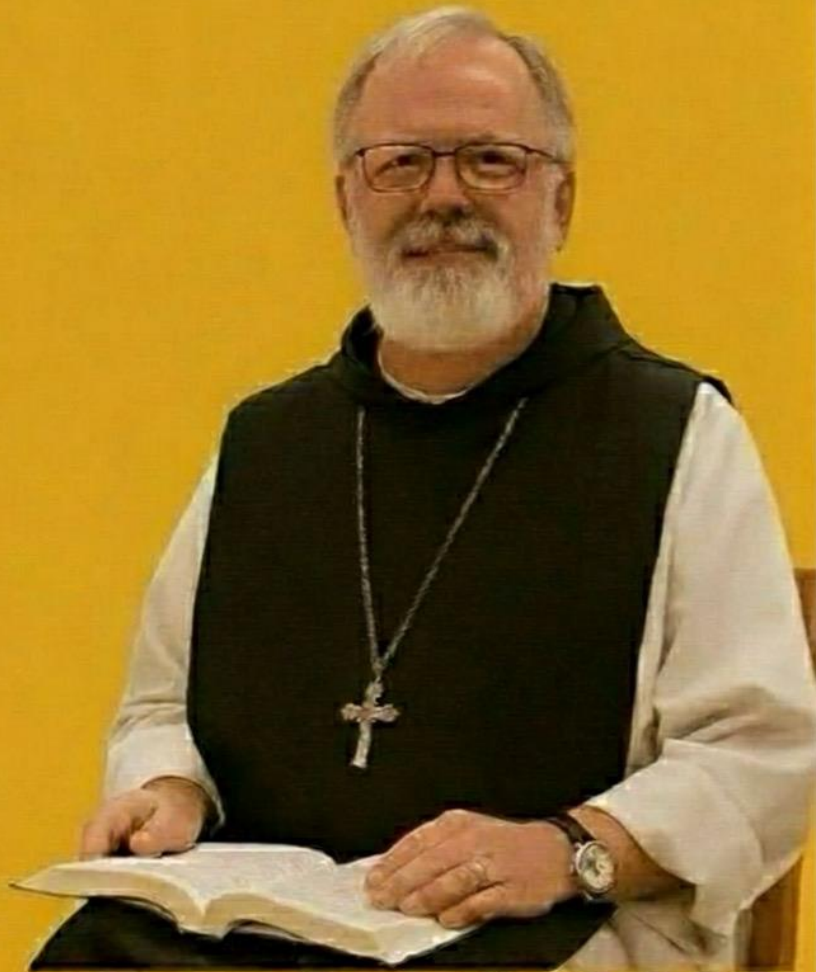
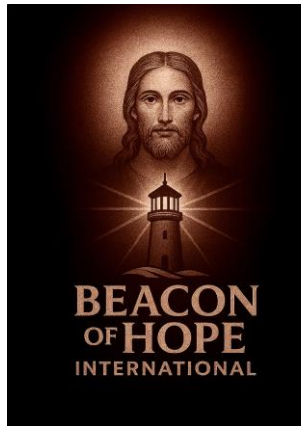


True Freedom Is In God



**Brother Oscar Joseph, OCCO
contemplative monk
abbotoscarjoseph.com**



Beacon of Hope International

Statement of Purpose & Mission

At Beacon of Hope International, we are devoted to guiding souls into deeper communion with God through the sacred journey of trust. We believe that learning to trust God is not merely a spiritual discipline—it is a transformative pilgrimage. It begins in surrender and unfolds through prayer, silence, and service. Trust is not passive; it is a courageous act of faith, a deliberate resting in divine providence even when the path ahead is veiled in mystery.

As we yield to God's rhythm, trust becomes the gateway to grace. It anchors us in peace, liberates us from captivity, and draws us into union with the Eternal. In this surrender, we become vessels of hope—living icons who reflect the light of Christ to a world longing for sacred presence.

We affirm that:

- **Trust in God** enables us to break through our captivity and become one with Him.
- **Gratitude** opens the soul to communion with God, self, and others—transcending fear and awakening love.
- **Gentleness** is the path to true joy and freedom, guiding others toward God's eternal intent.

Through these virtues, we seek to embody the mission of Beacon of Hope International: to radiate divine light, restore sacred identity, and lead others into the fullness of life found only in God.

How We Accomplish Our Mission

We accomplish our goals by building trust in God, forming people in spiritual identity, and serving others with compassion and clarity.

Brother Oscar Joseph's teachings:

This page summarizes Brother Oscar Joseph's teachings and background. What he teaches to your community (group) is determined by their needs and times available.

Scripture and Church Fathers

Brother Oscar Joseph places a strong emphasis on the foundational role of Scripture and the teachings of the Church Fathers. He encourages the study and meditation of the Bible, using it as a guide for personal and communal spiritual growth. The writings of early Christian theologians and leaders provide a rich resource for understanding the faith and its traditions.

Rule of St. Benedict

The Rule of St. Benedict is often referred to as Scripture's addendum and is a cornerstone of Brother Oscar Joseph's teachings. This Rule outlines principles for living emphasizing values such as:

Prayer: Regular and disciplined prayer is central to deepening one's relationship with God.

Work: Engaging in meaningful work as a form of prayer and service.

Community Life: Building a supportive, loving community where individuals grow together in faith.

Prayer, Meditation, and Contemplation

These spiritual practices are vital in Brother Oscar Joseph's teachings:

Prayer: Engaging in regular, heartfelt communication with God.

Meditation Reflecting on Scripture and spiritual writings to gain deeper insights.

Contemplation: Experiencing the presence of God in silence and stillness, allowing for a transformative connection.

Spiritual Direction

Abbot Oscar Joseph offers spiritual direction to help individuals navigate their spiritual journey. This involves one-on-one guidance to explore personal faith, address doubts and fears, and discern God's will.

Healing Ministry

A significant part of Brother Oscar Joseph's work is a healing ministry, where he shares God's grace in numerous miraculous healings and teaches others how to minister healing to those in need. This involves prayer, laying on hands, and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. His healing services and public presentations are done in a quite reverential style.

Overcoming Fears and Misconceptions

He addresses common fears and misconceptions about God and faith, helping individuals to overcome these barriers and embrace a more intimate and joyful relationship with God.

Living a Joy-Filled Life

Brother Oscar Joseph believes that a deep and joyful relationship with God is attainable for everyone. By letting go of doubts and fears, individuals can experience the peace and joy that come from knowing and trusting in God.

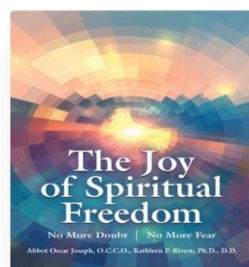
Abbot Oscar Joseph's biography

Education: He holds a Master of Science in Education, doctoral degrees in Sacred Theology (Scripture) and Christian Counseling, and several honorary doctorates.

Ministry: Ordained as a priest in 1993, he was consecrated as a bishop in 2002 and took his final vows as a monk in 1999. He has served thirty-five years as a Christian Counselor, and twenty-five years as the Abbot General for the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross.

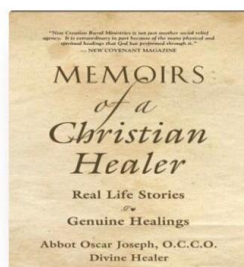
Roles: He has served as a TV and radio personality, former pastor of a local conservative Anglican Church, college educator, retreat master, and seminar leader Brother Oscar Joseph is known for his extensive background in education, having taught psychology, sociology, Old and New Testament, English, and ethics at several local community colleges He is also the Founder/President of St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary.

Publications He has authored several books, including "Memoirs of a Christian Healer," "The Joy of Spiritual Freedom," and "Listen with the Ear of Your Heart."



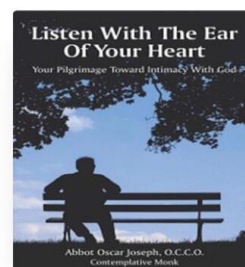
The Joy of Spiritual Freedom
No More Doubts | No More Fear

The Joy of Spiritual Freedom is the first of a trilogy that leads and inspires the reader to enter into a joy-filled relationship with a loving God. It is grounded in Biblical wisdom revealing how to remove debilitating doubt and fear. It draws from inspirational letters and case studies that illustrate the Gospel path toward freedom.



Memoirs of a Christian Healer
Real Life Stories | Genuine Healings

Memoirs of a Christian Healer chronicles the miraculous works of God. You will experience the joy of victory and the sorrow of human weakness. Incorporated within the many stories the Abbot includes reflective lessons on the Healing Ministry. The many stories are of real people and genuine healings.



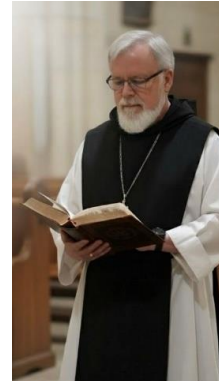
Listen with the Ear of Your Heart
Your Pilgrimage Toward Intimacy with God

God created you to yearn for intimacy with Him. Listen with the Ear of Your Heart presents a dynamic pilgrimage utilizing Scripture, the teachings of the Church Fathers, The Rule of St. Benedict, prayer, meditation and contemplation.

Greetings dear Pilgrims.

Hundreds and hundreds of my counseling clients are experiencing God esteem and their lives have improved tremendously. This “booklet” will guide you on that same journey.

Please remember that developing a truly intimate relationship with is a lifelong dedicated pilgrimage. Simply reading a few pages will be a good start but there is much more. For that purpose, I have included a number of prayer patters, reflections and the ultimate Lectio Divina. Take your time. Slow is grow. Fast is last.



The Lie of Self Esteem

Self-esteem is your overall sense of personal value and self-worth, it's how much you appreciate and like yourself. It influences how you think, feel, and behave, and plays a major role in your mental health, relationships, and motivation.

Key Aspects of Self-Esteem

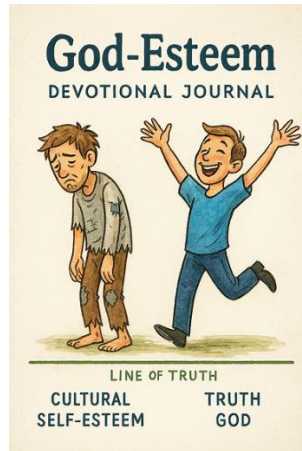
- **Self-confidence:** Belief in your abilities and decisions.
- **Self-respect:** Valuing yourself regardless of external validation.
- **Sense of identity:** Knowing who you are and what matters to you.
- **Feeling of competence:** Trusting your skills and capacity to handle challenges2.

Healthy vs. Impaired Self-Esteem

Type	Characteristics
Healthy	Realistic self-assessment, resilience, self-acceptance, and independence from others' opinions.
Impaired	Insecurity, self-criticism, people-pleasing, fear of failure, and hypersensitivity to judgment.

Why It Matters

- A healthy level of self-esteem helps you set boundaries, pursue goals, and maintain fulfilling relationships.
- Low self-esteem can lead to anxiety, depression, and difficulty asserting yourself.



What is God esteem?

God-esteem is the concept of seeing yourself through the eyes of God—valued, loved, and accepted unconditionally. Unlike self-esteem, which is often based on personal achievements, social validation, or how we compare ourselves to others, God-esteem is rooted in spiritual identity and divine worth.

✨ Key Ideas Behind God-Esteem

- **Unconditional love:** You are cherished by God not because of what you do, but because of who you are.
- **Spiritual identity:** You are seen as a child of God, created with purpose and dignity.
- **Freedom from comparison:** God-esteem frees you from needing approval from others or measuring your worth by worldly standards.
- **Grace and forgiveness:** You are forgiven and embraced, even with your flaws and failures.

📖 Biblical Examples of Being Esteemed by God

- **Abraham:** Honored for his faith and obedience (Genesis 15:6).
- **David:** Called “a man after God’s own heart” despite his imperfections (1 Samuel 13:14).
- **Mary:** Described as “highly favored” for her willingness to follow God's plan (Luke 1:28).

Why It Matters

God-esteem can transform how you live:

- You act from a place of love, not fear.
- You serve others without needing recognition.
- You find peace in your identity, not performance.

Let's explore how to cultivate **God-esteem** and how it differs from self-esteem in a way that can truly reshape your inner life.

Cultivating God-Esteem in Daily Life

Here are some powerful ways to grow in God-esteem:

- **Anchor your identity in God's truth** Instead of defining yourself by achievements or failures, meditate on what Scripture says about you: "*You are fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Psalm 139:14), "*You are God's workmanship*" (Ephesians 2:10).
- **Practice grace over perfection** God-esteem embraces imperfection. You're not loved because you're flawless, you're loved because you're His. Let go of the pressure to perform and rest in grace.
- **Speak life over yourself** Replace self-critical thoughts with affirmations rooted in faith: "I am chosen," "I am forgiven," "I am equipped for every good work."
- **Serve with purpose, not for praise** When you serve others from a place of divine worth, you're not chasing approval—you're reflecting God's love.
- **Spend time with God** Prayer, worship, and Scripture reading help you hear God's voice louder than the world's. The more you know Him, the more clearly you see yourself.

God-Esteem vs. Self-Esteem

The Clear Difference: Cultural Self-Esteem vs. God-Esteem

Aspect	Cultural Self-Esteem	God-Esteem
Source of Worth	Achievements, appearance, popularity, performance	God's love, grace, and truth
Stability	Fluctuates with success, failure, or others' opinions	Unchanging—rooted in eternal truth
Focus	Self-image and external validation	Spiritual identity and divine purpose
Motivation	To feel good about oneself or gain approval	To live in alignment with God's will

Aspect	Cultural Self-Esteem	God-Esteem
Healing Power	Limited to self-help and affirmation	Rooted in grace, forgiveness, and transformation
Emotional Outcome	Anxiety, insecurity, comparison, burnout	Peace, joy, confidence, freedom

Cultural self-esteem says: *“You are enough if you prove it.”* **God-esteem** says: *“You are enough because He made you, loves you, and lives in you.”*

God-esteem isn’t just a spiritual idea—it’s a radical shift in how you see yourself and live your life. It’s the difference between striving and abiding, between insecurity and peace.

Cultivating **God-esteem** is about aligning your thoughts, actions, and identity with how God sees you—not how the world defines you.

Here are some transformative behaviors that nurture God-esteem:



1. Daily Time with God

- **Behavior:** Spend intentional time in prayer, worship, and Scripture.
- **Impact:** Builds intimacy with God and reinforces your identity as His beloved child.



2. Meditate on God’s Word

- **Behavior:** Reflect on verses that affirm your worth (e.g., Ephesians 2:10, Romans 8:38–39).
- **Impact:** Replaces negative self-talk with divine truth and strengthens spiritual confidence.



3. Speak Life Over Yourself

- **Behavior:** Use affirmations grounded in Scripture: “I am chosen,” “I am redeemed,” “I am loved.”
- **Impact:** Rewires your mindset to reflect God’s view rather than worldly criticism.



4. Serve Others with Love

- **Behavior:** Help others without seeking recognition.
- **Impact:** Reinforces your purpose and reflects God’s heart, reminding you that your value isn’t performance-based.

5. Reject Comparison

- **Behavior:** Avoid measuring your worth against others.
- **Impact:** Frees you from insecurity and helps you embrace your unique calling.

6. Set Boundaries Rooted in Worth

- **Behavior:** Say no to toxic relationships or situations that diminish your God-given dignity.
- **Impact:** Affirms that you are worthy of respect and peace.

7. Practice Forgiveness

- **Behavior:** Let go of guilt and shame through grace.
- **Impact:** Embraces the truth that you are forgiven and free, not defined by past mistakes.

Here's a simple yet powerful daily rhythm to help you cultivate God-esteem—one that centers your identity in divine truth and sets the tone for a life of peace, purpose, and confidence.



Morning: Ground Yourself in God's View

1. Scripture Meditation (5–10 min)

Choose one verse that affirms your worth in God:

- *“I am fearfully and wonderfully made”* (Psalm 139:14)
- *“You are God’s masterpiece”* (Ephesians 2:10)

 *Write it down, speak it aloud, and let it sink in.*

2. Affirmation Practice

Say 3–5 affirmations rooted in God’s truth:

- “I am deeply loved by God.”
- “I am chosen and called for a purpose.”
- “I am forgiven and free.”

Midday: Live from Divine Worth

3. Serve with Intention

Do one act of kindness—big or small—without seeking recognition.  Whether it’s a smile, a prayer, or helping someone, let it flow from your God-given identity.

4. Reject Comparison

If you catch yourself comparing, pause and say:

“God made me unique. I don’t need to be anyone else.”

Evening: Reflect and Reconnect

5. Gratitude & Grace Check-In

Ask yourself:

- Where did I feel God’s love today?
- Where did I struggle to see myself through His eyes?

 End with a prayer of surrender:

“God, thank You for loving me as I am. Help me walk in Your truth tomorrow.”

Would you like me to turn this into a printable devotional card or expand it into a weekly guide with themes and scriptures? I’d love to help you build something that feels sacred and personal.

Here is a personalized God-Esteem Devotional Guide—a daily rhythm designed to help you live from your divine identity and walk in spiritual confidence. You can follow this each day or adapt it to your weekly flow.



Morning: Rooted in Truth

◆ Scripture Meditation

Choose one verse to anchor your day. Examples:

- “*You are fearfully and wonderfully made*” — Psalm 139:14
- “*I have loved you with an everlasting love*” — Jeremiah 31:3
- “*You are God’s masterpiece*” — Ephesians 2:10



*Read it slowly. **Speak it aloud.** Let it shape your thoughts.*

◆ God-Esteem Affirmations

Say these with conviction:

- “I am deeply loved by God.”
- “I am chosen and called for a purpose.”
- “I am forgiven and free.”



Midday: Living from Divine Worth

◆ Act of Grace

Do one intentional act of kindness—without seeking credit. ❤️ Whether it’s a smile, a prayer, or helping someone, let it reflect God’s love through you.

◆ Thought Check

If comparison or insecurity creeps in, pause and say:

“God made me unique. I don’t need to be anyone else.”

Evening: Reflect and Reconnect

Gratitude Journal

Write down:

- One moment you felt God's love today.
- One way you showed love to others.
- One area where you want to grow in seeing yourself through God's eyes.

Prayer of Surrender

"God, thank You for loving me as I am. Help me walk in Your truth tomorrow. Let me see myself the way You see me."

How can I see myself as God sees me?

Seeing yourself as God sees you means shifting from self-judgment to divine affirmation. It's not about ignoring your flaws about embracing your full identity as someone deeply loved, purposefully created, and eternally valued.

Here's how you can begin to see yourself through God's eyes:

1. Know What God Says About You

God's Word is the mirror that reflects your true identity. Here are some truths to hold onto:

- *You are made in His image* — Genesis 1:27
- *You are fearfully and wonderfully made* — Psalm 139:14
- *You are chosen, holy, and dearly loved* — Colossians 3:12
- *You are forgiven and redeemed* — Ephesians 1:7

 *Spend time reading and meditating on these verses. Let them reshape your inner dialogue.*

2. Renew Your Mind

Replace negative self-talk with God's truth. When you think:

- "I'm not enough" → say "I am complete in Christ" (Colossians 2:10)
- "I've messed up too much" → say "His grace is sufficient for me" (2 Corinthians 12:9)

 Speak life over yourself daily. Your words shape your vision.

3. Accept Grace, Not Perfection

God doesn't love you because you're perfect—He loves you because you're His. Let go of striving and rest in grace.

“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” — Romans 5:8

4. Surround Yourself with Truth-Tellers

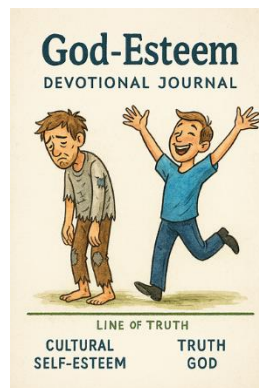
Spend time with people who remind you of your worth in God. Community helps reinforce the divine perspective when your own vision gets blurry.

5. Ask God to Show You

In prayer, say:

“God, help me see myself the way You see me. Remove the lies I’ve believed and replace them with Your truth.”

He will answer. Sometimes through Scripture, sometimes through others, sometimes through quiet conviction.



A personalized God-Esteem Affirmation & Prayer Guide, to help you see yourself through God's eyes every day. You can use this in the morning, during quiet moments, or whenever you need to realign your heart with divine truth.

Daily Affirmations: Speak Life Over Yourself

Say these aloud with conviction and faith:

1. **“I am God’s beloved.”** I am deeply loved—not for what I do, but for who I am.

2. **“I am created with purpose.”** My life has meaning, and I am here for a reason.
3. **“I am forgiven and free.”** My past does not define me—grace does.
4. **“I am chosen and equipped.”** God has called me and given me everything I need to walk in His will.
5. **“I am never alone.”** God is with me, guiding, comforting, and strengthening me.



Prayer to See Yourself as God Sees You

“Father God, help me see myself through Your eyes. Strip away the lies I’ve believed—those voices that say I’m not enough, not worthy, not lovable. Replace them with Your truth. Remind me that I am fearfully and wonderfully made, chosen, redeemed, and held in Your everlasting love. Let Your voice be louder than the world’s. Let Your grace be greater than my guilt. And let Your purpose shine brighter than my doubts. I surrender my self-image to You. Shape it with Your hands. Amen.”

Would you like me to expand this into a weekly devotional with themed days and scriptures? I can make each day feel like a sacred step toward deeper God-esteem.

Which is better God lives in me or I live in him

That’s a profound question, Abbot—and the beauty is, **you don’t have to choose**. Both truths are deeply biblical and spiritually powerful, and together they form a complete picture of intimacy with God.



“God lives in me” — *Indwelling Presence*

This speaks to the **Holy Spirit dwelling within you**. It’s about God’s nearness, His guidance, and His power working through your life.

- *“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you...?”* — 1 Corinthians 6:19
- *“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”* — Colossians 1:27

Impact: You carry divine presence wherever you go. You’re never alone. God is not distant—He’s within.



“I live in Him” — *Abiding Relationship*

This reflects your **dependence and surrender** to God. It’s about resting in His love, walking in His ways, and being rooted in His truth.

- *“In Him we live and move and have our being.”* — Acts 17:28
- *“Remain in me, as I also remain in you.”* — John 15:4

Impact: You're not just visited by God—you're enveloped in Him. Your life flows from His life.

Together: A Divine Exchange

- **God in you** = Power, comfort, transformation
- **You in God** = Peace, purpose, protection

It's like breathing: *God in you* is the inhale—His Spirit filling you. *You in God* is the exhale—your life surrendered to Him.

Here's a devotional to help you experience the fullness of both truths: **God lives in you and you live in Him**. This is a sacred union, a divine embrace that transforms how you see yourself and how you walk through the world.



Devotional Title: The Divine Dwelling

Scripture Focus

"Remain in me, as I also remain in you." — John 15:4 *"Christ in you, the hope of glory."* — Colossians 1:27

Morning Reflection

Today, I choose to live *in* God—resting in His love, trusting His guidance, and surrendering my plans. And I remember: God lives *in* me—empowering me, comforting me, and transforming me from the inside out.

 **Affirmation:** "I am held in God's heart and filled with His Spirit. I am never alone."

Midday Prayer

“Lord, let me walk today knowing You are within me. Let Your wisdom guide my choices, Your love shape my words, and Your peace guard my heart. I abide in You, and You abide in me. Let this truth be my strength.”

Evening Reflection

Where did I feel God’s presence within me today? Where did I rest in Him instead of striving on my own?

 **Journal Prompt:** Write one moment where you felt empowered, comforted, or guided—and thank God for dwelling in you.

7-Day God-Esteem Devotional Series, each day designed to help you experience the fullness of *living in God and knowing He lives in you*. You’ll find Scripture, reflection, affirmations, and prayer to guide your heart deeper into divine identity.

Day 1: Abiding Peace

Scripture: “*Remain in me, as I also remain in you.*” — John 15:4 **Reflection:** Peace isn’t found in control—it’s found in connection. When you abide in God, anxiety loses its grip.

Affirmation: “I rest in God’s presence. His peace surrounds me.” **Prayer:** “Lord, help me remain in You today. Let Your peace quiet my soul.”

Day 2: Spirit Within

Scripture: “*Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?*” — 1 Corinthians 6:19 **Reflection:** God doesn’t just visit—you are His dwelling place. His Spirit empowers you from within. **Affirmation:** “God’s Spirit lives in me. I carry divine strength.” **Prayer:** “Holy Spirit, fill me with wisdom, courage, and love. Let me reflect You today.”

Day 3: Living Loved

Scripture: “*I have loved you with an everlasting love.*” — Jeremiah 31:3 **Reflection:** You are not tolerated—you are treasured. God’s love is constant, not conditional. **Affirmation:** “I am deeply loved by God. Nothing can separate me from His love.” **Prayer:** “Father, let Your love define me. Heal every place where I’ve felt unworthy.”

Day 4: Secure in Grace

Scripture: “*My grace is sufficient for you.*” — 2 Corinthians 12:9 **Reflection:** You don’t have to earn God’s approval. Grace covers your flaws and fuels your growth. **Affirmation:** “I am covered by grace. I am free to grow.” **Prayer:** “Jesus, thank You for Your grace. Help me walk in freedom, not fear.”

Day 5: Chosen and Called

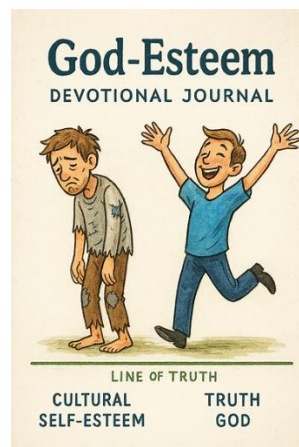
Scripture: “*You did not choose me, but I chose you.*” — John 15:16 **Reflection:** You’re not random—you’re handpicked. God has a purpose for your life. **Affirmation:** “I am chosen by God. My life has meaning.” **Prayer:** “God, show me the path You’ve prepared for me. Let me walk boldly in Your calling.”

Day 6: Redeemed and Renewed

Scripture: “*In Him we have redemption... the forgiveness of sins.*” — Ephesians 1:7 **Reflection:** Your past doesn’t define you. You are redeemed, restored, and renewed. **Affirmation:** “I am forgiven. I am made new.” **Prayer:** “Lord, thank You for redeeming me. Help me live from the freedom You’ve given.”

Day 7: Divine Identity

Scripture: “*You are God’s masterpiece.*” — Ephesians 2:10 **Reflection:** You are not a mistake—you are a masterpiece. Created with intention, beauty, and power. **Affirmation:** “I am God’s masterpiece. I reflect His glory.” **Prayer:** “Creator God, help me see myself through Your eyes. Let me live boldly in my divine identity.”



Congratulations. You have done some praying. You might have noticed that the praying was fine but that you had hope for more effects. That is natural. We all have blocks toward intimacy with God. Let us discover what yours might be. This is not a journey to discover how bad you are. Most blocks are created by hurt or what someone else has taught you.

Reflections on your personal blocks to prayer.

Please write your answer to these questions in a private journal.

1. Why is it so hard for me to value myself as God values me?
2. How will the training of spiritual habits make me more about to respond spontaneously?
3. I do I daily discover more about my beloved Christ?
4. How can I stay focused on Christ?
5. I am often tempted to strike back. How can I take these moments and turn them into moments of sanctification?
6. Why do I consume so much of this world, other people, even my emotional self-indulgence?
7. List the ways that you murmur, grumble.
8. Describe how you do better when you focus on God's generosity?
9. What will hell be like?
10. List some of the ways that God has moved in your life in the past. How does that affect you today?
11. How can I best manage my fears?
12. Why is it so hard to "love the Lord, God?"
13. I use humor to "puff" myself up at the expense of others?
14. What struggles do I have with wanting control of my future?
15. How do I look for ways to be gentle rather than confrontational with others?
16. Explain how difficult it is for you to manage the fine line between emotional self-pity and true repentance?
17. Why is it so easy for me to get lazy in use of my "spiritual craft"?
18. Why do I have this constant need to talk?
19. Why do I enjoy being self-righteous?
20. How do I get caught up in what I am doing rather to who am I going?
21. How can community and leadership help me to discover God's will verses my will?
22. Be honest. What are your desires of the flesh?
23. Give some examples of when you have invited God into a situation and it worked out far better than you could have imagined.

24. When do you give up too easily?
25. Describe the feelings that you will never measure up.
26. Give some examples when you have pressed forward even a little bit and God responded greatly.
27. Do I allow myself to be stripped of pride and to give my sense of
28. entitlement. Discuss your struggle with this.
29. Give examples of how you exercise humility when you look at your weaknesses. Describe how petty and self-serving you are.
30. Describe how you have longed to be a member of a community that celebrates you and accepts you despite your faults
31. How do I avoid silence within myself, others, God?
32. What gives my life richness and quality?
33. When do I best speak simply and with authority?
34. Describe your helplessness.
35. How do I respond to God's love?
36. Meditate on these words and write your response. "Eagerly do I seek you (God). My soul clings to you and your right hand holds me fast."
37. How do I respond to someone who shows weakness, physical or emotional?
38. I had to take care of someone for a long period of time how would I manage it?
39. "I used to struggle with when to find the time to pray.
- 40." How do you find your time to pray?
41. "Sometimes I am astonished at how strenuous the life of faith is. It is hard work truly to be engaged, not only with God, but with God-in-the-midst, that is, with my own given life." Comment.
42. What does it mean to accept Christ in every person?
43. How do I slip into a pattern of exhausting myself in constant business, rather than following that pattern of harmonious stewardship of self, which involves balance and rest. Comment

Day Devotional for Developing God-Esteem,

It is designed to help you shed cultural self-worth and embrace your divine identity. Each day includes a theme, Scripture, reflection, affirmation, prayer, and a journaling prompt to deepen your walk.

Day 1: You Are Loved

Scripture: “*I have loved you with an everlasting love.*” — Jeremiah 31:3 **Reflection:** God’s love isn’t earned—it’s eternal. Before you did anything, He loved you. **Affirmation:** “I am deeply loved by God. His love defines me.” **Prayer:** “Father, help me receive Your love without fear or striving. Let it heal every place I’ve felt unworthy.” **Journal Prompt:** Where have I looked for love outside of God? How can I return to His embrace?

Day 2: You Are Chosen

Scripture: “*You did not choose me, but I chose you.*” — John 15:16 **Reflection:** You’re not random. God handpicked you for a purpose. **Affirmation:** “I am chosen by God. My life matters.” **Prayer:** “Lord, thank You for choosing me. Help me walk boldly in the calling You’ve placed on my life.” **Journal Prompt:** What does being chosen by God mean to me personally?

Day 3: You Are Enough

Scripture: “*My grace is sufficient for you.*” — 2 Corinthians 12:9 **Reflection:** You don’t have to be perfect. Grace fills the gaps. **Affirmation:** “I am enough because God’s grace covers me.” **Prayer:** “Jesus, help me stop striving and start abiding. Let Your grace be my strength.” **Journal Prompt:** Where do I feel “not enough”? What truth can I speak into that place?

Day 4: You Are Forgiven

Scripture: “*In Him we have redemption... the forgiveness of sins.*” — Ephesians 1:7 **Reflection:** Your past doesn’t define you. Forgiveness frees you. **Affirmation:** “I am forgiven. I am free.” **Prayer:** “God, thank You for Your mercy. Help me forgive myself and walk in freedom.” **Journal Prompt:** What guilt or shame do I need to release today?

Day 5: You Are Empowered

Scripture: “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*” — Philippians 4:13 **Reflection:** You’re not alone. God’s power lives in you. **Affirmation:** “I am empowered by God’s Spirit. I am capable.” **Prayer:** “Holy Spirit, fill me with courage and strength. Help me trust Your power in me.” **Journal Prompt:** What challenge am I facing, and how can I lean on God’s strength?

Day 6: You Are Growing

Scripture: “*He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.*” — Philippians 1:6 **Reflection:** You’re a work in progress—and that’s okay. **Affirmation:** “I am growing. God is shaping me daily.” **Prayer:** “Lord, thank You for Your patience. Help me embrace the process and trust Your timing.” **Journal Prompt:** What growth have I seen in myself recently?

Day 7: You Are His Masterpiece

Scripture: “*You are God’s masterpiece.*” — Ephesians 2:10 **Reflection:** You’re not a mistake, you’re a masterpiece. **Affirmation:** “I am God’s masterpiece. I reflect His glory.” **Prayer:** “Creator God, help me see myself through Your eyes. Let me live boldly in my divine identity.” **Journal Prompt:** What makes me uniquely beautiful in God’s design?

General Devotional: “*Living from the Inside Out*”

Scripture:

“*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” — Colossians 1:27 “*In Him we live and move and have our being.*” — Acts 17:28

Reflection: The world teaches us to build our worth from the outside in—through success, beauty, and applause. But God flips the script. He builds us from the inside out. His Spirit lives in us, His truth defines us, and His love sustains us.

When you live from cultural self-esteem, you’re always chasing—trying to be enough. When you live from God-esteem, you’re resting—already accepted, already loved.

Affirmation: “I am not defined by the world’s standards. I am defined by God’s truth. He lives in me, and I live in Him.”

Prayer:

“Father, help me release the need to prove my worth. Let me live from the truth that I am Yours. Fill me with Your Spirit and remind me daily that I am loved, chosen, and empowered. I choose to live from the inside out—from Your truth, not the world’s noise. Amen.”

Lectio Divina, Going Deep

You have pilgrimed well. Now you can realize the fruits of getting over yourself, pulling up the tangled roots of deeply held erroneous beliefs, and building a solid foundation. You are now tilling the soil of your pilgrimage.

Prayer, the raising your heart and mind to God, cannot be taught because it does not involve a set of skills. Divine intimacy requires putting aside all that you think you know.

Prayer requires discipline, asceticism, purification, and self-control. Those qualities emerge when you earnestly do the pilgrimage as described in this book.

Reluctance to set a structure and schedule to pray is reflective of your resistance to God. You still do not trust Him. You prefer to withhold yourself and not be led by God.

The discipline of Lectio Divina is a well-founded vehicle that enables you to look at God and later you allowing God to look at you.

Lectio Divina means reading something holy. The reading is thoughtfully done unlike reading a newspaper. Read very slowly letting each word, each character speak to you. You may want to study secondary readings to better know the contents of the passage. You are not attempting to be a Biblical scholar. Just let the short passage speak to you.

1) Lectio means reading. I have included several short and lengthy Lectio Divinas with questions for meditation to help you to get started. When you are ready to go on your own let God choose what your reading should be. It is ok if it takes you some time to understand where He is leading you. Remember He initiates everything.

Lectio Divina is meant to go slowly. Stay with each of the following steps until the Lord Inspires you to move to the next step. You could possibly spend a week, month, or more on each step. When I first began doing Lectio Divina the Lord gave me for eight years three simple words, "in the beginning." When I look back on those eight years those three words were life sustaining.

2) Meditatio means meditation. While reading your short Scriptural passage certain ideas or questions may come to mind. Write them down. These ideas may or may not have a direct connection to reading.

The Lectio Divinas that are included in this book have some questions listed to give you a helping hand. Those questions may not be the end of the meditation. God might want you to go further. Since you are not in a rush, take your time and let the Holy Spirit lead.

3) Oratio means prayer. After a period of meditation, the Holy Spirit will impress upon your certain significant ideas. It may take some time for you to be aware which items are most important. That is ok. Keep meditating and asking God questions.

Let God direct your prayers. For example, He might lead you to pray concerning your fear of failure. Your simple prayer might be, “Lord, help me. I am terribly frightful of failure.”

4) Contemplatio means contemplation. This is your holy moment when you turn your prayer over to God. Be quiet. Let God to do the work. Do not expect anything or have an agenda.

It is difficult to remain quiet for any length of time. That is ok. When your mind wanders bring it back. Have something to focus on like a crucifix. Your contemplation may be relatively short. Come back to it sometime later. This is a slow experience worthy of investment.

Silence requires you to put away your selfish efforts to control and receive rewards or satisfactions. Contemplation is the ultimate expression of trust. Contemplation is a grace given by God. There is nothing that you can do to make contemplation happen other than be still and be willing to be led by God.

The true contemplative’s prayer is simply, “Here I am Lord. Do with me what You will.”

Let us get started on some shorter Lectio Divinas. In this case I had broken up the Retreat group into several groups. They were all reflecting on the same reading, but I focused on the reading for a particular group with appropriate questions. Once completed they would come together and share with the other groups.

Group 1

Mark 2:1-12

New International Version (NIV)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man ² A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

⁸ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? ¹⁰ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, ¹¹ “I tell

you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

Below is a list of reflective questions. Look deep within yourself and ask the Holy Spirit to inspire, direct and heal you. Ask Him how this scripture applies to your life. Answer each question completely and honestly. Write down your observations and insights.

1. When you report to the larger group one person from group 1 tells the story in your own words.

When you report to the larger group 1 may divide amongst themselves the following:

2. List the characters whether they are individuals or a group.

3. Give a list of character traits of each individual or group.

4. Each member of group 1 should reflect and then list the character traits that they share with those individuals or group in this story.

5. What negative traits do you share with those individuals or groups characters in the story.

Group 2

Mark 2:1-12

New International Version (NIV)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man ² A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man,

Below is a list of reflective questions. Look deep within yourself and ask the Holy Spirit to inspire, direct and heal you. Ask Him how this scripture applies to your life. Answer each question completely and honestly. Write down your observations and insights.

Your group, group 2, can divide the following when you report to the larger group. So many in group 2 can report.

1. List the personality characteristics of the paralyzed man’s friends.

2. How many close friends do you have? Without giving their names list some of the characteristics.
3. What characteristics do you display to your close friends?
4. How much would you risk for your close friends?
5. When your close friends want something from you do you get annoyed, generous, cautious what?
6. How much money would you loan to a close friend. Do not answer, "it depends."
7. Do you talk about your faith with your close friends? Why? Why not?

Group 3

Mark 2:1-12 New International Version (NIV)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷"Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

⁸Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, ¹¹"I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹²He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Below is a list of reflective questions. Look deep within yourself and ask the Holy Spirit to inspire, direct and heal you. Ask Him how this scripture applies to your life. Answer each question completely and honestly. Write down your observations and insights.

Your group, group 3, will report to the larger group on your reflections. More than one member can report.

If relate to Jesus at all it is from a distance. I believe in my head but not my heart.

I sometimes look to Jesus to be my savior, helper, sustainer but I doubt if He really cares enough about me personally. Hell feels closer to me than heaven.

Jesus could not forgive my sins. There are too many and too big.

Although I speak all the right words about Jesus and my relationship with Him, I do not really trust Him. I avoid His lordship over my life. I have to be in charge of my life.

God the Father and the Holy Spirit are intellectual concepts not realities that dynamically affect my life.

I create a false image of being in charge of my life. I am a perfectionist. I appear to be unaffected by any problem.

I put on the mask of being charming and sociable, but I am really trying to be unreachable and emotionally closed off from others. I appear not to want anything.

My plan for acceptance from others is to be good enough although I know that I am not. Being good enough often means doing things for others that I do not want to. I have a difficult time saying NO.

I know that Jesus knows everything about me and that scares me. Although I speak otherwise, I know that I am doomed for sure. Perhaps I can successfully hide from Jesus also.

I am afraid to trust. No one, even the Divine, is trustworthy. My whole life has validated this. I know this to be true. I am “wired” not to believe.

I often want to believe. Honestly, I am riding on the faith of others and what I read. Although again, being honest, I do not read much. Certainly, I do not read Scripture much or go to church much or even pray much. If I give five minutes a day to God, He is lucky. My laziness and lame excuses of being so busy are really evidence that I do not believe that Jesus is close to me, cares about me, and can affect me in positive way. Let’s be honest I am more about myself than Jesus.

I really do not know who I am in Jesus. I know what others have said but I have not integrated that into myself. Others have said that we are all dirty rotten sinners, but that Jesus can make us good and holy. I believe the dirty rotten part, but the other seems too good to be true. I do not trust it. I might say churchy words, but I really do not believe it.

Certainly, Jesus would never call me son or daughter.

I bet you learned some important things about yourself. Hang on...now we go deep. We are using the same text to illustrate that there is always more to Scripture than even a few deep readings. The first step in Lectio Divina is to know the reflected Scripture well. I have provided a number of questions for each quoted Scripture. I did that to help you out. Later when you do your own private Lectios God will bring the questions forward. Again, go slowly. If God wants you to stay on one sentence say there until He releases you.

Teach us how to Pray

Mark 2:1-12

New International Version (NIV)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

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Below is a list of reflective questions. Look deep within yourself and ask the Holy Spirit to inspire, direct and heal you. Ask Him how this scripture applies to your life. Answer each question completely and honestly. Write down your observations and insights. Use the information from the video, “Teach us how to Pray.” These reflections will use the above Scripture in the manner of “Lectio Divina”, or Divine Reading.

This is designed to be a 12-week program. Take your time, do not rush it through.

Use a separate sheet of paper to write your reflections.

In this experience of “Lectio Divina” we will examine each character and event in this Scripture story and allow the Holy Spirit to help us examine ourselves.

Week 1. “Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man”

Who am I and what paralyzes me?

My family of origin taught me that I am not a worthwhile person. I feel inadequate and a failure. I believe that something is essentially wrong with me. I often feel shame and guilt. These feelings do not go away. I believe that I do not deserve to have good things happen to me. Actually, bad things should happen to me. My struggle with my sexuality and other behaviors prove that I am a failure and have low self-worth. I conclude that I must hide my weaknesses from others.

I feel unloved and unlovable. My needs will never be met. Consequently, I internalize my rage and it shows up as depression, resentment, self-pity and even suicidal feelings.

I can confuse nurturing and sex. Support, care, affirmation, and love are all sexualized. No matter how much sex I get it never seems to be enough.

Week 2. “Carried by four of them”

How do I relate to my closest friends and family?

I often create a front of “normality” to hide my inadequacy. I wear a mask all the time. It takes a lot of energy from me. I may even appear to be grandiose and full of exaggerated self-

importance or, I pretend to be humble. My real friends and family see that I am conflicted between who I feel that I am and who I pretend to be. They see my decisions or behaviors as irrational and self-destructive.

I assume responsibility for all the pain of loved ones.

I feel isolated. I am often unaware of other people's pain or appreciate their opinions.

I cannot depend on others to love me. I do not have confidence in others' love. I expect rejection.

Week 3. "Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it," "When Jesus saw their faith"

How do others relate to me?

Close friends and family become angry and frustrated with me because of my egocentricities, especially when I am insensitive to others. They are troubled by what looks like destructive or curious behaviors.

I often do extreme or indulgent things as if I am making up for something.

Significant persons feel pushed away, useless, neglected, and unnecessary. They are confused, seemingly generous gestures, but lack any personal warmth or presence. People become angry and hurt with a sense of abandonment in reaction to my irresponsible behaviors.

Those closest to me see a double life. My ups and downs are difficult to understand. They begin to distrust me. There are inconsistencies between my private and public life.

Week 4. "And then lowered the mat the man was lying on."

What embarrasses me and who would care about me anyway?

I believe that everyone would abandon me if the truth of who I am and what I do were known. I dare not be dependent on others, reach out to others, or let others help me.

I believe that my sexual or other behaviors are so bad that everything becomes my "fault."

I believe that something is fundamentally wrong with me. I am embarrassed about who I am and how little I have accomplished. There is no way that I could be good enough.

Week 5. "He said to the paralyzed man, "your sins are forgiven."

Who is Jesus and how do I relate to him?

If relate to Jesus at all it is from a distance. I believe in my head but not my heart.

I sometimes look to Jesus to be my savior, helper, sustainer but I doubt if He really cares enough about me personally. Hell feels closer to me than heaven.

Jesus could not forgive my sins. There are too many and too big.

Although I speak all the right words about Jesus and my relationship with Him, I do not really trust Him. I avoid His lordship over my life. I have to be in charge of my life.

God the Father and the Holy Spirit are intellectual concepts not realities that dynamically affect my life.

Week 6. “I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”

What are my sins, and which make me feel the most shameful?

I fear that I may be emotionally, sexually, and generally out of control. I often promise to be in better control of myself, but it does not work.

My obsessions pervade my life and behavior.

I cover up and lie about who I really am.

I am ashamed of me.

Week 7. “Now, some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming!”

How am I a hypocrite?

I cannot honestly express guilt and remorse because that would require me to be honest with myself, others, and God.

I create a false image of being in charge of my life. I am a perfectionist. I appear to be unaffected by any problem.

I put on the mask of being charming and sociable, but I am really trying to be unreachable and emotionally closed off from others. I appear not to want anything.

I am purposely unclear about my intentions in relationships.

I put a great deal of effort into showing that I am respectable and law-abiding. I even publicly profess extreme sexual propriety and moral self-righteousness particularly about sexual matters.

Week 8. “Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

How do I try to manipulate others to go along with my beliefs?

I can be calculating, strategizing, manipulative, and even ruthless. Rules and laws are made for people who are lovable. Those who are unlovable survive in other ways.

I often mislead or lie to people. I will tell them what they want to hear. For example, I might say that I want to be emotionally nurtured because that is what they want to hear, but really what I want is sex. I am afraid to have a life without sex. I will even abstain from sex for a while to eventually get the sex that I really want.

I try to control others and situations to assure that I get the sex that I want. I make maximum effort to insure all possible sexual opportunities.

My plan for acceptance from others is to be good enough although I know that I am not. Being good enough often means doing things for others that I do not want to. I have a difficult time saying NO.

Week 9. “Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things”?”

What secrets does Jesus know about me that I wish He did not know? I know that Jesus knows everything about me and that scares me. Although I speak otherwise, I know that I am doomed for sure. Perhaps I can successfully hide from Jesus also.

Week 10. “I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. So he said to the man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home. He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.”

What sins or emotional problems hold me back from becoming a full and complete person? I am afraid to trust. No one, even the Divine, is trustworthy. My whole life has validated this. I know this to be true. I am “wired” not to believe.

I often want to believe. Honestly, I am riding on the faith of others and what I read. Although again, being honest, I do not read much. Certainly, I do not read Scripture much or go to church much or even pray much. If I give five minutes a day to God, He is lucky. My laziness and lame excuses of being so busy are really evidence that I do not believe that Jesus is close to me, cares about me, and can affect me in positive way. Let’s be honest I am more about myself than Jesus.

Week 11. “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Who does Jesus say that I am? I really do not know who I am in Jesus. I know what others have said but I have not integrated that into myself. Others have said that we are all dirty rotten sinners, but that Jesus can make us good and holy. I believe the dirty rotten part, but the other seems too good to be true. I do not trust it. I might say churchy words, but I really do not believe it. Certainly, Jesus would never call me son or daughter.

Week 12. “This amazed everyone, and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

What amazing things would you like God to do for you?

