discern why we have to endure suffering. It may not even be possible to know the reasons.”*

*“The aspect of suffering that we can control is our response.”*

*“The instructor of these lessons is encouraged to “teach that the Lord allows His people to be tested through suffering.” The application of this principle is “to encourage students to respond to life’s testing as Job did.”*

*“I believe that God-given suffering for growth is extremely rare and is reserved for those who are truly holy. That would eliminate mostly everyone.”*

*“Before we go any further, let me reinforce my earlier point. These are not biblical teachings. The Book of Job is an effort to investigate suffering.”*

It is easy to see how Job is misused but still believed by uneducated believers. Too many ignorant people have taken leadership in teaching and pastoral roles. Ultimately, it is everyone's responsibility to be educated and develop their conscience.

I do believe that God will hold accountable those who consciously and intentionally misuse Scripture.

#### **Chapter 4, p.26.**

*“The New Testament demonstrates that there are three reasons for suffering:”*

*Sin, Satan, Persecution*

Please, dear reader, always remember this we do not have to suffer nearly as much as we do, and often our suffering can often be avoided if we understand its source.

#### **Chapter 4, p.27.**

*“The fullest theology of sin in the New Testament appears in the writings of Paul. Both Jew and Greek are “under sin”; all men have sinned and do not attain the glory of God (Rom.2:1–3:31). In this first part of the discourse, several new points appear. Paul treats sin as a state or condition and as the human condition. Again, without excusing anyone, he presents a world in which sin reigns without any hope of offering us escape; sin is power. Paul elaborates on these elements in Romans 5–8”.*



The power of original sin, corporate sin, and personal sin is grave. Knowing that information might help you not to be so personally sinful.

**Chapter 4, p.29.**

*“If sin is understood as turning aside from God’s way, failing to follow the way of wholeness or individuation, there is a good reason for believing that this leads to illness. People who lose their religious way or have found none to follow find themselves exposed to destructive spiritual forces that often trigger emotional disturbances.”*

We are, after all, composed of a body, soul, and spirit. They each affect the others. When I sin, I am in personal conflict with my Creator, who only wishes me happiness. Naturally, I am going to have a messed-up life.

**Chapter 4, p.30.**

*“Jesus seemed to believe that a primary cause of sickness was a force of evil loose in the world, hostile to God and His way. He believed that men were sometimes in the hands of this power, so it exerted a baneful influence on their lives. You may call this force Satan, the devil, evil spirits, demons, autonomous complexes, or you will.”*

Yes, evil does exist. That doesn't mean we have to go along with it or even allow it. After all, Jesus came to do battle with it, and He has given us His Holy Spirit to continue that battle.

**Chapter 4, p.32.**

*“Persecution is the only acceptable form of suffering for a Christian. The apostles were honored to be “suffering disgrace for the name” (Acts 5:41). Later, Peter encouraged Christians to “rejoice” when they would “participate in the suffering on behalf of Christ” (2 Tim. 3:12).”*

Be careful with this one. Suffering because you were a jerk is not suffering for proclaiming your faith lovingly.

**Chapter 5, p.33.**

*“My point is clear. Christians do not have to accept emotional or physical suffering. How is it that so many Christians feel powerless against these afflictions? Why are so many denominations teaching a passive approach to suffering? How can we best establish a proper faith position?”*

Developing a proper faith perspective means taking the time to study, pray, and behave Christ-like

A prayer life that consists of only praying while driving or a quick please or thank you to God is NOT enough. It takes energy and lots of time to know God. However, this knowledge will help us spot the many lies that come at us.

### **Chapter 5, p.36.**

*“Another of Jesus' reasons for healing was that He was hostile to what made people sick. He rebuked the forces that seemed to possess the mentally ill and expressed the same antagonism toward physical illness.”*

*“The Christian attitude that glories in illness is utterly alien to that of Jesus of Nazareth; it is aligned on the side of what he was fighting against.”*

I sincerely wish we would have the same attitude towards anything that makes us less than we could become. Think about it if we were to remove even the persons who misuse their positions of power that would be a giant step forward if we could omit the greed behind pharmaceutical companies. The list goes on. What would be on your list to fight with a Jesus effort? What can you do now?

### **Chapter 5, p.37.**

*“The Christian who says that sickness is God's will does not fully understand the life and teaching of Christ. A large part, perhaps even the central part, of Jesus' ministry was devoted to healing those who were sick simply because it was indeed God's will that they should be well. God in Christ was opposed to sickness and what makes men sick; He was in the world to heal it.”*

*“The health of mind and body and Christianity cannot be separated. It may be possible to separate the health of mind and body from other religions, but not from Christianity; they are in a corporate relationship”.*

How often have you looked for comfort from your problems by believing that God gave you such and such and that was your cross to carry? The "take up your cross and follow me" has been used. It means that as Jesus took up His cross, which was a sign of obedience to His Father. We should take up our cross and be obedient to the commands of Jesus.

### **Chapter 5, pgs.37,38.**

*“For all practical purposes, the aim of founding the Church was to make it possible to carry on the ministry of Christ while they were waiting for the coming of the Kingdom. On the one hand, Christians who are followers of Christ, whose Spirit is still working, have good reason to want that ministry and its healing activity to continue.”*

*And on the other hand, the reasonably good way to keep that Spirit alive in people: to be touched by and to help carry out that same activity and ministry.”*

*“Jesus’ ministry was to preach, teach and heal. It was to be the same ministry for His disciples and His Church. The appendix to Mark (Mark 16:17–18) summarizes the last aspect of this threefold ministry of the early Church in these words: These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in My name, they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pickup snakes in their hands, and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover”*

I cannot say it any better. We must all do what Christ did to carry on Christ's mission as He empowered the apostles to do. He prayed for healing. He cast out demons. We need not be afraid to pray humbly but confidently for people to be healed. My encouragement to everyone, including yourself is to pray with other people for their needs, particularly healing. You do not need to be gifted to do so. We all have the mission to represent Christ. When I first believed that I received the gift to heal, I "practiced" on the children. I would encourage you to pray with those closest to you and keep your ears and eyes open to what God will be doing.

#### **Chapter 5, pgs.43,44.**

*“There has been a disintegration of a personal faith commitment, and a consequent disintegration of much of Christianity, into a largely socio-cultural phenomenon as contrasted with a religious phenomenon”.*

*Since there is no longer a commitment to the person of Jesus as personal Savior and Lord, it follows that there is no expectation of the Gospel promises. Although, there does seem to be an attitude of superstition and belief in God as a benevolent magician”.*

I challenge you to reflect on your genuine belief that Jesus is indeed your personal Savior. Why are you so afraid of so many things if He is?

#### **Chapter 5, p.44.**

*“We have been taught to ignore the experience of prayer. Many people describe unusual prayer experiences: seeing the light, angelic or satanic figures, ghosts, hearing voices, and the like. Many of them had previously tried to describe these same experiences to their ministers, only to be pushed off or made to feel abnormal. Recently, during a conversation with a priest and psychologist, he labeled a counselee “psychiatric” because she heard God. Another person told us that she had been hospitalized because she told her psychiatrist that God spoke to her.”*

*“Science and rationalism have falsely made man "feel" as though he has come of age. Man thinks he knows everything and has placed himself squarely in the center of reality. This sophomoric approach to life eliminates the possibility that God can break through to material reality.”*

I suspect that you have already seen the grace of God in your lives. I suspect that you do indeed believe that that grace is real. So the question is, exactly how many times does God have to make His presence real to you for you to believe that He is already here for you?

#### **Chapter 5, p.44.**

*“Even though man has become more humanistic, self-centered, and self-evaluative, most people still see themselves as evil, unworthy, helpless, and powerless. Low self-esteem has become a significant counseling issue.”*

Pop psychology is making things worse. Facebook, Twitter, and most news reporting make things worse. Watch what you read. Be careful of what you hear. Don't be angry when someone tells you the truth. I once belonged to a small Roman Catholic country church. Mostly it was a lovely experience. For several months we had a rather "dynamic" priest. Yes, his preaching style was like a bull in a China shop. Yes, his tone was most alarming and it confused his words. He drove me crazy also. BUT I went home and spent the remainder of the week researching Scripture and the Churches' teachings. Every word that he said was correct. I was the only one who did the research. The other members disliked him and got him transferred rather quickly. My point is to study, study, and learn the truth which will set you free.

#### **Chapter 5, p.44.**

*“What results from this error is a pseudo piety toward illness or life situations. We may not use these terms, but when one accepts physical, sexual and emotional abuse, the person hears a voice that says, “I deserve it; I’m bad. And this is the way it must be.”*

When God looks at you, what does He see? I ask most of my counseling clients to reflect on that question and to write their responses. If you use Scripture to guide you on what God sees, you will be delighted and much encouraged.

#### **Chapter 6, p.47.**

*“The evidence gives me every reason to trust in an existence beyond myself. Faith, then, is a product of trust based on evidence.”*

God has shown Himself in His creations. The very essence of humankind shouts that there is something beyond us. Then we have evidence in Scripture and in our own life experiences that God is trustworthy to do the things He has said He would do.

#### **Chapter 6, p.48.**

*“That brings us to the bottom-line question: who or what is it that is providing the evidence, and how faithful is that evidence? That will be the determinative factor in our faith response. We respond with faith to faithfulness”.*

I have often told my counseling clients that trust is created by consistency over time. God has certainly done that. It is all the lies that we have made about God that screws us up. Later I will discuss the lies we have created and believe about God in my other books. [www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com](http://www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com)

**Chapter 6, p.48.**

*“At first glance, it appears that Jesus is asking us to have perfect faith in what we say: “whosoever shall say...that those things in which he saith shall come to pass...pray.” It appears that apparently we are either to have faith in ourselves or in our ability to maintain the faith, but shall believe. Americans particularly favor that position because it gives them something to do. When Americans take action, they exercise power. Power gives us authority. There are a number of religious cults that are based exactly on that premise. The humanism of our age is also based on the use of human power and authority. The illusion soon fades, however, when we are faced with our own faithlessness. The evidence clearly shows that we cannot be trusted. If we are to be the source of faith, it is grounded in quicksand. That is why we balk at faith responses. We constantly place our faith wrongly.”*

This quote says it all. The name it claim it religion is founded on our power to speak and do. Are we saying and doing the will of God? If we are not doing God's will, do not expect His blessings on our doings.

**Chapter 6, p.48.**

*“Jesus is clear on the point. Our faith is not to be placed in what we say or do. But we are to have faith in God. “Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations (Deut.7-9).”*

So you love God and keep His commandments? If you do not, this faith thing is out of your reach.

**Chapter 6, p.49.**

*“If it is His will that you move mountains with your word, and you know it, there will be no doubt when you pray. The mountain will be moved. “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we have the petitions that we desire of Him” (1 John5:14–15).”*

I hope you see that the asking for something that He has called you to ask for is in His will. Praying in the name of Jesus is often used as a magic formula to force God into things. Prayer in Jesus' name means that if Jesus were standing right here with me, Jesus would ask for the very things I am asking. To honestly say that, you have to have a serious prayer life to know Jesus that well.

## **Chapter 6, p.49.**

*'The way, then, to pray in faith is this:*

*Turn to God in the complete trust that He knows what is best, that He loves us more than anyone else and that He has the power to accomplish whatever we need.'*

Look at the words carefully: complete trust knows what is best, loves us, we need.

## **Chapter 6, p.50.**

*'This gift of faith, or fullness of faith, is given to some, but not all, Christians. As I understand it, the gift of faith is a ministry gift that God imparts to help us pray with confidence and no hesitation in our hearts for a given intention. Since this confidence can come only by God's revealing His will at a given moment, the gift of the word of knowledge is closely connected with the gift of faith.'*

I am sure you have met such people who have this super kind of faith. They have that not only because it is a gift but like all gifts that had to receive it and work with it, which means a lot of prayer time on their part.

Do not misunderstand; you're not so super faithful, it doesn't mean that God has left you out. No, you have everything that you need. At your Baptism, the entire Kingdom has been given to you. The question is, have you worked on developing it?

## **Chapter 6, p.50.**

*"I have often seen sick persons without faith in their own prayers who were healed through the prayers of another person (such as their ministers). Perhaps such healings are means by God to help people receive the faith they do not yet have. Faith is important for healing; but if we, in our weakness, do all we can, God will bless us far beyond our own merits. Our faith lies in the obedience of praying for the sick, despite our weakness, doing the best we can to show forth the mercy of Christ. We need to take ourselves less seriously and God more seriously."*

Far too often, I hear people say that they are not worthy, and they use their unworthiness as an excuse not to ask or act. Nonsense, no one is worthy of anything. God gives unmerited gifts. So get over it. Suppose someone who is participating in the prayer has faith, then good. But let's remember you won't ask if you didn't have some faith. Remember, it is not your level of faith that matters but God's love for you.

## **Chapter 6, p.51.**

*“On another occasion, we spent several months counseling and praying with a lady who had an inoperable brain tumor. She had a poor relationship with God and much sin in her marriage. Neither she nor her husband wanted to address these issues. Needless to say, the healing was not achieved. “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it. Lest he play, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him” (Luke 14:28–29).”*

That couple wanted God the magician that they could manipulate into acting on their behalf. They were so deep into their self-centeredness even a miracle would not have moved them to repentance and changed their lives.

Another Scripture clearly says that their prayers are not heard where a husband and wife are in discourse.

The same need for unity in prayer applies to every group, including churches. Let's say the congregation comes together to pray, but they have anger toward each other their devotion is not going to work.

## **Chapter 6, p.51.**

*“Anyone who claims that the age of miracles is past denies the need, the privileges, and the benefits of prayer.”*

There are a lot of churches out there that believe this. Please make sure you know exactly what your Church believes. It is not sufficient for them to say that they believe in Scripture. That is not true. They believe in their interpretation of Scripture.

Sola Scriptoria, the belief in personal interpretation of Scripture, has led millions of people down the wrong path.

## **Chapter 7, pgs.53-56.**

*“In this chapter, we will discuss eleven reasons why people do not receive physical or emotional healing. The purpose is to give clarity, direction, and a better foundation for genuine hope.*

- 1. Lack of faith.*
- 2. Redemptive suffering*
- 3. A false value attached to suffering*
- 4. Sin*
- 5. Not praying specifically.*
- 6. Faulty diagnosis.*
- 7. Refusal to see medicine as a way God heals.*
- 8. Not using the natural means already available.*

9. Some assume that God always heals instantly, and when He does not heal immediately, they stop praying.

10. A different person is to be the instrument of healing.

11. The social environment prevents healing from taking place.”

I have taught many seminars on this topic. This chapter is a home run. Please read it carefully.

### **Chapter 7, p.57.**

*“I do not expect that most readers will want to remember all these reasons why people are not healed. The key thing for us to know, deep down, is that there is more than one reason why people are not healed. Lack of faith is not the only reason, and ministers of healing who imply that it is are simply leading innocent people into all kinds of false guilt.”*

If you have ever heard something like this run.... God is faithful to hear and answer our prayers, we have been steadfast in saying our prayers, and therefore the fault must be with your lack of faith.

A dear friend of mine went to a prayer group for the healing of her cancer and since she did not get an immediate healing, they told her that the devil possessed her. That was not true. She left emotionally destroyed.

### **Chapter 8, pgs.58-68.**

*“John Wimber has developed an integrated model of healing the whole person: body, soul and Spirit. I have employed this model in my healing seminars with much success, and I will outline it for you here.”*

Please read about this model very carefully.

### **Chapter 9, p.65.**

*“We do not see soul and Spirit as separate in space, for our Spirit permeates every part of us. But we do see distinct functions. The soul is more like clothing, and the Spirit lives in and through it. The horrifying fact is that almost no one in the Body of Christ, far less of course in the world, comprehends the stark reality that our Spirit requires nurturing.”*

I bet you had never heard of Spirit nurturing before unless it was from some New Age junk. In this chapter, I speak about it some, but I go into a much more detailed explanation in my other books. [www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com](http://www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com)



## **Chapter 9, p.68.**

*“Doctors now state that except in the case of trauma (physical damage from a car accident, house falling, radiation, etc.), anger and guilt play a role in triggering most physical damage done to our body.”*

Doctors might believe it, but not many address the issue of anger and guilt. They give a pill and move on.

Years ago, I gave a talk to several doctors about the truth of psychosomatic illnesses. They had never heard of that before. Remember that the medical model often is not a holistic approach to healing.

## **Chapter 9, p.71.**

*“If a counselee is not responding to ordinary healing prayer and counsel, the counselor would be advised to check the following criteria to determine the presence of a slumbering spirit:*

- 1. When you are in worship service or a prayer meeting, do you feel the anointing of God flowing over you and through you, or do you only know He is thereby faith?*
- 2. When you have private devotions, do you enter into His presence?*
- 3. Can you abide in His presence?*
- 4. When you read the Bible, do the words leap with meaning off the page at times? Or does Bible reading run dry?*
- 5. Do you ever hear the Lord or have spiritual dreams or visions?*
- 6. Does God talk to you?*
- 7. When you are in a conversation, do you enter in and feel what the other person feels, or do you have to figure out with your mind what to say?*
- 8. Are you a creative person? Do you have new ideas? Or do you always have to follow the manual?*
- 9. Have you experienced glory in marital sex in which you felt your mate's spirit flowing into yours?*
- 10. Does your conscience warn you strongly before you do anything and keep you out of trouble, or does it only work remorse afterward?”*

Indeed, there is such a thing as a slumbering or imprisoned spirit, but please note that what Sanford is describing is feeling-centered and many items people just are not advanced enough. So be careful.

When I visit a church or prayer group, I am often upset about their theological bankruptcy or too much emphasis on feelings or pop psychology.

## **Chapter 9, pgs.72,73.**

*“Below is a list of symptoms experienced by those who are spiritually imprisoned.*

- 1. Do you ever feel hollow, empty, or vacant, like something is missing?*
- 2. Do you ever feel deeply lonely, alone, or way off somewhere, even in the middle of a crowd?*
- 3. Do you ever feel persecuted, tormented, or afflicted when no one is bothering you on the surface? (Demonic spirits torment the spirits of captive people, and the captives feel it like a sub-current river of pain without knowing what it is.)*
- 4. Do you suffer from the sense that there are talents and powers and energies within you that you can't reach, as though they are locked away from you?*
- 5. Do you ever feel desperate, lost and futile, when on the surface everything seems to be going fine?*
- 6. Do you ever feel like trouble and danger are all around you, when in fact everything and everyone around you is perfectly safe?*
- 7. Do you ever have unaccountable inner rages? Do you get furiously angry at something, when actually there is nothing to be angry at? (The spirits of imprisoned people rage against the chains that bind them.)*
- 8. Do you have trouble staying awake at services that are quite lively and exciting? Just when the pastor is preaching a really good sermon, do you find it difficult to keep your eyes open? (Satan is a hypnotist.)*
- 9. Do you or did you ever suffer vertigo (dizziness) in the presence of the power of the Lord in a worship service? Have you felt weak or dizzy? (We do not know why this phenomenon occurs, but it is common for imprisoned people to break out in a cold sweat and/or become dizzy when others feel uplifted, warmed and joyous under the Lord's anointing. Perhaps by empathy they feel the nausea of their captors' pain in the presence of Jesus, but we do not know?)*
- 10. Have you ever suffered any dyslexia? (Imprisoned people commonly, but not always, have had some degree of dyslexia in childhood or currently suffer from it.)*
- 11. Amid a powerful time of worship, do you feel at peace and joyous or nervous and unaccountably upset?*
- 12. Do you feel agitated or calmed when others around you pray and thank Him for being present?”*

Indeed, there is such a thing as a slumbering or imprisoned spirit, but please note that what Sanford is describing is feeling centered, and many items people just are not advanced enough. So be careful. If you think this might be true for you, see a professional Christian counselor who knows about these things. More often than not, pastors are not equipped to do in-depth counseling.

## **Chapter 10, p.75.**

*“Sometimes it seems that my counseling office is a stage where counselees replay their lives. They once again relive the struggles, anxieties, losses and fears that haunted them in the outside world. Only now, they replay more honestly as they begin to understand them that come to bring them to this present moment. The healing begins*

*with glimmers of insight. As one client remarked, "It seems as though there is a law that is binding me...that inevitably makes everything I do come out wrong."*

God has given us some Laws on how things work, and they can be found in Scripture. There are a large number of books on Spiritual Laws. Most of these books are New Age, Eastern Religious, or name it and claim it. Be careful.

**Chapter 10, p.76.**

*"This is an important issue. Many Christians believe that God allows His people to walk in the dark valley of suffering. In fact, He may even allow Satan to buffet us. Suffering, these Christians believe, can lead to a deeper relationship with God. If suffering is for our ultimate good, naturally we must graciously accept it as God's special training. The only encouragement is the hope that God's grace will give us strength as we go through the trial. We are further directed to go through trials with thanksgiving. This seems to make sense; after all, if we recognize God's hand in the good things that happen to us, surely we must be willing to acknowledge that He must also have a reason for allowing undesirable events. Job is an excellent example of how God allowed a creature to suffer evil so that God might receive greater glory."*

And that is a lie from hell. The Book of Job does not answer the question of why there is suffering. Yes, it is wrongfully used as a methodology for handling guilt. I will discuss that to follow, but I will also go more in-depth in the other books.

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**Chapter 10, p.76.**

*"Further, these same Christians believe that it is not always profitable to attempt to discern the reasons why we have to endure suffering. In fact, it may not even be possible to know the reasons. What we can control is our response to the suffering. Beyond that, we are in the hands of a fickle God. We have heard a number of variations of the above theme from an equal number of well-intended but misinformed people. Strangely, these people seek the physician, the counselor and the minister for healing of their misery despite their belief that God gave it to them for some good end. The obvious contradiction begs an answer. Why would one seek relief from pain given by their God for the ultimate purpose of making them like Himself?"*

The terrible destructive lies are being taught even in Church. You don't have to be a Bible scholar to know what is a lie or the truth. A close relationship with God will give you a good sense that a Good, Holy God would not say or do such and such.

## **Chapter 10, p.76.**

*“The faulty theology of the preceding paragraphs eliminates even the possibility of an adequate answer. If God is God, then He must be a good God. The Book of Genesis describes creation as good. If we are known by the fruits of our labor, God therefore must be good and a giver of life. Clearly disease and suffering, emotional and physical, are anti-life events. Not only do they produce self centeredness, psychologically and physiologically, but they may even cause death. Satan is called “the king of death” (Heb. 2:14). Are, then, God and Satan one and the same? Certainly not!”*

See all of the questions that you can ask. If what is being said does not make sense, then be careful. The problem is that most people will not put the work into asking or even thinking about these questions. It is easier to accept what the preacher, teacher, or whoever says.

## **Chapter 11, p.77.**

*“Within the framework of a general and specific will, there are three distinct levels of God’s will: “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God”(Rom. 12:2).The first level is His perfect will, which has not yet come on earth. For it we pray, Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Heaven shall someday descend to earth “as a bride adorned for her husband”( Rev.21:2).That prayer for the coming of His Kingdom, which has ascended out of the throats of countless millions, will someday be answered.”*

Good point. We have not yet achieved perfection. So, of course, evil is still here. That does not mean that we have to put up with it.

## **Chapter 11, pgs.77,78.**

*“Rather, to be in His perfect will mean that for the moment, He has overcome our wayward tendencies, and we are walking hand in hand with Him by grace alone. He is opening the doors before us, and we are continually delighted with those little coincidences that bring order and fruitfulness to our lives. Thoughts flow from heart to mind to speech without interruption. The heart leaps in joy or weeps as is appropriate, for we are walking in the Spirit. Miracles and signs follow upon what we have said and prayed. Others seek us out and find peace in our presence. The Lord Himself dwells with us and blesses us”.*

The Rule of St. Benedict speaks about not walking in such grace because we are slothfully lazy. I think that was Adam and Eve's primary problem, and thus they opened the door to their disobedience and all that we still suffer for it. They were too lazy to ask, "Really, did God say that?"

**Chapter 11, p.78.**

*“However, most of the time, we are living within His acceptable or permissive will. We are saved. We are accepted as sons, adopted into His family. But we are like an aborigine at the queen’s banquet. We little understand the graces of the Kingdom and, worse yet, have little power to live that which we do know. Therefore, we are also under the hand of discipline and, being fainthearted, we often misunderstand the approaches of God that would bring healing.”*

Indeed, many Christians accept this position as their only choice, mainly because they are too lazy. You get what you deserve.

**Chapter 11, p.79.**

*“The laws of God are enforced more perfectly than any criminal code in the world. There is nothing relative about them. They describe the way reality works. Too many men, who observe physical laws to comfort and protect their lives, think they ought to be free (lawless) to try anything spiritually”*

You do not have to believe or even know about the Laws of God; they just work. Just like gravity works- you drop something it falls, period. The same goes for God's laws. If you knew about them and followed them, you would be happier.

**Chapter 12, pgs.85-91.**

*“No Fear in the Law of God”*

Unlike the fear developed as a motive for following civil or criminal law, God's law gives us direction to more confidence and happiness. The fear of hell is not a lasting incentive to do good. The love from and for God is an ongoing incentive to do good.

**Chapter 13, p.92.**

*“God’s Way to Joy”*

It would be good at this point to reread my definition of joy at the beginning of the book. You will be reminded of just how much you want Godly joy.

**Chapter 13, p.93.**

*“Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” (Deut. 5:16).”*

That is pretty clear. Most of my counseling clients have come from dysfunctional families. Then they recreate that same dysfunction in their own families. I discuss some of the how-to honor in my other books. [www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com](http://www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com)

**Chapter 13, p.93.**

*“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.”*

Simple, if you do good you will get good. You will reap what you sow

Then there is another lie: no good deed goes unpunished. You have heard that. If you are looking to do good because you want a particular interest in return, your motive is selfish. So you sowed selfishness, and that is what you will get in return.

**Chapter 13, p.93.**

*“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again (Matt. 7:1-2).”*

I hear that almost every day. Let us get it straight. We are called to judge and speak about destructive behaviors hoping that others will change. However, we are not to judge the conditions of one's heart. For example, "my father didn't love me. His work was more important than me." See the two judgments? Perhaps he hated working but had to put a roof over his head. So maybe he was very loyal and loving toward his responsibilities as head of the family. More on that in my other books [www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com](http://www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com).

**Chapter 14, pgs.99,100.**

*“Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck wrote People of the Lie while researching evil as a possible psychiatric disorder. Dr. Peck observed patterns of behaviors, which he labeled as evil”.*

*“Scott Peck’s definition of evil is “the imposition of one’s will upon others by overt or covert coercion in order to avoid spiritual growth. It is the use of power to destroy the spiritual growth of others for the purpose of defending and preserving their own sick selves.” This definition describes the behaviors of a person, or group that wants to hinder or prevent another’s joy and spiritual freedom.”*

*“Following is a summary of Dr. Peck’s observations of evil people:*

- *Evil people live with lies and distortions. They create a maze of confusing ideas to support self-protective habits. They engender confusion in other people.*
- *Evil people only respond to raw power. They cannot be influenced by kindness or persuasion.*
- *Sinning is not the same as evil.*
- *The destructiveness of evil people is consistent. They refuse to acknowledge their sinfulness.*
- *There is an aspect of cowardice to evil in that evil people fear facing the truth and would rather deny or fantasize than face their shortcomings.*
- *Evil people lash out at anyone who criticizes them.*
- *Evil people seek to destroy life, physical, creative, or spiritual, while good people promote life.*
- *Evil people work to maintain the appearance of moral purity in themselves. They desire to be seen as good but lack the desire to be good.*
- *Evil people are narcissistic. They do not believe that anyone else has any legitimate rights or feelings.*
- *Evil people will not make sacrifices for anyone or any noble principle.*
- *Evil seems to run in families.*
- *Evil people pretend to be motivated by love and concern. For evil people to misuse their power, they must gain authority or control over their victims.”*

I have seen those behaviors in many of my clients. I remember a husband that would argue with his wife over everything. It was destroying her. You would have to wonder about his spiritual condition and or mental illness.

### **Chapter 15, pgs.103-106.**

*“The Gate Keeper Sins of Codependency”*

*“Codependency foils our joy-filled spirituality by reinforcing our doubts and fears.*

1. *Inappropriate responsibility:*
2. *Idolatry*
3. *Denial of God’s power*
4. *Promiscuity*
5. *Self-hatred*
6. *Self-pity*
7. *Denial of the truth*
8. *Rebellion*
9. *Dishonesty”*

Often we wrongly believe that Mary Jane has the heart of a servant. She is so good. No, Mary Jane has a lot of problems. If you are Mary Jane, please get some good Christian counseling.

## **Chapter 16, pgs.107-109.**

*“Mary Models Love Without Fear”*

So far we have discussed how to be happy, live in joy and some of the blocks in doing so. Now Mary the Mother of God gives us a perfect example of how to actually live that joy even though some very difficult times.

The Mother of God, although scripturally described as the most blessed among women and other high spiritual attributes, she is often either discussed with disdain or not at all.

Again, the Church has created another lie out of their anger toward each other. The Protestant leadership has taught their flock that Catholics worship Mary. That is not true. Catholics venerate Mary. Big difference.

If we could only see Mary as a model of holiness, women in general and their babies would not have been aborted, and the elderly would be better cared for.

## **Chapter 17, pgs. 111-113.**

1. *Belong to Jesus*
2. *Be saints*
3. *His purpose*
4. *Be conformed to His likeness*
5. *Be holy*
6. *Be free and serve one another*
7. *Be hopeful*

We continue to look at Blessed Mary’s life. She modeled herself after her son. Imagine if you could do the same.

## **Chapter 18, p.115.**

*“God the father is concerned about your love or lack of love. We are all painfully seeking love. We search fruitlessly in corners and under tables, unlikely places, but not in ourselves. If we do not love ourselves, then to love others will be quite impossible. We must see ourselves as individuals of infinite value, unique among those around us. We must come to know ourselves for what we really are, to see the concrete aspects of our personality, void of illusion and self-deceit. Only after we have done this can we share our love with others.”*



Since we create our world through our perception of reality, it only makes sense that we have to love ourselves. Failure to love ourselves will mean failure to love others. But how can we do that since we insist on judging ourselves too harshly? We can begin to love ourselves when we understand how God sees us and use His definition of who we are. Scripture will help you to do that. God has given me the description that "I am the son of God, the brother of Jesus, heir to the Kingdom now and forever." Later it got more specific about how I am to live in the Kingdom as a prophet, priest, and teacher. When I look in the mirror, that is what I see. I would encourage you to do the same.

**Chapter 18, p.115.**

*"Our love for God is not unlike our love for our neighbor . We might even say that the way we love our worst enemy shows how we love God. As shocking as this might seem, it is true."*

No, I haven't carried 1 John too far. Think about it. If I am filled with anger and unforgiveness toward others, how can I approach God? Remember the words of the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us, and we forgive others."

**Chapter 18, p.116.**

*"We are so hypocritical in our love! We say that we live in the light of love, yet we fail to love even those in our homes. Our sisters and brothers are not objects of love but conveniences. If they are living, our parents are merely providers who are never repaid. And if they are dead, they are quickly forgotten. We say we are enlightened, but I say that he who does not love still stumbles in the dark and will never receive the healings that we have been discussing."*

I would ask you to read and reread the above passage. I think that you will find yourself stumbling or lying to yourself.

**Chapter 18, p.116.**

*"Frequently, we love God our Father only when and how we desire. When things are going well, we love; when they are not, God becomes the source of all our troubles. We would never think of turning to Him for help unless, of course, nothing else worked. He has become a coin machine into which we insert little and expect much in return."*

Think carefully. How often do you do that? Do relationships build when we only reach out when we are in trouble? How would I feel about our relationship if I were to go to you only in need? How would you feel toward me?

### **Chapter 18, p.117.**

*“However, love is not functional. Love is giving, not receiving. Love does not care about things but cares only about giving. We often ask our counseling clients why they love each other .Almost without exception they give a list of how they benefit from the love of the other .Few say, I love the other because I choose to give my love.”*

Try that yourself. Why do you love your mate? Why do you love God? When are the happiest with your neighbor?

### **Chapter 19, p.11.**

*“Spiritual direction is concerned with helping a person directly with his or her relationship with God. The underlying question is, “Who is God for me, and who am I for Him?”*

*“We define Christian spiritual direction, then, as help given by one Christian to another, which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication with him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God and to live out the consequences of the relationship. This type of spiritual direction focuses on experience, not ideas, and specifically on religious experience; that is, any experience of the mysterious Other whom we call God.”*

Remember, Christianity is a community event. There are members in your community that can help you to grow spiritually. If you try going it alone, you will get yourself confused and eventually quit or go shallow like most Christians. Indeed, you are not serious about your Christian faith.

### **Chapter 20, p.121.**

*“Transformation is a lifelong task, which at first can wear us thin. In this chapter we offer some last thoughts on how to hang in there and press on toward taking on the mind of Christ and thus live in the joy of spiritual freedom.”*

*“We ask our counseling clients to answer these questions:*

- 1. Presently I believe that my spiritual condition is :poor, fair, average, good, excellent.*
- 2. Presently I believe that my physical condition is: poor, fair, average, good, excellent.*
- 3. Presently I believe that my emotional condition is: poor, fair, average, good, excellent.*

*Frequently clients answer that their spiritual conditions are average to excellent, while they believe that their physical and emotional conditions are poor to average.*

*We conclude that although the clients profess to be Christians, they are still conformed to the world and do not understand the body, soul, and spirit connection.”*

How would you have answered those questions before reading this book? How would you answer them now?

## **Chapter 20, p.122.**

*“Cistercian monks, by the way, were the first to understand this connection. Their answer to developing a healthy God-centered life was to follow The Rule of St. Benedict. Many Christians from all Christian traditions continue to follow The Rule of St. Benedict even today.”*

*“The Rule of St. Benedict is often referred to as the appendix to the Bible because it takes the Bible message and distills it into a simple way of life that promotes thinking with the mind of Christ.”*

*“Several Rules of Life are available, and some people make their own. We frequently ask the couple to create a marriage vision in marriage counseling. This is a simple Rule of Life .Without a Christian Rule of Life, life will rule you.”*

*“We are trying to say that we all need a clear direction to follow toward healthy behaviors in every aspect of our lives, including physical, emotional, and spiritual.”*

*“Transformation includes every aspect of our lives. If we leave out one part, the others will not develop as they should.”*

*“A good example is being a member of a spiritual community. Christianity is a social religion where each member is transparent to the whole and the whole encourages each member in their faith as the community approaches God. We come God together, not strictly as individuals.”*

*“When I take an individualistic approach toward God, I can easily be self-deceived and misdirected and become lukewarm in my faith. This often is the experience of our counseling clients.”*

*“Our practice encourages all of our clients to be actively involved in a Christian community and develop a strong personal prayer life.”*

Why do you go to Church? Only about one-third of the people go for spiritual reasons. They might go to socialize to raise awareness that they and their products exist and are to be sold. Or perhaps your faith hinges on the faith of others. Examine why you go. If you are not going to Church, some would argue that you are not a Christian

since it is a community event. After all, you are baptized into a faith community—big questions.

**Chapter 20 pgs.122,123.**

*“Statistics show that people often choose a church because it is nearby, they know someone there, it has a good children’s program, and parking is easy, they felt comfortable at the service, the service was entertaining and they liked the preacher.”*

*“Our opinion is that these are earthbound criteria that will not promote the true Christian faith.”*

*last thing that a good Christian community should be is comfortable and entertaining. The Bible message is very challenging and uncomfortable, and sometimes you will be in conflict with the church leadership and membership. As uncomfortable as this can be, frankly, this is how we grow. Part of being uncomfortable is taking on your parental responsibility to teach your children the faith and practice what you preach.”*

*“Lately, we see more and more professing Christians view the faith more as a buffet where they can pick what is pleasing to them and disregard what is uncomfortable.”*

*“We see sloth in church participation and personal prayer, Scripture studies, and rationalizing elements of the faith. Most of our counseling clients think that pornography is OK; violence is OK and emotional absenteeism is OK, and they use Christ as their personal magician to grant all their wishes. A Rule of Life and participation in a faith community would help to keep these errors at bay.”*

*“When prayerfully choosing a faith community that you would wish to fully participate in and be formed by, you must study their faith positions before joining.”*

*“As much as the above may sound like consumerism, it is a prelude to submission and transparency.”*

Belonging to a faith community is vital to the Christian life. It is essential to be involved. I realize that sola scriptorium, personal interpretation of Scripture, is the call sign for Protestants. I say that most Protestants do not believe in pastoral authority. No one can tell them how to think. Of course, this ruins the purpose of the Church to speak with authority on faith and morals. So I ask you to rethink who do you allow to influence you? Have you studied what your Church believes? Why did you pick this particular Church?

**Chapter 21, p.125.**

*“Now all the pieces come together.”*

*“We have seen how a very humanistic church history and our self-seeking humanity have reshaped Christ’s original ministry of reconciling us to His Father so that we may be free. There is a cosmic battle between the Kingdom of God and the darkness of Satan.”*

*“This presentation has attempted to educate and empower us so that we may be joyful and celebrate that we are heirs to the Kingdom of God now and forever.”*

*“God does break through into physical reality and expresses Himself as a healing presence. He makes His Spirit available to all who cry, “Abba!” He is indeed close to and involved with His creation. We can live in the joy of spiritual freedom with no more doubt and no more fear.”*

*“May our Good Lord bless you, keep you from every evil and bring you to life everlasting.”*

I hope you have now been introduced to a different and better world of joy and freedom. It is now time to practice what you have learned. I would encourage you to make a to-do list and make joy a central part of your life.

My book, *Listen With The Ear Of Your Heart, Your Personal Pilgrimage Toward Intimacy With God*, will take you on that journey. You can find it at:

[www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com](http://www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com).

Blessing to you.