

Joyful Living: Build Yourself a Great Life!

Joyful Living is a step-by-step, easy to read recipe that stirs the soul and awakens the spirit. Amidst the many examples and touching stories, Pelger asks that you not be passive, but actively participate to discover yourself, chart your own destiny, and find joy in your life.

I now realize one of the best ways to relate to my kids on a non-superficial level; I must open up and share my experiences, my life, that they might find it within themselves to share theirs.

Ray DeStephen, P.E., president, Schnabel Engineering

...it made me laugh and cry as I considered some of my own life experiences...**Joyful Living** is not just a book to be read, but a book to be worked. In the exercise of completing the worksheets, in demanding of oneself the truth from within, the refining process begins.

Mike Sharpe, founder of Suzy's Soup

Pelger has more guts than I do to admit being "de-pantsed" in front of 80,000 people. His honesty, bluntness, desire for excellence, and refreshing humor are invigorating.

John Hess, hog farmer

"Most people don't know how to transcend the circumstances life hands them. This victim mentality is especially prevalent today. **Joyful Living** not only points out that we can choose our level of joy, but it provides a method for doing it."

Carl Ginder, director, United Zion Retirement Community

"A very human story, told well, which extends personal experience into spiritual guidance and fulfillment...quite an accomplishment."

Robert S. Walker, former US Congressman

I'm impressed with Pelger's deep understanding of the nitty-gritty of life.

Dr. J. Calvin Wenger

Joyful Living affords the reader an opportunity to examine life in a way that will provide a much deeper understanding of who they are and why they make those moment-to-moment choices. The real life examples made me feel very connected to the book.

Dr. Joe Narkiewicz, school principal

A wonderful road map to the difficult journey we take every day.

Mike Bingeman, CPA

Easy to read and applicable to anyone who desires to work toward a more joyful life.

Phil Geyer, construction superintendent

We really appreciate Pelger's unique approach to this material... so practical and full of common sense, which sad to say, is greatly lacking nowadays.

Fran and Leland Paris, directors, Youth with a Mission

Pelger produces a compelling blueprint for our social destiny, our voice of conscience, our *raison d'être* for self-determination and spiritual evolution.

Dr. Mark Mentzer, scientist and musician

An outstanding book that should be read by every member of the family and then discussed.

Robert Beers, AIA architect

Pelger writes with the seriousness of a scholar, the precision of an engineer, the lightheartedness of a humorist, and the wisdom of a sage.

Paul Brubaker, banker

...a wonderful handbook for self evaluation, it's quite a resource.

George Rettew, P.E., president, Rettew Associates

Joyful Living:

Build Yourself a Great Life!

Ned Pelger, P.E.

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to you, the reader. The principles presented here can change your life. Since many people give me guidance and love, I want to pass some of that help along to you. I hope you will enjoy my effort.

Acknowledgements

I sat in the office of John and Sharon Charles, discussing my manuscript. Prior to becoming my editors, they had reviewed the book and felt the editing would consist of a “light dusting” of grammatical corrections and word usage improvements. After four years of writing and many reviews by others, I thought there couldn’t be too much more to revise. As usual, I was wrong.

After carefully reading the first few chapters, they asked to meet with me. John leaned back in his chair, looked in my eyes for several seconds without blinking, and said, “Well, Ned, we think you should cut about a third to a half of the material from the book.” I felt sick. Then I thought, “How could I have chosen such obviously misguided people for my editors?” But I said, “You’re the experts. Do what you think is best.”

They didn’t cut quite that much, but they did cut plenty and the book improved substantially. Thank you, John and Sharon, for your struggles, your guidance and your integrity.

While John and Sharon came into the project near the end, Evelyn and Barney Epstein critiqued and encouraged me from the beginning. They helped me stay true to the concept of the work. We had so many discussions, and contemplated so many changes. In particular, they designed the cover.

We disagreed on some issues, yet always retained respect for the beliefs of the other. I’ll always cherish our friendship. Thank you, Evelyn and Barney, for challenging and encouraging me in many ways.

To my best friend and wife, Debby...what can I say? You have been there for 25 years, listening, gently directing, stubbornly refusing, whatever it took to move us in the right direction. I love you more than any words can say.

Alexey, Anna, and Tessa---we have so much fun together. Sorry if I embarrass you by sharing some of it here. But, if you've learned nothing else from me, you know that, "it builds character!" You have taught me so much about relationships and love. I'm proud of each of you.

I'm blessed to have a large group of friends and family to look to for guidance and direction. Thank you to the following people for reviewing manuscripts, providing comments, and encouraging me through this long process of writing and rewriting: Mima Adams, Bob Beers, David Billington, Mike Bingeman, John Bomberger, John Bonfield, Geneva and Bob Brandt, Mike Brubaker, Paul Brubaker, Skip Clair, Debby DeBord, Ray De-Stephen, Jill and Shawn Erb, Gail Funk, Colleen and Phil Geyer, Carl Ginder, Belinda Graybill, Pam and Terry Griffe, Gene Griffith, Ken Groff, Donna Hammond, Martha and John Hess, Beth Hibshman, Sarah Holt, Bruce Jackson, Lehman Kaylor, Carol Kline, Nevin Kraybill, Dan Leaman, Anita Lipkowski, Sharon and Dennis Martin, Judy and Paul Martin, John Matarazzi, John May, Mark Mentzer, Joe Narciewicz, Lynn Neidermyer, Patty Owens, Fran and Leland Paris, Chris and Ed Pelger, Jim Pelger, George Rettew, Dawn Risser, Shelley and Mike Sharpe, Jeff Sholly, Jim Singer, Steve Slaby, Bruce Spicer, Cindy Sullivan, Wendy and Steve Terry, George Travis, Joe Wagman, Bob Walker, Sally Watkins, Calvin Wenger, Kristen Worley, and, finally, all the people that have taken my courses and provided feedback, teaching me as I taught.

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Getting Started

Do you want more out of life? You may be an active young mother with a loving husband and children, but you lack joy. You wonder, "Is this all there is?" You may be a divorced father loving your children in your own way, but unsuccessfully trying to make sense out of life. You wonder, "What's the purpose of all this?" You may be a grandmother who has dedicated your life to your family, but now feels unappreciated. You wonder, "How can I change now?"

A simple truth exists: each of us has the ability to choose the level of joy in our lives! Regardless of where we are right now, we can attain much more joy. Each of us can have a joyous, amazing life!

The key to experiencing this level of joy lies in one word --- **UNDERSTANDING**. We must strive to understand ourselves and our world. We must examine our past, the lives of those who came before us, how we live now and what we believe. When we do so, we will discover sparkling gems of understanding.

This book exists to help you build a collection of those gems of understanding – which will provide a solid foundation for a meaningful life. You will then have the stability to reach for more: more love, more joy, more acceptance, more achievement.

As an engineer designs a building to withstand the anticipated forces of nature, so you can design your life to withstand and joyfully overcome the inevitable problems you will face. A solid foundation of understanding allows you to reach for more with little risk of toppling over or failing. As you work through this book, you will expand your understanding of yourself, thereby strengthening your life foundation and allowing you to reach for more.

You may be wondering, “Who is this guy and why should I believe him?” I wonder that myself from time to time. Perhaps this story will tell you a little bit about me...

I sat in a panic, poring over my freshman physics mid-term exam. I was living my recurring childhood nightmare in which I would begin taking a test and then realize that I knew none of the answers. (At least I was not sitting there in just my underwear, which was another variation of the dream.) This was my first major test in my first year at Princeton University and I was completely overwhelmed.

Let me give you some background information on how I even ended up at a place like Princeton. I had not been much of a student in high school. I spent most of my time playing and partying. I talked my way into a work-release program to skip classes in the afternoon and spent those hours fooling around with wood-working equipment in my grandfather’s garage. Not only was I not planning to go to college, I was not planning anything. My days just floated along.

The one discipline I had was high school wrestling. I enjoyed the head-to-head competition, the direct challenge and the fact that I was reasonably good at it. We got a new wrestling

coach in the fall of my senior year and he stopped by my locker one day. I remember the conversation clearly.

“Hi, I’m Mr. McDonald, I’m the new wrestling coach.”

“Yeah, I heard that.”

“So, I understand you made it to States last year and won a match up there.”

“Yeah, I was lucky.”

“Where are you planning to go to college?”

“I don’t think I’m going to college.”

“Well, I talked to some of the other teachers about you and I think you would really enjoy Princeton. I’ve known the wrestling coaches there for years. I teach at their summer camps. I could talk with them about helping you get accepted. I think you would really like it.”

“I’ve heard of Princeton. Where is it?”

“It’s in New Jersey.”

Over the next few months, Coach McDonald talked me into sending an application to Princeton; it was the only school I applied to because I was not planning to go to college. Due to some significant help from the wrestling coaches, I received a letter of acceptance. Many people told me what an honor it was to be accepted at Princeton and that I would be crazy not to go and give it a try. Hence, I found myself sitting in a freshman physics mid-term exam in turmoil.

As I read question after question, I became more overwhelmed. Most of the course had been focused on things like motion and force, mechanics and energy. In the last lecture before the mid-term exam, the professor had talked a few minutes about Einstein and the theory of relativity. Yet all the questions on this exam were about the theory of relativity ... questions about being on trains moving at the speed of light, and such. I tried to answer each question, but I just didn’t have a clue.

The exam was to last one and one half hours. Within 45 minutes I had reached the end of the exam booklet since there

were so many questions I couldn't answer. Reluctantly I turned back to the front cover, thinking that I would try to plow through it again. There on the top corner of the cover page I noticed the course title, "Physics 114." I was taking "Physics 101!" I was in the wrong room!

I was both embarrassed and relieved! Due to Princeton's honor code, there were no proctors in the exam room. Deciding to make the best of a bad situation, I put a big smile on my face, stood up, picked up my umbrella and my exam booklet and walked out of the room to panicked whispers of, "Oh my god, he's done already!" In the next room I explained my predicament to the professors, who had a great laugh and told me I could take a make-up exam.

I did make it through Physics 101 (I never did take Physics 114) and eventually graduated with an engineering degree. An engineer learns to solve a large, difficult problem by breaking it down into smaller, manageable-sized problems. The engineer then tackles the smaller problems one at a time. Eventually the large, difficult problem no longer seems overwhelming. For example, designing the structure for a five-story building may seem formidable. In practice, though, one works at it piece by piece. With patience and persistence (and probably some discussions with others about assumptions and methods) the design is completed. This problem-solving method was the most valuable thing I learned in my formal education.

Over the years, I have designed and constructed many buildings by working one step at a time. I have addressed many issues in my personal life using the same method. Remember the old question, "How do you eat an elephant?" The answer is, of course, "One bite at a time." **We can solve seemingly insurmountable problems in our lives if we are willing to break the problems down to manageable chunks.**

Before continuing with this book, you should ask yourself, "Do I want more out of life and am I willing to work for it?" If you answer "yes," you've got the right book! If you are willing to put forth effort to examine and understand your life, I guaran-

tee you will dramatically improve your sense of joy. Though I present no magic solutions nor incredible words of wisdom, I do offer a method which works.

Step by step, you will grow and change for the better. You will stop just reacting to events in your same old way and begin choosing appropriate life responses. This capability to choose your response will reward you with great power and deep joy.

Please notice: we are considering something quite different from the typical wishful New Year's resolution. I remember working in an aluminum foundry as a 16-year-old. The work was hard, dirty and hot. On breaks I listened to the older guys talk. Their conversations usually came around to money and how to get rich. There was plenty of wishing going on, but not much action for change (other than buying lottery tickets). Just wishing will not bring joy; we need commitment and effort.

As I think about the value of commitment and effort, the name of Bruce Springsteen comes to mind. I learned a lesson from him that I will never forget.

When I was 17 years old, I got a job setting up sound equipment for concert tours with Clair Brother's Audio. We traveled from city to city, either in trucks or in a tour bus, and set up an entire sound system almost every day. My first tour was with the group Yes in 1975. At one point on their tour, we went 14 days with a concert in a different city each night. The 17-hour workdays were long and hard, but the money was good (it enabled me to pay most of my way through college).

In 1978 I took a year off from college to earn some money (and to find some direction), and I was put on the Bruce Springsteen tour. As you might imagine, most of the people that work on these tours are cynical. Everyone is too "cool" to be impressed with the artist. The first show was in Buffalo, NY and Bruce played for almost four hours. The rigger, a man named George Travis, said to me after the show. "Who is this guy? That was the best show I have ever seen in my life! He gives it all to the audience!" I completely agreed.

We toured the country for six months, constantly amazed at the energy and effort Bruce put into every show. During the afternoon rehearsals and sound checks, Bruce, the sound engineer and I walked the entire arena. Springsteen demanded that everyone who paid to see his show would enjoy a good view and excellent sound. We often added speakers or rearranged the sound system if a section of seats did not have adequate sight lines or audio coverage. Bruce Springsteen was committed to providing the absolute best show that was within his power to deliver. He always went the extra mile; the additional effort never seemed a problem for him.

Bruce learned the names of everyone on the crew in the first week. That was quite a rarity for a superstar performing artist. As I observed him on that six-month tour, I became more impressed with the integrity, commitment, and effort he put forth in his work. He cared deeply about his audience and required that everything about his shows be done well.

One evening in Portland, Oregon, a few days before Christmas, Bruce added the song “Santa Claus is Coming to Town” to the set. We were all getting in the Christmas spirit. George Travis, who was always lots of fun, had the idea that we should surprise Bruce with a fake snowstorm during that song. George bought several bags of pillow feathers to use as snow and arranged for the guys on the lighting truss above the stage to throw the feathers when the song started. As the feathers floated down, it truly did look like a snowstorm on stage. The effect was great! We all laughed at the surprised look on Bruce’s face.

Unfortunately, there was one thing none of us had considered. After several hours of hard playing, Bruce was covered with sweat. The feathers that hit his face and arms stayed there. Others got stuck in his guitar strings. Feathers were everywhere! He must have felt like a big chicken out there on stage, and he was ticked! The crew reacted quickly with towels, brooms, and fans; we were all on feather clean-up duty. Later Bruce did laugh about it, but warned us to never pull such a stunt again!

Bruce Springsteen made an impression on me. He was the best at what he did, and not just due to God-given talent. Bruce worked hard and cared deeply about his performances. Years later, as I work at improving myself, I continue to be challenged by Bruce's example of commitment and effort.

So... do I live every moment with an intense level of commitment and effort? Of course not! I try, but I fail every day. I am sure Bruce Springsteen fails every day too! Realistically, we will never be totally satisfied with how we live our lives. But step by step, decision by decision, we can grow more joy and purpose and meaning in our lives. We can move toward becoming the person we want to be.

The key to moving in that direction lies in the "learning-by-doing" approach. Observing the experiences of others can be challenging and enlightening, but not a substitute for learning from our own experiences. **Examples from the lives of others are not as helpful as the lessons we learn from our own personal experience.**

The problem for most of us is that we don't recall all our personal experiences and lessons. Our life encompasses too much to keep clear in our head at one time. So when we try to choose a course of action for a specific situation, we do not get the full value of our prior experiences.

The solution is simple. **We have to write things down!** The exercise of writing helps us to learn. Therefore, this book utilizes a workbook approach. You can read through the text, fill in the worksheets with your own experiences, and (at your own pace) draw your conclusions. Since clearly understanding a problem usually creates a strong sense of purpose, the exercises in this book will help transform your life.

Begin with the following question, "Whom do I know that I respect and admire?" The accompanying questions in Worksheet #1 expand that thought, helping you look more deeply at specific characteristics. Remember, you don't need to choose someone who is perfect, simply someone you respect and admire.

When I'm asked about someone I admire, Aunt Mid comes to mind. Aunt Mid was the kindest, most compassionate person I ever knew. Her life was difficult. She never married, feeling responsible to take care of her aging parents until they died. Then she took care of a series of elderly folks. About every five years, Aunt Mid suffered through a brutal bout of depression.

Since she had neither money nor insurance, she was hospitalized in a state mental institution and given electro-shock therapy. In the early days no sedatives were used. The hospital beds were lined up in a big room and the doctor moved down the line from patient to patient, holding the electrodes against both temples for the big zap! Can you imagine the horror, lying there waiting for your turn? Aunt Mid suffered greatly through her times of mental illness and was so ashamed of them. Yet, Aunt Mid gave all she had all the time and loved those around her unconditionally.

As I stood in the cemetery after her funeral, my father commented to me, "That casket is by far the most expensive thing she ever owned." The humility, courage, and honor that Aunt Mid exhibited in her life inspire me. Her example continues to challenge me. Her pictures (on the front cover in a bathing suit to the right of my grandmother and on the back cover holding our daughter Tessa) allow you to put a face to the story.

As you think about Worksheet #1 and the people who inspire you, consider some basics about these Worksheets. My learning increases when I see an example. Therefore I include example Worksheets based on a fictional character named John Miller. If you find examples helpful, study the John Miller example Worksheets. If you find these example Worksheets confusing, please ignore them.

Blank Worksheets are available to you in several ways, described in Appendix A. You may want to read the book prior to filling in the Worksheets (most people prefer this method). Or you could complete the Worksheets during your first read through the book. Either way, I strongly encourage you to take the time to complete the Worksheets.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #1

Date: *3-1-00***Whom do I respect and admire?**

1. Who comes to mind when I think about someone I personally know, respect, and admire?

Grandma Miller

2. What do I like about this person?

She is very kind and loving. I feel good when I talk with her.

3. How has this person affected my life?

She has been the one person who always loved me, no matter what. She is a role model for how to treat others.

4. What seems to motivate this person?

Making other people feel good.

5. What outstanding characteristics does he/she have?

Selflessness, tolerance, kindness, unconditional love

6. Does this person have a sense of purpose?

She seems to.

7. Does he/she exhibit joy?

Absolutely. She has a great sense of humor, and even in sad times she has a quiet joy.

As John read the first question, he immediately thought of his grandmother. He pictured her many acts of kindness. When he thinks of a truly good person, he always thinks of her.

8. Would I desire to be more like this individual? In what ways?

Yes, to care more about others

9. What event, or situation, involving this person, illustrates why I respect and admire him/her?

She always remembered my birthday and other special occasions with a card and a few dollars (even though she never had much money).

Filling out the Worksheets takes you on a guided tour of your life. A few instructions will help the process go smoother.

Reserve a certain time each day to study. Perhaps 15 or 30 minutes a day will be appropriate. If you are a morning person, work in the morning. If you are a night person, work in the evening. Use your best time of day for this study.

Try to use the same place, a place where you are comfortable and mostly uninterrupted. I have actually never been able to find such a place for myself, but I imagine it would be quite a good thing!

Most importantly, make a commitment to yourself; decide to put forth the effort required to work through this book.

Please be realistic and understand that you will be working on these (or similar) issues for the rest of your life. So don't get discouraged and don't set your initial expectations too high. We gather gems of understanding in a step-by-step process. Remember, though, **good organization and looking in the right direction is 80% of success.**

As you begin this work, you will struggle with the need for honest self-evaluation. Honestly examining your life is always difficult. Putting those observations on paper becomes even more difficult. What if someone should read those thoughts and conclude you are foolish? One of Dostoevsky's characters said, "Above all things, I don't want to appear ridiculous." I believe we all share that fear.

Therefore, you may wish to use a 3-ring binder for the worksheets, and keep the binder in a private place. If you complete the Worksheets on the computer, you could password protect your files. You might even want to use your own personal "shorthand" for certain sections that you wish to keep confidential.

If, as a child, you were raised with a "Don't feel!" attitude, it may seem unnatural to think about your feelings, much less write about them. But you are reading this book because you want to move your life in the right direction. You want joy and

you want purpose. **When you record personal experiences and insights in a logical, rational sequence, you build personal understanding. REMEMBER, no examples are as effective as the ones we create for ourselves.** So please, take the risk – write! It will be worth the effort!

“Life is like playing a violin solo in public,” wrote Samuel Butler, “and learning the instrument as one goes along.” I feel foolish and ridiculous often in my life, as do we all. In spite of those embarrassing moments, I continue to struggle toward joyful living. You must remember that finding joy requires courage. In order to succeed with this process, you need to consider, “Do I want to be a person of courage?” You may not be a person of courage at this moment, but you must desire to become one.

If you desire to be a person of courage and will take small steps in that direction, I guarantee that you will find more and more joy. In fact, I will make that a money-back guarantee. If you work through this book and are not satisfied, send me a note, and I will send back to you the cost of the book. I believe in what I’m doing.

A final sensitive issue to discuss in this Getting Started section concerns spiritual matters. To understand our life's purpose, we must consider the spiritual component. To avoid discussing spiritual matters parallels trying to fix a stalled car without checking the fuel. If the car does not start, we need to wonder whether gas is getting to the engine. If your life is not filled with joy, you need to examine possible spiritual factors.

Whether you are a Mormon, an Orthodox Jew, an evangelical Christian or not associated with any religion --- you can reflect on spiritual matters. Focus on your relationship with God. Your religious affiliation tells little of your relationship with God. I’m not interested in debating theological doctrines. I have discovered that, as I focus on seeking truth about my own life, I make sound decisions about religion.

I encourage you to examine all my ideas, spiritual or not, with a healthy skepticism. I think I have some right ideas and I’m

sure I have some wrong ones as well. **You will be wise to choose your beliefs carefully.**

I assume most people reading this book grew up, as I did, in the Judeo-Christian culture. We learned about God in the context of that culture. I was raised in a Protestant home, so I learned about God from the writings in the Bible. I will refer to stories from the Bible because it is most familiar to me.

To end this introduction, let me tell you the story behind one of my favorite Bible quotes. As mother of the child Jesus, Mary experienced a confusing series of events. She was a young woman who loved God and knew her place in society. Then her life went crazy. She had a meeting with an angel. She became pregnant. Her elderly cousin pronounced her most blessed of all women. When her baby was born, shepherds arrived, telling of a sky full of angels proclaiming Jesus as king. A group of astronomers also visited, bringing incredibly expensive gifts. When Jesus was only twelve, he astounded religious leaders in Jerusalem with his amazing knowledge and insight.

How could Mary make sense of all this? The Bible explains in Luke 2:19, "*Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*"

We all experience confusion; there are times in all our lives when we simply do not understand what's going on. We can learn a great lesson from Mary. We must treasure our experiences, both past and present, and think about them and learn from them. We must "treasure up these things and ponder them in our hearts." This can be the foundation for changing your life. Let's get to it!

*CHAPTER 1***What Makes You Unique**

Sitting in my office at High Construction, I received a call from my wife, Debby. I'd never heard her so agitated! She kept saying something about the donkeys being in the basement, but I was only half listening since I was making a construction schedule and preparing for a project meeting. Eventually I discerned that our two full size donkeys had managed to get into our daylight basement sunroom and had apparently spent the night there. The donkeys had deposited the usual large animal messes all over our nice brick floor and new braided carpets.

Debby's agitation stemmed from those messes. This was early in our marriage and I was at least a little stupider than I am now. I told Debby that I was busy with an "important meeting" and she would just have to deal with the situation herself. When I arrived home that evening (I was lucky Debby hadn't changed the locks), I learned the rest of the story.

The previous evening I had been reading on the porch and thought I heard glass breaking, but ignored it. We live in the country and hear plenty of strange noises. Apparently our donkeys, Jeremiah and Zechariah, had been curiously nosing around our basement door. Our fenced pasture bordered the front and side of the house so the donkeys could walk right up to the basement door. One of the children must have left the door partially open and the donkeys walked right into the basement sunroom. The breaking glass I heard must have been Jeremiah shoving his nose through a window pane in the door, inadvertently pushing the door shut. The donkeys were trapped in the sunroom!

When Debby got up the next morning, she heard strange noises coming from downstairs. She opened the basement stair door and saw the two donkeys standing at the bottom of the steps, staring forlornly up at her. When Debby went downstairs she found a foul mess of donkey droppings, urine and blood (from Jeremiah's injured nose). She spent most of the day cleaning up the mess.

So I came home to a clean basement and an extremely irritated wife. All Debby would say to me was, "Do not make a joke, this will NEVER be funny." So I didn't joke about it (at least not in front of Debby) for about a year. Eventually she came to see the humor in the situation and our "donkeys in the basement" story became one more life experience we enjoy laughing about.

Sometimes I wonder why I have donkeys and sheep and other miscellaneous critters around. They have caused me hundreds of hours of work and more than a little aggravation. Why do I bother?

Perhaps for various reasons...I believe our children benefit from being around animals. The children love to see the new lambs born in the spring. The children also observe the natural cycles of birth and death and that seems to be a healthy, if sometimes difficult, experience. I also enjoy the fact that hundreds of people drive by our property and regularly look to see "what those cute donkeys are up to." Besides providing a pleasant di-

version, I find the presence of the animals to be somehow comforting.

I am willing to build the fences, buy the feed, chase the miserable critters when they escape back into the woods and do the other bothersome chores because the benefits outweigh the aggravations. Having the animals around just feels right to me. It is simply one of the interests that makes me unique.

Discovering Your Own Uniqueness

The thousands of people I've known over the years have one thing in common: each one is unique. Think of all the people you know; are any two completely alike? We all are different from each other. Each person is unique.

This concept of uniqueness may make us uncomfortable. Since most of us tend to be herd creatures by nature, we like the idea of blending into the group. The group provides safety. But to progress in our search for joy, we must recognize we are not simply clones. We exist as unique individuals, even if we don't fully understand our uniqueness. Hence the purpose of this first chapter...to discover some of the things that make you unique.

For starters, consider the areas in which you have talents and abilities. Worksheet #2 challenges you to think about things you are good at. Most of us do not allow ourselves that luxury very often. In fact, most people have a difficult time naming their strengths because they spend so little time thinking about themselves in an objective way.

Perhaps you dread the thought of doing such a worksheet. The idea of naming your talents and abilities might not feel comfortable to you. But rather than getting anxious about it, just take a deep breath, read the questions and write down the first answers that come to mind. Don't over-analyze these early worksheets; just get some thoughts on paper and keep on going. Later worksheets will provide opportunity for review and modifications can be made at that time.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #2

Date: *3-2-00*

Knowing My Talents and Abilities

1. What are some things I enjoy doing? Consider the various areas of my life such as work, home, friends, church, family, hobbies, interests, etc.
 - a. *Working as a construction superintendent, being "The Man" on a complicated building project.*
 - b. *Rebuilding my old Triumph Spitfire.*
 - c. *Making love with Rachel.*
 - d. *Drawing and sketching, though I don't take much time to do this anymore.*

2. What are some things that other people have told me I'm good at?
 - a. *Drawing – my school teachers*
 - b. *Understanding details on a building project – my project manager Bill is always amazed at how I can see tricky details and get them built right.*
 - c. *Settling conflicts fairly on the jobsite.*

3. Considering the items above, which can I become so absorbed in that I lose track of time?

When I am working on a set of difficult shop drawings on a project, I really get into it. Sometimes I will look up and notice that hours have passed and I didn't even realize it.

4. Without being conceited, just simply being honest with myself, what do I think my strengths are? Does one seem to be a predominant talent or ability?

The ability to see and understand details clearly.

5. How has this talent or ability benefited me in the past?

Getting promoted to superintendent at such a young age.

John Miller wrote the answers to Worksheet #2 quickly. He didn't spend much time agonizing over the questions. As he read the answers the next day, however, he was surprised that his greatest strength was the ability to see and understand details clearly. If someone had asked him in conversation to name his greatest strength, he would have been at a loss to answer. As he reviewed his answers on Worksheet #2, he realized he had jotted down something true about himself that was not previously obvious to him. It seemed to him that this small piece of information could be helpful to him in the future.

It is not necessary to interpret the significance of every answer, either. Hopefully some of the worksheets will provide an “AHA” experience, but most will not produce any instant illumination of your life. The value of this process tends to build as you progress through the book.

Worksheet #2 will help you identify your talents and abilities. It is a huge asset to know your outstanding gifts. You can excel if you know what to focus on. When you identify your highest potential, you become motivated to work harder on improving it. We all love to do the things we’re good at. Knowing your strengths also helps you see what makes you unique.

Since an area of failing balances every talent, you also need to consider your most significant weakness. It’s usually easier to name our weaknesses than to identify our strengths. Worksheet #3 quizzes you on areas of failing that hurt the most.

As I filled in this worksheet, I was not surprised by the results. My main area of failing involves not paying attention to things going on around me. I often get so involved in my own mind, running through different possibilities and scenarios, that I forget to pay any attention to what is actually happening. Consequently, my actions can look pretty silly at times.

Just last week I was cutting off a tree limb with a chain saw and thinking about a number of things. Somehow I forgot that the law of gravity would most likely be in effect that day as I stood on the stepladder and sawed through the branch. At the moment the freshly sawed end of the large branch fell, hit me in the mouth and knocked me off the ladder, I realized that I was again not paying attention. As I rubbed my mouth to check for missing teeth, I glanced to the garage to see my co-worker staring in disbelief. His look clearly said to me, “How can you be that stupid?” I chose not to answer.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #3

Date: *3-2-00*

Knowing My Areas of Failing

1. What are some things I dislike doing? What are some things I do not do well? Consider the various areas of my life such as work, home, friends, church, families, hobbies, interests, etc.
 - a. *I don't like going to pointless, stupid meetings at work. I hate to have my time wasted.*
 - b. *I don't like fighting with Rachel.*
 - c. *I am not good at showing or explaining my feelings very well.*
 - d. *Don't particularly like going to church, just doesn't seem real to me.*
 - e. *Not good at saying "No," especially at work.*

2. What are some areas that other people have told me I need to improve?
 - a. *My boss told me I need to communicate better.*
 - b. *Rachel told me she needs to know what I'm thinking more.*

3. Which of the items above causes the most damage in my life? Which prevent me from living the way I would like to live?

I guess my problems in communicating cause me the most difficulty. I can tell a guy what job to do and how to do it with no problem. I seem to have a problem more in the non-technical stuff.

4. What habits or characteristics do I think are my weaknesses? Does one seem to surface as my predominant area of failing?

The ability to clearly communicate about things I care about.

5. How has this area of failing hurt me in the past?

I guess in fights with Rachel and in not being as close to the kids as I ought to be. Probably at work too.

John Miller names poor communication skills as his main area of failing. This was no surprise to John, since both his wife and his boss have told him that he needs to communicate better. He may not really believe it, but he is certainly aware of this criticism.

Unfortunately, my life is full of examples of not paying attention. Here's another example you may enjoy...I had spent the afternoon negotiating the closeout details on a building project. It had been a difficult project and I was pleased we were able to resolve the problems in an amicable way. Wanting to reward myself, I stopped to get an ice cream cone.

I truly love ice cream and it felt great to stop in the middle of the afternoon to grab a cone. As I drove away from the ice cream shop, I realized something was wrong. The ice cream tasted terrible, and the more I ate the worse it got. Contrary to every part of my ice cream loving nature, I decided to throw away the rest of the cone. I was driving on a four-lane highway and decided it would not be littering to throw the cone out the window. After all, it was organic and the ants would devour it completely in a few days. I wanted to make sure it landed in the grass but I certainly could not stop the car since that would not have been efficient use of time (I get sort of nutty about maximum efficiency).

So I pulled into the right lane, checked for traffic and threw the ice cream cone toward the grass at the edge of the road. It seemed eerie to me how the ice cream cone just hung in the air, almost as if time had stopped. Then I realized the ice cream cone really *was* hanging in the air! I had forgotten to roll down the passenger side window. The ice cream cone was stuck right there on the glass with the cone pointing back at me. For a few moments it hung there and then it plopped to the seat. By then I was laughing so hard I couldn't drive and had to pull over, park and laugh.

I wish all my cases of not paying attention were as funny and cost me so little aggravation. In reality I have made many significant mistakes because of not paying attention. I have damaged relationships, put others and myself in danger and simply screwed things up by this weakness. It is, nevertheless, one of the things that make me unique.

I work on paying better attention and have made some improvement over the years. However, I don't expect this will ever become an area of strength. I will be content to improve to a level where I cause less significant problems for me and those around me. We will discuss how to do this in later chapters.

Why Goal Setting Rarely Works

Identifying areas of failing leads to goal setting. New Year's resolutions are prime examples. Imagine that you look in the mirror and see about 15 pounds more than you previously saw. You are not real happy about that and you understand that the extra weight came from a weakness of yours (i.e. eating like a hog over the holidays). When the new year arrives, you think, "Now is the time to lose those extra pounds!" So you make a New Year's resolution to lose the weight. The goal is set and the dieting begins.

The first few days of dieting go OK, but then you begin to sow the seeds of failure... a little cheating here and a little cheating there. You resolve to do better. And for a while, you succeed. Then comes the fall. For some people, it's a gradual decline. Others fall off the wagon with a thud, as in, "Forget this diet; let's go for banana splits!" (My personal favorite.)

Most of us can relate to this experience. We make and break our New Year's resolutions. Why does this type of goal setting usually fail? Because we lack an understanding of the problem. Our goal setting is simply wishful thinking.

A few percent of the population love to set goals. They can set a goal, work hard and achieve results. Successful sales people often fall into this group. If you are a natural goal setter, have at it...the world awaits.

For the rest of us, though, simple goal setting programs don't work. We start with enthusiasm, but since we lack a real understanding of the problem, we lose motivation and fail. After a few failures, we don't have much desire to try again. There are plenty of goal setting books on the market, but this is not one of

them. We must first understand ourselves before making plans to improve.

The Need for Hope in Your Life

Most of us dislike setting goals, but we enjoy dreaming about possibilities. There is great benefit in thinking about our hopes, dreams and wishes for the future. Relax and take some time to ponder how you would like your life to be different. Think about what you would like to do or have. The value of writing those hopes, dreams and wishes (see Worksheet #4) can be significant. Perhaps one of those dreams will provide the motivation to help change your life.

Most of us spend little time contemplating the future. We are conditioned to live in the here and now and not “waste time” dreaming about things that may never happen. We have learned to be practical, and that means not dreaming.

I believe we need to dream. We need to consider how we would like our lives to be different. We need to let our minds soar. Don't worry about being practical or the probability of achieving your dreams. Just write what you wish you could do, have, or be in the future.

In this first chapter, you named some things that make you unique. By looking at your talents and abilities, your areas of failing and your hopes, dreams and wishes, you got a sense of what makes you a unique individual. Hopefully you also caught a glimpse of the person you are capable of becoming.

That glimpse provides motivation to continue this process. Joyful living, here you come! So why work through the rest of the book? Remember the words of Lily Tomlin, “I always wanted to be somebody, but I should have been more specific.”

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #4

Date: *3-4-00***Hopes, Dreams and Wishes**

(Don't be too practical; let yourself soar!)

1. What would I like to achieve in my lifetime?

- a. *Build a 4 story building*
- b. *Make \$50,000/year*
- c. *Build a church*
- d. *Stay married to Rachel*

2. What things would I like to possess in my lifetime?

- a. *House paid off*
- b. *Harley*
- c.

3. What character traits would I like to develop?

- a. *Known as a very fair and honest man*
- b. *Have courage*
- c.

4. What other hopes, dreams and wishes come to mind?

- a. *The kids to be happy and healthy*
- b. *To be able to say what I mean/feel*
- c. *Make a true peace with my dad*
- d.

As John Miller worked on this particular worksheet, he struggled. He prided himself on being a realist who did not have time for foolishness. Wishes for the future seemed like foolishness to him. On the other hand he was accustomed to completing tasks he did not particularly enjoy so he got started. He was surprised when he wrote the last two items. While he had thought of both many times before, he had never put either on paper. It was odd to see these thoughts in writing.

CHAPTER 2

Understanding Who You Are

“There comes a time in the affairs of a man when he must take the bull by the tail and face the situation.”

W.C. Fields

Most of us are not very perceptive about ourselves. We may be perceptive about other people yet have a blind spot when it comes to understanding our own lives. We need to investigate our basic nature. We need to stop pretending that, “Everything is just fine,” and take a look at who we really are.

Will Rodgers said, “It is not so much what we don’t know that gives us trouble, it’s what we know that ain’t so.” We need to approach self-evaluation with honesty and a desire to know the truth. A good sense of humor helps too.

This chapter provides several basic tools to help understand ourselves better. Any tradesman knows the benefit of using the

right tool for the job. In fact, one can often determine a tradesman's productivity by simply looking in his or her toolbox. Let's work through these exercises and add some new tools to our toolboxes.

Optimists and Pessimists

Did you ever notice how some people are incredible optimists? It seems no matter what happens, they have a positive outlook. If these wild optimists get a ton of cow manure dropped on them, they are delighted about all the free fertilizer for their garden. The optimist always seems to find the silver lining in the clouds, even when there is none.

The pessimist occupies the other side of the coin. These folks never saw a gift horse whose mouth did not need looking into. When they win the lottery, they lament the amount that has to be paid in taxes. The pessimist always looks for, and finds, the negative in any situation.

I heard a story of a father with twin boys; the one boy was ultra pessimistic and the other was a real optimist. The father decided that both sons would benefit by moving toward middle ground, so he decided to "cure" them one Christmas. He bought the pessimistic son a beautiful new train set and filled the optimistic son's Christmas stocking with horse manure. The boys rushed down Christmas morning and opened their gifts. The father gave them a few minutes and then asked what Santa Claus had brought them.

"I got a train set," said the pessimistic son in a gloomy voice, "but it's going to take me forever to put it together and then it probably will break within a week."

This was not the response the father had hoped for, but he was sure that the other boy would learn a good lesson. Just then, the optimistic son came running into the room, all excited and exclaimed, "Guess what Dad? I got a pony for Christmas! Only I haven't found him yet!"

So if we want to live with joy, should we be an optimist or a pessimist? The positive-thinking gurus tell us to simply adopt an optimistic mental attitude. Then we'll be happy. Yet most of us recognize that doesn't work. We know people who see only the good in every situation and are fools. They see what they want to see and ignore the truth. They have not found joy, they have deceived themselves.

Our happiness does not depend on our optimism or our pessimism. Our happiness depends on our ability to understand our tendencies and to develop strategies to help us live.

For example, my friend Bruce happens to be a pessimist by nature. He always sees the danger where I see the fun. We have built several house additions together, and the difference in our natures consistently emerges. I always assume the board I am about to cut will fit "just right" and Bruce always figures it will not fit at all. Of course, I do make more mis-cuts than he does, but he spends more time measuring and agonizing than I do.

An optimist and a pessimist often make a good team. My optimistic enthusiasm, ("Oh this will be simple, we'll be done in no time!") combined with Bruce's attention to likely pitfalls, tends to get projects done well and with lots of fun. I have grown to appreciate his cautious nature, and Bruce now enjoys (I think) the glee with which I attack a task.

What makes an optimist or a pessimist? We must evaluate ourselves by our ability to accurately predict the outcome of an event. Imagine you are planning a trip to the zoo in a nearby city. As you consider the trip, you may think about the drive to the zoo. That becomes the anticipated event, and your expectations reveal your degree of optimism or pessimism.

You could have a variety of predictions regarding the outcome of the event: "Everything will go fine," "We'll have car trouble," "We'll get lost," "We'll get car jacked," etc. An optimist tends to think everything will go well and a pessimist tends to think everything will go badly. If you do drive to the zoo, though, things will go a certain way (whatever that happens to

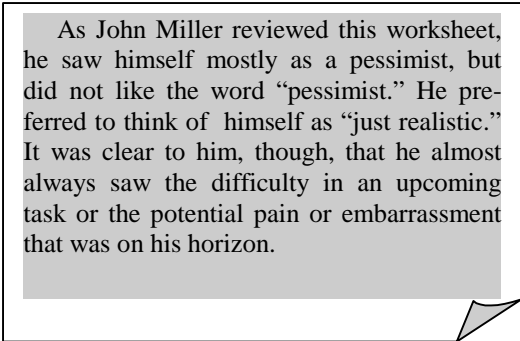
be). So we have an anticipated event, expectations for that event and how things actually go.

In order to tell if you are an optimist or a pessimist, consider how many times your expectation of an event matches the actual outcome. If actual events usually turn out to be worse than you anticipated, you are an optimist. If events usually turn out to be better than you anticipated, you are a pessimist. If outcomes usually match your expectations, you are a realist.

Do you consider yourself an optimist, realist or pessimist? Worksheet #5 quizzes you on this topic.

Discovering my own tendencies helped me choose my career. As a young man I worked in a consulting engineering office. Most of the time I was behind a desk performing architectural or structural engineering designs. The design aspect of the work was enjoyable, but I struggled when I needed to go out in the field as an inspector. The role of an inspector is to point out problems (items of work that were not in accordance with the intent of the drawings and specifications). I was not supposed to solve the problems because that was the contractor's job.

I thoroughly disliked being an inspector. I loved solving problems, but I hated having to tell other people they had a problem and then walking away. As I considered why I disliked this part of my job, I realized that I was an optimist. It was more natural for me to see the positive and focus on solutions, not the problems.



As John Miller reviewed this worksheet, he saw himself mostly as a pessimist, but did not like the word “pessimist.” He preferred to think of himself as “just realistic.” It was clear to him, though, that he almost always saw the difficulty in an upcoming task or the potential pain or embarrassment that was on his horizon.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet#5

Date: *3-7-00***Do I Tend To Be an Optimist or a Pessimist?**

1. My boss unexpectedly says, "We need to talk, please come into my office."

My immediate response is:

Mostly	Somewhat	Realistic	Somewhat	Mostly
Pessimistic	Pessimistic		Optimistic	Optimistic

2. My five-year old daughter, while riding bike in the driveway, crashes to the pavement. My first response is:

Mostly	Somewhat	Realistic	Somewhat	Mostly
Pessimistic	Pessimistic		Optimistic	Optimistic

3. I have a romantic dinner date with my spouse tonight. As I think about how things will go, I am:

Mostly	Somewhat	Realistic	Somewhat	Mostly
Pessimistic	Pessimistic		Optimistic	Optimistic

4. I am about to walk across a one-way street. The old saying is, "A pessimist looks both ways when crossing a one-way street." I am:

Mostly	Somewhat	Realistic	Somewhat	Mostly
Pessimistic	Pessimistic		Optimistic	Optimistic

5. While driving my car near the speed limit on the highway, I hear the siren and see the flashing lights of a police car behind me. My reaction is:

Mostly	Somewhat	Realistic	Somewhat	Mostly
Pessimistic	Pessimistic		Optimistic	Optimistic

6. I get a telephone call informing me that I have won \$5,000 in a sweepstakes that I entered. I am:

Mostly	Somewhat	Realistic	Somewhat	Mostly
Pessimistic	Pessimistic		Optimistic	Optimistic

7. During a routine physical with my doctor, she comes in with a grave look and says, "We found a lump that concerns us. We would like to schedule you for a test to take a sample for a biopsy." After the initial shock, my reaction is:

Mostly	Somewhat	Realistic	Somewhat	Mostly
Pessimistic	Pessimistic		Optimistic	Optimistic

8. Considering all the above, my nature is probably:

Mostly	Somewhat	Realistic	Somewhat	Mostly
Pessimistic	Pessimistic		Optimistic	Optimistic

I decided to take another job as a project manager for a contractor. There, I found all the problems were mine to solve and I loved it! I was fortunate to find work that suited my nature and my particular set of talents. That decision to enter construction project management was based on recognition of my optimistic nature. This was truly a helpful tool in my life.

Many self-help books take a single concept (positive thinking, birth order, time management, etc.) and attempt to create a tool to solve our problems. These programs fail because we live in a complex world. While I benefited in my job change described above by understanding my optimism, most of the decisions in my life have nothing to do with optimism or pessimism. I believe there are, ultimately, some simple answers for our lives, but we must obtain an understanding of our complexity before we get to the simple answers.

The Values You Live

The next exercise involves understanding our personal values. We all have values by which we live. Most of us never take the time to consider what these things are and how they drive our lives. Not being aware of their importance does not lessen their influence.

Values are defined as our beliefs or our standards, those things that we believe have worth. I like to think of our values as the attributes we highly prize. For example, many people value compassion. If you are a compassionate person, you are attuned to the pain of others. Perhaps you have no idea why you have this strong sense of caring; it is just there and you consider it valuable.

We all have qualities that we value. Whether we were born with these traits or we developed them while growing up doesn't matter here. What does matter is discovering what we currently value.

The characteristics we value can work for good or move us toward destruction. Loyalty, for example, may seem noble. Con-

sider a motorcycle gang that values loyalty above all else. Loyalty becomes its code of ethics. Any gang member involved in a fight can count on all the other members present to jump into the fight. In this case, loyalty could result in the brutal beating of an innocent person. As we identify the standards and beliefs we live by, we gain insight into ourselves.

In my life, I value a sense of humor. While growing up, a sense of humor was essential in my family, and we all learned to give and take.

One particular family trip stands out in my memory. We were on a 12-hour drive from Pennsylvania to New Hampshire, and there were five of us in the car: my father, my mother, my younger brother Jim, my then girlfriend Debby and me.

We were getting a little silly by hour 10, when Jim threw a used piece of chewing gum out the rear, driver's side window. A minute or two later my father said, "What in the world...?" and was moving his foot on and off the gas pedal. After a short distance he pulled over to the side of the highway saying, "I don't know what's going on here, my foot is sticking to the accelerator!"

Well, the rest of us had a pretty good idea of what was going on and were trying hard not to laugh (my father always hated being sticky and was quite irritated at this point). As Dad was leaning down, trying to figure out what was making his foot stick to the gas pedal, a police car pulled up behind us. The policeman approached the driver's window and asked, "What seems to be the problem, sir?"

To which my father replied, "Uh... I just... uh... have some chewing gum on my sock." At this point the rest of us could no longer contain ourselves and broke out in hysterical laughter. We laughed so hard that tears ran down our faces. Then we would tell the story to each other and laugh some more. Almost 20 years later, we still tell the story and laugh as if it just happened.

Although I did not think about it at the time, dad's response to that situation was significant for me and for our family. Even though Dad was sticky (which he hates) and embarrassed (which

he also hates) he was laughing about the situation within minutes. Clearly, he valued his sense of humor.

As we consider our own valued attributes, we sometimes draw a mental blank. Perhaps we are not accustomed to thinking in these terms. Therefore Table 1 provides a list of attributes we may value. Of course, this list is not all-inclusive, so feel free to add to it.

As you read through the list of valued attributes, which seem to matter most to you? Be careful to focus on what you now value, not those attributes you think you ought to value. What attributes do you show, by your actions, to be important to you?

You need to be honest, but not overly hard, with yourself. Mother Teresa is not the only person in the world who could list compassion as a valued attribute. On Worksheet #6, list the attributes that you value. Please recognize, though, that you must oversimplify for this exercise. We are all complex human beings. We are never all one thing or all another. However, we make better decisions when we know our values.

Emerson wrote, "What you are shouts so loudly in my ears I cannot hear what you say." Look at what your life shouts into the ears of those around you and write your responses. Be as honest as you can.

As I consider my own valued attributes, I check my honesty level by considering how I would respond in certain circumstances. Since I consider integrity a valued attribute, I envision a situation in which I get pulled over for speeding by a policeman. Now, how am I going to respond? If I know I really was speeding, do I tell the truth? Or do I try and finesse my way out of it.

The true answer, of course, is, "It depends." The specific circumstances, my mood and many other factors affect how I respond to a given situation. Worksheet #7 offers several potential situations to consider for a "reality check" on the answers in Worksheet #6.

Table #1
List of Valued Attributes

1. Comfort
2. Caution
3. Commitment
4. Common sense
5. Compassion
6. Courage
7. Drive
8. Easy going
9. Encouragement
10. Excellence
11. Equality
12. Fairness
13. Faith
14. Forgiveness
15. Free-spirited
16. Gentleness
17. Goodness
18. Grace
19. Honesty
20. Honor
21. Hope
22. Human dignity
23. Human potential
24. Humility
25. Integrity
26. Intelligence
27. Introspection
28. Joy
29. Knowledge
30. Love
31. Morality
32. Patience
33. Paying attention
34. Peace
35. Power
36. Physical beauty
37. Perseverance
38. Pride
39. Punctuality
40. Purity
41. Responsibility
42. Risk taking
43. Revenge
44. Restraint
45. Self discipline
46. Self esteem
47. Sense of humor
48. Strength
49. Service
50. Sincerity
51. Trust
52. Wisdom

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #6

Date: *3-7-00*

Valued Attributes

What are my four most valued attributes? (Refer to Table #1 for ideas.)

- Why do I value this attribute?
- When have I been strong in demonstrating this attribute?
- When have I been weak in demonstrating this attribute?

Valued Attributes

1. *Compassion* Why? *I am very sensitive to the pain of others.*

When strong? *Hate to see animals abused or mistreated.*
I once punched a guy in the mouth for whipping his dog.

When weak? *Way too impatient with our 2 kids.*
2. *Fairness* Why? *Cause Dad was never fair at home & I promised myself I would always try to be fair.*

When strong? *I am known for settling disputes fairly on the job site.*

When weak? *Can't think of any examples.*
3. *Perseverance* Why? *It just seems to come natural to me.*

When strong? *When I am in a tough situation, I just put my nose to the grindstone and keep on going.*

When weak? *Sometimes with Rachel I want to give up.*
4. *Competence* Why? *From when I was little, I always wanted to know how things worked and how to do things.*

When strong? *My skills as a craftsman.*

When weak? *My skills as a husband & father.*

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #7

Date: *3-7-00***Valued Attribute Scenarios**

Imagine the following situations and think, "How would I respond?" Consider the attributes listed in Table #1, your responses from Worksheet #6 or anything else that comes to mind.

1. When driving a car, someone inadvertently cuts me off and I just miss being in an accident.

I usually don't get mad. I mostly am assessing the specifics of the situation, trying to figure out exactly what happened and why.

2. My child plays a sport and is often treated unfairly by the coach.

I have gotten right in a coach's face already over this. I hate unfairness.

3. I get a small finance charge for a late payment I think I mailed on time.

I just tell Rachel, "Pay it and forget about it, it isn't worth the hassle."

4. I am ready to park my car and another car zooms in and steals my space.

This happened to me 3 years ago and I went wild. I jumped out of my car and started yelling at the guy who stole my spot. At some point I told him (who was sitting in his car with his windows rolled up and doors locked) either he moves his car or I smash all his headlights and taillights. He moved but I wasn't real proud of my behavior.

5. A co-worker tells me, face-to-face and without much tact, that I failed to keep a commitment.

I know it would probably tick me off at first, but after I cooled down, I would know the person was probably right and be glad for their gumption to tell me.

After completing this worksheet, go back and look at Worksheet #6. Were your answers there honest and accurate? Write down any thoughts as notes to Worksheet #6.

U.S. Marine Corps training provides a good example of how influential values can be. Marine training stresses the values of honor, courage and commitment. These are constantly drummed into the young person's head: **honor, courage and commitment!** The trainee repeatedly hears that it takes honor, courage and commitment to be a Marine. The power of those clearly focused values is amazing. When the Marine has to make a hard decision, those are the values that come to mind. Many young men trained in this manner have retained these values for the rest of their lives.

Our American culture, on the other hand, tends to highly value physical beauty and intelligence. A child with beauty or high intelligence starts with a huge advantage in our society. Conversely, a child who is neither attractive nor bright, struggles through our school system and our culture. Even though this doesn't seem fair, it indicates the power of personal values in our lives and the lives of others.

Think about a person you highly respect and see if you can pick out the key values that they live by. I know a man who has done a wonderful job raising his family and living his life. He based his life on integrity, love and joy. I also know people who highly value revenge. Nothing matters as much as righting a perceived wrong. There are others who live their whole lives striving to be easygoing. Whatever is easiest is best. We can spot the values of others by observing how they live.

Your Central Focus

I first came across the idea of central focus from Steve Covey's excellent book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. As I studied the concept, I found it to be helpful in understanding myself and others. Asking the simple question, "By the way I live, what do I care about most?" can provide valuable gems of understanding.

For example, I have a friend, Joe, whose central focus is clearly his work. While Joe has a nice, loving family, attends

church, has friends and generally a full life, work matters most. He runs a successful family business and was brought up viewing work as his greatest priority. Joe enjoys his job, and he spends most of his time thinking about work. When a family crisis hit Joe's life, he came face-to-face with the reality of a life not based on the best foundation. If he desires more joy in his life, Joe will need to admit that work has been his central focus. Sometimes simply admitting our central focus provides the motivation for us to begin the process of change.

Consider someone who puts personal pleasure first. Pleasure becomes the measuring stick by which all decisions are made. Vacations, hobbies, sports and recreation become the strongest areas of interest.

We probably all know a mother who has made her family the central focus of her life. She lives for her husband and her children. Every decision she makes is based on the question, "How will this affect my family?" She will put the family needs ahead of her own needs in almost every case.

At this point we are not making value judgments. We are not trying to determine whether our central focus is good or bad. We are trying to recognize how we are presently living. For this exercise, forget about all the psychological terms (workaholic, co-dependent, etc.) and simply concentrate on how you live and what matters most to you. The following list may be helpful in determining your central focus.

Work	Family
Money	Self
Church	Pleasure
Spouse	Possessions
Friend	Enemy
Health	Principles
God	

As you read through the list, did any items seem to jump out at you? Think about where you spend your time. Consider

your thoughts as you fall asleep, what you dream about, and what you think about as you wake up each morning. Remember, focus can change, so don't think that writing "possessions" as your central focus makes you a terrible person. J. Pierre Pont Morgan said, "A person usually has two reasons for what they do: the one that sounds good and the real one." Try to look at the real reasons for what you do and the real things you do. Worksheet #8 will help you gain some insight about your central focus.

Personality Styles

My high school yearbook lists my likes as "sex and money" and my dislikes as "promiscuity and materialism." I still laugh when I read that and consider how well it describes my personality. Apart from being a wise guy (which apparently I'm not going to grow out of), I still struggle with the way I am vs. the way I ought to be. By studying personality styles, though, I gain some clues as to why I act the way I act.

Over the years I examined many different personality systems, such as "The DISC Personality Profile," "Myers-Briggs Type Indicator," Get a Life Without the Strife by Fred and Florence Littauer, The Six Thinking Hats by Edward deBono, etc. I developed my own simple Basic Personality guidelines for your use based on the DISC model.

A Type D personality (Demanding Driver) pushes to get things done. Type D's dominate relationships; they usually have a strong sense of what needs to be done and move boldly to accomplish the goal. Stubborn and impatient, Type D's don't have time to fool around. They want things done and they want things done NOW! The hard-nosed boss is a classic Type D personality.

The Type I personality (Invigorating Influencer) concerns himself less with what gets done and more with having a good time doing it. The Type I is the people person, the social director of any group. With spirit and enthusiasm, Type I personalities

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #8

Date: *3-10-00***Central Focus**

1. The central focus of my life would be... *Work*
2. Why? *I spend most of my time thinking about it. I guess I don't want to fail at it.*
3. If I had trouble identifying just one clear focus, what are other possible candidates for central focus in my life? *family, possessions*
4. Why? *I love Rachel & the kids. I also love working on classic cars & cycles.*
5. If I explained this concept of central focus to the following people, what would they say was the central focus in my life? Why?
 - a. Grandparents *Family, because I spend time with my kids.*
 - b. Parents *Family, they think I am a great dad.*
 - c. Siblings *Probably work since that's important to both my brothers.*
 - d. Children *Work*
 - e. Bosses *Doubt they think about it or would even care.*
 - f. Co-workers *Work, because I am pretty good at it.*
 - g. Close friends *Don't really have any.*

As John Miller contemplated his central focus, he gained some valuable insights. He had never previously realized how important work was to him. He knew he liked work and was good at it, but never admitted it was the most important thing in his life. In fact, he still was not really sure work was his central focus, though even the possibility that it might be was sobering to him. John also surprised himself by writing that he did not really have any close friends. Some of the previous worksheets did not particularly connect with John. This one did.

want to have fun and usually expect the best of others. The downside of a Type I personality is the tendency to be naïve, haphazard and unpredictable. The successful salesperson is a classic Type I personality.

The Type S personality (Sensitive Sustainer) wants everyone to be happy and stress-free. They are often the nice people in our lives, the people who care about the feelings of others. Gentle and cautious, the Type S personality generally is also a good listener. Type S people have a tendency to worry and to be timid. The caring counselor is a classic Type S personality.

The Type C personality (Calculating Controller) wants things to be clear and precise. They want everything to be done properly. An analytical group, Type C's love details and accuracy. They have a tendency to be fussy, suspicious of those not like them, and overly-critical. The engineer or accountant is a classic Type C personality.

Think about how people make decisions. A Type D (Demanding Driver) person makes quick decisions, based on gut-feelings. The Type I (Invigorating Influencer) person considers which option will be the most fun; the decisions also tend to be intuitive. The Type S (Sensitive Sustainer) person must be sure how the decision will affect everyone else; no one must be hurt by the decision. The Type C (Calculating Controller) person wants more information and more data; decisions are careful, deductive and slow.

As an engineer and building contractor, I routinely work with many different building owners. I've learned to pay attention to the building owner's personality type as I struggle to obtain the many decisions to design and construct a building. When working with a Type D (Demanding Driver) owner, I have all the information summarized and quickly explain the options. Usually, I do not even write it down because they don't want to take the time to read. I can count on a quick decision from a Type D and know he will stand behind it.

With a Type I (Invigorating Influencer) owner, the presentation counts for much more. The Type I owner wants to see en-

thusiasm for the recommended option. It is easy to get a quick decision from a Type I; the problem is that it is just as easy for them to change their minds in the future.

The Type S (Sensitive Sustainer) owner tends to agonize over every decision in order to keep everybody happy. I have learned to expect Type S owners to get the opinions of others on most decisions, so I am prepared with information that is simple to pass on.

The Type C (Calculating Controller) owner wants all the available data to analyze for every single decision. When I need a decision from a Type C owner, I come prepared with a written analysis and every performance chart and graph I can find. I then expect to wait for all this information to be digested and more information to be requested.

So how can you use this concept in your life? First, determine your own personality type. Quickly read through Worksheets #9 and #10 and go with your first response on the answers. Determine if you strongly fit one of the four personality types or if you tend to be a combination of two or three of them. Write your thoughts in the margin. Next, consider the personality types of a few people you know well. You will remember the personality types better if you can think of someone who is a good example of each.

Let's consider a situation where knowing personality styles could help you. Perhaps your boss drives you crazy. Nothing you do meets his standards, and you find him to be picky, inefficient and irritating. You strive to do your job well, and you see your boss as a hindrance. An understanding of personality styles could go far in actually resolving your problem. (Remember, your options are: 1. continue to be miserable. 2. find another job. or 3. solve the problem.)

In reading the personality profiles above, you determine that you are a Type D (Demanding Driver). You look to do things efficiently, quickly and move on to the next task. You are good at what you do, and you know it; you just want to do your job. Your boss, on the other hand, clearly acts like a Type C (Calculating

Controller). Everything has to be perfect, and he always wants more details.

Can you see the steps that would diffuse the situation? As a Type D employee, you are struggling to get along with your Type C boss. The solution involves redefining what a completed task means to you. In order to have a completed task, you must provide the level of detail that satisfies your boss. By defining your job tasks from the beginning in a way that will satisfy your boss, you will probably resolve this problem without major effort or aggravation.

To summarize, if you want to get along with your boss, just understand that he needs more detail than you do. With little effort or aggravation, you can provide your boss with the extra information. As so often happens, the problem can be solved easily after it is understood clearly.

Since I have been paying attention to personality types for years, I can attest to their usefulness in day-to-day living. When you identify an individual's personality profile, you can better predict how that person will react in different situations. You gain a higher level of understanding in that relationship.

On the other hand, some people simply do not fit the personality profiles. For example, artistic people tend not to fit any of the categories. Please don't try to label every person with a personality type, for you will have gone beyond the usefulness of the concept. Use the personality types where they seem to fit. Used wisely this tool will be valuable in your own life and as you relate to others.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #9

Date: *3-11-00***My Basic Personality – Part 1**

(Circle items that best describe you, X items that least describe you)

Calculating Controller**C**

+	-
Analytical	Cautious
Detailed	Fussy
Precise	Critical
Introspective	Suspicious
Persistent	Resentful
Orderly	
Accurate	
Faithful	

Demanding Driver**D**

+	-
Dominant	Impatient
Forceful	Outspoken
Decisive	Stubborn
Assertive	Restless
Bold	Tactless
Competitive	
Self-reliant	
Pioneering	

Sensitive Sustainer**S**

+	-
Gentle	Timid
Cautious	Nonchalant
Amiable	Worrier
Listener	Hesitant
Consistent	Lenient
Sympathetic	
Obedient	
Tolerant	

Invigorating Influencer**I**

+	-
Persuasive	Naive
Enthusiastic	Haphazard
Popular	Changeable
Charming	Unpredictable
Inspiring	Talkative
Playful	
Cheerful	
Spirited	

As John Miller went through Worksheets #9 and #10, the answers came easily. No great insights came from these Worksheets, but the concept did seem interesting. He had no trouble thinking of examples of the various personality types.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #10

Date: *3-11-00***My Basic Personality – Part 2**

1. Which personality profile do I most strongly resemble? *Type C*
2. Do I mostly fit one profile or am I more of a combination? Explain.
I am fairly strong Type C, but I also have some of the Type S traits
3. Who is the best example of a Type D person that I know? *Bill Jones (owner of Commercial Contractors)*
4. What are his/her strengths? Weaknesses? *Decisive, gets things done, hard-nosed & efficient. He's a real jerk.*
5. Who is the best example of a Type I person that I know? *Stan Hartman (a foreman I work with)*
6. What are his/her strengths? Weaknesses? *Real funny, can get anyone to do anything. He goes in too many directions at one time.*
7. Who is the best example of a Type S person that I know? *Pastor Toland*
8. What are his/her strengths? Weaknesses? *Sensitive and seems kind. Timid, just kind of goes along.*
9. Who is the best example of a Type C person that I know? *Grandpa Miller*
10. What are his/her strengths? Weaknesses? *He was so smart and detailed, he could figure out any kind of technical problem. He was so cautious, he never left farming, even though he would have liked to try some other type of work.*
11. What are the strengths of my personality and how do they help me?
I am analytical and detailed and get things done by staying at a task.
12. What are the weaknesses of my personality and how do they hurt me?
I am overly critical of others and not very trusting.

Love Languages

Did you ever think about the ways you show your love to another person? Gary Chapman, in his book, The Five Love Languages, examines that concept and discovers five different ways of showing love to another person:

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

By learning about our Love Languages we gain another useful tool for understanding ourselves and others.

Gary Chapman spent years working with couples who were trying to save or improve their marriages. As he struggled to help, he discovered, again and again, the deep emotional need for love that most people have. As couples shared their secret pain, he would hear things like, “Our love is gone; our relationship is dead,” or “We used to feel close, but not now,” or “We no longer enjoy being with each other, we don’t meet each other’s needs.” Many times husbands and wives had tried to meet each other’s emotional needs, but not very successfully. It was like one spouse spoke Greek and the other spoke Russian.

Chapman then developed the concept of the five Love Languages. Stated simply, most of us tend to show our love, and want to receive love, in one or more of the five ways listed above. One of those ways will be most significant to us and is our primary Love Language. In our most intimate relationships (with our spouse, our parents, our children, our close friends, etc.), we will benefit greatly from an understanding of our own and our loved one’s primary love language.

A person whose primary love language is *Words of Affirmation* wants verbal feedback. These people need to be told they are appreciated. “Thanks for cleaning up the dinner dishes,” or “I

really am glad you took the time to come to my ball game,” are things this person will both say and like to hear. Complimentary, kind and loving words matter much to a person whose primary Love Language is *Words of Affirmation*. These words really register and make an impact. Conversely, someone who has *Words of Affirmation* as one of their lowest Love Languages will often disregard such statements or assume the words are said in order to manipulate them.

Quality Time is the primary Love Language of those who measure love not in words spoken but in time spent. A person whose primary Love Language is *Quality Time* simply needs to spend time, good focused time, with the people they love. The cry for help from these people will sound like, “We never do anything together,” or “You are always too busy with the kids (or your work) to pay attention to me.” A *Quality Time* person will tremendously appreciate an evening sitting together in front of the fireplace and chatting. On the other hand, someone who has *Quality Time* as one of their lowest Love Languages will view such an evening as, “Well we didn’t really do anything; we just sat around.”

We all know the person who has *Gifts* as their primary Love Language. These people are the ones who show up with a present and who seem never to miss a gift-giving opportunity. The person with *Gifts* as their primary Love Language feels special when giving or receiving gifts. It is not the size of the gift that matters; the sentiment behind the gift illustrates the love. A person for whom *Gifts* is the lowest Love Language tends to see gifts as manipulation.

One speaks the Love Language of *Acts of Service* by doing things for others. Washing the dishes, changing the baby (or a burned out light bulb), mowing the lawn or making a special meal are all examples of *Acts of Service*. With this primary Love Language, one feels truly loved only when another person puts forth the effort to perform helpful tasks. One who has *Acts of Service* as the lowest Love Language may tend to see all that activity as avoidance of the real issues.

Physical Touch is the Love Language that desires contact with the loved one. A *Physical Touch* person will value holding hands, hugs, playful punches on the arm and other physical contact. The handshake will be significant to this person, as will sexual intercourse (and I am willing to wager that's the first time you saw those two items tied together in one sentence). A *Physical Touch* person will place a high value on any type of touch and physical contact. Those who have *Physical Touch* as one of their lowest Love Languages tend to see the contact as insignificant.

To illustrate the usefulness of this concept, imagine a husband (Bill) and wife (Naomi) who are struggling in their marriage. Bill feels like he puts forth the bulk of the effort to keep the marriage going and resents Naomi for not trying harder. Naomi, of course, believes she puts most of the energy into their relationship and is angry at Bill for not noticing. Bill works all day at the telephone company and then comes home to mow the lawn, pull weeds, pick up the kids' toys, help with the laundry, do the dishes and coach a softball team. At the end of one of these busy days, when he feels a little frisky, Naomi rebuffs his romantic advances. Bill lies in bed and seethes, wondering why Naomi appreciates him so little and has become such a selfish witch (or sentiments to that effect).

Naomi, on the other hand, stays home with the three children in the mornings and works as a waitress many days at lunch and dinner. She tries to be a good mother by reading to each child and spending time with them; she does the bulk of the housework and she waitresses to bring in extra money. Naomi actually enjoys the waitressing because her regular customers tell her how wonderful she is, which she rarely hears at home any more. She falls into bed at night, exhausted physically and emotionally, and then Bill pouts when she does not feel like having sex. She wonders how she married such an insensitive dolt.

Do you see the Love Language clues in this scenario? They are right there in the open, as they are in most relationships. It is up to us to use the Love Languages as a tool to better understand and improve the situation.

Bill's primary Love Language is *Acts of Service* with *Physical Touch* being a close second. *Gifts* is in third place while *Words of Affirmation* and *Quality Time* are last. Bill works hard in the marriage by doing things other women complain their husbands never do. Bill feels that he puts forth so much effort and is not appreciated by Naomi, and he feels especially strongly about this issue at bedtime.

Naomi's primary Love Languages are *Quality Time* and *Words of Affirmation*. *Physical Touch*, *Acts of Service* and *Gifts* are not especially important to Naomi. When Bill comes home from work and rushes right out to mow the lawn or throws in a load of laundry, Naomi wishes he would just sit down with her for a while and talk about the day. Naomi knows she should appreciate all the work Bill does, but instead she finds herself resenting the work and Bill. Then she feels guilty. She knows they are growing apart, and it scares her.

Like many married couples, Bill and Naomi have different Love Languages. If they don't address this issue, they will probably continue to drift apart. Perhaps Bill will find temporary comfort in the arms of a co-worker or a softball team mom, and then the marriage will go down in flames. Perhaps nothing dramatic will happen, but their sense of love and closeness will just fizzle away to nothing. However, Bill and Naomi could decide to take action and turn their marriage around.

When Bill realizes that time and encouraging words truly matter to Naomi, he will begin to see his sitting and talking with her or giving her a compliment as an act of service and not as a waste of precious time. These efforts on Bill's part will be emotionally rewarding for both of them. Naomi will be hearing the Love Language she understands, and Bill will see the effort as an act of service, a Love Language he relates to.

Naomi will strive to do those little extra things for Bill that she knows he appreciates. She may still get more compliments as a waitress than she gets at home, but she knows Bill is trying and that helps her feel loved. Their love-making improves as their love grows and this aspect of their marriage motivates Bill more

than Naomi can ever imagine. Understanding and using the Love Language concept can help produce strong, happy, enduring relationships.

In reviewing this book, our niece Wendy became intrigued with the Love Language concept (having never heard it before) and decided to try it. Her husband had a week of vacation in which he planned to get some things done around their house. Wendy correctly guessed that *Words of Affirmation* were quite important to her husband Steve, although they were not that important to her. Wendy spoke encouraging words to Steve each day when opportunities presented themselves.

After only a few days Steve commented how much he appreciated Wendy's encouragement. As a couple they had nourished their love. A strong marriage just grew a little stronger.

Worksheet #11 gives you an opportunity to think about Love Languages in your life and in the lives of a few other people. Many folks will find this Worksheet challenging. Please just take your best guess and move on. This Worksheet introduces you to the concept of Love Languages and helps you think about them.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #11

Date: *3-12-00*

Love Languages

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

List your Love Languages from most important (#1) to least important (#5) for yourself and three other people that you care about deeply. This is a highly subjective exercise, so just make your best guess.

1. For myself, my Love Languages are:
 1. *Physical Touch*
 2. *Acts of Service*
 3. *Receiving Gifts*
 4. *Quality Time*
 5. *Words of Affirmation*
2. For *Rachel Miller (Wife)*, his/her Love Languages are:
 1. *Words of Affirmation*
 2. *Quality Time*
 3. *Receiving Gifts*
 4. *Physical Touch*
 5. *Acts of Service*
3. For *July Miller (Mom)*, his/her Love Languages are:
 1. *Words of Affirmation*
 2. *Quality Time*
 3. *Receiving Gifts*
 4. *Acts of Service*
 5. *Physical Touch*
4. For *Samuel Miller (Dad)*, his/her Love Languages are:
 1. *Receiving Gifts*
 2. *Physical Touch*
 3. *Acts of Service*
 4. *Quality Time*
 5. *Words of Affirmation*

CHAPTER 3

Understanding & Managing Emotions

“If we want to discover the keys to our own motivation, we must look to our emotions. Thinking stirs feeling and feeling triggers action.”

A.W. Tozer

If given my druthers, I would avoid this entire discussion of emotions. By nature, I gravitate toward concrete solutions to problems. I believe in “pulling one’s self up by one’s own bootstraps.” Nevertheless, I find these tricky, difficult-to-understand emotions often control our choices. In order to understand why we do the things we do, we must begin to understand our emotions.

I was teaching a class based on **Joyful Living** a few years ago. I found the classroom give-and-take enjoyable and helpful. As we discussed one of the worksheets, a woman asked why I had not included any questions about the emotional side of the

issue. It was a good question, and I made a note to throw in a few questions about emotions.

Another woman in the class challenged me much more deeply. She said little, but there was something about her. Her eyes haunted me; she seemed so intense. I discovered she was a survivor of incest; she had suffered horrible sexual abuse by her father throughout her childhood years. As I thought and prayed about my teaching and writing, I knew I must be sure about my material. I had to be certain the things I said were in fact true.

I read the 200-page curriculum I had developed and concluded it wasn't good enough. I decided to reconsider all my ideas. As I reviewed the section of the course about memories, I got bogged down. I believed it would be a good thing to record our clearest memories. Accessible memories, I reasoned, could help us better understand ourselves. But I had never actually tried it myself.

I started recording memories and was amazed at the amount of information that surfaced. I was also amazed at the amount of time I spent. While I felt foolish taking that much time to record my memories, I persevered and ended up with a large collection.

Due to my student's comment about emotions, I listed the strongest emotion associated with each memory. Debby and I put these stories, along with the corresponding emotions and dates, in a computer database. I wanted to know if this information would prove to be useful. I was to find out shortly.

As I was preparing to go to sleep one night, I found a letter on our bed from our then nine-year-old daughter Tessa. Written in childish handwriting, the letter floored me:

Dear Mom and Dad,

Today is the last day I will be around here. Let's stop fooling each other, I just don't belong in this family. Either tonight or after

school tomorrow I am leaving. Please don't try and find me because you never will. We have tried but it is just not working. I don't know where I will go but it will be away from here. I love you very, very, very much.

Tessa

I felt half sick. I knew this letter was more than a youngster's idle threat to "run away from home." She had not written it in anger. I knew this was extremely important and needed to be handled properly; I had almost no idea what was going on or what I should do.

Debby was away that evening so I went alone to talk with Tess. We talked, but on a superficial level. I did get a promise from her not to do anything until we had a chance to come up with a plan. When Debby got home, she spoke with Tess and got more information (Debby's a much better listener than I am). She discovered Tess had gone into the school bathroom to cry several times in the past weeks and was feeling sad much of the time. Tess, Debby and I felt we should talk with a psychologist.

In the following days, as I tried to process this new information, things just did not make sense. Tessa was a rambunctious, popular kid who excelled in her school work. In fact, most things came easily for her. I thought about my nightly ritual of going into each child's room and talking, telling stories and saying prayers. I realized these conversations were different with each child.

Alexey, who is four and one-half years older than Tessa, was easy to talk with. We had so many similarities and were so close that our conversations flowed from one topic to another. We laughed often and wholeheartedly. We also talked about many spiritual issues. Our bond of love and friendship seemed to grow deeper every day. Lex certainly could be a challenging child and often pushed the limits, but we were both able to put

those conflicts behind us quickly. I treasured those nightly conversations with Lex as times to both teach and learn.

Anna, who is two years older than Tess, was quite different from Lex. Anna was like her mother in many ways; she was sensitive and kind and more intuitive than logical (which made things like math a challenge). Anna had an easy way of getting along with people. When I put her to bed each night, she chattered on about her day and the things she was thinking about lately. She was both funny and had a deep spiritual side. Anna and I were different in many ways yet I felt very close to her.

Tessa was like me in many ways, but she had an odd combination of a strong will and a sensitive nature (which was not like me). Our nightly bedtime routine turned into a battle of wills. There always seemed to be something to disagree over, and our discussions tended to be superficial. I certainly loved her and she loved me, yet our relationship was strained. I tried a bit harder with Tess, because I wanted to improve our emotional closeness.

The day after the letter, we made an appointment with a psychologist. When the day for the appointment came, we were all a bit nervous as we drove into Lancaster City. Dr. Mary Lindsey quickly made us feel comfortable. She spoke with Tess for about 40 minutes, then asked to speak with all of us. As we neared the end of our time, Dr. Lindsey gave us her initial evaluation. "It seems Tessa feels she's getting lost. Tessa feels like she's wandering further and further from the rest of the family and getting quite scared that she will not be able to find her way back."

Dr. Lindsey's comments immediately clicked with me. I had been lost in the woods already; I knew that panicky, sometimes irrational, feeling that sweeps over. I realized that Tess, in her strong-willed way, felt "lost in the woods" while the rest of our family went about our normal routines. Now that I had identified the problem, I prayed for a solution.

I sensed that Tess and I needed to connect on a much more emotional level. When I had recorded my memories (which we will discuss in the next chapter) I had categorized them according

to eight basic emotions: anger, joy, fear, love, sadness, surprise, shame, and disgust. I decided to make a notebook entitled “Tessa’s Stories” with tabs for each emotion.

I asked Tess if she would be interested in trying a little experiment. When I put her to bed at night, she would pick a card that had one primary emotion written on it. I would then check my list of memories and tell her a story about a time when I strongly felt that emotion. Then Tess would tell me when she had experienced that emotion, with as much detail as possible, and I would record her story in her notebook.

The results were amazing! After a day of superficial interaction, Tess and I would settle in for our story time. Tess would pick a card and we would see which emotion we were to talk about that night. Perhaps it would be fear or surprise or joy or whatever. I would look over my list of memories and tell her a story with as much detail as I could recall. Many of my memories were humorous to Tessa.

But something else began to happen. When Tess told her story, I realized we were suddenly communicating much more deeply. The petty games were gone, and we were connecting at a deep and loving level. It was truly wonderful! I began to see the strong artistic side of Tessa’s personality and to understand her better.

We continued to see Dr. Lindsey for a few months. Things did not change overnight, but they did change. My relationship with Tess grew consistently stronger. Debby and I were thankful we had faced this when Tess was only nine years old. If we had hit this crisis with a teenager, we probably would have endured a much more difficult challenge.

No event from my life more clearly illustrates the value of emotions. When we learn to understand our emotions and use them in our lives, we discover our own personal “buried treasures.” In this chapter, we will help develop that simple, working knowledge of our emotions.

Eight Primary Emotions

For many years, psychologists studied emotions and disagreed on how to categorize them. The hundreds of human emotions overlap and do not easily group together. Rather than tackling all the complexity of a complete model of emotions, we can obtain value from a simple, common-sense approach. We will use a basic model of eight primary emotions:

- Anger
- Joy
- Fear
- Love
- Sadness
- Surprise
- Shame
- Disgust

The first letter for each emotion can be remembered by the following saying, “**A Jolly Farmer Loves Singing Some Silly Ditties.**” **A**nger, **J**oy, **F**ear, **L**ove, **S**adness, **S**urprise, **S**hame and **D**isgust.

Thinking about emotions in theory bores most of us. Recalling some of our own powerful emotions, on the other hand, can be fascinating. Worksheet #12 provides the opportunity to recall some of your most vivid emotions. As you fill in Worksheet #12, struggle to recall the power of past emotions.

As I thought about my various emotions, I remembered a funny incident which included almost every emotion. Alexey suggested we go on a Saturday afternoon bicycle ride, so away we pedaled on a beautiful, sunny day. We were speeding down a steep hill with the wind in our faces. I could coast much faster than he could, so I got up over the crest of the next hill and lost sight of him briefly. What I did see, however, was a big, old dead groundhog lying in the middle of the road with all four legs sticking up in the air. I had an idea! Jumping off my bike, I laid down

next to that groundhog and assumed a similar “dead groundhog position.”

Lex rode over the crest of the hill and saw me lying on the road, on my back with my legs in the air. “Dad, are you alright?” he gasped. Then he looked at the groundhog. Then he looked at me again. Then he understood! He burst out laughing, as did I. He said, “Man, I was worried when I first came over that hill and saw you. I didn’t know what happened.” We continued to laugh as we enjoyed the rest of our long bicycle ride.

Can you see some of the emotions in the story? I remember the sense of joy as we rode down the steep hill with the wind and sun on our faces. When I saw the dead groundhog, I experienced surprise and disgust in quick succession. Then I felt the joy of my prank. Lex feared for me upon first sight, then felt the mixed emotions of surprise, disgust, joy and love. I was a little ashamed that my prank had worried Lex, but mostly we both felt this strong bond of love. When I feel that love for our children, I also feel sadness, knowing how relationships change with time.

Worksheet #12 challenges you to recall the emotions in your life. Everyone experiences these emotions, yet few think about them. Be one of the few!

Rational vs. Emotional Thinking

Think about a time that you based a decision primarily on logic. Perhaps your refrigerator had stopped working, and the repairperson said it was not worth fixing. Most of us solve this type of problem in a rational way. We talk to friends and relatives about where they got their refrigerators; we go to a new appliance store and compare values; we look in the newspaper for used refrigerators. Then we choose the option that best meets our needs.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #12

Date: *3-17-00***Emotions Remembered**

(When did I strongly feel each of the following emotions?)

1. Anger: *When Rachel and I get into an argument, I get so mad I feel like I could kill her.*
2. Joy: *The most joy I ever felt was the moment Nate was born and the moment Katie was born. It was amazing.*
3. Fear: *When we went down to Orlando and Katie got lost at Sea World. She was about 3 years old.*
4. Love: *When Rachel and I make love.*
5. Sadness: *I was 14 years old when our dog Barney died and the sadness just blew me away. It felt like I cried for days.*
6. Surprise: *When Bill Jones came out to the job site and told me they wanted me to be a Project Superintendent. I had no idea. I thought I'd work as a carpenter my whole life like Dad did.*
7. Shame: *Before I met Rachel, I once had sex with my best friend's girl friend. We were both a little drunk, but I felt so ashamed and embarrassed. Things were never the same again with either of them.*
8. Disgust: *When I found that Uncle Bill had molested two of my younger cousins.*

When John Miller first looked at this Worksheet he basically drew a blank. He was not accustomed to thinking about emotions. After a few minutes of brooding over the Worksheet, however, he was amazed how his responses just popped out.

Your method may be more or less exhaustive, but most of us go through some similar approach to procure a refrigerator. In a rational approach, we gather facts and information, process that information using our intellect and make a decision. Some of the information may have an emotional component, such as, “I don’t want a used refrigerator because we always bought used stuff when I was growing up and I always felt ashamed.” Nevertheless, the decision to buy a refrigerator is generally made in a rational, logical way.

Emotional thinking operates differently. Our emotions give us a quick response. They are our “gut feelings” and tend to be quite intense. Think about some rational thinking process you went through in the past, such as the refrigerator example above. Do you have strong feelings about that process? Probably not. You may clearly recall the steps you went through, but it doesn’t move you as a powerful memory.

Now think about a “gut feeling” you had recently. Perhaps you met someone to whom you took an instant dislike. This type of emotional thinking is difficult to understand. Yet these emotional “gut feelings” often surprise us with their accuracy. Our emotional thinking system includes this intuition as well as the emotions considered previously.

We must realize that our emotional thinking is reactive. Both our intuition and our emotional responses are always reactions to some stimulus. Our emotional thinking system can provide us with some amazingly quick information, which we can use to make decisions. For example, when we meet someone for the first time and our intuition strongly warns us to be cautious, we do well to take heed.

On the other hand, we need to test our emotional thinking since it sometimes sacrifices accuracy for speed. Using our rational thinking system, we can scrutinize our emotional responses. For example, we can rationally explain that bad “gut feeling” we had about the person we just met. We recall all the verbal and nonverbal clues that the person gave. Which of those clues seemed significant?

Obviously this sounds like too much work. And many times it's unnecessary. If the bad feeling is about a person on the bus, you just choose to sit somewhere else and that's that. If you have the bad feeling about the woman your brother just introduced as the love of his life, you will want to analyze that intuition. We make a mistake when we totally ignore or totally trust our intuition.

So, our emotional thinking system reacts to the stimulus in our life and gives us quick, often powerful, information. We need to be wary of the accuracy of this information and sometimes use our rational thinking system to test it. Our rational thinking system works more slowly and logically. We can trace the line of thinking and even write it down. Our rational thinking system doesn't need to be reactive; we can choose to think about things outside our current circumstances.

Another difference between the two types of thinking lies in the degree of certainty of the conclusions. Emotional thinking gives clear, quick direction. Answers tend to be black or white, such as "Run!" or "Fight!" or "Get Angry! You've been insulted!" In contrast, rational thinking allows us to work toward various, detailed conclusions.

Everyone I've ever met utilizes both their emotional and their rational thinking systems. At this point, it is not important to know which system you use most. It is important simply to understand that both supply us with information from which we choose our actions.

Emotions, Moods and Temperament

As we seek to better understand our basic emotions and intuition, we come to the topic of moods. Figure #1 helps illustrate the relationship between emotions, moods and temperament. Personality style (discussed in the previous chapter) can also be called temperament. Most of us naturally demonstrate one type of temperament or another. I noticed this phenomenon with each of

our children. Their personalities seemed to be in place from the time they were born.

For most of us, our temperament is rather consistent. Moods, on the other hand, can vary greatly. Some days I wake up feeling the world is wonderful and created just to make me happy. On other days, the entire universe seems to be conspiring to make my life as miserable as possible. The main difference between those two days is my mood.

It is natural for us to have good moods, bad moods and many types of in-between moods. I strongly disagree with the positive-thinking gurus who tell us our key to happiness lies in manufacturing good moods. Ultimate happiness lies in our understanding of the truth, and that includes understanding our moods.

Certainly there are times we need to use our will to change our mood. For example, perhaps one day you happen to be in a particularly lousy mood at work, and you bring the mood home. Then you realize that your eight-year old daughter is having a slumber party at your house with six other girls. If you stay in your current mood, everyone is likely to be miserable. Or, you could use your will in that situation to “get in a good mood” and thereby have a less painful evening. We can all change our moods by using our wills from time to time.

Most important is that we learn from our moods. Rather than trying to make ourselves into a constantly happy person, we need to understand the dynamics of our moods. Ironically, it is often from our worst moods and most shameful behavior that we learn the most.

Emotions, Moods and Temperament

Figure #1

Emotional Hijackings

Debby, the kids and I drove from Pennsylvania to Atlanta to attend the 1996 Summer Olympics. We had planned the trip for two years and had a packed itinerary. The first leg of the trip was a nine-hour drive to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park in Tennessee. The children seemed to be constantly arguing, and I was stressed about all the details of the trip. On the second day, as we were driving through the magnificent beauty of the National Park, the kids were yelling and slapping at each other. I felt my lousy mood intensify. I bellowed, "That's enough!" at the top of my lungs as I slammed on the brakes and shoved the transmission into "park." Unfortunately, I put the vehicle into "park" while we were still moving and that only made me madder. I jumped out, ran around the minivan and jerked open the sliding door.

"I am sick and tired of your constant fighting and bickering! It ends and it ends now!" At that moment, Anna began to giggle, ever so slightly. I went nuts! "YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY? ARE YOU TRYING TO MAKE A FOOL OUT OF ME?" I grabbed her arm and squeezed hard. Anna started to cry as the other two looked on in shock (this was not behavior they typically saw from Dad). Not a word was spoken as I got back into the car and drove to the motel.

As I drove, I calmed down, and my rational thinking began to work again. Anna's behavior that pushed me over the edge had not been a disrespectful laugh; it had been a nervous giggle. Anna was the sensitive, peacemaker of the group and did not deserve the treatment she had received. I did apologize, but we all knew I had allowed my bad mood to go too far.

The phrase "Emotional Hijacking" describes this type of behavior. I had allowed my strong emotions to take complete control of me for a short time. My rational thinking system seemed to just shut down, and I let my emotions totally dictate my actions. I did exactly what I felt like doing. And I was thoroughly ashamed of the result.

Most of us can relate to the concept of an emotional hijacking; we have experienced the rush of full-blown anger or fear or even joy. Most of us, at times, simply give in to a strong emotion and let it dictate our actions. Worksheet #13 quizzes you about emotional hijackings in your past.

I have known people who seemed to let their emotions completely control their responses in almost every situation. These folks are rarely boring, but can be a challenge. On the other hand, I have known people who seem to be devoid of emotions. They are always in control, but are deadly dull.

An over-reliance on our emotions leads to many life problems. When we give in to our emotional hijackings, we are rarely proud of our behavior. On the other hand, an under-reliance on emotions keeps us from living life to its fullest. To live without ever having experienced anger, joy, fear, love, sadness, surprise, shame and disgust is to barely live at all. So how do we find a happy medium? How do we obtain the maximum benefit from our emotions without going out of control?

Simply stated, we manage our thinking process just as we manage other areas of our lives. We need to learn to identify our emotions and use them productively. We can significantly improve our relationships with others by understanding and managing our own emotions.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #13

Date: *3-17-00*

Emotional Hijackings

1. I recall the following incident when my emotions hijacked me:
That time when the guy zoomed into the parking space in front of me and I went nuts on him. Threatening him with everything under the sun. I totally lost it.
2. My primary emotion in that incident was: Anger.
3. Upon reflecting rationally on the incident, I recognize...
I felt very foolish and embarrassed. I hope I never meet that guy again.
4. Did this incident change me in any way?
In a way I think it did change me. I felt so foolish that I told myself I would never let something like that happen again. I have "lost it" many times since then, but never quite that totally.
5. What is the most recent emotional hijacking I can recall?
When Nate sassed his mother just yesterday. I told him in no uncertain terms that he was not allowed to talk back to his mother, then he turned around and sassed me. I instantly was furious and started yelling at him and sent him to his room for the rest of the night.
6. My primary emotion in that incident was: Anger.
7. Upon reflecting rationally on the incident, I recognize...
There was no reason for me to get so mad.
8. Overall, how do emotional hijackings affect my life?
At work I keep things in pretty good control. If I have an outburst I usually know what I'm doing and use it for my advantage on the job. But at home I get angry with the kids more than I should. I need to do better with that.

*CHAPTER 4***Your Memories**

I have a great question for you. What is your earliest memory? Twelve year-old Alexey and I were talking one night before bedtime. I asked him his earliest memory and he quickly responded, “I remember coming down a long, dark tunnel with a bright light at the end.” We both cracked-up laughing! His actual first memory wasn’t so funny. He remembers being transported in an ambulance after being hit by a car (he was three years old). He remembers the darkness as the woman from the ambulance crew covered his eyes (he had a nasty gash near his eye). He was yelling and thrashing around, and the paramedics had to hold him down so he didn’t aggravate his injuries. He remembers his arm hurting as they held him still.

Earliest Memory

My own earliest memory contrasts with Alexey's. I am three or four years old and playing outside on the sidewalk with my childhood pal Mike Bingeman (who is now a CPA and does our taxes). The sun shines brightly in a clear blue sky on this warm summer day. I just got up from a nap and am wearing only underwear and a tee shirt. Bingy is pedaling like mad on his tri-cycle as I stand on the back. The memory is like a short, vivid film clip which exudes peacefulness and pleasantness. Indeed in this memory, the world appears to be an inviting place.

Part of the value in recalling one's earliest memory comes from the overall feeling it evokes. People whose earliest memory is harsh, scary, etc. tend to perceive the world as a dangerous place. On the other hand, those who recall a happy, carefree memory tend to see the world as friendly and affirming. There is no right (or even preferred) type of earliest memory; the memories we have are those we have. By recalling and contemplating our earliest memories, we gain a clue about who we are and why we respond the way we do.

My own earliest memory accurately reflects my general view of the world. I tend to see goodness and affirmation even when it's not there. As I became an adult, I developed a slightly more realistic view of the world. Alexey being hit by a car as a toddler was a major event, causing me to see the world as a more dangerous place. It is ironic that this accident became Alexey's earliest memory. But then, this world is a strange place.

Just close your eyes and picture your first memory. What do you see? Can you recall how you felt during this event? Consider even the smallest details. If the memory is your own (as opposed to an incident you have been shown in a photo or told about) you will probably remember some odd, incidental details. Write down even the smallest details from this first memory. You can utilize the questions at the top of Worksheet #14 to assist in recording information about the memory.

Name: **John Miller**

Worksheet #14

Date: **3-19-00****Earliest Childhood Memories**

When recalling memories, ask, "Who?" "What?"
"Where?" "When?" "Why?" and "How?"

For example: Who was with you? What did they look like? What were they wearing? What were you wearing? What were you doing? What else was going on? When was it? Where were you? How was the weather? How did you feel? How strong is the memory?

1. My earliest memory is: *When I was about 4 yrs. old, I remember banging on nails with a hammer outside my uncle and aunt's house. My uncle and aunt were there. They were old. My aunt had on a dress, my uncle had on short pants with high socks and a short sleeved shirt. I just had on shorts, no shirt and I was barefoot. I remember hammering nails and banging away on a block of wood. I remember hitting my thumb with the hammer and crying like crazy. My uncle laughed at me and called me a "sissy boy." Seemed like it would have been late morning. I was outside their door at their house near Denver, PA. It was a very sunny day. I felt humiliated and mad at my uncle for laughing at me. I remember feeling embarrassed for not being able to use the hammer right. It is a very strong, vivid memory.*

2. Other early memories:

Childhood Memories

What if you can't recall early memories? No big deal; try another direction. Think about your happiest childhood memory. Don't just say, "I was happy when I played outside." Try to recall specific events when you felt joy. Write as much information as you can remember. You will probably be surprised by some of the small details that are stuck in your mind. I encourage you to take the time to record this information in Worksheet #15.

Along with pleasant childhood memories, try to recall several of your more painful ones. For many of us, these are much more vivid. A word of warning is necessary here...if your past had significant trauma (severe abuse or humiliation), please proceed cautiously. Overwhelming feelings can be unleashed and drive an unprepared person into deep despair. Consider the use of a qualified counselor in such cases.

Memories, Memories, Memories

Finally, consider your entire life up until today. What are your most joyful memories? Which ones bring a smile? What are your most painful memories? When were you most hurt, embarrassed, or humiliated? How about memories of special days, family gatherings, or holidays? What was the best day and the worst day of your life? What about everyday, commonplace events?

It takes an investment of time to complete this exercise. I recommend that you gather mementos from your life prior to beginning. As you sit amidst your old yearbooks, report cards, family photos and other assorted memories, you may feel a strange mix of emotions. Don't worry, that's a good thing, there is power in those emotions.

Name: **John Miller**

Worksheet #15

Date: **3-19-00****Strongest Childhood Memories**

When recalling memories, ask, “Who?” “What?”
“Where?” “When?” “Why?” and “How?”

1. My three most pleasant childhood memories are:
 - a. *Getting ice cream after little league baseball games.*
 - b. *Driving with my dad and a bus full of people going down to see the Baltimore Orioles play.*
 - c. *Building dams in the creek with my best friend Jim.*

2. My three most painful childhood memories are:
 - a. *When Grandpa Long would get drunk and say real mean things to Mom.*
 - b. *When Tonto, our pet German Shepherd was run over and killed by a car.*
 - c. *When the kids in first and second grade made fun of me saying, “John, John, uses the John” over and over.*

Since John tends to be a no-nonsense kind of guy, these Worksheets are somewhat annoying to him. He thinks, “Why waste my time on the past? I can’t change anything in the past, so there’s no use thinking about it.” Yet even as he writes several of the memories, he feels some surprising emotions stirring him.

You can record your memories either low-tech or high-tech. If you choose the low-tech route, take a 3-ring notebook with plenty of paper and divider tabs. Organize it chronologically. For example, make tabs for "Infant/Toddler/Pre-School," "Elementary School," "Jr. High School," "Sr. High School," "Late Teen/Early 20's" and "Adult." As you look through your mementos and reflect on your past, write down what comes to mind.

The high tech method uses the Microsoft Office 2000 version of Access Database. The software (which you can download free from www.pelger.com) allows you to input your memories into a simple database. You can search and sort the memories based on dates, emotions, relationships, humor, key words, etc. If you have access to Access (sorry), I recommend you record your memories directly into the database. You will obtain a treasure for the future.

Regardless of whether you choose high tech or low tech, please take the time to embark on this process of recording memories. You won't regret it. You may, though, have trouble getting the memories to start flowing. Perhaps the following subjects will help jog your recollections.

1. Arts
2. Athletics
3. Dreams
4. Dysfunctions
5. Embarrassing moments
6. Friends
7. Grandparents
8. Holidays
9. Humorous moments
10. Over-night experiences
11. Parents/Siblings
12. Pets
13. Proud moments
14. Recess/lunch
15. Religious experiences
16. Sexual interests
17. School
18. Vacation

You may remember certain friends from elementary school that you have not thought about for years. A special teacher may come to mind. Perhaps a funny story will be recalled or a particu-

larly embarrassing moment. Just jot down the ideas, in no special order, as they flow through your mind.

You may wonder, “Why spend all this time on something I can’t change.” True, we cannot change the past. However, past events shape us not only by what actually happened but also by our impressions, beliefs and memories of what happened. Remember though, memory of any past event is not necessarily absolute truth; it is simply our impression of the way things were.

Two illustrations from my own life may be helpful here. I loved sports as a child. So I decided to go out for midget baseball though I really didn’t know much about it. The coach put me in right field (the location where the least number of balls are likely to be hit). I recall standing out there in right field with my hands hanging at my sides. I would be out there daydreaming when all of a sudden I would catch movement out of the top of my eyes and spring into my ball-catching position. Unfortunately, the movement I saw was normally a bird flying overhead. No memories of “Glory Days” here!

I also recall making an Appalachian dulcimer (stringed musical instrument) in my grandfather’s wood shop when I was 17 years old. I loved the challenge of making the dulcimer, and it turned out very well. I spent hours over the next few years trying to learn to play. I practiced hour after hour and never became proficient. I had neither an ear for music nor any sense of timing. It took me years to reach the conclusion that I wasn’t going to be a musician.

Recently, I thought about these two memories, along with several others, and observed a trend. I generally have a strong character trait for perseverance but often head off in directions where I have no aptitude. I have spent much time struggling to succeed in areas where an impartial observer could have easily told me that I had limited likelihood for success. This review of my past helped me uncover a personal “gem of understanding” -- I need to carefully consider my own strengths and weaknesses before heading off in a new direction.

This may seem like a trivial conclusion, but I benefited greatly from it. I now consciously consider my aptitude prior to undertaking a new direction. Often the simple discoveries help us most.

Don't worry if the memories you write seem insignificant or do not immediately make sense. It may take awhile for you to spot trends from your past. But remember --- you are embarking on a journey for truth, and only a fool would expect to find all the truth in a few weeks.

As you record these memories, try to recall the emotions you felt at that time. List a primary emotion with each memory. The combination of memories and emotions can provide great insights for your life.

Of course not all, nor even most, childhood memories will give you great insight. Go through the effort anyway! At the very least, you'll have assembled a fascinating bunch of stories. Perhaps one of those memories that doesn't seem significant now, may be quite helpful in several years. From a personal standpoint, I'm not sure of the significance of my earliest memory -- being chauffeured on a tricycle in my underwear by a future CPA -- but perhaps time will tell.

As I reviewed my list of memories, I discovered one you'll enjoy. Jim Singer was my best friend in high school. We acted goofy, like most 16 year-old boys. We were insensitive louts, with a dash of self-obsession and a bunch of hormones thrown in. We lived the motto, "If you can't laugh at other people, who can you laugh at?"

Speech class seemed an easy course, so we both took it. The teacher assigned a ten-minute prepared speech on any topic. I don't remember my speech but I surely recall the one Singer gave. "I had a dog," Singer began as he stood in front of the class. "His name was Spot. Spot ran away. Here Spot. Here Spot..." Singer kept repeating, "Here Spot" as he walked out the classroom door. I still remember his voice fading away as he walked down the hall. We waited silently, then we began to laugh. After ten minutes, we heard Singer coming back down the

hall, “Here Spot, Here Spot, Here Spot...” He came back in the class and took his seat amidst cheers and laughter.

The teacher, of course, was not laughing. She was livid. She escorted Singer to the Principal’s office. She wanted to flunk him for the entire year. The Principal tried to be supportive of the teacher, but couldn’t keep the big smile off his face. Singer failed that speech and went on to become a computer programmer. And I get a good laugh every time I think about that story.

Take the time to record your memories! You’ll remember things you haven’t thought about for years and benefit from the effort.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #16

Date: *3-19-00***Recalling Memories: Infant/Toddler/Pre-school**

When recalling memories, ask, "Who?" "What?"

"Where?" "When?" "Why?" and "How?"

(Anger, Joy, Fear, Love, Sadness, Surprise, Shame, Disgust)

- 1. Drawing pictures on the sidewalk with many different colors with my friend Bill. (Joy)*
- 2. Making clay pots down by the stream and drying them in the sun. (Joy)*
- 3. Getting in fights with my friend Bill and pulling each other's hair and kicking at about 5 yrs. old. (Anger)*
- 4. Feeling afraid when my sister and I went to sleep upstairs because the attic door was in our bedroom. (Fear)*
- 5. Having the little kid from down the street come visit and being a pain in the neck. (Disgust)*
- 6. Grandpa Bob's big smelly face right next to mine at holidays and Grandma being real nervous and worried. (Shame)*

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #17

Date: *3-19-00***Recalling Memories: Elementary School**

When recalling memories, ask, "Who?" "What?"

"Where?" "When?" "Why?" and "How?"

(Anger, Joy, Fear, Love, Sadness, Surprise, Shame, Disgust)

- 1. My first day at first grade was a disaster. I got lost, I cried, I hated it. (Shame)*
- 2. I always hated going on the school bus. There were always a couple of bully kids that made life miserable. (Fear)*
- 3. I remember really liking art class every year in elementary school, cause I could draw pictures better than anyone. (Joy)*
- 4. I always liked gym class cause I was always one of the fastest runners. (Joy)*
- 5. My favorite teacher was in fourth grade, Miss Krebbs. Before I had her I was really nervous because everyone called her "Crabby Krebbs," but she was so kind and thoughtful and she really seemed to believe in me. (Surprise)*
- 6. I remember Dad coming home from work and Mom complaining how bad we were that day. Dad would make us line up, pull down our pants and whip us with his belt. Not just a slap or two, but real hard and over and over. The anticipation was horrible. I hated him for being so unfair, for not even bothering to find out what actually happened. (Anger)*

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #18

Date: *3-19-00***Recalling Memories: Junior High School**

When recalling memories, ask, "Who?" "What?"

"Where?" "When?" "Why?" and "How?"

(Anger, Joy, Fear, Love, Sadness, Surprise, Shame, Disgust)

- 1. When I got to junior high, I really felt out of place. (Shame)*
- 2. We took a family vacation to Disney World, which I don't remember that well, but it was a lot of fun. (Joy)*
- 3. I was on the junior high track team. I ran sprints and I liked it. I didn't win too often but I was often in the race. (Joy)*
- 4. I didn't have any girlfriends, but I did have Jim Long for a friend through that time. (Joy)*
- 5. My older brothers (Bob and Steve) were in high school and sometimes would take me along to football games. It was great when they would take me. (Love)*

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #19

Date: *3-19-00***Recalling Memories: High School**

When recalling memories, ask, "Who?" "What?"

"Where?" "When?" "Why?" and "How?"

(Anger, Joy, Fear, Love, Sadness, Surprise, Shame, Disgust)

- 1. Tenth grade was a major year of change for me. I started to drink beer and smoke pot. (Shame)*
- 2. My first girlfriend, Linda Kime, was in the spring of 10th grade. I couldn't think of anything else. (Love)*
- 3. I got my license in the summer and I bought an old 1963 Chevy Impala for \$300. (Joy)*
- 4. I worked at a restaurant as a busboy enough to pay my gas and insurance. (??)*
- 5. I remember going to parties in my junior and senior years. We would get so drunk we could hardly stand. (Shame)*
- 6. Stopped going to church somewhere in 11th grade. (Shame)*
- 7. In 12th grade I realized I better start thinking about something to do after high school. I thought about college, but since nobody in our family ever went before, I didn't buck the trend. I was sick of school anyway, but I didn't know what I wanted to do. (Fear)*

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #20

Date: *3-19-00***Recalling Memories: Late Teen/Early 20's**

When recalling memories, ask, "Who?" "What?"

"Where?" "When?" "Why?" and "How?"

(Anger, Joy, Fear, Love, Sadness, Surprise, Shame, Disgust)

- 1. After graduation, I got a job as a carpenter's helper at the construction company where Dad worked. I liked the work and was pretty good at it. I got along well with the guys and the foremen often tried to get me on their job (that was a nice feeling). I learned to be a real good carpenter. (Joy)*
- 2. I partied a lot. Sometimes I'd work all day, drink all night and work the whole next day. (Joy)*
- 3. I met Rachel at a party in July when I was 20. I clearly remember looking across the room and seeing her. My first thought was, "Man, I'd like to nail her!" Real romantic, huh? (Love)*
- 4. We dated for 2 yrs, then she got pregnant with Nate and we got married. (Love)*
- 5. I settled down pretty much after we got married. (Surprise)*

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #21

Date: *3-19-00***Recalling Memories: Adult**

When recalling memories, ask, "Who?" "What?"

"Where?" "When?" "Why?" and "How?"

(Anger, Joy, Fear, Love, Sadness, Surprise, Shame, Disgust)

- 1. Nate and Katie being born were probably the 2 most important things that ever happened to me. (Love)*
- 2. I still work for Commercial Contractors, Inc. and they made me a Project Superintendent 2 yrs ago (the same year I turned 30). (Surprise)*
- 3. I remember the first time my dad came on my job as a carpenter. It felt kind of weird. (Surprise)*
- 4. Rachel and I went to the Bahamas on an all expenses paid trip from a vinyl siding company. We had a great time -- laid around on the beach, snorkeled, and made love in the ocean. We really seemed connected down there. At home Rachel often complains that I am too "distant" from her and the kids. She says I work too much and when I'm not working, I am thinking about work. Maybe she's right. (Joy & Sadness)*

CHAPTER 5

Understanding & Managing Relationships

“All happy families are alike, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

Leo Tolstoy’s opening sentence in Anna Karenina

Reflecting on my memories has led me to a conclusion: my life would be empty without relationships. I treasure my relationships with my parents, children, siblings, extended family, friends, and co-workers. Even acquaintances from school, people that picked me up hitch-hiking, people I picked up hitch-hiking, waitresses, taxi drivers, people that gave me directions when I was lost (a rather large group), and so many more have enriched my life.

Our relationships connect us to the rest of the world. If we lack joy in our relationships, we will lack joy in life. Therefore, we must put forth the effort to understand and manage our relationships.

Relationship Bank Account

Before we look at specific relationships in our lives, let's consider a helpful tool. Steven Covey presented this concept in The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People and I found it useful. I call this simple concept the "relationship bank account."

Think about a particular relationship in your life, perhaps with your spouse. Imagine that every interaction you have is like a bank transaction. Some interactions are like deposits in the relationship bank account. Things like courtesy, kindness, honesty, and integrity, make deposits. Of course, you also have negative interactions, which are withdrawals in the relationship bank account. Withdrawals occur through acts of unkindness, harshness, not keeping commitments, etc. Many transactions are neither positive nor negative and do not affect the account balance.

If you awaken and whisper lovingly, "Good morning dear, you are so beautiful!" (and you mean it) you have made a deposit in the relationship bank account. If you growl, "Oh man, your breath stinks!" you have made a withdrawal. As we are kind, even in small ways, our relationships tend to improve. Trust grows.

On the other hand, as we act with disrespect and rudeness, interrupting others and slighting them, even in little ways, we are withdrawing from the account. When the balance reaches zero or goes into the red, trust is gone.

Several years ago, I supervised two employees who hated each other. They needed to work together, but because of some petty jealousies, problems with compensation, etc., they simply could not stand each other. We talked about their problems and discussed the relationship bank account concept. We agreed they could either learn to work together while hating each other or build some sort of positive relationship. They both decided they would try to keep track of the transactions in the relationship bank account.

It was amazing to see their relationship grow as they both became aware of extending small courtesies, keeping commit-

ments, etc. Of course, there were times when they made withdrawals, when their emotional thinking system overrode the rational and they spoke quick, harsh words. However, because of their efforts, these brief battles did not escalate into a full-scale war. With effort on both their parts, they developed a fine working relationship. In fact, a mutual respect and a friendship grew that continued beyond the workplace.

Withdrawals tend to come naturally for most of us; I know they do for me. Perceived insults to my self-esteem make me want to strike back, to take my “deserved revenge.” None of us needs lessons in how to make the withdrawals from our relationship bank accounts. Let’s consider some actions, though, which can make valuable deposits.

1. Keep your word. It’s amazing how many times people make a commitment and don’t follow through. Integrity precedes trust. That means we need to do what we say we are going to do. We need to strive to keep our word, even in the smallest things.

2. Show small courtesies. The little things in life always add up to be the big things. The small courtesies that cost very little can change everything. As we open the door, bring a small present, or say thank you, we connect with others more than we realize.

3. Make a serious effort to understand the other person. Few people know how to listen these days. Most people only wait for the other person to stop talking so they can jump in with the response they’ve been busy formulating. Focused listening makes a big deposit in the relationship bank account.

4. Apologize when you make a mistake. We’re all going to make many mistakes. If we sincerely apologize, we can usually turn a withdrawal into a deposit.

Worksheet #22 asks about a relationship in your life. I think you'll agree the concept of a bank account works well to track the status of a relationship. The relationship deposits and withdrawals are monitored and tallied. Even if you don't keep track of the balance in the account (i.e. ignore the status of the relationship), the balance is a reality.

I remember in my earlier years I often overdrew my checking account. The bank would send an overdraft notice with a fifteen dollar service charge. I would be indignant about the charge and go to the bank to argue it away. I was too self-absorbed to realize it was my mistake. I needed to pay for my mistakes. When we become overdrawn in our relationships, we often have a similar response. We blame someone or something else; we try to maneuver out of the situation or we ignore it.

Since Debby took over our banking many years ago, we have fewer overdrafts. She also arranged for bank overdraft protection, which provides automatic coverage in the event we spend more money than is in the account. Of course, this protection is only available because some level of trust has been established between the bank and us. Our relationship bank account operates much the same way. Trust is absolutely necessary.

Functional and Dysfunctional Families

Let's consider the relationship between parents and children. Most of us have first-hand knowledge about the parent-child relationship. We grew up in a family with one or two parents. Some families operate smoothly with lots of love while other families are constantly in crisis. What do you think helps create the "happy family" that Leo Tolstoy writes about in Anna Karenina? What separates functional families from dysfunctional families? A highly functional family encourages personal growth. Physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs are met.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #22

Date: *3-25-00***Relationship Bank Account**

1. Choose a significant relationship.
Spouse. Rachel and I.

2. In what ways have I made deposits into this relationship bank account?
When I talk to her and tell her what I am thinking about.

2. In what ways have I made withdrawals from this relationship bank account?
*Brooding.
Not bothering to call and tell her that I'll be late from work.*

4. How has the other person made deposits into this account?
*Active lovemaking.
When she cooks a special meal for me.*

5. How has the other person made withdrawals from this account?
Letting the house stay messy, just not getting her jobs done.

6. Overall, how would I describe this relationship account balance?
(overdrawn, small balance, medium balance, large balance)
Small balance.

Children are prepared to handle the responsibility that comes with adulthood. Most of us would agree there are not too many highly functional families. For the sake of discussion, let's say that 5% of families consistently operate in this manner.

Then there are the highly dysfunctional families. In these families, one's needs are not met, growth is not encouraged, and kindness seems to be non-existent. In the highly dysfunctional family, the parents tend to ignore or even show contempt to the child. In these families, abuse is so pervasive and evil so prevalent, it overwhelms. Perhaps 5% of families operate in a highly dysfunctional style.

The remaining 90% of the families (in which the vast majority of us grew up) operate somewhere in between. The degree to which needs are met in a family, or the degree of functionality, can be illustrated by a bell curve (See Figure #2).

The interesting thing about this bell curve is that most of us tend to see our own home situation as "normal." We may know better intellectually, but in our gut, we still see our own childhood as the norm from which to measure other families. Our emotions tend to override our rational thinking here. We benefit from realistically evaluating our family relationships and striving for objectivity.

M. Scott Peck uses an interesting example in The Road Less Traveled. Peck describes a situation where a six-year old child chatters away to a parent. The parent has several response options:

1. Forbid the child to talk.
2. Allow the child to talk but don't listen.
3. Pretend to listen, saying things like, "Uh-huh," "Umm," or "Yeah."
4. Selectively listen, i.e. pay attention if you hear a phrase that seems important.
5. Truly listen.

Bell Curve of Functional and Dysfunctional Families

Figure #2

Which of these methods is best? If you think #5 must be best, I challenge you to think again. Consider a circumstance which may make each of these methods appropriate. For example, if a friend calls you on the phone and threatens suicide, it would be most appropriate to forbid your child to talk so you could completely focus on the needs of your friend. Or, if you are driving a car during a blizzard, you may choose to simply let your child talk and not listen since you must focus totally on driving.

There are certainly times when I finish a difficult work day, sit down to relax and read the newspaper, and merely grunt my responses to the kids. I enjoy those few minutes of relaxation and the children don't seem permanently damaged. Perhaps as I relax, I pay more attention and pick up on an important phrase. Of course, in any healthy relationship, there must be times of true listening. However, a healthy relationship does not require constant listening. Humans cannot operate at that level all the time.

Many believe a highly functional parent-child relationship must have minimal conflict. We need to challenge that idea. A lack of conflict or a tensionless state rarely indicates a healthy relationship; it more likely indicates repressed emotions. Humans have natural conflicts. The way we deal with those conflicts determines the level of functionality of our relationship. A functional family doesn't always act, "nicey nice and kissy face." They encourage personal growth.

When I took our pre-school children to the park to play, each one of them wanted to climb on the large pieces of playground equipment. Other parents lifted their children onto the equipment, but I told our kids they needed to learn to climb up on their own. It was very difficult for me to watch our toddlers struggle and fail. They wanted to get up there and play and would get frustrated when they could not. I would encourage them and even try to show them how, but I would not lift them.

It would have been easier for me and for them if I had simply placed them on the equipment. It would certainly have seemed "nicer" on my part. However, I strongly believed (and

still believe) that children benefit greatly by trying, failing, getting frustrated, and trying again. After they learned the tricks of climbing each piece of equipment, they scampered up and down like little monkeys. The children whose parents had lifted them onto the equipment were still requiring assistance.

The essence of successful parenting lies in this concept of allowing our children to make decisions, fail, deal with the failure, and try again. This process builds character. In a highly functional family, the children learn perseverance and hope from many different lessons. With these two traits, children are prepared to tackle other problems successfully in the world.

The parents in a highly functional family also strive to identify strengths, weaknesses and gifts of their children and help them find their best direction in life. These parents humbly put aside their own preconceived desires and choose instead to encourage their children in the direction that best fits their abilities and interests.

For example, a surgeon father who loves his vocation and loves his son, naturally wishes that the son would also choose to become a surgeon. The father knows the path is difficult, but the rewards are many, both financially and personally. He believes he could perhaps make the path a little easier for his son. And, of course, the father can envision a future time when he and his surgeon son will discuss cases and spend time together. These are normal, loving desires in a father.

However, in a highly functional family, the father must go beyond his natural hopes to an honest evaluation of the situation. Perhaps the son has no interest in medical things. From an early age he has loved to build things: tree houses for himself and his friends and complicated dams in the stream. And he has loved to take things apart and put them back together. He hates school. Learning has never come easily for him.

The father realizes, through careful observation, that it is unlikely his son will become a doctor. In fact, the father has to consciously struggle with his own pride (e.g. "All my children have attended the best colleges"). He concludes that carpentry

training at a trade school would be best for his son, leading to his highest fulfillment, happiness and success. The path is obviously much different from the path the father preferred, but therein lies the lesson.

The highly functional family struggles to help its members find the course which best suits their gifts, nature, and personality. Abraham Lincoln said, "When I die, I want it said of me, 'He plucked a weed and planted a flower wherever he thought a flower would grow.'" Effective parenting requires more than just effort (plucking weeds and planting flowers), it involves determining where flowers will and will not grow and planting accordingly.

Parents in a highly functional family go beyond loving their children. Effective parents observe, study and play with their children in order to help them discover their talents, skills and abilities. A careful interaction with one's children provides clues and hints. Effective parenting requires effort to find how the child might distinguish and feel good about themselves. Through this, the child establishes his or her own positive identity.

Few families live up to the preceding descriptions of highly functional families. Think back to the bell curve; the highly functional family is the top 5% of all families. It is therefore unlikely that you grew up in such a family. The purpose of defining the highly functional family is not to make us feel bad; the purpose is to help us better evaluate our own family experiences.

The highly dysfunctional family is probably more familiar to most of us. We have seen families where the selfishness and laziness of the parents appall us. The children are treated with contempt (if they are noticed at all). Their potential is ignored and their capabilities are never considered. These parents abuse, neglect, and tyrannize their children. Being around a highly dysfunctional family makes my skin crawl. I just want to get away and breathe clean air again.

Worksheets #23 and #24 ask probing questions about our relationships with our parents and our children. I encourage you to take some time and deeply consider these Worksheets. Truly understanding our relationship with our parents and our children is foundational to understanding ourselves.

Relationships with Family and Friends

We considered relationship bank accounts and parent/child relationships. Now we move on to other relationships: friends, co-workers, siblings, other relatives, enemies, acquaintances, spouses, etc. Most of us have many significant relationships. These relationships are critical to our emotional health. I'm amazed how little effort we normally put into understanding our relationships.

I grew up in a family with three older sisters and a younger brother. My relationship with my brother Jim exemplifies how a relationship can change. Jim is seven years younger than I am, and we had an odd relationship while growing up. I don't recall playing with him very much. I usually played with kids my age or older. I mostly ignored Jim but occasionally paid attention to him in order to torment him...normal family stuff.

As I look back, I realize Jim had a troubled adolescence, although I was not paying much attention at the time. I vacillated between ignoring him and treating him harshly in order to help him "build character." We were both self-absorbed and not really close to each other. One amusing event stands out in my memory.

One cold winter day, Jim, our nephew Mick, and I were all out in the woods behind our house. An activity Jim and I enjoyed doing together was sapling climbing. The goal in sapling climbing is to pick a small tree (trunk diameter about 2" to 4") and climb up the trunk, hand over hand, as high as you can. At some height the sapling tree starts to bend. At that moment, you hold on tightly and throw your legs out to the side. As the tree bows, you get a ride back to the ground.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #23

Date: *3-26-00*

My Relationship with My Parents

1. Thinking of my relationship with my parents when I was a child, I would describe it as:

Things were kind of tense most of the time. We never knew when Dad was going to yell at us or smack us. His moods varied a lot. Mom tried to smooth things out.

2. Thinking of my relationship with my parents when I was an adolescent, I would describe it as:

Dad stopped hitting me but he would belittle me when he was mad. I just tried to stay out of his way and away from home as much as possible.

3. Thinking of my relationship with my parents when I was an adult, I would describe it as:

Better. Dad has mellowed some and I think he is proud of my success at work. Mom sure loves to spend time with her grandkids.

4. I am most grateful to my parents for:

They provided for me.

5. What do I wish my parents had done differently?

Dad's drinking, of course, but also I wish we had spent time together doing something.

6. How much fun and play occurred with my parents?

Not much.

7. How was discipline handled in my home?

Mom did none and Dad just reacted to his moods. To tell the truth, it was lousy.

8. What is the level of trust in this relationship?

I guess at this point it is OK.

9. Overall, how do I rate the effectiveness of the family I grew up in?

Mildly Dysfunctional

Highly Dysfunctional Mostly Dysf. Mildly Dysf. Mildly Functional Mostly Functional Highly Functional

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #24

Date: *3-26-00***My Relationship with My Children**

1. Thinking of my relationship with my children when they were young, I would describe it as:

I am more distant than I would like to be. I love them very much.

2. Thinking of my relationship with my children when they were adolescents, I would describe it as:

NA

3. Thinking of my relationship with my children when they were adults, I would describe it as:

NA

4. My children are most grateful to me for:

They just seem to love me because I'm their Dad (which is a great feeling).

5. What do my children wish I had done differently?

Spend more time with them, play with them more.

6. How much fun and play occurred with my children?

Some, but not as much as there should be.

7. How was discipline handled in our home?

Rachel and I mostly agreed on discipline. We spanked from the time they were toddlers, but never hit them any place except on the butt.

8. What is the level of trust in this relationship?

Fairly high.

9. Overall, how do I rate the effectiveness of our family?

Mildly Functional

Highly Dysfunctional	Mostly Dysf.	Mildly Dysf.	Mildly Functional	Mostly Functional	Highly Functional
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If the tree is too small, it bows too soon and that's no fun. If the tree is too large, you have to climb very high and, if it just doesn't bend, you have to climb back down (to the ridicule of others). The right size tree, though, is truly wonderful. You climb higher and higher, begin to get afraid and then the tree bows and gives an exhilarating ride back to earth. Jim, Mick, and I loved to go sapling climbing.

This particular winter afternoon, we had tried a few saplings and had not had any really good rides. I spotted a tree I thought might be too thick, but decided to give it a try. As I climbed higher and higher, I felt fear in me. Jim and Mick were yelling, "Come on. Just a little more!" The tree started to bow and I was ready to throw my legs out to the side to ride down. But something happened different this time.

Since it was so cold, the sap was frozen and the tree trunk snapped at ground level. I didn't hear the snap and didn't get my feet pointed toward the ground. I fell quickly and landed flat on my back on the ground with a THUD (I remember the THUD!). As I immediately began to sit up, the tree trunk came down and hit me right in the middle of the forehead. At this point, Jim and Mick were rolling on the ground in laughter. They did manage to gasp out, "Are you OK?" I just lay there on that frozen ground trying to get my breath. It was not too long till we were all laughing at the improbability of that sapling trunk hitting me square in the forehead.

I am grateful that in my family we learned to laugh at ourselves and not take ourselves too seriously. Over the years, Jim and I laughed at that memory and at many other funny things that happened to us. As we became adults, our relationship grew in mutual respect. As we both struggled to become responsible men, we came to appreciate each other more and more. We now have a loving and affirming relationship (which still has plenty of laughter in it). Where there was no bond, there is now a relationship which gives us both great joy.

Jim and I changed our relationship slowly. Usually we weren't even aware of the changes. As we became adults, we

both wanted a closer relationship, and both took some small steps in that direction. We made a point of staying in touch, we talked about work and family issues, we spent time together. I always loved my brother in a family sort of way; now I love him as a close friend.

As stated earlier in this chapter, we must find joy in our relationships in order to find joy in our lives. Worksheet #25 will quiz you about a relationship with a significant person in your life. It could be your spouse, a brother or sister, a co-worker, a friend or whomever.

Friendship is the glue that bonds relationships together. I have observed over the years that many people simply do not know how to be friends. Like many skills, though, we can both teach and learn it.

Building friendship requires that we become interested in the other person and desire their good. A man focused on himself cannot be a good friend. Ironically, a man focused on himself will not even be a good friend to himself.

Think about a friend whom you truly enjoy. That friend probably listens to you and appreciates you. We all love that! Con artists rely on this fact to ply their trade; they understand that people want to be listened to and appreciated. A con artist develops the ability to quickly endear himself to another person. Then, he uses that trust to take advantage of the other person. The con artist feigns friendship in order to selfishly manipulate others.

If we are going to cultivate friendships, we must become interested in the other person and desire their good. This idea sounds simple and natural, but my experience indicates that it is neither. Abiding friendships do not just happen. We need to work at them.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #25

Date: *3-26-00*

My Relationship with Another Person

1. Choose an important relationship to examine:
 - a. This relationship is with... ***Bobby Miller***
2. How did it begin? (When, where, why?) ***When I was born.***
3. How has it changed? (When, where, what, how much, why?) ***As kids I would tag along whenever I could. I tried not to be a pain to him and usually he and his friends didn't mind me being around. I still look up to him.***
4. What has been the high point of this relationship? ***One night about two years ago we went out for a few beers, he said how proud he was of how I was doing with my job and family.***
5. What has been the low point of this relationship? ***When I was a senior in HS and he smashed his car and wanted to use mine. I wouldn't let him.***
6. What attributes does this person value? ***Goodness, commitment, caution.***
7. What is the central focus of this person? ***Work.***
7. What are the main needs in this relationship? Mine? His/hers? ***Mine: to get approval and to be close. His: to help guide me and to be close.***
9. How well are the needs met? Mine? His/hers? ***Fair.***
10. Who has control in this relationship? ***Bobby.***
11. What is the level of trust? ***I'd say the trust level is high.***
12. What is the level of tolerance? ***Neither of us is overly tolerant.***
13. Is there any fear of being abandoned? ***I worry about him just leaving.***
14. What happens when someone screws up? ***We just avoid each other for awhile.***
15. How much play & fun is in this relationship? ***Some, but not that much. I wish there was more.***
16. Does this relationship help me grow as a person? ***Yes.***
17. On a scale of 1-10, how do I rate this relationship? ***7***

John Miller decided to examine his relationship with his older brother, Bob. While this was certainly an important relationship in his life, he was aware that he understood little about it, and knew it was not as strong as it should be. John had little contact with his oldest brother, Steve who had moved out of the area years ago, but John saw Bobby a few times a year.

My wife Debby and I now have a wonderful friendship which we both treasure. This was not always the case. In the early years of our marriage, we hit a time when we could barely tolerate each other. I remember the sense of drifting further apart and not really knowing what to do about it. I was playing one-on-one basketball with a good friend, Bruce Spicer, and we discussed the situation.

Bruce gave me some great advice: “Ned, when you’re interacting with Debby and feeling angry, think about what you plan to do or say next, and then do the opposite.” At first this seemed like nonsense; how could I benefit by doing the exact opposite of what I felt like doing? The idea seemed silly, but it did stick in my head.

The next few times Debby and I were having a skirmish (since she would never actually fight), I remembered Bruce’s advice. If I felt like saying, “Fine!” and walking out of the room, I would stay and continue to talk. If I wanted to use logic to “prove” my point, I would try to just keep my mouth shut. The results were amazingly positive; our relationship improved almost immediately (although we still had a long way to go).

I’ve never really understood why this advice worked. Perhaps the mere act of stopping my natural response in the middle of a dispute and considering other options is a positive move. For whatever reason, that piece of advice helped Debby and me to get beyond the stage we were in and move toward a deep, abiding friendship.

If you have a loving relationship with your spouse, you are well aware of the great joy and peace that comes with that love. If you do not have that type of relationship, don’t despair. Loving relationships do not spring up effortlessly; they come from understanding, working hard and taking emotional risks.

Relationship with Yourself

In order to build loving relationships with others, we need to have some understanding of our relationship with ourselves. To be a friend to others, as we discussed above, we must be interested in them and wish for their good. The same concepts apply in our relationship with ourselves.

It seems obvious that we would be interested in ourselves, that we would have an extraordinary level of interest in our own affairs. However many people do not appear to be very interested in their own lives. I think of the mother who slavishly devotes herself to her family, so no sacrifice is too much. The mother trades any interest in herself for an increased interest in her family's welfare.

I have seen many people who live with an apparent lack of interest in their own welfare. It reminds me of the saying, "She's a woman who truly lives for others, and you can tell the others by their hunted looks." If you do not have a reasonable amount of self-interest, you will be neither a friend to others nor a friend to yourself.

Of course, at the other side of the spectrum are those people who have an inordinate amount of self-interest. These folks consider every situation from the sole viewpoint of, "How does it affect me?" People that are completely self-absorbed are exasperating. To such narcissists, other people do not really matter. In fact, nothing really matters except the protection of their precious self-image.

Narcissists perpetrate many of horrible, evil acts in this world and often do not view their victims as fellow human beings. We have a friend who was raised by a narcissistic mother. Our friend endured a horrible childhood, at the hands of the one person who was supposed to love and protect her. She was forced to stand for hours with her face exactly 2 inches from the wall; when she moved she was beaten. When this mother became irritated with her daughter, she would grab scissors and chop off her hair. Narcissistic parents humiliate their children. For these par-

ents, nothing seems to exist except themselves, their moods and their all-important self esteem.

If we live without paying any attention to our own needs, we err. If we live completely absorbed by our own needs (as a narcissist), we are also wrong. As in so many areas of life, the correct path appears to be the middle road.

As mentioned earlier, a strong, positive relationship needs two components. First, one needs an appropriate level of self interest. Next, one must wish for one's own good. One need not take the middle path when wishing for one's own good, though. People should be very interested in their own future good. You may think everyone would want their future to be full of good things, happiness, joy, etc. However this is not always the case.

Think about a person that seems to have so much going for them, yet always chooses relationships with people who have major problems. This person always dates a substance abuser or someone who is out of work ("although it's not their fault") or just someone who is creepy. I observe that many people choose relationships which an impartial observer (me, in this case) could easily point out will bring them sadness and hurt.

Why do some people choose to embark on relationships with those that will hurt them? I don't know the answer to that question; I do know these situations are common. Therefore, we need to consider the extent to which we wish our own happiness or unhappiness. Worksheet #26 examines this issue.

Relationship with God

We have examined our relationships with other people and our relationships with ourselves, now we investigate our relationship with God. We must understand this personal area of our lives to find the joy we desire. Let's start with an example...

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #26

Date: *3-29-00*

My Relationship with Myself

1. How interested am I in myself? On a scale from totally uninterested to totally narcissistic, where do I fall?
I think I am fairly interested in myself and my own well being.
2. Describe a situation, event, or story that illustrates my level of self-interest.
When I get a job performance evaluation (which isn't too often), I get very defensive about any criticism.
3. To what extent do I wish for my own good (my future happiness)?
As I think about it, I don't really wish for my future happiness that strongly. I just am so busy with things of today.
4. Describe a situation, event, or story that illustrates how I desire my own good?
I am so focused with my job on any given day that I rarely if ever even think about the future. It seems to take all the energy I have just to do a half decent job getting through the day.
5. Do I like myself? *Sometimes.*
6. What is my self-image?
To be honest, I see myself as a failure in many areas.
7. Does this self-image seem consistent with the reality of my life?
I do better than I give myself credit for, generally. I probably think of myself as worse than I actually am.
8. How well do I nurture my physical body and my mind?
I have a good bit of self-control in my diet and staying in some kind of shape. I don't know what I do to nurture my mind.
9. How much responsibility do I take for myself and for the rest of the world?
Too much.
10. On a scale of 1-10, how do I rate my relationship with myself? 5

Most everyone has read about the tremendous struggles Abraham Lincoln had during his years in the White House. The Civil War was raging, soldiers were dying by the thousands, and everyone in the country seemed to want something different from him. President Lincoln worked one of the most challenging jobs during one of the most difficult times in history. Lincoln wrote about the way in which he faced those difficulties: "I must confess that I am driven to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I have nowhere else to go. My wisdom and that of all about me is insufficient to meet the demands of the day."

Lincoln was a brilliant man who turned to God in prayer because the problems he faced were overwhelming. Now Abe Lincoln had not been a church-going man. He had been accused of infidelity to religion during one of his early political campaigns. He responded to the charge with the following, "That I am not a member of any Christian Church is true, but I have never denied the truth of the Scriptures; and I have never spoken with intentional disrespect of religion in general." This cagey response fended off the true charge that Abe did not go to church.

Abraham Lincoln matured as a person and turned to God for wisdom and direction because the answers he needed were not found anywhere else. While he often had quoted the Scriptures for political expediency, for years Lincoln appeared to not have much of a relationship with God. In his most difficult times, however, Lincoln learned to come to God for guidance and direction. Lincoln discovered and developed a personal relationship with God. The extent of that relationship was between him and God.

President Lincoln superbly met the demands of his day. Many people believe he was the most effective U.S. President in history. Yet, he was ridiculed and despised by many of his contemporaries. Abraham Lincoln appears to have struggled with God and man, yet he completed the task history laid upon him.

Few of us deal with issues the size of Abe Lincoln's. Nevertheless, our problems can seem insurmountable. We all confront difficult situations that seem to have no solutions. I have

met thousands of people in my life and never met one who did not have problems that:

1. Seem large.
2. Have no simple solution.
3. Are a source of concern to them.

If you have such problems, then the concept of consulting God should at least be considered as an option.

What is your current relationship with God? Worksheet #27 quizzes you about this. Some of these questions you may have considered many times; others you may have never thought about. As you fill in the worksheet, I recommend writing the answer that first comes to mind. The purpose is to determine how you perceive God at this point in your life.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #27

Date: *3-30-00*

My Relationship with God

1. When was I first aware of my relationship with God? (How, where, why?)
I was about 10 or 11 years old and Mom took us kids to Sunday School and church. I remember singing in the children's choir and feeling so close to God. I guess I really believed then.
2. How has this relationship with God changed? (When, where, what, how much, why?) *Just lost interest as I hit my teen years, too much other stuff going on. Rachel insists that we all go to church together now, but to be honest, it doesn't really mean much to me. It's just another obligation I have to fulfill. I wish it was different from that.*
3. What has been the high point? *When Nate and Katie were born, I truly felt how amazing God's creation is.*
4. What has been the low point? *I don't know that there is a low point, it seems I just kind of go along.*
5. How active is God in my life?
Not very, as far as I can tell.
6. What does God expect from me? *I have no idea.*
7. What do I expect from God?
For things to be fair. (although I don't really know why I would expect that)
8. What is the most terrible personal tragedy I can imagine?
For Rachel, Nate and Katie to be killed in a car accident.
9. How would I view God if this tragedy occurred? *I would probably go off the deep end, take a rifle and start killing people.*
10. How much joy is there in my relationship with God? *Not much, since I don't relationship with God. I am just so busy, there isn't time for everything.*
11. On a scale of 1-10, how do I rate my relationship with God? *2*

When John Miller filled out Worksheet #27 he did not like it one bit. He rarely thought about God. He did go to church with Rachel and the kids, but it was routine and didn't affect him much. He did not meditate on God as he sat in church, or at any other time. John was uncomfortable looking critically at his relationship with God and putting those observations on paper.

John sees himself as a practical person who gets important things done. He sees most other people as ineffective boobs who don't get things done. The idea that his relationship with God may be an important thing that he is ignoring disturbs him. John wonders, "If I wanted to improve my relationship with God, how would I go about it?"

Was this worksheet difficult? Few of us spend much time talking or even thinking about our relationship with God. Nevertheless we probably have some sort of relationship with God and that leads us to the question, “If I were to try to improve my relationship with God, how would I go about it?”

One learns to know God better by the basics of study and prayer. This process has been called the inward journey. There are risks involved in this journey: we may discover our own shallowness or inadequacy or we might have to face our lack of commitment and hypocrisy.

We start by reading the Scriptures, we start by spending some time each day in prayer (even though it feels so very odd), and we start by thinking more about the nature of God. We really do not need any complicated plan, we merely need a desire to begin and a commitment to keep at it when it gets a bit difficult or boring.

To improve your relationship with God, some time should be spent with Him daily. Start by finding a book that you think may be enlightening (for me that would be the Bible) and read it for 10 minutes each day. Obviously, read longer if you have the time or inclination.

This discipline helps provide direction for our inward journey. The books we choose to study should challenge and make us think. Don't believe something just because someone you respect says it or you see it in print. Be critical and always analyze for the truth. So few people examine what they read for truth and thereby are deceived.

I recently saw a woman who had a look of misery in her eyes. I had known her well in happier times, when she found joy in her husband and small children. This woman had an interest in the inward journey and went to her minister for help. Unfortunately, her minister was a self-centered, evil man who was more interested in seducing this woman than leading her to truth. This minister fed her “feel-good lies” which ultimately destroyed the family unit. After the divorce, the minister dropped out of the

picture, and all that was left was a big pile of misery where previously there had been love.

Please do not embark on the inward journey lightly, as some sort of lark that may prove to be interesting. If you choose to proceed with the inward journey, include study as part of your plan. Study utilizes both our rational thinking and our emotional thinking. Rational thinking allows us to critically analyze the accuracy of the material and decide whether we believe it or not. Our emotional thinking process utilizes our intuition and sensitivity to help us evaluate the practicality of a passage.

Over time, studying produces results. We strengthen our faith because we think it through. The different things we study and read build on each other to further our level of understanding.

The process of studying and learning about the nature of God must be more than just an intellectual experience, though. To truly learn about God, we must come to know God. If we want to get warm, we must stand near the fire. If we want to know God, we must spend time in prayer. During time in prayer, we communicate directly with God.

If you were not raised in a religious tradition or taught how to pray, the entire idea may seem foreign to you. Prayer really is quite simple. Take some time, quiet yourself, and begin to tell God the things that are important to you as you would to a good friend.

Don't expect prayer to instantly feel natural or soothing; it probably will not. When I decided to spend some time each day in prayer, I set the egg timer for 10 minutes and got down on my knees. Those were the longest 10 minutes in my life. This was a new experience and everything felt odd. In the first few weeks, my mind would wander, I would fall asleep, or the time would pass agonizingly slowly.

As I developed the habit of prayer, though, things began to change. The time began to pass quickly and I often felt a deep connection with God. Of course, my mind still wanders sometimes, and occasionally I fall asleep. But prayer has become a

special time of connection with God, and I usually emerge from it refreshed and ready for the challenges of the day.

There are five basic types of prayer. You may want to keep these five categories in mind to help guide you through your time of prayer.

- Prayer asking for **forgiveness** for things you have done or have not done
- Prayer of **thanksgiving** for the blessings you have received
- Prayer of **intercession** asking God to help others
- Prayer of **petition** asking God to help you with your own problems
- Prayer of **praise** to God because He is God

Sometimes it seems that nothing happens when we pray. Everyone who prays experiences this feeling. When we persevere, though, we will look back and realize things have changed. Prayer, like discipline, can only be appreciated in retrospect.

Since prayer changes things, it carries one great risk: we will not remain the same. As we embark on this inward journey of study and prayer, we must be aware that it will change us. Remember the words of Oswald Chambers, “The battle is lost or won in the secret place of the will before God, never first in the external world.” If we desire to have a relationship with God, we must start on this inward journey and anticipate changes.

The Psalmist wrote, “Be still and know that I am God.” Our relationship with God can be nurtured and improved just as our relationship with our spouse, children, and friends can be. It takes effort and sincerity, but we can do it. We must work at it just as we would at getting our bodies in shape for an athletic competition. This inward journey requires our best effort.

Worksheet #28 asks specific questions concerning what you think about God. It will serve as a benchmark from which you can measure your changes or growth. Perhaps you never considered some of the questions before and you probably never

gave written answers to them. Don't be overwhelmed by this worksheet, simply work through it and put in the answers that first occur to you.

This chapter on Understanding and Managing Relationships has covered a tremendous amount of material. Our relationship with others, ourselves and God are huge topics. Obviously we can not totally explore every aspect of these relationships. However, we can begin the process of gaining a better understanding of them.

The anticipated joy of improved relationships motivates us to change our lives. Later, we will return to the information in this chapter to further assist this process of change. But first, we need to consider a few more issues.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #28

Date: *3-30-00***How would I describe God?**

1. Is God active in the world? *Yes, I think so.*
2. Is God active in my life? *Yes.*
3. Do I trust God to protect me? *No.*
4. Is God loving toward me or is God harsh? *Mostly harsh, I think.*
5. Is God judgmental of me? *Yes.*
6. Do I ever feel joy in my relationship with God? *Not really, not that I can think of.*
7. Do I ever feel a strong sense of belonging to God? *No.*
8. Do I clearly know right from wrong? *Absolutely.*
 - a. Do I know what God wants from me? *No, not really much at all.*
 - c. How do I know what God wants from me?
9. Is there a force of evil in the world? *There sure seems to be.*
10. What happens when people die? *I don't know, but I don't think we just stop existing.*
 - a. Is there a heaven? If so, how do people get there? *I think so. By being good.*
 - b. Is there a hell? If so, how do people get there? *Probably. By being bad.*
11. On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my faith in God? *5*
12. On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate the certainty of my convictions? *1*
13. Which of my actions glorify God? *Treat Rachel and the kids well.*
14. Which of my actions show rebellion towards God? *Ignoring him, I guess.*
15. Do I pray? If so: *Not really.*
 - a. Where do I pray?
 - b. How often do I pray?
 - c. How long do I pray?
 - d. What do I think about the value of my prayers?
16. Do I study any religious text? What text? How often? *Not really.*
17. Do I believe God forgives my mistakes? *No.*
18. What do I give to God? *Some money in the church offering (not sure that gets to God!)*
19. What does God give to me? *Don't know.*
20. When I feel discouraged, how do I feel about God? *Lousy.*
21. When I am in a crisis, how do I feel about God? *Don't usually consider God.*
22. When I feel great, how do I feel about God? *Don't usually consider God.*

Story by Leo Tolstoy

“That Whereby Men Live”

Throughout this book, I include several paraphrased short stories written in the late 1800’s by Leo Tolstoy, a Russian author. The stories are quite captivating! A great author manages to touch our soul and teach us more about ourselves.

If you don’t enjoy reading fiction, skip to Chapter Six. On the other hand, if you take the time to read these stories, they will entertain and enlighten. The story that follows moves me every time I read it. It’s truly amazing.

A shoemaker named Simon lived with his wife and children in a farmer’s house. He did not have a house or land of his own and supported himself and his family by shoe cobbling. Since food was expensive and work was cheap, they barely made ends meet. The shoemaker and his wife had one sheepskin coat between them and it was a ragged one at that!

For two years, he had been saving up to buy a skin for a new one. By autumn, he had saved a small sum. He had three rubles and he was owed five rubles and 20 kopecks from farmers in the village. So one morning after breakfast, he got ready to go to the village to collect his money and to buy sheepskins. He thought to himself, "I'll get the five rubles I am owed by the farmers, add those to the three I have here, and buy sheepskins for a sheepskin coat."

As he went into the village, he stopped at one farmer's house. The farmer was not home, but his wife promised to send her husband with the money in a week. He went to the house of another and the farmer swore to God that he had no money. He gave him only 20 kopecks for mending his boots. The cobbler thought perhaps he could go to the fur dealer and buy the sheepskins on credit.

But the fur dealer had another idea. "Bring the money first," said he, "and then take what you like. We all know how debts mount up."

So the shoemaker did not get his coat nor collect his money. He only got the 20 kopecks for mending the boots and he took away another pair of old boots for resoling.

Depressed at the result, he went and spent the 20 kopecks for a drink of vodka and set off for home without his sheepskins. While he had been cold in the morning, he now felt quite warm, even without a fur coat. He walked along hitting the frozen snow clods with a long stick and swinging the boots by the laces with the other hand.

As he went, he talked to himself, "I'm warm without a sheepskin coat; I've drunk a thimbleful of vodka and it skips all through my veins. So a sheepskin coat is not necessary after all. Here I go and forget all my troubles. That's the sort of fellow I am. What do I have to worry about? I can get along without sheepskins. I don't need them. There's one thing though...that wife of mine will fret. She'll say, 'It's a shameful thing that you do a job for someone and then let him lead you by the nose.'"

He could imagine his wife telling him that they must have money to buy bread. "The farmer grinds his own flour to make bread," she will say. "They certainly can find the few rubles to pay us. Our bills go on no matter what."

The shoemaker went on until he came to a church. He looked at the church as he was passing by and saw something strange. "What is that? A stone?" he thought. "No, perhaps it's a cow." But it was not a cow either. It looked like a man, but it was all white. As he got closer, he saw that it was a man, sitting naked, leaning against the church. He could not tell if he was alive or dead. The shoemaker felt quite odd. He said to himself, "Robbers must have killed this man, taken his clothes and pitched him here; don't mix yourself up in this."

So the shoemaker went on. As he was passing by, though, he saw the man begin to move. The shoemaker became more afraid. "Should I go up to him or should I keep on walking?" he said to himself. "Oh some evil is going to come of this. Nothing good has brought him here. He'll probably leap at me and choke me and do me in. And even if he doesn't, what can I do with a naked man? I can't give him the last rags off my back. I just have to pass by, that's all." And the shoemaker quickly passed by.

Slowly, his conscience began to bother him and the shoemaker stopped in the middle of the road and looked back. "I wonder what it is with that fellow," he said to himself. "What are you doing, Simon? Here is a man, dying in misery and you get scared and run by. Have you grown so rich that you need to guard against having your valuables stolen? Shame on you Simon, this won't do!"

So he turned back and approached the man. As he did so, he saw he was a young man and in the prime of his life. He also saw that he had no marks of violence on his body. He just seemed very cold. As Simon reached him, the young man lifted his head and opened his eyes wide and looked at Simon's face. That made Simon feel better. Simon threw down the boots, unclasped his belt and began to take off his outer coat.

“Come, stand up,” he said. “You must have something to put on,” and he helped the man put on the coat and the boots. Simon thought about taking off his cap, but he looked at the man’s full head of hair and thought, “I’m bald all over, I think I need this more than he does.”

With the man thus clothed with the boots and the coat, Simon said to him, “Now brother, get up and walk and get yourself warm. Things like this can’t be helped. Are you able to move?” The man looked at Simon in a friendly way, but said nothing. “Why don’t you speak?” said the shoemaker. “We can’t spend the winter here. We’ll go home to my lodgings; take my stick to lean on if you feel weak. Come on, let’s go.”

The man started and walked easily enough without lagging behind. As they walked, Simon asked him, “Where are you from?”

“I’m not of this place,” he said.

“So I see, because I know everyone who lives here. How did you come to be here?”

“I may not tell you,” replied the man.

“I suppose the people here treated you badly.”

“Nobody has treated me badly, but God has punished me.”

“Yes, indeed. God is everywhere and he puts his hand upon us. But where would you like to go?”

“It doesn’t matter to me,” replied the man.

Simon was amazed. The man was gentle in speech, not like a robber and he would give no answers about himself. Simon thought, “One knows little of the things that go on in this world.”

“Well, come to my lodgings and you can go on your way later,” said Simon.

As they walked together, the stranger easily kept up. The wind was rising now and blowing through Simon’s shirt and the drink had begun to wear off. Simon felt quite cold. As he wrapped his thin shirt around him he thought, “So, this is what my sheepskin trip has come to. I went out for sheepskins and am returning without even my coat and bringing back a naked man. Matrina will not be pleased, I’m afraid.” But yet, when he looked

at the stranger and remembered the look on his face when he first went to him, his heart somehow leapt for joy.

Simon's wife finished her duties early that day. She had chopped the firewood, brought in the water, fed the children, had something to eat herself and then began to think, "Should I make bread today or tomorrow? There is still a piece left. If," she thought, "Simon gets here for supper and doesn't eat much, the bread will last till tomorrow." She turned the piece over looking at it and finally decided, "I won't make bread today. There is only meal enough left for one loaf. We can last another day."

As she put the bread down and began to sew a patch on her husband's shirt, she wondered how he had made out getting sheepskins for the coat. "I do hope the sheepskin seller won't cheat him," she thought. "But that man of mine is so simple. He never cheats anyone himself, but he is like a little child in many ways. Eight rubles...that is no small amount of money. We should get a good sheepskin coat for that. I went through last winter the best I could without a sheepskin coat. I really couldn't go anywhere when it got cold. We were almost prisoners in the house. It's a long time coming for this coat. I hope Simon gets back soon. I hope nothing bad happened to him."

As Matrina was thinking over these things, she heard a noise outside. Someone was coming. Matrina stuck her needle in her work and went into the passage. She saw two people there: Simon and some sort of man without a cap and in felt boots. Matrina immediately noticed the breath of her husband. "Yes," she thought, "he's been drinking." And then, when she saw that he was without his long coat, in his shirt only and was carrying nothing in his hand, she got hot.

"He's drunk away the money," she thought. "He's been wandering around with some bum and now has brought him home with him." Matrina let them go into the room and looked at the stranger. He was young and the coat he had on was their own and he stood right where he first came in, neither moving nor raising his eyes.

Matrina thought, "He's not a good man. He's afraid." Matrina just stood there and stared at them, wondering what they would do next. Simon took off his hat, sat down on the bench as if everything was fine.

"Well, Matrina, give us some supper, let's go!"

Matrina grumbled to herself, but kept standing by the oven as if she never heard him. First she looked at the one and then she looked at the other, but she only shook her head.

Simon said to the stranger, "Sit down brother. We'll have some supper." And the stranger sat on the bench next to Simon. "Have you cooked anything that you could give us?" said Simon to his wife.

Then temper got the better of Matrina. "Yes, I have cooked something," she said, "but not for you. You, I can see, have drunk your senses away. You go out to buy sheepskins and you come home without even your coat. And with a naked bum in tow as well. I have no supper for drunkards like you."

"Come, come Matrina. Don't talk so silly. You should have first asked who this man is."

"Well suppose you tell me. What have you done with the money?"

Simon took his coat, pulled the three rubles out and unrolled them. "Here is our money," he said. "The farmers did not have the money to pay me."

This only made Matrina madder. She snatched the money from the table and ran to hide it. "I have no supper for you. I can't feed every naked drunk who comes along."

"Now, now Matrina. Hold your tongue. Give people a chance to explain."

"What sense is going to come from a drunken fool like you," she replied. "I should have known better than to marry a tipsy brute like you. My mother gave me some things and you drank them all away. You go out to buy a sheepskin and you drink that away too."

Simon tried hard to explain to his wife that he had only drunk 20 kopecks worth and that he had found the stranger by the

church. But she interrupted him on every turn bringing up issues that were ten years old. She got madder and madder as she talked and finally grabbed his shirt and said, "Give me that. That's mine. I have nothing warm to wear. May you die of a fever!"

Simon took off the shirt and handed it to her. As Matrina went to go into the other room, she stopped. Her anger was subsiding and the truth is, she wanted to know who this man was. Therefore she said, "If the man was honest, he wouldn't be sitting there without a shirt on his back. And if you had been up to any good today, you would have told me at once where you picked up this friend of yours."

"Very well," said Simon, "I'll tell you now. As I was passing a chapel, I saw this man lying naked and frozen. It's not summer time, you know, that a man should go naked. I knew that he would die if I left him there. What could I do? Such things do not happen for nothing. I took him, clothed him and brought him here. That's all. Don't be mad, Matrina. To give way to it is sinful. Remember that we must all die someday."

Matrina was ready to burst out again when she glanced at the stranger and decided to remain silent. He was sitting there motionless, on the edge of the bench, with his hands clasped to his knees, his head sunk to his chest, his eyes closed.

"Matrina," went on Simon. "Is there nothing of God within you?"

When she heard these words, and glanced at the stranger again, she suddenly felt compassion. She turned to the door, got the teapot and the last piece of bread and served the men some food.

"Eat away," she said. Simon nudged the stranger. "Come up here," he said. "Let's have some food."

When Matrina saw the stranger's face, she had to smile. She felt a certain indescribable joy. After supper, as she washed up things, she asked him, "Where do you come from?"

"From somewhere other than here," he replied.

"Then how came you to fall by the wayside?"

“I cannot say.”

“Who was it who took your clothes from you?”

“God was punishing me.”

“But you were lying there naked?”

“Yes, I was lying there naked and frozen when Simon saw me and had compassion on me. He took his coat, put it over me and told me to come with him. And you have kindly given me food and drink. May God do so unto you also.”

Matrina got up and went back to her sewing. “Here,” she said, “since you have no shirt or pants, put on these.”

As Matrina and her husband went to bed, she could not get the stranger from her thoughts. They had eaten their last crust of bread. They had nothing for tomorrow. She had given him shirt and trousers. In a way, she felt angry with herself but then she remembered the stranger’s smile and her heart jumped within her. She lay there unable to sleep.

“Simon.”

“Yes?”

“We have eaten our last piece of bread and I don’t have anymore. What shall we do tomorrow? I must beg some of the neighbor.”

“Oh, but we shall manage to live and have enough,” said Simon.

For a little while, his wife lay there without speaking. “He seems a very fine young fellow,” she said. “Only why does he tell us nothing about himself?”

“He cannot, I suppose.”

“Simon.”

“Yes.”

“We give things away, but why does no one give to us?”

Simon was at a loss for an answer, but remarked, “We can talk of that another time,” and he turned over and went to sleep.

In the morning when Simon awoke, the children were still asleep and his wife had gone out to borrow some bread. The stranger was sitting on the bench alone, dressed in the old shirt

and trousers from yesterday with his face turned up. His face was even brighter than it had been the night before.

Simon said to him, "Well, my good friend, the stomach craves for some bread and the body for some clothes. We must work to earn it. Do you know any trade?"

"No, none," replied the stranger.

Simon was rather surprised at this and said, "But you would try, would you not? A man can learn anything if he tries."

"Yes, men work and so also will I."

"What is your name then?"

"Michael."

"Well Michael, you do not tell us anything about yourself and that is your own affair, but we must earn our living. If you work, I will teach you and we will feed you."

"The Lord be good to you. I will learn, only show me how."

So Simon began to show him the trade of shoemaking.

"The trade is not difficult," he said. "Watch me."

Michael watched and followed each step and understood immediately. By the third day, he was able to work as if he had been a cobbler all his life. He never made mistakes and he ate very little. Only at times, he would stop for a moment and silently look upwards. He never went outside, never spoke of his own affairs and never joked or laughed. Indeed the only time he had been seen to smile was on the first evening, when Matrina had got him some supper.

Day followed day and week followed week and soon a year had passed. Michael still lived with Simon and worked for him. It became known that Simon's workman could sew better than anyone. And so, Simon's business increased.

One cold winter day, Michael and Simon were sitting together working, when a three-horse sleigh came to them. The two shoemakers looked through the window and saw that the sleigh had stopped and a gentleman in a fur coat stepped out and walked towards Simon's dwelling.

Matrina ran to open the door and the gentleman bowed his head as he came in and his head nearly touched the ceiling, he

was so tall. He seemed to fill the whole corner of the room. Simon rose to greet the man. The gentleman breathed hard, took off his fur coat and sat on the bench.

“Which of you is the master boot maker?”

Simon stepped forward saying, “I am your honor.”

Then the gentleman shouted to his footman, “Hey, Vedka, bring me that leather here!” The footman entered with a parcel and laid it on the table.

“Untie it,” he said. When the footman did so, he showed the leather to Simon. “Look here boot maker, do you see this?”

“Yes sir, I do,” answered Simon.

“And do you know what it is?”

Simon felt it for a moment and said, “It is good leather.”

“Good leather, indeed!” cried the gentleman. “You knothead, you have never seen such leather as this in your life. It is German leather and it cost 20 rubles.”

Simon was intimidated by this. “Yes, well what chance do folks like us get to see such leather?” he answered.

“Could you make me a pair of boots out of it?”

“Perhaps, sir,” stammered Simon.

“Perhaps! You must clearly understand what you’re going to work on and what you’re going to make of it. I want a pair of boots that will last a year, that will never tread over and not split at the seams. If you can make me such boots, then set out to work at once. But if you cannot do these things, tell me beforehand because if these boots split or tread over in a year, I’ll throw you into prison. But if they do not fail, I will pay you 10 rubles for your work.”

Simon hesitated and did not know what to say. He looked at Michael and asked him. “What do you think about it, brother?”

Michael nodded to say, “Yes, take the work.”

So Simon obeyed Michael and undertook to make this pair of boots that would not tread over or split within a year. Simon went to measure the man’s feet. He carefully marked it on a piece of paper so as not to spoil the gentleman’s sock. He measured first the sole and then the in-step and was going to measure the

calf. But the strip of paper would not go around it for the muscle of the gentleman's leg was as thick as a beam.

"Take care not to make them too tight in the leg," remarked the great man.

So Simon measured it carefully.

"Who is this you have with you?" the gentleman asked.

"This is my skilled workman who will sew your boots."

"Look you," said the gentleman to Michael, "and remember this. You are to sew them so that they will last a year."

Simon glanced at Michael and saw that he was not so much looking at the gentleman as staring into a corner behind him as though he was gazing at someone. Michael gazed and gazed till suddenly his face broke out into a smile and he brightened all over.

"What are you grinning at, you fool?" cried the gentleman. "You had better see to it that the boots are ready when I want them."

To which Michael replied, "They shall be ready whenever wanted."

"Very well." The gentleman put on his boot again, buttoned up his fur coat and headed for the door. He forgot to bend his head and smacked it against the lintel. He swore violently, grabbed his head, jumped into his sleigh and drove away.

"What a man!" remarked Simon. "He nearly knocked the lintel out of place with his head. Yet he hardly minded."

"How could he not get hardened with the life he leads," replied Matrina. "Even death itself could not take such a rock of a man."

"Well, we have taken the work now," said Simon to Michael "and we must take care not to make a mistake. This leather is valuable stuff and the gentleman is quick tempered. There must be no mistakes. You have the better eyes and the better skill in your fingers, so take the measures and cut the stuff while I finish my work."

Michael took the leather obediently and spread it out on the table, folded it in two and began to cut. Now Matrina happened

to approach Michael and saw what he was doing. She was astonished. She was well acquainted with the shoemaking art and she realized he was not cutting the leather into an ordinary boot shape but into rounded pieces. She felt inclined to say something but thought to herself, "It must be I who doesn't understand how a gentleman's boots ought to be made. Michael must know better than I do so I won't interfere."

When Michael finished cutting the shapes, he began to thread them. Not in boot fashion but as you sew the shoes that you put on the feet of a corpse. Matrina was even more surprised at this but still said nothing. Michael went on sewing until supertime. Then Simon arose and walked over to Michael's bench. He saw, that from the gentleman's leather, Michael had made a pair of shoes to put on the feet of a corpse.

Simon groaned. "How is it," he thought, "that Michael has lived with me a whole year without making a mistake and now he makes this mistake! The gentleman ordered heavy-soled boots. Michael has gone and made these and spoiled the leather. How shall I ever settle things with such a gentleman? One cannot get leather like that everyday."

Then he said aloud to Michael, "My good fellow, what have you done? You've ruined me. The gentleman ordered boots but you have gone and made these instead." Just as he was about to tear into Michael, someone arrived at the door. Simon saw that a man had arrived on horseback and was tying up his horse. Presently the door was open and a footman from the very gentleman himself came in.

"Good day to you," he said.

"Good day. What can we do for you?"

"My mistress has sent me about the boots."

"Yes, what about them?"

"This indeed, that my master will not want them now. He has been dead some time."

"What do you say?"

"Yes, it's true. He died in the sleigh on the way home from your shop. We reached home and were just going to help him

out; we saw that he had slipped to the floor like a flour bag and breathed his last. There he lay dead. And it was only with great difficulty that we got him out of the sleigh. Then my mistress sent me, "Tell the boot maker that the gentleman who called to order the boots will now need a pair of shoes to put on a corpse. Wait until they are made and bring them back with you." So I came here at once.

Michael gathered up the cuttings of the leather from the table and rolled them in a coil. Then he took the shoes, wrapped them against each other, wiped them with his apron and gave them to the footman.

Another year passed and again two more until Michael was now completing his sixth year with Simon. He still lived as he had before. He never went out, never spoke of himself and smiled only twice since he came... first when Matrina had given him supper upon his arrival and second when the rich gentleman had been there. Simon was well pleased with his workman and never returned to the subject of where he had come from. Indeed, his biggest fear was that he would go away again.

One day, they were all sitting together at home, when a woman came in with children. The one child was lame. As soon as Michael saw the children, he threw down his work and looked at them. This surprised Simon because Michael, as a rule, did not pay much attention to the affairs of others.

"Good day to you," said the woman.

"Yes, what can we do for you," said Simon.

"I want a pair of boots for each of my little girls to wear in the spring."

"Very well, madam, we have never made such small sizes, but it can be done. You can have the boots either leather throughout or lined with linen. Here is Michael, my skilled workman."

As Simon looked at Michael, he saw that he was sitting with his eyes affixed on the little girls. Simon was astonished. It is true they were beautiful little girls with black hair, rosy round cheeks and cute little shawls and jackets, but he could not understand

why Michael looked at them as though he knew them. However, Simon went on talking to the lady and arranging the terms.

After they settled the terms, he went about making the paper measure for the boots. The lady lifted the lame little girl to her knee and said, “take both sets of measures from this little girl and make the one boot for a crooked foot and then the other three ordinary ones. The two children take the exact same size for they are twins.”

Simon took the measures, then asked about the little girl. “How did she come to be lame? She is such a pretty little girl. Was she born so?”

“No, she was laid upon by her mother.”

Matrina, hearing this, stepped closer. “Then you are not their mother?”

“No, in fact I am no relation at all. I only adopted the children.”

“You are not their mother but yet you seem so fond of them.”

“How could I not be fond of them? I raised them both. I had a child of my own once but God took it unto Himself. But yet I could not be any fonder of my own child than I am of these two.”

“And whose are they?”

Then the lady went on to tell the story. “Six years ago, it happened that these two little girls lost both their father and their mother in the same week. Their father was buried on a Tuesday and the mother died on the following Friday. At that time, my husband and I were living nearby. The father of these children worked cutting down trees. One day when a tree was cut, it fell on him and crushed him. He was carried home but died immediately.

“His wife delivered her twins that week, these two little ones here. Poverty and loneliness, that is what they were born to. For the mother had no woman to help her with the birth. She was alone when the twins were born and she died in that bed. The next morning, I went over by chance for a neighborly visit and I

found her there, the poor woman, already stiff and cold, laying on the one little girl having crushed and bent her foot.

“I sent for help, washed the corpse and laid it out. We made a coffin for her and buried her. The little girls were left for orphans. I alone of all the women in the neighborhood was suckling a child. My little one was eight weeks old, so I decided to take the twins also.

“I began by feeding the uninjured child only since I did not expect the other one to live. Then I thought to myself, ‘Why should this little one’s angel spirit be left to fade away?’ So, filled with compassion, I nurtured the two as I did my other child. All three of them at the same breast. I was young and strong and able to feed well and God had given me much milk. I would feed two at once while the third lay waiting. Then they would all be satisfied.

“Yet God did not have it that I should nourish all three children. I buried my own little one in his second year and God has never given me another since. Now my means have been increased and I have a good income and live comfortably but I have no children of my own. So, how could I ever bear to live alone without these little ones? Or how could I ever rest without them to love and care for? I can’t even think about it. They are to me as wax is to the candle.”

The lady drew the lame child to her and wiped the tears from her cheeks. “Surely the old proverb is true, without father or mother we may live, but without God, never.”

Thus they talked for a while, after which the lady got up to leave. Her host saw her to the door and then glanced at Michael. He was sitting with his hands folded and he gazed intently upwards with a smile.

Simon approached him. “What is it, Michael?” he said.

Michael rose from the bench, laid aside his work and bowed to his master and his wife. “Pardon me good master and mistress,” he said. “God has pardoned me, do you also pardon me?”

Then Simon and his wife saw that light was proceeding from Michael and bowed low. "Michael, I see you are more than an ordinary man and that I can not detain nor question you. Only tell me one thing. Why is it that when I first found you and brought you home you were downcast, but you smiled immediately when my wife offered you supper and became brighter thereafter? And again, why did you smile the second time when the gentleman was ordering the boots and became brighter than before? And lastly, why did you smile the third time and become bright all over when the lady brought the little girls here? Tell me, Michael, why you smiled those three times? And why is this light shining from you now?"

Then Michael answered him, "The light is shining from me now because I have been punished and God has pardoned me. And I smiled those three times because it was laid upon me that I should learn three things from God. And those three things I have now learned. The first thing I learned was when your wife had compassion upon me. That is when I smiled the first time. The second thing I learned was when the rich man was ordering the boots. That is why I smiled the second time. And the third and last thing I learned was when I saw the little girls. That is why I smiled the third time."

Then Simon said, "Tell me also Michael, why God punished you and what those three things of God may be that I too may learn them."

Michael answered, "God punished me because I disobeyed him. I was an angel in Heaven and disobeyed God. He sent me down to earth to bear away the soul of a woman. To earth I flew and saw there the woman lying sick, just having delivered the twins. The children were there beside their mother and she did not have the strength to put them to her breast. She saw me and understood that God had sent me to take away her soul. Crying she said, 'Angel of God, they have just buried my husband who was killed by a tree in the forest. I have neither sister nor mother nor grandmother, so there is no one to bring up my little ones. Do not take away my soul but leave me to feed and raise my

children and set them on their feet. Little children cannot live without father and mother.'

"So I listened to the mother, laid one child on her breast, and gave the other one in her arms, and ascended again to God in Heaven. I flew to God and said, 'I could not take away the soul from that mother. The father had been killed by a tree and the mother just delivered twins. She begged me not to take her soul away, saying, 'let me raise my children, rear them, and set them on their feet. Little children cannot live without father or mother.' So I did not take away the mother's soul."

"Then God said to me, 'Go and fetch away the soul of that mother and you will learn three things. You will learn that which dwells in men, that which is not given to men and that whereby men live. When now you have learned these things, return to Heaven.'

So I flew back to earth and took away the soul of the mother. The child slipped from her breast. And the dead body rolled back upon the bed, crushing as it did one of the little one's legs. Then I rose above the village and tried to bear the soul to God. But a wind caught me so that my wings hung down and were blown from me. The soul returned alone to God and I myself fell to earth by the roadside."

Now Simon and Matrina understood at last who it was they had clothed and fed and taken in. They wept with fear and joy. But the angel went on, "Thus I was left naked and alone in an open field. I'd never before known human need, never before known cold nor hunger, yet now I was a man. I was freezing and hungry and I did not know what to do.

"Then I saw by the roadside a church built for God. I approached God's building, hoping to take refuge there. But it was barred and locked and I could not enter. Then I sat down behind it to protect myself from the wind. Evening came and I felt cold and hungry and in pain all over.

Suddenly I heard a man coming up the road, carrying a pair of boots in his hands and talking to himself. And then, for the first time since I became a man, I saw a deathlike human face.

The face seemed horrible to me and I turned away from it. But as I did so, I heard the man talking to himself about how he should protect his body from the winter's cold and feed his wife and children. I thought to myself, 'here I am perishing of cold and hunger while he is thinking about how he should clothe his wife and himself in sheepskin and feed himself and his family with bread. Surely I can look to this man for help.

"The man caught sight of me and became still more horrible as he passed by. I was in despair. Suddenly, however, I heard him returning. I looked and could scarcely recognize him as the same man. In his face before there had been death, but now the face had suddenly come to life. And in that face I saw God.

"The man came to me, clothed me and took me with him to his home. As I entered his home a woman came to him and began to speak. The woman seemed even more dreadful than the man. The breath from her mouth was that of a corpse. And I was almost choked with the odor of death. She wished to cast me into the cold again. And I knew that I would die if she did so.

"Then all at once her husband reminded her of God and in a moment she became changed. When she had given us supper and was sitting there gazing at me and I gazed at her in return, there was no longer death in her face but life. And in her I recognized God.

"I remembered the first word of God, 'You will learn what it is that dwells in men.' I knew that the thing which dwells in men is love and felt that God had seen fit to reveal that to me. So I smiled for the first time. But I still had more to learn. I still had to learn that which is not given to men and that whereby men live.

"So I dwelt with you for over a year when the gentleman came to order the boots. They were to be, 'boots which will last a year without treading over or splitting.' As I looked at the man, I saw my comrade, the angel of death. No one but I saw that angel. Yet I knew him and knew that the sun would not set before the soul of the rich man would be required of him. And I thought to

myself, 'Here's this man, making provision for a year from now, not knowing that he will not live out the night.'

"Then I suddenly remembered the second word of God, 'You will learn that which is not given to men.' Already I learned that which dwells in men, now I also learned that which is not given to men. What is not given to men is to know their own needs. Then I smiled the second time. I rejoiced that I had seen my comrade angel and God had revealed to me His second word.

"Yet I still had more to learn. I still had to learn that whereby men live. So I lived on and waited for the time that God would reveal this to me. During my sixth year with you, there came the woman with the twin girls.

I recognized the little girls and knew that they had been preserved alive. As I recognized them, I thought to myself, 'The mother begged me for her children and I listened to her, thinking that without father or mother the little ones would die.' Yet this woman, a stranger, has fed them and raised them. When I saw the woman moved to pity for the children and shedding tears for them, I recognized in her the living God and understood that whereby men live. I knew that God revealed to me his third and last lesson and had pardoned me. Then, for the third time, I smiled."

Suddenly the angel's form became stripped of clothing and he was robed only in light, so that you could not bear to look upon him. His voice became more resonant as though not proceeding from his mouth but from Heaven itself.

The angel said, "Yes, I learned that every man lives not by talking and not by taking thought of himself, but by love. It was not given to the woman to know what was needed for the preservation of her children's lives. It was not given to the rich man to know what was needful for his body. Nor will any man know whether the setting sun will bring need of boots or death shoes. When I was a man, my life was saved for me, not by taking thought for myself, but by the love which dwelt in the passerby and his wife. So that they could feel for me pity and affection. Again the two orphans were preserved alive, not by any thought

which was taken for them, but by the love that dwelt in the heart of a strange woman. So that she could feel for them pity and affection. For indeed, all men live, not by the thought which they may take for themselves, but by the love which dwells in all mankind.

“I had known before that God gave life to men and desires them to live. Now I understood another thing. I understood that God would not have men live apart from one another but God would have men live together in unity. Therefore, God made men dependent on one another.

“Yes, I last understood that men only appear to live by taking care of themselves. But in reality they live by love alone. He that dwells in love, dwells in God and God in him. For God is love.”

Then the angel sang a hymn of praise to God and the hut trembled with the sound of his voice. The roof parted in the middle and a pillar of fire shot up from earth to heaven. Simon and his wife and children fell down upon their faces in adoration. As they did so, wings burst forth upon the angel’s back and he soared away into the sky.

When Simon opened his eyes again, the hut was as it had been before. There was no one there but his own precious family.

Wow! What a truly amazing story! I must admit when I read that story, a wave of emotion sweeps over me. Its power captivates me. The thought of “entertaining angels unawares” fascinates me. Do you think you may have come across an angel in your day-to-day living and not been aware of it? It seems possible to me. I believe much goes on in this world that we don’t understand, and a story like this helps awaken my mind to the possibilities.

Worksheet #29 asks for your impressions of this story. Some of your responses may prove helpful in examining your own life.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #29

Date: *4-1-00*

“That Whereby Men Live”

1. My first impression of the story is... *it doesn't seem too realistic.*

3. I related to the following character because...
the character of the impatient man reminded me of my boss.

4. The story motivated or moved me in what way?
The part about the lady's love for her adopted children was pretty moving. I can relate to loving children that much. The idea that God or his angels are involved in our everyday affairs is also kind of interesting. There is so much that I don't understand, I wish that I did have a better understanding of God.

5. Other impressions?

*CHAPTER 6***Your Ancestors**

When I was 17 years old, I found some old woodworking tools in the attic above my grandfather's garage. There were a table saw, jointer, sander, jig saw and lathe. These old tools fascinated me, so I carried them downstairs and decided to get them back into working order. I learned to enjoy using the woodworking tools. I made candle holders, Appalachian dulcimers, jewelry boxes, and other items.

One day as I was doing some work on the lathe, my dad came in and told me the chisels needed to be sharpened in order to cut better. He mentioned that my Uncle John, a craftsman who built grandfather clocks as a hobby, knew how to sharpen knives and chisels. Since our family was not the visiting kind, I had only seen Uncle John on a few occasions in my life. I wanted to learn to sharpen knives, though, so I called Uncle John and set up a time to meet with him.

I felt nervous going to Uncle John and Aunt Anna's house that night. As he led me back to his woodshop, Uncle John seemed a bit uncomfortable too. We simply did not know each other. I could see the skill in his hands as he showed me the basics of tool sharpening. I looked around his shop at the projects he was working on and gained great respect for his talents as a craftsman.

Then a strange thing happened. Uncle John, feeling more comfortable with me and perhaps sensing my respect for him, began telling me stories about his past. It was fascinating to listen to his life stories and to hear about the events that helped make him who he was. He was not a famous man and they were not dramatic stories, but they were true accounts. He told me the places he had worked, the things he had done and the interests he had. He told me about his parents and his upbringing. He showed me mandolins he had serenaded his wife with as a young man, and spoke of his children with affection and pride.

One particular story about his parents amused me. They were hard-working people who saved enough money to buy a new television set in the early 1950's (when all television sets were new). His father sat in their living room in front of their new TV, fascinated with this new-fangled device. Uncle John's mother came walking into the room in her nightgown and sat down to watch. Her husband said, "Mother, get a robe on!" It seems he drew the obvious conclusion that since he could see people on the screen, they could also see him. He did not want those men staring at his wife in her nightgown!

Uncle John, Aunt Anna, and I laughed hard at that story and enjoyed many others. We began that evening as strangers and built a bond that lasted until his death. Since then, I have spent many hours listening to relatives tell the stories of their lives, and it has been time well spent.

Family Stories

The lives of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents provide many clues for understanding our own lives. We gain important knowledge by investigating those who came before us. By listening to our ancestors' stories, chronicling them, and taking some time to reflect on them, we discover truths about our family that we never saw before. It is amazing how many times characteristics of a family are obvious to any casual observer, but not noticed by the family members. By considering your family's past, you gain an objective perspective.

We are not creating a detailed genealogy here (which can be tedious and difficult), but rather a collection of stories and interesting events. It should be fun and enjoyable. Talk to family members that are available and make notes regarding ancestors' names, significant dates, occupations, characteristics, and interesting stories. Worksheets #30 to #44 will help you gather this family information.

If you are comfortable working with a spreadsheet program, I have these worksheets in Microsoft Excel. The advantage of the spreadsheet program is the ability to see all the family traits for a specific category in one location. For example, if you fill in the blank for personality type for each of the four generations, the spreadsheet produces a chart illustrating all the personality types in your direct lineage. You can discover trends by viewing the information in this way that you otherwise may never notice.

While this exercise takes a bit of effort, if you put in the time, you will be delighted with the results. Begin by filling out Worksheet #30 (which lists your family tree to the fourth generation) with all the information you know. Next, call someone who knows information about your family and arrange an interview. Use Worksheets #30 to #44 as a basis for your interview. Try to do some other interviews utilizing these worksheets. Talk with anyone who can provide information about your ancestors.

Good sources of information may be your mother, father, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, or

friends. If you are older, you may not find many folks who remember much, but probably there are a few. If you are younger, you likely have many sources of information. Don't be shy! I guarantee you will learn some valuable things, and you will get the added benefit of documenting family stories, which are great to tell children, grandchildren, and others.

You may hesitate to start this exercise. You can't just sit by yourself and mull over your own ideas to accomplish this. You must get out and talk with people. It takes some effort to pull out stories about your ancestors. Utilize, "Who, What, When, Where, How, and How Much," along with the worksheet questions, and record as much as you can.

Be Aware of the Risks

Besides the difficulties mentioned above, this exercise also involves some risk. Most of us tend to picture our parents and grandparents "larger than life," almost superhuman. When we discover their strengths, weaknesses, fears, etc., we gain a different perspective. Perhaps their human frailties will become obvious. We need to see our parents and grandparents as fellow adults, fellow strugglers, if that's possible.

Another risk involves uncovering unpleasant information. Perhaps you discover that grandma actually was an alcoholic or that great-grandfather was a thief. It may be more comfortable to not know certain family information, but learning and understanding the truth goes with being an adult. You can choose your response to a situation much better when you know the truth.

For some people, reviewing the lives of parents and grandparents will cause pain. I feel great sorrow for children from an abusive, dysfunctional home environment. Wounds from those hurts go deep and are difficult to heal. One thing I know, however, is that discovering joy and purpose in your life requires you to "come to grips" with your past. If you had a terrible upbringing, this information can dramatically change your life.

In the Ten Commandments, God tells us to “Honor your father and your mother.” There are no conditions given. It does not say “Honor your parents if they were good,” or “Honor your parents if they did their job.” Each of us must honor our parents, if only to accept them for what they were and move on.

Remember -- we are embarking upon a lifelong journey for truth. If you had loving, involved parents, you caught a break and get to start on the path at point Y. If you had selfish, lazy parents, you have some additional issues to work through and get to start on the path at point X. Where you start doesn't matter, how you travel and where you finish matters.

As I chatted with my parents about their lives and the lives of their parents and grandparents, I was amazed at how much I learned. They also seemed to enjoy the walk down memory lane. I was especially surprised to discover the occupations of my grandparents and great-grandparents. There were many salesmen among my relatives. Like many engineers, I never had much respect for salesmen. But with so many salesmen in my ancestry, I realized something about myself. In my career, I had repeatedly (and unconsciously) moved toward selling. With my ancestral discovery, I became much more comfortable with that career trend and, in fact, made it a clear objective.

Story of Naaman

Naaman was commander of the army of the King of Aram. He lived with integrity, was highly regarded by the king, and successful in his military career. But Naaman had leprosy. He heard about a great prophet in Israel named Elisha who could cure leprosy. Naaman, loaded with gifts and presents, traveled to Israel to be healed. Elisha would not even see Naaman. Elisha simply sent a message, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River and you will be healed."

Naaman was furious! “I thought he would come, wave his hands over me, call on the Lord his God and heal me. Don't we

have better rivers in my country than the muddy Jordan? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he went off in a rage.

Naaman's servants appealed to him, "Our father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'"

Naaman realized this was good advice and dipped himself in the Jordan River seven times. And he was healed! (*Note: the complete Biblical account of Naaman can be found in II Kings, chapter 5.*)

This story illustrates a crucial concept. We can sit around and whine about the status of our lives. Or we can choose to take the small steps required to move us forward. To paraphrase Helen Keller, "We can not do everything but we can do something." If you truly want to improve your life, take some time to investigate your past.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #30

Date: *4-4-00***Family Tree to 4th Generation***Gaylon Miller*

Great Grandfather

Edward Miller

Grandfather

Virginia Sload

Great Grandmother

Samuel Miller

Father

Harrison Moseman

Great Grandfather

Gladys Moseman

Grandmother

Suzanna Burr

Great Grandmother

John Miller

Self

Howard Long

Great Grandfather

Robert Long

Grandfather

Deborah Dieterly

Great Grandmother

July Long

Mother

Stanley Schroeder

Great Grandfather

Leah Schroeder

Grandmother

Emma Steeley

Great Grandmother

John Miller filled out his family tree form to the fourth generation. He talked to his Mom and Dad and gathered any information he could. He also made a few telephone calls to some aunts and uncles who could give some additional information. While some of the stories were interesting, John was surprised at the difficulty he had writing about his parents. It was not easy for him to think about them as one adult thinks about an other adult. He persevered, however, and gained some insights into his background and himself.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #31

Date: *4-8-00***Father Profile**Father Name: *Samuel Tyler Miller*

Birth Info

Date: *Sep 9, 1936 at home on the farm in Denver, PA*

Where:

How:

Childhood Info

Siblings: *Mary Anne (4-17-1932), John Rob (7-4-1934)*Schools: *Suzanna Burr (11-19-1937), Mildred Mae (5-18-1939)*Stories: *Denver Public School*

Adult Info

Occupation: *Carpenter*

Characteristics (Valued attributes? Personality type? Love Language?) &

Stories:

*Loud, boisterous, quick-tempered, mean when drinking**Loved the Army but got in trouble for fighting. Worked real hard on the farm as a kid. Called Hoffy's Tavern his 2nd home.*

Death Info

Date: *NA*

Where:

How:

Strengths: *Hard worker, never sick, can build anything*Weaknesses: *Alcoholic, selfish*What did this person care about the most (central focus)? *Self/Drinking*

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #32

Date: *4-8-00***Mother Profile**Mother Name: *July Long*

Birth Info

Date: *July 7, 1938*Where: *Trenton, NJ in a hospital*

How:

Childhood Info

Siblings: *Fred Michael (1-13-1937) William James (5-8-1940)*Schools: *PS 24, Then Trenton HS*

Stories:

Adult Info

Occupation: *Homemaker*

Characteristics (Valued attributes? Personality type? Love Language?) & Stories:

*Pretty, Patient, Somewhat timid**Loved to play make-believe as a girl. Her father was real hard on the kids. Did not like school much. Met Dad when he came back from Korean War and was stationed at Fort Dix. They met at a bar near the base. Got married 6 mos later and moved to PA.*

Death Info

Date: *NA*

Where:

How:

Strengths: *Loving, patient, long-suffering, kind*Weaknesses: *Never stood up for herself (co-dependent?)*What did this person care about the most (central focus)? *Family*

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #36

Date: *4-8-00***Grandmother Profile (Mother's side)**Grandmother Name: *Leah Schroeder*

Birth Info

Date: *July 1, 1908 Trenton, NJ*

Where:

How:

Childhood Info

Siblings: *Michael Lloyd (1-10-1907)**Elizabeth Ann (9-25-1911), Gerald Roy (4-5-1913)*Schools: *Thru 8th grade in Trenton*

Stories:

Adult Info

Occupation: *Homemaker*Characteristics (Valued attributes? Personality type? Love Language?) &
Stories:*Strong willed, leader in the family**As a little girl she was always in trouble for disobeying. She ran away from home at 15 to get married to a circus roustabout. She married Grandpa a few years later.*

Death Info

Date: *Aug. 14, 1979 in Trenton of a stroke*

Where:

How:

Strengths: *Perseverance*Weaknesses: *Very harsh as a parent, pretty selfish*What did this person care about the most (central focus)? *Self*

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #43

Date: *4-8-00***Great-grandfather Profile (Mother's mother side)**Great-grandfather Name: *Stanley Schroeder*

Birth Info

Date: *May 2, 1878 near Munich, Germany, in the home*

Where:

How:

Childhood Info

Siblings: *Estelle Marie(12-12-1880) Jonathon Brent (5-30-1883)*Schools: *not much schooling*

Stories:

Adult Info

Occupation: *Blacksmith*Characteristics (Valued attributes? Personality type? Love Language?) &
Stories:*Strong, didn't say too much, skilled**Came to USA thru Ellis Island at 25 yrs. old with only \$20 in his pocket. Started his own blacksmith shop near Trenton by 35.*

Death Info

Date: *1941 at home in Trenton. Don't know from what.*

Where:

How:

Strengths: *Skilled tradesman*Weaknesses: *Heavy drinker*What did this person care about the most (central focus)? *Work*

*CHAPTER 7***Truths and Lies**

“We are generally better persuaded by the reasons we discover ourselves than by those given to us by others.”

Pascal

You have covered a tremendous amount of ground in the preceding pages. You have considered everything from whom you most admire... to your psychological make-up... to the lives of your ancestors. Perhaps you're wondering, "Does this book really go anywhere, or is it just a series of worksheets and ideas to make me think?" That's a reasonable question. I'll use a project management concept to explain how this information can change your life.

The Phases of a Project

Most of my career I managed projects, such as: setting up a sound system for a rock concert, designing and constructing buildings, or creating policies and procedures to turn around a company.

Every project needs an objective; without an objective, a project becomes aimless wandering. When I begin designing a building for an organization, I attempt to discover their objectives as early as possible. My degree of success on the project usually depends on how well I understand the organization's objectives. The objective of this book is to help you find greater joy in your life.

From the objective, we move to actually doing something. Most people struggle with how to begin. I start by identifying these necessary project phases:

1. Idea
2. Study
3. Analysis
4. Plan
5. Implementation

The idea phase on projects usually comes easily, "Wouldn't it be nice to have..." The idea phase of your project was as simple as obtaining this book and deciding to work through it. You liked the idea of gaining more joy in life and began moving in that direction.

The study phase involves the gathering of data to use in understanding the project. The preceding chapters are part of the study phase. Your completed worksheets now constitute a valuable body of data. But what can you do with it?

The analysis phase requires us to examine data and decide what is true, what is false, what is useful and what is not. In this chapter, we review the previous worksheets and decide what is

true and useful for our lives. We will also find some things that are not true or that cause us problems.

After pinpointing basic truth and lies, you will be ready to create a plan (see next chapter.) The implementation of the plan is discussed in the “Living the Plan” chapter.

This organized approach may seem like overkill, but consider the alternatives. Most people desire a change, but don’t want to go through this amount of effort. They try to jump right from *idea* to implement and usually fail. Keep putting forth the effort. This project approach to a joyful life works!

Finding the Meaning of Life

We are ready to tackle the analysis phase. Let’s start by considering a question that seems to be at the heart of our culture, “What is the meaning of life?”

It seems as if we ought to be able to identify a simple meaning to life, but we cannot. There exists too much complexity, suffering, pain and joy to summarize it in one sentence. To break complex problems into simple solutions is wisdom, but to grossly oversimplify is foolishness.

Victor Frankl, a psychiatrist who survived the horrors of Nazi Germany concentration camps, stated, “The meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person’s life at a given moment.”

Frankl goes on to explain that asking, “What is the meaning of life?” is not a reasonable question. It is like asking a chess master, “What is the best move in chess?” Of course, there is no one best move. The best move is determined in the context of the game being played, the position of the chessmen, the nature of your opponent, etc. In a given situation on a chessboard, there may be a best move. However, there is no overall best move, just as there is no simple answer to the meaning of life.

Finding Truths

Rather than tackling the overall meaning of life, which is too big a task, let's look for manageable chunks of truth. We need to know the truth and lies of our life.

In order to survive in this world, we all make judgments based on what we believe to be true. In short, we all have things we believe in. If not, we could not force ourselves out of bed in the morning. There would be too many uncertainties.

For example, think about walking on the sidewalk along a busy street. You walk without worrying that each passing car will drive onto the sidewalk and hit you. Why don't you worry? Because you understand that rules prohibit cars from driving on the sidewalk and hitting pedestrians. You can walk with unconcern because you believe the cars will stay on the road.

If you didn't believe this truth and many others like it, the world would seem too dangerous and scary; you would not venture out. Of course, some people do live this way, paralyzed by fear. Most of us, though, tend to "go with the odds" and accept the many norms of modern society. We accept things such as which side of the road to drive on, paying for things we want rather than stealing them, the availability of food for our next meal, and many other assumptions.

There is not much value in listing all these assumptions about how society operates. But there is value in contemplating and recording our foundational truths. These constitute our present world-view. Having knowledge of foundational beliefs provides a great advantage. Decision-making gets easier when you know your foundational truths.

Most of us spend little time considering our foundational truths; it feels odd to even try. I named eight of my personal truths to provide an example. I reviewed my previous worksheets and wrote statements I believe to be both true and significant to my life. They are concepts I don't have to re-think with each decision. I count on these truths for my day-to-day living.

Ned Pelger Truth #1: It is hard work to find the truth

One of my favorite quotes from Samuel Butler helps illustrate this: “Life is like playing a violin solo in public and learning the instrument as one goes on.” I don’t know why life contains so much struggle; I just know that it does. Life challenges us continuously. We can choose to whine and avoid or work and persevere.

We will not discover truth by lying in bed and waiting for it. Truth requires work. We must think about truth and not be too lazy to learn.

Many people put off consideration of the truth because they believe they need to have their mental affairs in order before starting. They think they need to attain an emotionally tensionless state prior to considering the truth. These ideas are wrong.

We must start from where we are; it’s that simple. As we challenge ourselves, as we struggle toward some worthwhile goal of our own choosing, we will find bits of truth along the way. But we must set ourselves on a course and begin, we must be willing to work.

Helen Keller said, “So much has been given to me, I have no time to ponder over that which has been denied.” She had neither sight nor hearing, yet she inspired millions of people with her world-wide lectures and other activities. She also traveled far on her journey toward truth. As a child, Helen lived in a self-absorbed world, full of luxury and ease. She existed, not seeing, hearing nor speaking, just roaming around on her parents’ estate. She was willful and undisciplined. Her teacher, Anne Sullivan, broke through the communication barrier with Helen. The world became real and understandable as Helen worked to learn names of objects, to communicate through sign language and eventually to speak.

You and I pass through a similar process. We begin living in a self-absorbed, childlike way. Then we start paying attention to others, to our surroundings and to ourselves. We learn to truly see with our eyes, truly hear with our ears and truly pay attention

to those things going on around us. This increased level of attention takes effort, but the effort produces gems of understanding that are ours to keep.

Ned Pelger Truth #2: We have the freedom to choose our response

Sometimes we can control what happens to us and sometimes we cannot. For example, if we are out for a walk with a friend and a tornado suddenly descends, we cannot remove the wind. While we cannot control the situation (the weather), we can choose our response. We can run for home immediately, curl up and try to hide, hold onto our friend, forget about our friend, totally panic, or any number of other things. We have the freedom to choose our response.

Action is a choice. It may not always be a conscious choice, we may just react at a subconscious level. Or, we could let our emotional thinking system choose our response. Many waste their whole lives defaulting to their emotions, not exercising their freedom to choose. We must remember the important truth, though, that whether we exercise it or not, we definitely have the freedom to choose our response in any situation.

This concept is well-illustrated by Victor Frankl. He wrote about life in the concentration camps where every dignity, every right, was stripped away. Even in that situation, with so much freedom lost, he states that one still had the freedom to choose one's response. We need to remember that in all situations we have that freedom.

If our child is diagnosed with cancer or our spouse is violently killed in an automobile accident or if we win the lottery, in each case we have the freedom to choose our response. We cannot always control what happens to us. However, we can control our response to every situation. This puts the responsibility on us.

My wife thinks I'm a little goofy because of my fascination with labor camps and concentration camps. Often when a

difficulty arises in my life, I think of concentration camps. The comparison forces me to conclude that I have no major problems, just minor annoyances. The following accounts of life in labor camps have been a major influence:

- Man's Search for Meaning by Victor Frankl
- Alexander Dolgun's Story: An American in the Gulag by Alexander Dolgun
- This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen by Tadeusz Borowski
- A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch by Alexander Solzhenitsyn

One fascinating thread runs through all these stories. Even in the midst of such pain, suffering, and squalor, there was a working human society in existence in these prisons. Even though the people were stripped of almost everything, many retained their sense of humor and deep spiritual commitment.

Victor Frankl explains, "It is easy for the outsider to get the wrong conception of camp life, a conception mingled with sentiment and pity. Little does he know of the hard fight for existence which raged among the prisoners. This was an unrelenting struggle for daily bread and for life itself, for one's own sake or for that of a good friend." Frankl makes it clear that life in the camps was still life, with all its crazy ups and downs. He further writes, "Humor was another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation. It is well known that humor, more than anything else in the human make-up, can afford an aloofness and an ability to rise above any situation, even if only for a few seconds."

As we consider truth, the words of Victor Frankl challenge us, "Man is ultimately self-determining. What he becomes--within the laws of endowment and environment--he has made out of himself. In the concentration camps for example, in this living laboratory and this testing ground we watched and witnessed some of our comrades behave like swine while others behaved

like saints. Man has both potentialities within himself. Which one is actualized depends on our decisions, but not on our conditions.”

The word “responsibility” comes from having the “ability” to choose one’s “response.” Improvement requires taking responsibility. No matter what happened to us in the past, no matter where we are now, we must stop blaming others and use our ability to choose our response. Choosing our responses, as opposed to just reacting emotionally, lies at the heart of finding joy.

Ned Pelger Truth # 3: We all sin

Many people struggle with the concept of sin. Perhaps, as children, they were lectured about sin and were turned off. Perhaps they have heard TV evangelists preach about sin in a ridiculous, hypocritical way. Or perhaps they just don’t like the idea of being judged by anyone else’s standard.

I think of sin as simply missing the mark. Imagine an archer standing with his bow and a quiver full of arrows. He faces a target 50 yards away (half the length of a football field). Carefully he removes an arrow from his quiver and aims at the target. From that distance, the bull’s-eye appears to be just a dot. He releases the arrow and it smacks into the target one inch to the right of the bull’s-eye. The archer shoots again and hits two inches above the bull’s-eye. Over and over he shoots, always hitting near the center of the target, but only occasionally hitting the center of the bull’s-eye. Even though he shoots quite well, most shots fail to hit the exact center of the bull’s-eye; he misses the mark.

When we know the right thing to do and don’t do it, we miss the mark. We all sin because we don’t do the right thing every moment of every day of our lives. Human beings aren’t perfect. We all miss the mark on a regular basis.

A more challenging question is, “Why do we miss the mark?” Are we basically good, noble creatures that occasionally

fail due to a defective upbringing? Or are we, at the core of our human nature, self-seeking and lazy? There is no question in my optimistic mind that there is a tremendous amount of good in the hearts of most people. I also believe a baseness exists in every person. This may be well hidden (sometimes masterfully hidden), but it exists and will surface from time to time.

It is essential, as a mature adult, to be reconciled to this fact. Every person we deal with will disappoint us from time to time. Every person we know sins and that is truth. Knowing this, we can build relationships that stand the test of difficult times. On the other hand, if we expect only good from others, we will be frequently disappointed. We will have few, if any, strong, lasting relationships because no one will live up to our expectations.

Ned Pelger Truth #4: We must admit our ignorance to learn the truth

I spoke with a father who had been sexually abusing his daughters and his attitude amazed me. He had no guilt; he had no shame. He convinced himself that the children were bad, and he himself was completely faultless. He simply could not bear the thought that he could be in the wrong.

If a person is ill, he must recognize and admit that he is ill. Then he can seek a cure. Many folks, particularly those with psychological disorders, never move toward a cure because they never admit their problem. They refuse to face the truth of their situation.

Our search for knowledge is much the same. We can never learn if we believe we know everything already. We remove a load of stress from ourselves when we are able to admit that we do not have all the answers.

Ned Pelger Truth #5: Finding truth coincides with developing personal character

Dietrich Bonhoffer, a Christian martyr from Germany during World War II wrote, “Who can be faithful in the great things if he has not learned to be faithful in the things of daily life?” When I consider the wise men and women I have known, they all had one thing in common. Each of these people I admired lived with integrity and character.

In the hassles and irritations of our daily lives, we demonstrate integrity and character by our actions and the choices we make. Character is sometimes defined as what we do when no one is watching. I know of no one who has increased their level of understanding and truth who does not live with integrity and honesty.

Ned Pelger Truth #6: Joy motivates us to the truth

When we consider all the hard work and difficulty required to change, why bother? The answer lies in one simple word, “Joy.” When I discover a new truth, the joy I feel always amazes me. That great feeling motivates me. Without the joy of results, we would abandon life’s struggles in despair.

As I watched our children grow and learn and change, I observed this truth in action. As our son learned to use a computer, he experienced the joy of discovery. He felt the satisfaction of being able to do more things and go more places. He put up with the aggravation, the repeated failing, in order to succeed. And with that success came joy.

When our daughter decided she wanted to stop sucking her thumb, I heard the struggle in her voice as she told me how hard it is to quit. Yet she was determined to find a way to stop this habit. The joy of success motivated her in that struggle, as it does each of us, whether it be the struggle for understanding, the struggle for change, or the struggle for truth.

Ned Pelger Truth #7: Love is action

Unfortunately, I am at an age where I see too many of my friends and acquaintances getting divorced. One of the partners always seems to say, “I just don’t love him (or her) anymore.” They express it with such finality, as if to say, “What else could I do? It is simply out of my hands.” They speak of love as a sentiment, or an emotion, beyond their control.

If you have ever “fallen in love,” you remember the experience. Everything in your life paled in importance when compared to being with your lover. You thought about almost nothing else except the next time you would be with your precious beloved. Psychologists call this the “in-love experience.”

While this feeling seems wonderful, we need to remember it is only a feeling, a passing sentiment. No one retains that “in-love experience” permanently; like any emotional experience, its intensity will fade with time. Admittedly, it’s great while it lasts, but it will pass. Instead of thinking of love as an emotion (something you feel), think of love as an action (something you do.) “To love” is an action verb, and loving becomes a series of choices we make.

With this view, love becomes an intentional choice. For example, my wife Debby chooses to love me. On a particular day, I may act mean and critical toward her (perhaps because I’m tired). Nobody likes this type of behavior and Debby is no exception. It would be natural for her to respond in kind. Typically, though, Debby will choose to respond with love and simply overlook the offense. This response “takes all the wind out of my sails.” I feel badly about being nasty and eventually get around to apologizing. Of course, sometimes the roles are reversed (except for the apologizing part!)

Debby chooses to love me even when she does not feel like it. She chooses to love me even when her feelings have just been hurt. She chooses to love me, to overlook an offense, because she knows that true love is action.

M. Scott Peck in his book, The Road Less Traveled, talks about love being even more than giving. Love is judicious giving and judicious withholding as well. We must not simply give our beloved what they want; we must attempt to give them what they truly need. Love requires us to think and often make painful decisions.

When we try to love in this manner, we come face-to-face with the reality that love is much more than an emotion. Love becomes an active struggle. We fail some days and fantastically succeed other days. Love becomes an action adventure.

Ned Pelger Truth #8: There is a universal battle between good and evil

I have known some very good people in my life and some very evil ones. I have known people that lived for the good of others and people who cruelly abused those who were closest to them. While most of us fall in the middle of these extremes, I've come to realize there is something going on in this big old world, something larger than our minds can get a handle on.

I experience the struggle between good and evil in my own life and observe it in the lives of others. Sometimes good wins; sometimes evil wins.

C.S. Lewis writes, "There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and countered-claimed by Satan." I believe he means we cannot be neutral as we live our lives. We are either moving in God's direction or moving in the direction of evil.

Many people acknowledge a kind and loving God, but cannot accept the reality of a force of evil. The concept of evil is too unpleasant and therefore not considered. How does one explain when terrible things (such as serious illness, death of a loved one, natural disaster, etc.) happen to good, moral people? Is it merely a mistake...something that ought not to occur...something that God wishes would not be? It is hard for us to understand why the righteous suffer.

We could claim that God does not have the capability to control these situations. A view of God as kind and loving, but not Almighty would explain many difficult-to-understand events. Personally, I cannot accept a view of a God who has so little power, a God who is not Almighty and All-knowing. It just doesn't jive with what I've experienced of God.

The book of Job describes the relationship between man and God. But it is not a closed relationship. A third party exists, the evil one, the devil, Satan or whatever name you choose to use. He alienates people from God. The evil one has a significant amount of power and uses many methods to keep people alienated from God. Suffering, busyness, lack of focus and even success can be used by Satan to keep individuals separated from God. For some reason, which we do not understand, God allows the evil one to exist and allows us the freedom to choose our loyalty.

The simple truth that we choose to serve either God or evil becomes even clearer in this quote from Joshua, the leader of the people of Israel. He said, in Joshua 24:14-15, "Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the river and in Egypt and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. Whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the river or the god of the Amorites in whose land you are living, *but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.*"

Your Truths

My eight personal truths help me live. Every single day, these truths form the foundation of my behavior choices. As I make day-to-day decisions, and when I consider important, long-range issues, I utilize these truths. The truths are my beliefs and knowing them helps me live my life with integrity.

You may not agree with the things I believe to be truths. What you need to do, though, is to develop your own. Your list

need not be fancy or well-explained. The ideas can be simple or complex. The importance of this exercise involves getting clear awareness of the beliefs that affect you. Record these on Worksheet #45.

Consider the sayings you often use. For example, my kids feel like screaming when for the ten thousandth time I tell them, “It builds character,” when they are struggling with a difficulty. I usually say it without thinking, but as you observed in my list of truths, I consider character essential to successful living. We need strength of character; we need to go through difficult, hard times in order to grow.

Read through your previous worksheets and look for recurring themes. This worksheet may be a challenge, but I encourage you to take the time to complete it. Then refer back to it from time to time, and additional foundational truths can be added.

We should return to our project management framework to clarify one point. This worksheet does not constitute a plan; we are not yet in the plan stage. We are still in the study and analysis phase. We are gathering data and analyzing that data so we will be properly prepared when the time comes to make our plan.

Defining Lies

We deceive ourselves every day. The lies of our lives are concepts we consciously or unconsciously believe, but which are not true. For example, I have known several beautiful women who saw themselves as ugly. By society’s standards, they were quite attractive, but what they saw in the mirror was not. This lie shaped their responses in many situations. If we believe something to be true, we will make our decisions and live our lives based on that belief regardless of its validity.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #45

Date: *4-11-00*

Things I Believe to be True

1. *Life is not fair.*
2. *It always pays to be courteous.*
3. *If you are going to try something, always do your best.*
4. *Alcoholism is a brutal disease.*
5. *It is a good thing to protect those who can't protect themselves.*
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

We need to expose these personal lies. We need to recognize the lies in order to deal with them. As we name the lie, it has less power over us. Don't expect this exercise to be easy. Generally our most dominating lies originated in early childhood and are rooted in our subconscious. When we have the courage to bring these lies into our conscious mind, we begin the process of overcoming the false belief.

As in the "Truth" section, I am listing some lies I encounter in my own life. Again, you do not have to agree with me. They are here for the purpose of illustration.

Ned Pelger Lie #1: I have a right to be happy

This seems to be the mantra of our times. Happiness is viewed as all-important and our absolute right as human beings. Where do you think this idea comes from? I doubt it came from the pioneers and early settlers; they probably were content to just survive. The writers of the Constitution considered "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" to be essential, but there is a big difference between pursuing happiness and having an absolute right to be happy. In fact, the "right to happiness" concept most likely emerged only in the 20th century. As our lives became easier (electricity, social security, reduced work week with much more leisure time), the idea that we deserve perpetual happiness also evolved.

While I adamantly believe we can have tremendous joy, I don't think we can, or even should, strive to be always happy. By definition, happiness is satisfaction, the enjoyment of pleasure. Most can agree that a central focus on pleasure is not healthy. This short-term, feel-good happiness rarely promotes growth. It is usually selfish, and lacking in commitment.

Of course, I'm not saying it's wrong to be happy. I love to have fun and laugh as much as anyone I know. When I go through a time of struggle or difficulty, though, I need to understand its significance. I must not suddenly feel abandoned by God. My life ought not to consist of constant happiness,

pleasure and enjoyment. A balanced life contains struggles, joys, concerns and happiness, all in their place.

Victor Frankl, in Man's Search for Meaning, wisely states: "Suffering cannot be removed from life, just as fate and death cannot. Without suffering and death, human life cannot be complete. The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity - even under the most difficult circumstances - to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified and unselfish. Or in a bitter fight for self-preservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal."

We are not guaranteed perpetual happiness, nor would it be a good thing. In fact, much of the meaning of our lives comes through struggle.

Ned Pelger Lie #2: Possessions provide security

We all know this statement is false, yet so many of us fall into the trap of living as though it was true. Think of a person who struggled his whole life to climb the ladder of success and then died suddenly. Perhaps a heart attack, maybe cancer or even a car accident took his life. All his hard work and personal wealth did not provide any protection when the angel of death came around. At those times, we generally say things like, "Life is short; we ought to pay attention to the things that are truly important." But, then time moves on, and we get caught once again in the rat race of working too hard and buying lots of stuff.

We must consider how we view our possessions and our status in life. Do we always need more? Do we always need to get to the next higher level at work? We must evaluate how much of our time and energy goes into the acquisition and maintenance of possessions. We need to consider if the promotion we want will really be worth the cost. I am not saying we should not work hard; I am saying we should consider our motivation and make our decisions wisely.

I worked as a foreman for an excavation company when I was a young man. We had a rough crew; at one point my crew consisted of six guys and five of them were on probation or parole. I learned a tremendous amount at that job. Much of what I learned came from an old equipment operator named Steve Balach (who was not one of the ones on probation or parole). Steve was in his mid-fifties while I was in my mid-twenties. Steve's family was raised while my family was just beginning.

On rainy days we could not work, and I would send all the guys home. Being salaried, I would stay at the job trailer. Steve would sit with me for a few hours, and we would talk. I mostly listened. Steve had lived a fascinating life filled with gusto. When we talked about work, he would say to me, "Ned, when I was your age, I thought I was going to conquer the world. I worked all the time, trying to make my mark. You know, Ned, my two boys kind of grew up without me. I was just too busy working. Now they're grown and here I am still working. Don't miss what I did, Ned! Take the time with your kids when they're young; you'll never regret it!"

Steve died suddenly a couple of years later and I miss him. I think about him sometimes when I get too busy and I remember his words of wisdom. When I feel like I simply don't have enough time, I remember that there is always enough time to do the truly important things. I start considering my priorities and can feel the stress lessening.

My material wants and needs often get reversed. I focus on possessions, thinking they can help define me or protect me. In reality, increased possessions make me more anxious rather than more secure. The idea of losing those things is scary. As John D. Rockefeller said, "How much money is enough? Just a little more would do it."

We are told in our culture in many different, subtle ways that we can have everything. Understand the dangerous deception in this statement. We cannot have everything; we must carefully choose where our treasure is.

Ned Pelger Lie #3: We deserve the treatment we received early in our lives

We all had different upbringings and most of us tend to see the family we grew up in as normal. We know our own family best and use that relationship as a frame of reference for evaluating the rest of the world. As we grew up, though, we observed that other families were different from our own.

Some people were fortunate to be raised in very healthy families, surrounded by love and support. We previously discussed these highly functional families which fostered emotional and spiritual growth. If you were raised in such a family, you know you were blessed. You need to realize, though, that you did nothing to deserve this good fortune (you were simply born.)

Conversely, some people were raised amidst evil. Every positive attribute, every sign of growth was beaten down and snuffed. Those who were raised in very unhealthy families took constant beatings to their self-esteem. Physical, mental, emotional and/or sexual abuse occurred. If you were raised in an unhealthy, dysfunctional family, if you were treated badly early in your life, you need to accept the fact that you did not deserve that treatment.

M. Scott Peck in his book, The People of the Lie, raises some important issues about evil visited upon children. He states that children are the innocent victims of much of the evil that occurs in this world. And much of the most vile behavior is inflicted upon children by their parents. It is truly difficult for a child, even an adult child, to come to the realization that his parents do not, or did not, love him in a healthy way. However difficult it may be, if you were treated badly as a child, you must choose to believe that it was not your fault.

We are more than the sum of the events in our lives. We have the capacity to take those events, both good and bad, and learn from them. We can turn dross into silver. The times that

seemed like a painful waste can become some of our strongest guiding lessons if we look for their significance.

Ned Pelger Lie #4: Only good people are in church

I was trying to decide about using a certain subcontractor on a large construction project. I had a slightly bad feeling about the owner of the firm, but he seemed to be such a dedicated Christian man. He had Christian mottoes on his letterhead and business cards and espoused all the right principles about honesty and integrity. I decided we would give his firm the job (to be honest, they were also the best price by far, so there was an element of greed involved on my part).

That decision cost our firm a quarter of a million dollars. The man billed for materials on the job site, then took those same materials to another site and billed for them again. He stole things and then shut down his company in the middle of the project and was unable to complete the job.

As I handled damage control, I remember feeling especially betrayed since I trusted this man's Christianity to make him do the right thing. After many other business dealings and discussions with friends, I have come to the conclusion that, unfortunately, the amount of immoral behavior inside the Christian church about equals the amount found outside the church. The reality is that we are all humans, all make mistakes, and all exhibit both good and bad behaviors at different times.

I do believe people with a true spiritual commitment behave much more decently than they would without it. But church attendance does not indicate one's spiritual sincerity. There are so many social and personal reasons to attend a church; don't assume all people are in church for spiritual reasons.

While we will find many truly good people in church, we will also find some of the worst people imaginable. People attend church for many reasons: they may want to be part of a friendly social group, they may want business contacts, they may use the church for appearance's sake (to help hide their true behavior), or

they may truly be interested in spiritual growth. Be aware that we will find both very good people and very evil people most anywhere we go, even in church.

Worksheet #46 quizzes you about the common lies of your life. Perhaps you're aware of some that hinder you every day. On the other hand, this concept may challenge you greatly. No answers may occur to you. Remember, these worksheets get upgraded as you live and learn. If you strive for understanding, your subconscious hindrances will become clear over time.

Favorite Quotes and Stories

As I strive to understand truths and lies in my life, I often find wisdom from quotations. I love to read quote books. I enjoy finding sayings that make me laugh or think. Do you ever hear a joke you'd like to remember and promptly forget it? It's frustrating.

Worksheet #47 provides a place to record that information. You'll enjoy rereading your list of funny and notable sayings and stories. Over time, you will add entries and your earlier ones will mean more to you. This database will help color your every day speech and be helpful if you must speak for a special occasion.

The computer adds a real benefit here. Rather than writing all these quotes and stories on paper and reviewing them page by page, a database program allows you excellent access to the recorded information. Appendix A tells how you can obtain the software program on Microsoft Access for your use.

By entering the quotes and stories into the Access database, you'll be able to sort by author or key words. You can also search to find one word that you remember from the quote or story. If you take some time to start entering this information, you will develop a great personal resource.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #46

Date: *4-14-00***Common Lies in my Life**

1. *If you love others, they will love you back.*
2. *Being good at work provides security.*
3. *Only good people are in church.*
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

If you completed the worksheets through this book, you had quite a bit of information to review when identifying your beliefs and deceptions. I hope you carefully considered those things you believe to be true and useful, and those things which are false and cause you problems. This type of analysis provides excellent information from which to begin your plan for change. You now have assembled all the tools and materials needed to build that plan.

The following story by Leo Tolstoy is a warning to make sure the items in your plan are truly what you want. “Be careful what you pray for, because you just may get it,” is a wise word of caution. Many times the things we believe would make us happy are not what we need.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #47

Date: *4-15-00***My Favorite Quotes & Stories**

1. *No man ever listened himself out of a job. Calvin Coolidge*
2. *Some guy hit my fender, and I said to him, "Be fruitful and multiply," but not in those words. Woody Allen.*
3. *Start every day off with a smile and get it over with. W.C. Fields*
4. *Experience is what allows you to recognize a mistake when you make it again.*
5. *Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former. Albert Einstein*

Story by Leo Tolstoy

“How Much Land Does a Man Require?”

An older sister came from a small city to visit her younger sister. The older one was married to a merchant and the younger to a farmer. As the two drank tea and talked, the older sister began to boast and make much of her life in town. She lived in ease and comfort, dressed her children well, had nice things to eat and drink, and could walk to the theater.

The younger sister was irked at this and responded by running down the life of the merchant's wife and making much of her own country life. “For my part, I should not care to exchange my life for yours,” she said. “I give you that ours is an uneventful existence and we don't know much excitement. But yet you, on the other hand, with all your fine living, must either do a very large trade or be ruined. You know the proverb, ‘Loss is Gain's older brother’. Yes, you may be rich today but tomorrow you may find yourself in the street. We have a better way than that here in the

country. The farmer's stomach may be thin but it's long. We may never be rich, but we'll always have enough to eat."

The older sister responded quickly, "Enough indeed! Enough with nothing but your wretched pigs and calves. Enough with no fine dresses or company. Why, however hard your man may work, you have to live in mud and you will die there. And yes, your children after you."

"Oh no," replied the younger sister. "It's like this with us. Though we may live hard, at least the land is our own. And we have no need to bow and scrape to anyone. But in the city, there is always scandal. Today everything may be okay but tomorrow any of many temptations may come to your husband and your lives will be ruined. Isn't that true?"

Pakhom, the younger sister's husband, had been listening near the stove. "That is true," he said. "I've been turning over Mother Earth since my childhood so I've had no time to get any foolishness in my head. Yet I only have one grievance--too little land. Only give me land and I fear no man. No, not even the devil himself."

The two women finished their tea, chatted a little longer about clothing, washed up the dishes and went to bed. All this time the devil had been sitting behind the stove and heard everything. He was delighted when the peasant's wife led her husband to brag. Led him on to boast that once given land, he would not fear even the devil himself.

"Splendid," thought the devil, "I'll try a little trick with you. I'll give you much land and then take it away again."

Near these farmers there lived a lady landowner who had about 600 acres of land. She got on well with the tenant farmers and did not abuse their rights. However, as she aged she took on a retired soldier as an overseer. This soldier was vicious. No matter how careful Pakhom was, some of his horses got into the lady's oats or a cow got into her garden. He was fined for each of these offenses.

Pakhom became more angry with each of these fines and took it out on his family. He eventually had to put his animals in

the feedlot. He regretted the costs but it caused him much less anxiety in other ways. As winter came one year, the lady landowner was planning to sell her land. Rumor had it that the overseer was going to buy it. All the nearby farmers were dismayed.

“If that overseer gets the land, we’re in big trouble.” So, the farmers got together and decided they would try to buy the land as a group. The old woman agreed to this arrangement but as the farmers met on various occasions, they could not decide who would buy which lots. Finally, the old woman agreed that she would sell the lots to the individual farmers.

Pakhom didn't know what to do. He saw his neighbors buying ground, some of them paying half down and letting the rest stand over for two years. He said to his wife, “If the others buy all the land, I'll be left out in the cold. Everybody is buying some. We had better get hold of 20 acres also. We can't make a living as things are now for the overseer takes out all the profits in fines.”

Since they had 100 rubles in savings, they needed to find additional money. They sold half of their bees, a young colt that was just born and let out their son to service. With this money, they were able to settle on the 20 acres.

Pakhom was truly happy at this time. He borrowed a little money to buy some seed, planted it and had a wonderful crop. He was able to pay off both the seed money and the rest of the land within the first year. He was able from his own land to cut his hay, gather his firewood and graze his cattle. Whenever he went out on his estate, either to plow or inspect the crops, he felt overjoyed. The very grass seemed different from other grasses, the flowers seemed to bloom differently. Before it was just land, now it was land with a difference.

So Pakhom lived like this for a time and was happy. Indeed all would have been fine if the other peasants had let Pakhom's corn and pasture alone. He complained many times to them about letting their animals roam in his crops. Again and again, Pakhom drove them out and overlooked the matter. But finally, he lost his temper and made a complaint before the court.

He knew from his own experience that the peasants let the animals roam only from lack of land, not to cause him problems, but it simply could not be allowed. He must teach them a lesson. So first he took one person to court and then another. He had one person fined and then another.

Soon there were strong feelings against Pakhom and some of the neighbors stole crops on purpose. In fact, one neighbor stripped bark off ten of his fine linden trees. Pakhom went wild when he saw the damage. He thought it must be Sempka that would have done such a thing and hauled him into court. Of course, Sempka was found not guilty because there was no evidence. Pakhom screamed at the magistrates, accusing them of being thieves along with Sempka. More and more, Pakhom stayed away from the group of farmers that were his neighbors.

Around this time a traveling farmer stopped in at Pakhom's house. He mentioned land available to the north. It was wonderful land and it grew such rye. The traveling farmer said the straw of the rye was tall enough to hide a horse and thick enough to make a sheaf with just five handfuls. He also told Pakhom that one hard-working farmer had gone there with nothing and now grew 150 acres of wheat and made 5000 rubles last year alone.

This story set Pakhom's soul on fire. "Why should I stay here poor and cramped when I might be making such a fine living as that? I will sell out here, both land and homestead, and go build myself a new house and farm there with the money. Here, in this cramped up spot, life is one long worry. At least I can go and find out."

At the end of the summer, Pakhom decided to visit the place. He walked 300 miles and was overjoyed when he got there. He could get 20 acres of free land for every member of his family and he could buy additional land with the money he brought.

Pakhom and his family relocated to this new area and started with 100 acres of land. But of course all was not quite marvelous. While he could grow corn on all his land, the best crop to grow was white Turkish wheat. To grow this crop, one

needed to sow the land one year, harvest, then let the land sit fallow for two years. In order to maximize his profits, Pakhom would need to find new land each year on which to grow Turkish wheat.

He moved his family often, going from place to place. He began to get frustrated that he did not have his very own grand estate where he could let land sit fallow without moving around the country. He entered into negotiations with a farmer who had become destitute, to buy 1500 acres at a very good price. Pakhom paid 1000 rubles for the land. Right after he bought the land another traveling farmer came to see him.

“I have found the best land in the world,” the farmer told him. “I was able to buy 15,000 acres for only 1000 rubles. The land fronts on a river, is all open grass and very flat. You would not find land like that in a year around here.”

Pakhom was depressed. “Why did I give 1000 rubles for 1500 acres when I could have 15,000 acres.” He decided he must go and find out about this story. Pakhom walked 400 miles to the land of the Bashkirs.

This was a different type of country. The people were simple. They did not plow nor eat corn. Their main substance was mare's milk, which the women made into a drink called kamiss. Then they turned the kamiss into cheese. The only food the Bashkirs cooked was mutton and their only amusement was pipe playing. Yet, they were a sweet and cheerful people who kept holiday all year around.

When they caught sight of Pakhom coming into their midst they were pleased. He set up drinks for everyone, gave presents and made friends easily. He told them how he wished to buy land. They, being a simple people, told him they had much and were glad to sell land to him.

The head of the Bashkirs came into the group at this time. Pakhom could tell that this was a person of importance and saved his best presents for him. As he gave these presents, they spoke and Pakhom asked if he could buy land. The head of the

Bashkirs said, "Certainly, you can have as much land as you would like."

Pakhom thought, "These are truly simple people but I must get something in writing so they do not give me land and then take it away." He said aloud, "Thank you, kind sir, for the offer of the land, but I, of course, need to know which land I shall have and how much it will cost."

The leader smiled, "Yes... you may have a day's worth of land for 1000 rubles."

"How many acres would that include?" Pakhom asked, confused, for he had never heard of this day rate.

"We do not reckon land in that way," said the leader. "We sell only by the day. That is to say, as much land as you can walk around in a day, that much land is yours. That is our measure and the price is 1000 rubles." Pakhom was astounded. "Why a man might walk a great deal in a day," he said.

The leader smiled. "Well, in all events, it will be yours. Only, there is one condition. You must return to the same spot from where you started before sunset or your money is forfeited."

"How do you decide on that spot?" Pakhom wondered.

"You may choose any spot you like," replied the leader. "I and my people will stand there first thing in the morning and we will wait for you. We will send a rider behind you to plant stakes to show your path. As much land as you circle, that land will be yours."

Pakhom accepted these terms and decided to make an early start in the morning. They talked more, drank some more kamiss and ate some more mutton. Eventually, Pakhom went to bed. As Pakhom lay in bed, he could get no sleep. He was too excited. "What great land there is here," he said to himself. "Tomorrow I will mark out a large Promised Land for myself. I can walk at least 30 miles and that would make over 30,000 acres of land. Then I will be under no one's thumb."

Too excited to sleep, Pakhom tossed and turned through the night. He finally fell asleep near morning and began to dream. He saw himself lying in a wagon and heard someone laughing

and talking outside. As he sat up to see who was laughing so much, he saw the leader of the Bashkirs rolling on the ground in laughter. Pakhom walked over to him to find what was so funny.

When Pakhom approached him, he saw it was not the leader of the Bashkirs, but the traveling farmer who had told him about this land. Then he saw the face turn into the farmer who told him of his previous ground. The face always laughed and laughed. Finally, he saw the devil himself in that face with horns and hooves, still laughing at him.

As he looked away, he saw a man, barefoot and wearing only a shirt and pants lying flat on his back, dead. Pakhom looked into the man's face and saw it was his own face. He jumped and awoke. "It is time to start," he thought, "I must get these good people awake and moving."

Pakhom went around the village and awoke the Bashkirs. They met at the spot Pakhom chose. As the first sunlight beamed over the distant mountains, Pakhom started to walk at a good pace towards the east. He had laid his money in his hat on top of a knoll and all the people waited there for him. He did not walk too quickly, but he kept a good pace. As the sun came up, he felt comfortable. He walked and calculated, smiling about the beautiful land.

As he continued to walk, the day grew warm and he shed clothes. After he had walked about eight miles, he decided he should veer to the left to keep his calculations true. He looked back. He could barely see the knoll from where he had started. Still the land was so flat and the further he walked, the better the land got. He was beginning to get tired as he walked through the late morning but he thought, "I must not sit down to rest. I don't want to fall asleep. I should stop and just take lunch."

After lunch the walking became easy, for the meal had revived his strength. The hot afternoon sun wore on him, though he said to himself, "An hour's pain may a century gain." After he went about 15 miles, he came upon some beautiful land near a dry ravine. He thought to himself, "Oh what a pity to leave that piece of ground out. Flax would grow so splendidly there."

So he kept on straight till he encompassed the ravine and had a stake placed there. Looking back at the knoll, he could barely see the people. He knew that they were probably not much more than 10 miles away, but the afternoon was passing.

He decided, "I must go straight home now. No matter how rough the land is. I must not take in a single piece. I have enclosed sufficient as it is." So Pakhom headed straight back for the knoll.

He found the walking very difficult. His feet ached and hurt him. He was beginning to tire. He would have given anything to rest yet he knew he must regain the knoll by sunset. The sun would not wait. He staggered and said to himself, "Surely I have not miscalculated! I have not taken in too much land to get back. Oh, but there is such a long way to go and I am so tired. I cannot have come all this way to have all my money and all my toil gone in vain."

Pakhom pulled himself together and began to run. His feet were bleeding, but he ran on and on. He threw away his coat, boots, cap, flask. He kept saying over and over in his mind, "Everything is lost. I will never reach the mark before sunset." The more worried he got, the more breathless he became. Still he ran. It was like his lungs were a pair of blacksmith bellows and his heart was a steam hammer. His legs were breaking underneath him and did not even feel like his own.

He was not thinking of the land anymore. He was only thinking about not dying from the exertion. But he could not let himself stop. "To have gone so far," he thought, "and to stop, why they would think me a great fool."

By this time, he could hear the Bashkirs cheering and shouting for him and their cries stirred his heart. On and on he ran, with his last remaining strength, while the sun was just touching the horizon. Ah, but he was close to the spot now. He could see the people on the knoll waving their hands to him and urging him on. He could see his cap lying on the ground with the money in it and the leader sitting beside it.

Suddenly Pakhom remembered his dream. "I have much land now," he thought, "if only God should bring me safe to live upon it. But my heart tells me I've killed myself." Yet he ran on.

For the last time he looked at the sun. Large and red, it had touched the earth and was sinking below the horizon. He was in despair as he thought everything was lost, but suddenly he remembered that the people on the knoll would still have not seen the sunset. He rushed up the slope and as he got to the cap, there were still rays of sun. He stumbled and fell and touched the cap before the sun set.

"Ah, young man," cried the leader, "you have earned much land indeed." Pakhom's servant ran to his master and tried to raise him but blood was running from his mouth. Pakhom lay there, dead. The servant cried out in consternation but the leader remained sitting on his haunches, laughing and holding his sides. The leader stood up, took a shovel and threw it to the servant. "Bury him," was all he said.

The Bashkirs got up and left. Only the servant remained. He dug a grave the same length as Pakhom's body laying there and buried him.

I often recall this story when I consider the priorities in my life. What values did Pakhom have? He had mostly good attributes. He was hard working, he cared about his family, he was disciplined, and he was intelligent. Worksheet #47 quizzes you on your reactions to Pakhom's story.

What was Pakhom's central focus? What did he care about more than anything else? Pakhom cared about land; he wanted to have the best property he could for himself and his family. By working hard and taking some calculated risks, Pakhom prospered toward his objective. He succeeded in accomplishing his goals for the most part, and certainly would be viewed as a success story in our culture (except for the dying part).

We all have something that truly motivates us, something on which we spend our time and effort. For Pakhom it was land; what is it for you? We can decide we do not want to be like Pak-

hom. We don't want to be the fool. We especially don't want to end up dead, with nothing, everyone laughing at us. So let's begin work on our plan; let's begin to pull together all this knowledge about ourselves and make a usable plan for our lives.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #47

Date: *4-19-00*

Impressions from “How Much Land Does a Man Require?”

1. My first impression of the story is... *I could easily see how you could get caught up like that.*
2. I related to the following character because... *Pakhom because he was working his way up from the bottom and thought that just a little more would make him happy. I understand that idea fairly well myself.*
3. The story motivated or moved me in what way? *I want to make sure that I don't get to the end of my life and figure out that I lived for the wrong things. I don't want to look back and realize what a fool I have been.*
4. Other impressions? *It was kind of eerie how the devil was involved in Pakhom's life. I had the sense that maybe there really is a devil like that in the world. I don't know though.*

*CHAPTER 8***The Plan**

Think ahead; don't save your reason for difficult situations, use it to anticipate them...your whole life should be a matter of thinking out your destination.

Baltasar Gracian

It's time to make a plan; to bring together all your efforts from the previous chapters. Your worksheets contain information essential to your future joy. To transform that information into an effective plan will take plenty of brain power, but not more than you possess. You simply need to give this plan your best effort, and you'll succeed. How do you put forth your best effort?

A Time of Retreat

You need to withdraw to a private, secluded place for a time of contemplation. You need to plan a retreat. A few hours is the minimum amount of time required; a day or two may be better. The concept is simple: gather the information about yourself, go to a place where you are comfortable and alone, and contemplate your life. Relax, and keep interruptions to a minimum.

The first time I took a retreat, I spent several hours on the front porch of an abandoned cabin in the woods. As I sat with my notes in front of me and reflected on my life, several new insights became clear. I wrote my thoughts and they became part of the plan that changed my life. I remember my first retreat like it happened yesterday, and the benefits continue to enrich me.

You may object that you don't have time for a retreat. If a retreat is not worthwhile to you, you'll not find the time. On the other hand, if you believe a retreat could bring you great joy, you'll make the time to go. Remember, when it comes to time, we do the things we want to do.

I find the woods an ideal place of retreat for me because I'm not distracted by other people or the TV. Perhaps you would benefit by finding a pristine location to do your thinking. On the other hand, you may find a hotel room in the middle of the city works just as well. Perhaps you will go to a community park and sit at a secluded picnic table for a few hours. Don't worry too much about the location or the setting; what matters is getting away from your normal routine for a time.

Most people balk at the idea of a personal retreat. We are all busy. There are newspapers to read, work to be done, children to be chauffeured, and so much more. Just getting the most urgent things done seems like more than we can handle. When we get a break, we tend to flop in front of the TV or stick a movie in the VCR. We vegetate.

Living in this manner, week after week, month after month, year after year, we spend the currency of our lives. It need not be

so. With some effort, we can take some quiet time of retreat to think deeply about our lives.

The Value of a Simple Plan

In this chapter, we will look at ways to develop a simple plan for our lives. Why is this plan so important? Most of us work hard, yet few of us put enough effort into the truly important things. For many of us, our lives fly by, with one crisis following the next, and we never really take control. There never seems to be enough time nor energy to get beyond the day-to-day routine of job and family responsibilities.

By creating a simple plan, we formulate a blueprint for positive change in our lives. We give ourselves an opportunity to change rather than just living more of the same. We allow ourselves to go beyond our normal responses to the situations in our lives. By having a plan, we prepare to succeed.

Victor Frankl said, “We detect, rather than invent, the missions in our lives.” We don’t have to wait for an angel to come to us in our sleep and give us direction. We usually have the information; we just need to get it clear in our minds. The time of retreat, combined with your thoughts from the worksheets, provide an ideal basis to help you devise a simple plan for a more joyful life.

Significant Observations from Previous Worksheets

Worksheet #48 provides a place to write significant observations from previous worksheets. This exercise should be your first retreat activity. Carefully read each of your previous worksheets. Think about the items that seem surprising or somehow significant. Most worksheets have at least one item that seems significant upon review.

Worksheet #48 lists twelve primary relationships (such as parents, spouse, friends, etc.) that will help organize your thinking. There are also two spaces to add relationships that are special

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #48

Date: *4-29-00***Significant Observations from Previous Worksheets**

Review all previous Worksheets and write at least one significant item from each. Record the observations in the appropriate category below.

1. Parents

- *Wish I could make a true peace with my Dad. WS#4*
- *Dad was very unfair and unfeeling to us when we were kids. WS#17*
- *Mom and Dad did a poor job as parents when we were young. WS#22*
- *I learned how to work hard from Dad. WS#31*

2. Grandparents

- *Grandma Miller always remembered my birthday with a card and money. WS#1*
- *Grandpa Long is a mean drunk. WS#15*

3. Spouse

- *I absolutely want to stay married to Rachel. WS#4*
- *I should learn Rachel's personality type. WS#10*
- *Rachel and I have almost opposite love languages. WS#11*
- *Rachel and I had our best time on the Bahamas vacation. WS#21*
- *I need to talk with Rachel more. WS#24*

4. Children

- *I am way too impatient with Nate and Katie. WS#6*
- *I don't want to get mad so easily at the kids. WS#13*
- *Just playing outside was the most fun thing I did as a little kid. WS#16*
- *Vacations were high spots in my childhood. WS#18*
- *Rachel and I do a decent job as parents. WS#23*

5. Other Relatives

- *A lot of my relatives tend to be mean. WS#14*
- *Bobby and I should do some more fun things together. WS#25*

6. Friends

•

7. Co-Workers

•

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #48 (continued)

Date: *4-29-00*

8. Work

- *Even though it's frustrating, I enjoy my work. WS#2*
- *I am good at settling disputes fairly on the jobsite. WS#6*
- *Work is important to me and I want to get better at it. WS#8*

9. Hobbies

•

10. Talents

- *I loved to draw when I was young. WS#17*
- *I am good at building things. WS#20*

11. God

- *Church doesn't seem very real or useful to me. WS#3*
- *I lost interest in church at 17 years old. WS#19*
- *I wish I had more of a relationship with God. WS#27, #28, #29*
- *I would like to know more about the Bible. WS#47*

12. Myself

- *I wish I could communicate my feelings better. WS#3*
- *I am a pessimist. WS#5*
- *I must learn to control my anger better. WS#7*
- *I am a Calculating Controller type personality. WS#9*
- *I have very strong emotions. WS#12*

13. _____

- *I definitely see the world as a dangerous place full of potential pain and humiliation. WS#15*
- *I should learn to lighten up on myself. WS#26*

John Miller arranged to rent a cabin by the lake for his weekend retreat. He discussed the idea with Rachel, and she encouraged him to go. He left on a Saturday morning and returned Sunday afternoon. When he got to the cabin, he took a little walk to relax before he got down to work. He agonized over Worksheet #1 for quite some time, trying to write something profound. He finally just wrote something that was true and struck him as significant (which is all that's necessary.)

Several of his observations surprised John, especially the critical comments about his family. John had decided previously, though, to be as honest as possible and to keep these worksheets completely confidential. John felt a sense of accomplishment as he worked and knew he was on the right track.

or unique to you. Record the significant observation from each worksheet in the appropriate category on Worksheet #48. If you need extra space, just attach other papers.

Please don't rush through this important step. The review of your worksheets requires careful contemplation and musing. Take the time to think about the significance of what you wrote. Many of the items will be obvious to you; but don't read too quickly and miss an idea that could change your life.

I recommend listing at least one significant observation from each worksheet. Admittedly, there will be some worksheets where that observation is not profound. However, some worksheets may have several significant observations.

Some people have said, "I just don't like to think so deeply." I agree. Thinking hard makes my head hurt. However, the pay-off is astounding. So, we just need to "suck it up" and put forth the effort. We will survive (even if we don't like it much).

You are at the critical transition point in the personal growth process. You have moved through the idea and study phases. The analysis phase and the plan phase come together at this point. As you read through the previous worksheets and draw conclusions from each, you will begin to lay out the basic building blocks of your plan.

The ultimate value you obtain from this book will directly relate with how carefully and conscientiously you do this work. Though this step is critical, it's not complicated. Simply think about each worksheet as deeply as you can and list the things that seem most significant to you.

As you read the information on Worksheet #48, you may feel some powerful emotions. Resist the temptation to draw conclusions too quickly. The significant observations listed in Worksheet #48 are merely interesting thoughts at this point; they have not yet been analyzed. The analysis stage must precede the plan stage in order to develop a great plan.

Ideas to Improve Your Relationships

The next important step involves analyzing your information and formulating ways to improve your relationships. As mentioned before, meaning and joy in life come through relationships. The information about yourself from Worksheet #48 will help you develop some ideas for improving your relationships.

Worksheet #49 provides space to list many ideas which could improve your various relationships. Every significant observation from Worksheet #48 need not (and probably should not) match up with an idea on Worksheet #49. Read each observation written on Worksheet #48. Think about how that observation affects your current relationships and how it could affect future relationships. Then record any ideas that come to mind regarding improving relationships on Worksheet #49.

The proper completion of this worksheet will require some soul-searching. This is why a time of personal retreat is so valuable. Take your time and prayerfully consider ways that you might improve your various relationships.

I have noticed so many times in my life that I knew the right things to do, I just didn't do them. You may ask, "If I know the best course of action and have chosen not to do it in the past, why bother to write it down now?"

An example may be helpful. If I know that I ought to communicate better with my spouse, yet rarely put forth the effort to do it, why bother writing it down? Am I not just going to continue acting the same way? "Probably, but not necessarily." While we tend to continue our habits, looking back over the last few years of our lives, most of us will admit to some changes. Change happens!

So, if it becomes clear to me that my life could be much improved by better communication with my spouse, I can decide to try it. If I realize that choosing to talk a few minutes a day when I don't really feel like it, could dramatically change the way my spouse feels about me, I may put forth the effort.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #49

Date: *4-29-00*

Ideas for Improving my Relationships

Review Worksheet #48 and list some ideas.

1. Parents
 - *Spend some more time with my parents.*
 - *Thank Dad for teaching me about hard work.*

2. Grandparents
 -

3. Spouse
 - *Spend more time with Rachel. She talks about a friend of hers who goes out on a date with her husband about once a month. Maybe we should try that.*
 - *Take another short vacation with just Rachel and I.*
 - *Try and talk with Rachel some every day.*

4. Children
 - *I should just play with the kids more.*
 - *Take a family vacation.*
 - *Get the kids away from the TV and outside playing more.*
 - *Assign chores that the kids are responsible to do.*

5. Other Relatives
 - *Get together with Bobby more often.*

6. Friends
 -

7. Co-Workers
 - *I rarely stop to have drinks with the guys from Commercial Contractors. I could do that more often.*

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #49 (continued)

Date: *4-29-00*

8. Work

- *I would like to learn more about how to plan and schedule projects, maybe I could go to a seminar.*
- *Learn how to use computers, since I don't know squat about them now.*

9. Hobbies

- *I don't think I have time for any hobbies.*

10. Talents

- *Since both the kids like to draw, maybe I could do something with them.*

11. God

- *Get a Bible and read some every day.*
- *Learn some things about praying.*

12. Myself

- *Lighten up, laugh more and do more fun stuff.*

13. _____

14. _____

As John Miller read through his observations, an interesting thought hit him. He realized what he had written about his parents seemed harsh, but it was the reality of his upbringing. The interesting idea didn't come from the harshness—it came from the observation that his father taught him how to work hard. This trait helped John prosper and he never thought about it before.

John realized this positive trait might be a good starting point for a meaningful conversation between his father and him. Perhaps they could have a discussion where all the bad stuff was not hanging directly over their heads. Not definitely, just perhaps.

Thinking about his own children, an even more powerful idea came to him. Both he and Rachel struggled to shield their kids from the ugliness John had experienced as a child. Yet, in trying to give his children what he didn't have, he was missing the opportunity to give them what he did have. He was missing the opportunity to teach his kids how to work. John decided he could improve his relationship with his children by teaching them to work.

Remember, the possibility of joy best motivates us to change. If I notice that increased verbal communication with my spouse produces improved physical communication (better sex), I may be motivated to talk more. This is not manipulation; it is understanding the truth of this particular relationship. If my efforts at improved verbal communication are noticed and appreciated, a closeness and a trust grows and leads to a better overall relationship.

Of course, time is a critical factor. You will be sorely disappointed if you expect your first efforts at a new type of behavior to be immediately rewarded with an improved relationship. Your first attempts will probably be met with some degree of cynicism and distrust: “What does he want now?” or “Who is she trying to fool?” Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “Compliment your wife, even if it frightens her at first.”

We need to anticipate those types of reactions and be prepared to continue our new habit. You will be amazed how quickly most people lose their cynicism. In the end, we all want to love and be loved. We just need some time to feel that it’s safe.

How to Write Action Plans

After completing Worksheet #49, you are ready to begin the first draft of your one-year plan. At this stage, the plan should easily come together. In fact, you only need to carefully review Worksheet #49 to develop the first draft of your one-year plan.

The analysis step requires you to think about each item from Worksheet #49 in a critical and realistic manner. On Worksheet #49, an item is an idea. On Worksheet #50, the idea must be redefined as an action that you will choose to implement. The action must be reasonably realistic (i.e. you must have a decent chance of actually accomplishing it).

In order for an action plan to be effective, it should have the following components:

1. **The action plan should be simply stated.** Long, detailed action plans are just too difficult to remember and execute. Remember the KISS method: Keep It Simple, Stupid.
2. **The action plan must be measurable.** Vague, general statements are not acceptable. You must be able to know if you have accomplished the plan, so strive to make it measurable.
3. **Solve a problem important to you with the action plan.** Avoid setting goals merely because they would be nice to achieve. The success of your plan depends on how clearly you understand a problem area in your life and how much you want to overcome it.
4. **Be realistic with your action plan.** To create a plan in which you have a 2% probability of success is not wise (particularly if you are new to this type of planning). Neither is it wise to create a plan with 100% probability of success. Choose an action plan that is realistic, but which will stretch you. Your one-year plan should challenge you.

You must think about the specifics of any action plan with regard to the above guidelines. Consider how you are going to follow-up each of the items and measure them. You want a plan you can maintain and continue.

To develop a plan for positive change, you need to think about a time period. I never found long range plans to be effective. I can't get excited about an accomplishment 20 years from now. Even five years is a very long time. When I look at the difficulty involved in changing my own behavior, I need some immediate benefits to motivate me. Therefore, I've found a plan with some clear, simple objectives for the next 12 months works.

Let's critique a specific action plan, such as, "Improve the lives of children around the world." Do you see the problems with this action plan? It needs to be more specific; it needs to

have a measurable goal. That sense of motivation and joy comes when we can anticipate actual positive results. Restate that plan as, “Be a big brother/big sister to a local child for one year.”

As you think about your plan, try to look at it apart from yourself and use your common sense. Humans can combine deductive thinking and inductive thinking and just know the right thing. We call that skill “common sense.” Consider the items in your plan from a common sense viewpoint and think about how each makes you feel.

I never like the idea of attempting to change my behavior. Like most people, I don’t like to fail and I find change somewhat scary. I have found by experience, though, that the effort outweighs the risk. The great, joyful surprise that happens to us when we realize that we can do what we were afraid we could not do is wonderful. That sense of joy will motivate you to take additional risks to change and improve yourself and your relationships.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #50

Date: *4-30-00***My One-Year Plan – First Draft**

1. Relationship with Others:

a. In order to build my relationship with *my parents*, I will try to:

- (1.) *Go out to breakfast with them a few times a year.*
- (2.) *Write Dad a note of appreciation for teaching me to work hard.*

b. In order to build my relationship with *Rachel*, I will try to:

- (1.) *Take Rachel on a date every month (no kids).*
- (2.) *Go away together for a long week-end.*
- (3.) *Make an effort to talk together for a few minutes every day.*

c. In order to build my relationship with *our kids*, I will try to:

- (1.) *Limit their TV time to 2 hours per day and have them play outside more. I need to go out and play with them sometimes.*
- (2.) *Take a family vacation up to the lake for a few days.*
- (3.) *Make a chore chart for the kids.*

2. Relationship with God:

In order to build my relationship with God, I will try to:

- a. *Read 1 chapter in the Bible every day.*
- b. *Learn more about praying by talking to Bill Jameson at work.*

3. Relationship with Self:

In order to build my relationship with myself, I will try to:

- a. *Make sure I take some time every week to relax and have fun.*

4. Other:

- a. *Go to a Sixer's game with Bobby.*
- b. *Stop for a drink with the guys more often.*

My One-Year Plan

So, how do you feel about your one-year plan – first draft? Hopefully, you are excited about the possibilities. There should be a sense of anticipation. There should also be some sense of misgiving about your ability to actually complete it. A combination of some joy and some concern is appropriate.

The first draft plan is merely some well-thought-out words on paper; you have not yet committed yourself to achieving the plan. Before making that commitment, you must proceed through one more step.

Each item on the first draft plan should be analyzed carefully to determine if you truly desire to accomplish it. As I mentioned earlier, the anticipated joy at the accomplishment of a contemplated task acts as the best motivation. You need to look at the items in your first draft one-year plan and decide if the results would bring you joy. If you can't get excited about the results, you probably won't put in the effort to carry out the plan. Remember --- change is difficult and will not happen on its own.

An item on my current one-year plan involves spending time with each of our three children individually, once a month. I take each child alone with me for a special activity that is usually of their choosing. Perhaps we go out for dinner and shopping or maybe to some activity like a football game or a movie or a bike ride. Since I am a busy person with lots of irons in the fire, I knew it would be a challenge to find three evenings a month to take out the kids. As I thought about the task, though, I got a glimpse of the potential value of this course of action.

I remembered the times my Dad did things with me as a child and how special it made me feel. Sometimes he took me to a baseball game; sometimes he just took me along on his work for a service call (Dad was an electrician). I treasured those times, even as a child, enjoying the opportunity to talk with Dad and be listened to. Dad did not schedule those times, but he did make them happen. With the busier pace of life these days, I

doubt whether those times would happen for my family unless I put forth some specific effort.

As I analyzed the value of spending three evenings a month with the kids, I concluded it would be a great thing. If I can do something important for my children, then I'll feel good about myself as a father. Joy comes from knowing I am positively affecting our kids. The only difficulty was finding the time, and I knew this would be a struggle. I determined to make time each month for these special outings. I put that on my final one-year plan.

Like most plans, things did not go exactly as I had anticipated. This time, for once, things went better. I had not considered how much fun I'd have with the kids on our special times. Our times together build confidence and are great fun for both of us. It becomes much easier for me to find the time for an activity when I have lots of fun doing it (especially understanding that I am a Type I personality). We talk and laugh about things and are so relaxed together. These special times have become activities that we all look forward to.

Carefully review each of the items on your one-year plan – first draft, and answer the questions listed on Worksheet #51. This process will take some time. The plans that are not carefully analyzed and committed to become the plans that fail. Put in the time and effort to analyze your plan items, then you will succeed.

You may or may not have great confidence upon completion of Worksheet #51. If you feel good about your plans on Worksheet #51, then copy them directly onto Worksheet #52. If you still are not sure about the items listed on Worksheet #51, take more time. Review the four criteria listed above in the section "How to Write Action Plans." Also, reread Worksheets #48 and #49. Simply take another pass at the process until you devise a one-year plan that you feel good about and can commit yourself to.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #51

Date: *4-30-00*

Analysis of My One-Year Plan – First Draft

Answer the following questions for each individual item:

- a. How would the accomplishment of this item bring me joy?
- b. What seems difficult about accomplishing this item?
- c. How will this item be measured and tracked?
- d. When I visualize the accomplishment of this item, what do I see?

1a.(1) *Take my parents to breakfast a few times a year* – *I would enjoy being closer to my parents. I don't want them to die without settling things. The conversation may not be too easy. I visualize us sitting, eating, and having a relaxed, friendly discussion.*

1a.(2) *Write a note of appreciation to Dad* – *I would like to put the pain of my relationship with Dad behind me. Honestly, I don't know if I can write a nice letter to Dad. I sure could write one that blasts him. It's difficult to visualize anything here.*

1b.(1) *Take Rachel on a date every month* – *The closeness would be nice, especially the likelihood of good sex at the end of the evening. Making the effort to plan the evening will be the biggest difficulty. I can see Rachel and me out dancing together.*

1b.(2). *Go away together for a long weekend* – *We had such a great time when we went to the Bahamas, I think any weekend away would be good. Both the time and the money will be difficult, although I hear some hotels in Baltimore and Philadelphia offer some cheap rates for get-away weekends. I visualize a lazy Saturday morning in the hotel room with room service.*

1b.(3) *Make an effort to talk together for a few minutes every day* – *Since Rachel tells me I am a lousy communicator, she would probably enjoy if I tried harder. I'm not really sure how much something like this would help. I should change the task to, "Focus exclusively on Rachel for at least 10 minutes a day." I would have to sacrifice some TV time to do this one. I do enjoy when we sit and talk and can visualize us doing that.*

1c.(1) *Limit kids' TV time to 2 hours per day and have them play outside more* – *I would like to see the kids away from the TV and outside doing stuff. I would also like to see them learn a little about work. Maybe we could have them do a few simple outside chores before they are allowed to watch TV. Rachel would have to enforce this and she can be real easy on the kids. I can visualize Rachel and me talking about how it went every day and the kids telling us what they did outside.*

1c.(2) Take a family vacation up to the lake for a few days – We would all enjoy this. I would have to take a few vacation days, but I have plenty. I can see us all swimming in the clear water.

2a. Read 1 chapter in the Bible every day – I would like to learn more about God and I suppose the Bible is the place to start. Just keeping at it will be the only difficulty. I don't know what, if anything, will come of it.

2b. Learn more about praying by talking to Bill Jameson at work – Again, I don't really know why I am interested in this at this point in my life. I guess it is partly for me and partly for the kids. Also I would just like to know the truth. I should rename this item: "Pray every day," and just put a note about talking to Bill. I can not visualize myself praying.

3a. Make sure I take some time every week to relax and have fun – I am not sure what I would do to relax and have fun. I have spent most of my life working. I used to "party hardy" to have fun, but that stuff is behind me now. I suppose I could make a list of stuff that I would enjoy and have it around for when I have some time.

4a. Go to a Sixer's game with Bobby – This would be fun and is worth doing. We just have to do it. I can see us watching the game and moaning about all the lousy calls.

4b. Stop for a drink with the guys more often – Even though this could be fun, it just isn't me anymore. I'd rather be home with Rachel, Nate and Katie. I'm going to take this one off the list.

5a. Learn more about computers – I didn't put this one on the first draft plan, but I am going to add it. I am not sure where to start except I know I need to learn about computers to keep up with the times.

As John analyzed his first draft, one-year plan, he was amazed at how clearly he began to think. He had a sense of peace about almost every item. He had the feeling that the things he wrote were possible, and that was a nice feeling. With the items written, the creation of the final plan was little more than copying them onto the plan format and reviewing them one more time.

There are several questions you should consider prior to finalizing your one-year plan.

1. Will you feel comfortable posting your one-year plan where others could read it? Do you want to keep your one-year plan completely confidential? Whom would you allow to read your one-year plan?
2. Where will you keep your one-year plan? How will you check progress?
3. How often will you review your progress? (I find a monthly or twice-a-month review works well for me.)

As you write your plan items, consider adding a note to help motivate or clarify. Perhaps note a particularly strong visualization in which you see yourself enjoying the accomplishment of the item. Maybe you need a note to remind you of a critical portion of the plan item. These little extras help the review process make more sense.

Take the time now to finish your plan for the upcoming year. You have created a plan that can help change your life. Allow yourself the luxury of imagining how your life will be in one year if you accomplish most of the items on the plan. The increase in both joy and purpose will be significant.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #51

Date: *4-30-00***My One-Year Plan****2000 Plan for John Miller**

- 1. Go out to breakfast with my parents quarterly**
- 2. Send a note of appreciation to Dad**
- 3. Take Rachel on a date every month**
make an effort to plan each evening
- 4. Go away with Rachel for a long weekend**
- 5. Focus only on Rachel for at least 10 minutes a day**
sit and talk without the TV on
- 6. Limit kids TV to 2 hours/day; play outside more**
discuss this daily with Rachel and the kids
- 7. Take a family vacation up to the lake for a few days**
- 8. Read 1 chapter in the Bible every day**
- 9. Pray every day**
talk to Bill Jameson about prayer
- 10. Take some time to relax and have fun every week**
make a list of things I would enjoy
- 11. Go to a Sixer's game with Bobby**
- 12. Learn more about computers**
talk to people, try to find a used computer cheap, etc.

*CHAPTER 9***Living the Plan**

“Always bear in mind that your own resolution to success is more important than any other one thing.”

Abraham Lincoln

No matter how good your plan, nothing happens if you don't execute. To do this, you'll need to change some habits. You'll need to stop doing some things you now do and start doing some new things.

Most of us cringe at the thought of change. We have an established routine and any change is uncomfortable. The familiar comforts us. The fear of change controls us more than the allure of rewards from new behavior. Don't minimize the difficulty of personal change. The creation of new habits will be difficult and challenging, but completely possible.

Creating New Habits

The most difficult aspect of creating new habits will not be the time required nor the critical comments of others. The greatest challenge will be our own sabotage. Our own feelings of unworthiness will surface at the most inopportune times and make us feel like phonies.

Thoughts like, “Who are you trying to kid? Don’t try to pretend you love her when just yesterday you were so mad at her you felt like killing her. You big phony, just give it up and act normal.” Have you ever had a monologue like this run through your head? I’ve heard it called self-talk. It seems like a non-stop audio tape that plays in one’s mind. The same message gets played over and over and reinforces an idea.

Unfortunately, when we are trying to change habits, most of the self-talk seems to be negative. It strives to maintain the status quo, even when we recognize that a habit change would be beneficial. We need to anticipate this negative self-talk and prepare to deal with it.

One of the secrets to overcoming negative self-talk is realizing that we need not be good in order to act good. Many times the only way to develop a virtue is to act as if you already have it. As you continue your forced behavior, you usually will find that the virtue grows.

As you examine the execution phase of your plan, John Miller’s example may be helpful. Consider John’s plan to devote some time every day to communication with his wife. That step could dramatically improve their relationship. However, there will be days he will come home tired, not feeling like putting forth the effort. There will be days when her behavior will anger him, and he will want to nurse a grudge rather than talking and listening deeply. On these days, it’s guaranteed that his self-talk will be telling him he is a failure and a sap.

Since John has thought deeply about his one-year plan, though, he understands that change will not just happen naturally. He understands he will have to force this change to happen. So

John can defeat negative self-talk by anticipating it and realizing he must hold to his plan even when he doesn't feel like it.

If John had to go on in this manner indefinitely, he could not sustain the effort. John understands, however, that the virtue follows the behavior. After a few weeks of talking to his wife every day, John realizes he is beginning to enjoy this part of the day. The practice of communication becomes easier as the benefits increase.

John has established a new habit, and the motivation to continue comes from the increased love and closeness with his wife. Nevertheless, the initial stages of change were difficult. The negative self-talk was strong, and no rewards were immediately evident. This difficult early stage sabotages most behavior change.

Why do you think the benefits of better communication with Rachel were not immediately available to John? She had told him for years she wanted him to talk and listen to her more. Why didn't she quickly reward this type of behavior? Think about our own natural desire to protect ourselves. When we encounter changed behavior, we react with skepticism. We wonder, "What game is going on here and how could it hurt me?"

We must anticipate this skepticism from the people we know and care about as we begin behavior change. As we strive to create a new habit, we will also be confusing those around us. They will be wondering, either consciously or subconsciously, "What in the world is going on here?" They will be trying to determine if this behavior change is real, and they will be uncomfortable.

I don't want to create the impression that making changes will be overly difficult, yet I do want to warn of some of the pitfalls that may be encountered. Self-talk will try to convince us to return to what is known and comfortable. The people closest to us will be skeptical. These forces may discourage us in our efforts for positive change.

The secret to success is to simply persevere until the benefits start to appear. Negative self-talk will decrease as we become

accustomed to the changes. Other people's skepticism will decrease with time. Most importantly, since we decided on the change in order to improve our life, that improvement will become more and more apparent with time.

Do you brush your teeth every day? I hope so. Did you always brush your teeth every day? No, at some time in your life you developed the habit. If for some reason you forget to brush your teeth one day, how do you respond? My guess is that you do not berate yourself and tell yourself that you are worthless. You simply brush your teeth the next day and get on with your life. That attitude is the last secret to creating a new habit.

Don't beat yourself up if you fail in your new habit. In fact, expect that you will fail sometimes. Be prepared for the failure and be prepared to forgive yourself and go on. Just do your new habit the next time. You will be amazed how this simple concept can create positive life changes.

Courage

When forming new habits, we will absolutely hit some periods in which we doubt the worth of the entire project. Conflicting thoughts and emotions are normal.

The "Positive-Thinking Gurus" tell us to simply ignore the doubt. They say if we control our attitude, the feelings of doubt will eventually go away. Remember though, our ultimate goal is to find the truth, not to find the quickest method for feeling good. Sometimes, doubts help lead us to the truth.

It takes courage to honestly examine one's own doubts. It takes courage to begin to change one's behavior. So why would we struggle to change? When asked why he robbed banks, Willie Sutton replied, "Because that's where the money is." Similarly, we find the courage to change our behavior and to honestly examine our doubts because "that's where the joy is."

When I think about courage, I recall the Charles family that lives down the street from us. Back in the 1950's, Norm and Betty Charles were a young couple, struggling to raise five small

children and run their dairy farm. The Charles family experienced some difficulties in their lives and turned to God for help. One day, Norm felt a strong sense that he and his family should go to Brazil to be missionaries. Try as he might, he could not get rid of this idea.

Finally, Norm prayed something like, "Lord, I have all this debt. It would not be right for me to leave while I owe all this money. Lord, if you truly want us to go into missions, please make the cows give an extra thousand pounds of milk this month." The extra milk came, not just for one month, but for two, and the Charles' financial condition improved. Then Norm began to doubt the wisdom of moving his entire family to Brazil. He thought he could instead support other missionaries with his increased financial resources.

Within days of this decision, the cows came down with an illness and the veterinarian said the entire herd was at risk. At that point, Norm and Betty understood their good fortune had come from God. Upon recommitting themselves to the mission field, their cows recovered. Soon all their belongings were sold, and they were on a freighter ship to Brazil.

They struggled through Portuguese language classes. As the end of the term neared, they realized all the other students were associated with mission organizations and had specific places to go upon graduation from language school. The Charles' simply prayed the Lord would place them where they ought to be.

One day they drove to a remote village with friends, having heard of a need for some missionaries in that region. They stopped at a house in the village and briefly explained to the young girl who answered the door that they were missionaries. She didn't say a word, but ran back into the house. A few moments later, many people streamed from the house; they had been having a prayer meeting, specifically praying for missionaries to come to their village to help begin a church!

The Charles family lived with courage. They attempted to discover direction for their lives and then they made the hard de-

cisions to “...go for it.” Their complete story can be found in the book, Heaven on Earth: Family Style.

To live out your plan, you must vow to live it with courage. You can find the strength and the courage. Julies Hare said, “Half the failures in life result from pulling in one’s horse as he is leaping.” Break old habits of fear and conformity and allow yourself the joy of success. Resist the temptation to “pull in your horse as he is leaping” and live with all the courage you can muster.

Common Sense

Common sense is essential for executing your plan. As a person with little natural common sense, I know what it is to struggle with change and not pay attention to items that are obvious to everyone but me. A particular incident comes to mind when I think of common sense.

I was working as a foreman on a large construction project. I was driving about 90 minutes each way to the job site and was not making much money. I decided it would be a good time to remodel the basement, even though I had little time and less money.

I went from idea to action and out came all the duct work from our oil furnace. I planned to move the ducts to better locations and to build a wood furnace to augment our existing furnace. Of course, I started this project in October, thinking that it would be simple and take only a short time.

As you may imagine, my project was anything but simple. With the months passing, it became clear even to me that my timing had been poor. The only heat we had in the house was an old potbelly stove that we had installed in the kitchen. The wood fire in that stove would only last about three hours before it completely burned out. Therefore, we would be without heat in the house for much of the night.

One morning I checked the thermometer in our baby’s room. The temperature was 34° F, and there was Alexey, our one-year old baby, sleeping in the cold. My lack of common

sense became obvious to me at that moment. Fortunately, we all survived and laugh about it now.

While implementing your plan, keep your eyes open to the things going on around you. Think about the issues that are clear to others, but difficult for you to see. Don't neglect your common sense.

Daily Time with God

Another key for successful plan implementation is spending time with God each day. A daily time of prayer helps life make sense and puts it into perspective. I have never met a person who took time to pray every day who regretted the effort. Of course, this is an issue between you and God.

If you decide you would like to pray every day, expect several challenges. First will be finding the time. The best way for busy people to learn to pray is to set a time for prayer and to stick to it. Simply do nothing else in that time.

You must decide how you will pray. Prayer can be broken down into five basic types: forgiveness, praise, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition. If you cover each of these topics as you pray, you will have plenty to say to God.

Forgiveness involves telling God the things we did that we know we ought not to have done, and asking Him to forgive us. It also includes asking to be forgiven for not doing the things we know we ought to have done. When we honestly examine our day-to-day living and our true motivations, we find many things for which to ask forgiveness.

Praise prayers express our wonder and thanks to God for being God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The closer one grows to God, the more one wants to praise Him. Since many of the Psalms are David's praise prayers, I often read a Psalm aloud. There is great joy in finding various ways to praise God.

Thanksgiving prayers give thanks for the specific blessings and protections we have in our lives. Most of us have much to be thankful for, and we rarely take the time to express that.

Intercessory prayer involves praying for other people, asking God to intervene on their behalf in some specific way. Prayers of intercession may be for someone's physical health, emotional well-being or spiritual growth. Many people keep a written list of prayer concerns to help them remember such items.

Prayers of petition are specific prayers in which we ask God for things we need or want. If you only ask God for things you want or beg for help when you encounter trouble, you may be too self-absorbed and could use some balance. On the other hand, don't think that spiritual people never ask God for anything for themselves, for that isn't true. If we have a growing relationship with God, we will naturally tell Him the things we need and want.

If you practice these five types of prayer, you will not have the problem of having nothing to say to God. However, you will soon learn how much your mind can wander and how little self-control you really possess. Don't be discouraged by your early attempts at time spent in prayer. Your mind may wander, your mind may race, you may fall soundly asleep. These things happen to everyone. The important thing is to keep on spending the time in prayer, even when it does not feel rewarding.

Often in prayer you will feel like nothing is happening. Looking back over time, though, you'll see that much has happened. The process parallels spending time with your children; you don't notice them growing, but an outside observer can notice all sorts of changes. Likewise, your time spent with God will gradually produce positive changes.

Rest

While attempting to carry out your new plan, you need proper rest. You can only push your body and mind so hard. Take the time to recharge. Get enough rest. My wife Debby has always believed that when you have lots of things to do, you should get your nap out of the way first. It's important for us to have a plan

and to be focused, but we need to guard against being overwhelmed. We need to remember to take a nap occasionally.

If you begin paying attention to almost any relationship, you will see a direct correlation between the amount of fatigue and the amount of conflict. We simply are not at our best when we are tired or hungry. If you ever raised young children, think about how you acted by the end of a long day and how they were acting. Usually, it wasn't pretty.

Few of us are at our best when we're tired. The things that would be simple if we were rested become a big deal when we're tired. By not getting enough rest, we increase the challenge with no corresponding reward. Why would we choose to do that? By managing to get adequate rest, we enhance the likelihood of successfully completing our plan. Life goes better when we get enough sleep.

Sense of Humor

A sense of humor will be a great resource for living out your plan. I guarantee that some of your plan items will take you out of your comfort zone. When you then have a failure, it's easy to become discouraged or feel ridiculous. Pride gets hurt and we don't like it! To see the humor in the situation helps us from wallowing in defeat. The ability to laugh a bit at ourselves is truly a valuable tool.

I was working on the Peter Frampton tour in the summer of 1977, and we were doing a few large stadium shows. In Cleveland, we had some heavy rains in the morning, and the start of the concert was delayed until the weather stabilized (the performers generally seemed uncomfortable holding a metal microphone on a metal stage during thunderstorms). There were about 80,000 people in the audience, just sitting and waiting for the show to begin and those of us on the road crew were wandering around, waiting for the weather to clear. I remember walking onto the stage, checking the microphones for placement.

While on this tour, I had become friends with a rock and roll truck driver, who I called Mr. Dave. He always referred to me as Mr. Ned. We had a very civilized relationship, I suppose. Well, as I was standing in the middle of that stage in front of 80,000 people, Mr. Dave came up behind me and with one quick motion, yanked my shorts down to my ankles. Now at that stage in my life, I never wore underwear (I thought it “unnecessary”), so I was standing there not wearing much more than a look of total surprise.

Unfortunately, since my shorts had been buttoned and zippered, I couldn't get them back up too quickly. I had to stand there and try to calmly unbutton the shorts and then unzipper them in order to get them back up. It seemed to me to be a very long time until I was clothed again. Of course, Mr. Dave was behind me laughing uncontrollably.

I would like to be able to say that I had the final laugh on him, but I didn't. I just accepted the prank and laughed about it. It was simply no big deal.

Story by Leo Tolstoy

*“Where Love Is,
There God Is Also”*

In a certain town there lived a shoemaker named Martin Aveditch. He lived in a basement room which possessed but one window. This window looked onto the street, and through it a glimpse could be caught of the passers-by. It is true that only their legs could be seen, but that did not matter, as Martin could recognize people by their boots alone. He had lived here for a long time, and so had many acquaintances.

There were very few pairs of boots in the neighborhood which he had not worked on at least once, if not twice. Some he had resoled, others he had fitted with side-pieces, others he had re-sewn. Yes, he often saw his handiwork through that window. He was given plenty to do, for his work lasted well, his materials were good, his prices moderate, and his word to be depended on. If Martin said he could do a job by a given time, it would be

done; and if not, he would tell you ahead of time rather than disappoint you.

Martin had always been an upright man, but as he got older he began more than ever to think about his soul and draw nearer to God. His wife had died while he was still an apprentice leaving behind a little boy of three. This was their only child since two older children had previously died. At first Martin thought about placing his son with his sister in the country but changed his mind thinking, "My little guy would not like to grow up in a strange family, so I'll keep him with me."

When Martin finished his apprenticeship, he went with his little boy to start their trade. But God had not seen fit to give Martin happiness in his children. The little boy was just growing up and beginning to help his father and to be a pleasure to him, when he fell ill, was put to bed, and died after a week's fever. Martin buried the little fellow and was inconsolable.

Indeed he was so angry, he began to murmur against God. His life seemed so empty that he often prayed for death. He reproached God for taking away his beloved son instead of himself, the old man. After awhile, he ceased altogether to go to church.

Then one day there came to see him an ancient pilgrim who was then in the eighth year of his pilgrimage. Martin talked to him and went on to complain to him of his great sorrow. "I no longer wish to be a God-fearing man," said Martin. "I only wish to die. That is all I ask of God. I am a lonely, hopeless man."

"You should not speak like that, brother," replied the old pilgrim. "It is not for us to judge the acts of God. We must rely not upon our own understanding but upon the divine wisdom. God saw fit that your son should die and that you should live. Therefore, it must be better so. If you despair, it is because you have wished to live too much for your own pleasure."

"For what then shall I live?" asked Martin.

"For God alone," replied the old man. "It is He who gave you life, and therefore it is He for whom you should live. When you come to live for Him you will cease to grieve, and your trials will become easy to bear."

Martin was silent. Then he spoke again. "But how am I to live for God?" he asked.

"Christ has shown us the way," answered the old man. "Can you read? If so, buy a Testament and study it. You will learn there how to live for God. Yes, it is all shown you there."

These words sank into Martin's soul. He went out the same day and bought a large-print copy of the New Testament and set himself to read it. At the beginning Martin had only meant to read on holidays, but when he began reading he found it so comforting to the soul that he never let a day pass without doing so. Sometimes he became so engrossed with his reading that all the kerosene burnt away in the lamp before he could tear himself away from the book.

Thus he came to read it every evening, and the more he read, the more clearly did he understand what God required of him and in what way he could live for God. So, his heart grew ever lighter and lighter.

He previously went to bed and moaned and sighed at the thought of his poor little son; but now he said, "Glory to Thee, O Lord! Glory to Thee! Thy will be done!" From that time onwards, Martin's life became completely changed. He previously went out on holidays and drank tea in the tavern and had an occasional glass of vodka. Although no drunkard, he would often leave the tavern in an excited state and talk much nonsense with his friends. Now, though, he turned his back on all this and his life had become quiet and joyous.

Early in the morning, he would sit down to his work and labor through his appointed hours. Then he would take the lamp down from the shelf, light it, and sit and read. The more he read, the more he understood, and the clearer and happier he grew at heart.

One night Martin was reading late. He had been reading those verses in the sixth chapter of Luke: "When one strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone

who asks you and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

Then further down he read, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man who built a house, and dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the storm struck that house but could not shake it because it was well-built. But, the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built his house on the sand without a foundation. The moment the storm struck that house, it collapsed, and its destruction was complete.”

Martin read those words and felt happy in his soul. He took off his glasses and laid them on the book, leaned his elbows on the table, and gave himself up to meditation. He tried to measure his life by those words, and he thought to himself: “Have I founded my house upon rock or sand? It is well if it be upon rock, yet it is so easy as I sit here by myself. I may think I have done all the Lord required of me and grow careless and sin again. Yet, I will keep on striving, for it is good to do so. Help me, Thou, oh Lord.”

He kept on meditating. Although he knew it was time to go to bed, he hated to tear himself away from the book. He began to read the seventh chapter of Luke and read about the Centurion and the widow’s son and the answer given to John’s disciples. Then he came to the passage where the rich Pharisee invited Jesus to his house, and the woman washed the Lord’s feet with her tears and He justified her.

“Then he turned towards the woman and said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I came into your house; you did not give me any water for my feet but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss but this woman, from the time I entered, did not stop kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you her many sins have been forgiven for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little, loves little.”

Once again, Martin took off his spectacles and became lost in meditation. "I'm even as that Pharisee," Martin thought to himself. "I drink tea and think only of my own needs. Yes, I think only of having plenty to eat and drink; of being warm and clean but never of entertaining a guest."

Martin sat pondering, "What if the Lord were to come and visit me." As he thought about this, he leaned forward on his elbows and was almost asleep.

"Martin," someone seemed to breathe in his ear; he started from his sleep.

"Who's there?" he said. He turned to look toward the door but he could see no one. Again, he bent forward over the table and he heard the words, "Martin, Martin. Look thou into the street tomorrow for I am coming to visit you."

Martin was awake now. He got up from the chair and rubbed his eyes. He didn't know if he was dreaming or awake when he heard those words, but he turned out the lamp and went to bed.

The next morning, Martin rose before daylight and said his prayers, made up the stove and got some cabbage soup and porridge ready. He put his leather apron around him and got ready to work by the window. He sat and worked hard, but all the time his thoughts were centered on last night.

He had two ideas about the vision. At one moment, he would think it was his fancy or the next moment he would have himself convinced he had really heard the voice. "Yes, it must have been so," he concluded.

So Martin sat by the window and kept looking out of it as much as working. When a pair of boots passed with which he was acquainted, he would bend down to look up through the window to see their owner's face as well. The doorkeeper passed in new felt boots, and then a water-carrier. Next came, an old soldier, a veteran of Nicholas' army, in old patched boots, and carrying a shovel in his hands. The soldier stopped by the window. His name was Stephen and he was kept by the neighboring tradesman out of charity, his duties being to help the doorkeeper.

He began to clear away the snow in front of Martin's window; the shoemaker looked at him, and then resumed his work. "I think I must be getting old," thought Martin with a smile. "Just because Stephen begins clearing away the snow... I jump to the conclusion that Christ is about to visit me. Yes, I am growing foolish now, old man that I am."

Yet he hardly made a dozen more stitches before he was craning his neck again to look out the window. He could see Stephen had placed his shovel against the wall and was resting, trying to warm himself. "He is evidently an old man now and broken," thought Martin to himself. "He is not strong enough to clear away some snow. Would he like some tea, I wonder? It must be about ready now."

He made fast his awl in his work and got up. He tapped his finger on the windowpane. Stephen turned around and approached. Martin asked him to come in and warm himself. "You must be frozen," Martin said.

"Christ be with you," answered Steven. "Yes, my bones are almost cracking." He came in, shook the snow off himself, and took pains to wipe his boots carefully, that he might not dirty the floor.

"No, no, don't trouble about that," said Martin. "I will wipe your boots myself. It is part of my trade. Come here and sit down and we will empty this teapot together." He poured two glassfuls and offered one to his visitor. Stephen drank it down quickly; it was clear he would like another.

"You must drink some more," said Martin and refilled his guest's tumbler. Yet, in spite of himself, he continued to look out into the street.

"Are you expecting anyone?" asked his guest.

"Am I expecting anyone? Well, to tell the truth, yes, that is to say, I am, and I am not. The fact is that I have some words fixed in my memory. Whether it was a vision or not, I don't know. At all events, my old friend, I was reading in the Gospels last night about Our Little Father Christ, and how He walked this earth and suffered. You have heard of Him, have you not?"

“Yes, yes, I have heard of him,” Stephen answered, “but we are ignorant folk and don’t know our letters.”

“Well, I was reading of how He walked this earth, and how He went to visit a Pharisee, and yet received no welcome from him at the door. All this I read last night, my friend, and then fell to thinking about it--to thinking how some day I too might fail to pay Our Little Father Christ due honor. ‘Suppose,’ I thought to myself, ‘He came to me or to anyone like me? Should we, like the great lord Simon, not know how to receive Him and not go out to meet Him?’ I was thinking about this and I fell asleep.

Then as I sat sleeping, I heard someone call my name; and as I raised myself, the voice went on, ‘Watch thou for me tomorrow, for I am coming to visit you.’ It said that twice. And so those words have gone into my head, and, foolish though I know, I keep expecting Him--the Little Father--every moment.”

Stephen nodded and said nothing, but emptied his glass and laid it aside. Martin took it and refilled it. “Drink it up; it will do you good,” he said. “Do you know,” he went on, “I often call to mind how, when Our Little Father walked this earth, there was never a man, however humble, whom He despised, and how it was chiefly among the common people that He dwelt. It was always with them that He walked. And it was from among such men as you and I--from among sinners and working folk--that He chose His disciples. ‘Whoever,’ He said, ‘that should exalt himself, the same shall be abased, and whoever shall abase himself, the same shall be exalted. You,’ He said again, ‘call me Lord; yet will I wash you your feet. Whoever,’ He said, ‘would be chief among you, let them be servant of all. Because blessed are the lowly, the peacemakers, the merciful, and the charitable.”

Stephen had forgotten all about his tea. He was an old man, and his tears came easily. He sat and listened, with the tears rolling down his cheeks. “Oh, but you must drink your tea,” said Martin. Stephen only crossed himself, and said the thanksgiving, then pushed his glass away and got up.

“I thank you, Martin Aveditch,” he said. “You have taken me in, and fed both soul and body.”

“No, but I beg you to come again,” said Martin. “I am only too glad of a guest.” So Stephen departed, while Martin poured out the last of the tea and drank it. Again, he sat at his work by the window--stitching away--looking for Christ. Indeed Christ’s many sayings were never absent from Martin’s mind.

Two soldiers passed the window, the one in military boots, and the other in civilian. Next, there came a neighboring householder, in polished goulashes, then a baker with a basket. All of them passed on.

Presently a woman in woolen stockings and rough country shoes approached the window, and halted near the buttress outside it. Martin peered up at her from under the lintel of his window, and could see that she was plain looking, poorly-dressed and had a child in her arms. It was in order to cover the child more closely that she stopped near the buttress with her back to the wind.

Her clothing was ragged and fit only for summer, and even behind his window-panes, Martin could hear the child crying miserably. The mother vainly tried to soothe it. Martin rose, went to the door, climbed the steps, and cried out: “My good woman, my good woman!” She turned to see him. “Why need you stand there in the cold with your baby?” he went on. “Come into my room, where it is warm, and where you will be able to wrap the baby up more comfortably than you can here. Yes, come in with you.”

The woman was surprised to see an old man in a leather apron, with glasses upon his nose, calling out to her, yet she followed him down the steps and they entered his room. The old man led her to the bed to sit down. “Sit down here, my good woman,” he said. “You will be near the stove, and can warm yourself and feed your baby.”

“Oh, but I have no milk left in my breast,” she replied. “I have had nothing to eat this morning.” Nevertheless, she put the child to her breast. Martin nodded his head approvingly and went to the table for some bread and a basin, and opened the

stove door. From the stove, he took some soup and a bowl of porridge and gave it to the woman.

“Sit down and eat, my good woman,” he said, “while I hold your baby. I have had little ones of my own, and I know how to hold them.” The woman crossed herself and sat down, while Martin seated himself upon the bed with the baby. He smacked his lips at it once or twice, but made a poor show of it, for he had no teeth at all. Consequently, the baby went on crying. Then he thought of his finger and wriggled it to and fro in front of the baby’s mouth--without ever touching the little one’s lips, since his finger was black with the shoemaker’s wax.

The baby contemplated the finger and grew quiet, then actually smiled. Martin was delighted. Meanwhile the woman had been eating her meal, and told him, unasked, who she was and where she was going.

“I am a soldier’s wife,” she said, “but my husband was sent far away eight months ago and I’ve heard nothing of him since. At first, I got a job as a cook, but when the baby came, they dismissed me. That was three months ago and I’ve had nothing since, and have spent all my savings. I tried to get taken as a wet nurse, but no one would have me because they said I was too thin. I have just been to see about a job. I was promised I would be hired, but was told to come back next week. Since the job is a long way from here, I am quite worn out and have tired my baby for nothing. Thank Heaven for my landlady who is good to me, and gives me shelter for Christ’s sake. Otherwise, I should not have known how to bear it all.”

Martin sighed and said, “But have you nothing warm to wear?”

“Oh sir,” replied the woman, “although it’s the time for warm clothes, I had to pawn my last shawl yesterday for two rubles.” Then the woman returned to the bed to take her baby while Martin rose and went to the cupboard. He rummaged around and found an old jacket.

“Here,” he said, “It’s a poor old thing, but it will serve to cover you.” The woman looked at the jacket, and then at the old

man. Then she took the jacket and burst into tears. Martin turned away, and looking under the bed, found a box and pretended to rummage about it for a few moments.

Then the woman said to him, "I thank you in Christ's name, good grandfather. Surely it was He Himself who led me to your window. Otherwise, I should have seen my baby perish with the cold. When I first came out the day was warm, but now it has begun to freeze. But He, Our Little Father, had placed you in your window, that you might see me in my bitter plight and have compassion on me."

Martin smiled and said: "He did indeed place me there. Yet, my poor woman, it was for a special purpose that I was looking out." Then he told his guest of his vision.

"That may very well be," said the woman as she rose, took the jacket, and wrapped her baby in it. Then she said, "Farewell."

"Also, take this in Christ's name," said Martin, and gave her two rubles with which to buy back her shawl. The woman crossed herself and he likewise. Then he led her to the door. When she had gone, Martin ate a little soup, washed the dishes, and went back to work. All the time, though, he kept his eye upon the window. Acquaintances came past, and people he did not know, but never anyone in particular.

Then suddenly he saw something. Opposite his window, an old peddler-woman with a basket of apples stopped. Only a few of the apples remained, so it was clear that she was almost sold out. Over her shoulder was slung a sack of wood shavings, which she must have gathered near some new building as she was going home. Apparently, her shoulder had begun to ache under the weight, and she stopped to shift the load. To do this, she balanced her basket of apples on the top of a post and lowered the sack to the pavement. As she was doing this, a boy in a ragged cap appeared from somewhere, seized an apple from the basket, and tried to make off.

But the old woman, who had been on her guard, managed to turn and seize the boy by the sleeve. Although he struggled and

tried to break away, she clung to him with both hands. She snatched off his cap and got a firm grip on his hair. The youngster began to shout.

Martin didn't stop to make his awl fast, but threw his work down on the floor and ran up to the door, stumbling on the steps, and losing his glasses as he did so. Out into the street he ran, where the old woman was still holding the boy by the hair and threatening to take him to the police. While the boy, for his part, was struggling to get free. "I never took it," he was saying. "What are you beating me for? Let me go."

"Let him go my good woman. Pardon him for Christ's sake."

"Yes, I'll pardon him, but not till he's tasted a new birch-rod. I mean to take the young rascal to the police."

But Martin still interceded for him. "Let him go, my good woman," he said. "He will never do it again." The old woman released the boy, who was for making off if Martin had not stopped him. "You must beg the old woman's pardon," he said, "and never do such a thing again. I saw you take the apple."

The boy burst out crying, and begged the old woman's pardon. Martin said, "There, there, now I will give you one," and he took an apple from the basket and handed it to the boy. "I'll pay you for it, my good woman," he added.

"Yes, but you spoil the young rascal by doing this," she objected. "He ought to have received a reward that would have made him glad to stand for a week."

"Ah, my good woman, my good woman," exclaimed Martin. "That may be our way of rewarding, but it's not God's. If this boy ought to have been whipped for taking the apple, ought not we also be punished for our sins?" At this, the old woman was silent. Then Martin related to her the story of the master who absolved his servant from the great debt which he owed him, after that the servant took his own debtor and grabbed him by the throat.

The old woman listened, and also the boy. "God has commanded us to pardon one another," went on Martin, "or He will

not pardon us. We ought to pardon all men, and especially the thoughtless."

The old woman shook her head and sighed. "Yes, that be so," she said, "but these young rascals are so spoiled already!"

"Then it is for us, their elders, to teach them better," he replied.

"That is what I say to myself at times," replied the old woman. "I had seven of them at once but only one daughter now." She went on to tell Martin where she and her daughter lived, and how they lived, and how many grandchildren she had. "I have only such strength as you see," she said, "yet I work hard, for my heart goes out to my grandchildren--the cute little things that they are! No children could run to meet me as they do. Alisa for instance, will go to no one else. 'Grandmother,' she cries, 'dear Grandmother, you are tired'--at this the old woman became thoroughly softened. "Everyone knows what boys are," she added presently, referring to the culprit. "May God go with him!"

She raised her sack to her shoulder and began to walk again, when the boy darted forward. "No let me carry it grandmother. It will be on my way home." The woman nodded assent, and gave the sack to the boy and went away with him down the street. She had forgotten to ask Martin to pay the money for the apple.

He stood looking after them, and observing how they walked together. Martin returned to his room, finding his glasses unbroken on the steps as he went down.

Once more, he took his awl and went to work. As it began to get dark, he thought to himself, "I too must light up my lamp." So he trimmed his lamp, hung it up, and resumed his work. He finished one boot completely, and then turned it over to look at it. It was good work. He laid his tools aside, swept up his cuttings, and cleaned his awl. Next, he lifted his lamp down, placed it on the table, and took the Testament from the shelf. He had intended to open it to the place where he had been reading last night, but opened it instead to another place.

The instant he did so, the vision of last night came back to his memory, and he thought he heard a movement behind him. He turned around and saw the shadows of a dark corner and what appeared to be figures of people standing there. Then the voice whispered in his ear:

“Martin, do you not know me?”

“Who are you?” said Martin.

“Even I!” whispered the voice again. “Lo, it is I!” and there from the dark corner, Stephen smiled, and then, like a fading cloud, was gone.

“It is I!” whispered the voice again and there stepped from the same corner the woman with her baby. She smiled, and the baby smiled, and they were gone.

“It is I!” whispered the voice again and there stepped from the same corner the old woman and the boy with the apple. They smiled, and were gone.

Joy filled the soul of Martin Aveditch as he crossed himself, put on his glasses, and set to read the Testament where it opened. At the top of the page he read:

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink: I was a stranger, and you invited me in.”

Further down the page he read:

“I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

Then Martin understood the vision had come true, that his Savior had in truth visited him that day, and he had received Him.

What a wonderful story! Martin Aveditch certainly knew his share of suffering. To lose one's spouse and three children would be a terrible thing. The grief could be overwhelming. Time has a way of taking the edge off strong feelings, though. Then it's up to us to choose our course. Martin chose a path toward understanding and toward God; he decided to move his life to find

more joy. He found a deep, abiding joy that gave meaning to his life.

Examine the questions on Worksheet #47. Write your thoughts on this fascinating short story from Leo Tolstoy.

Name: *John Miller*

Worksheet #53

Date: *4-30-00*

**Impressions from “Where Love Is, There God Is
Also”**

1. My first impression of the story is...
How nice it would be to believe anything so completely.
2. I related to the following character because...
The boy who stole the apple. I'm not really sure why.
3. The story motivated or moved me in what way?
I wished I could believe and feel the peace that Martin did.
4. Other impressions?
I was somewhat familiar with the Bible stories he was referring to, but realized that I only vaguely knew them. I guess I don't know the Bible very well.

*CHAPTER 10***What I Believe**

This chapter comes with a warning. Throughout previous chapters I tried to present the process of **Joyful Living** without interjecting too many of my deeply-held spiritual beliefs. Even if you hold spiritual views different from mine, the **Joyful Living** process can help you change your life. I believe the process stands on its own as a viable way to find more joy.

I also believe my deeply-held spiritual beliefs are truths that others can use. In this chapter, I describe those beliefs that are most precious to me, those ideas that most profoundly affect my life.

In polite society, we don't talk about the things that matter most. We keep the discussion on a superficial level and avoid disagreements and hurt feelings. I break that code of conduct in this chapter and discuss my deepest, most meaningful thoughts. This discussion often takes people out of their comfort zone, so

be forewarned. You have the choice to simply skip to the Conclusion chapter.

Curiosity got the best of you and you decided to stay? Good. These issues matter.

Debby and I spent a weekend in New York City many years ago. As we were strolling along Fifth Avenue, we came to a store called “Cartier,” and Debby told me it was a famous jewelry store. We had little money, but I said, “Oh come on in, let’s look around a bit.” She reluctantly followed me and we began admiring the beautiful jewelry. We spotted a diamond necklace that was amazing, and to Debby’s dismay, I asked the sales clerk to show it to us. As we were examining the necklace, I asked in the calmest voice I could muster, “What’s the price on this piece?”

“\$25,000,” the clerk replied. We left the store quickly, laughing about a necklace that was worth more than our house, for which we could barely make the mortgage payments! Although we were uncomfortable in that store, the visit did us no harm. We were simply exposed to something that we chose not to pursue further. We were just shopping.

I believe the wise person goes idea-shopping. They try to understand the beliefs of others in order to determine if there is something valuable there. Therefore, I commend you for considering my deeply-held beliefs and hope you find something you can use.

I was fortunate to have parents who valued spiritual matters. Our whole family went to Sunday School and church each week. Even when we were away on vacation, we would find a church to attend. As a youngster, I recall singing songs and hearing stories about God and Jesus.

I have believed in the God who created the universe and everything in it, since I was a very young child. The beauty of nature has always made me feel close to God and thankful to Him. I suppose we all develop an image of God based on our experiences and the things we have read and learned. Psalms 145:8 most clearly reveals my image of a strong, loving, creative God:

The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made.

The Nature of God via the Ten Commandments

The rules God gave us further illustrate His goodness. The Ten Commandments were given to Moses by God over 5000 years ago, yet their value has not diminished over those years. We still must obey the Ten Commandments if we wish to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Table 2 lists the Commandments as stated in the New International Version of the Bible. Shortcuts for memorizing are listed in the right column. There is great value in memorizing the Ten Commandments. As you study them, you will realize the first four Commandments address the relationship between God and people. The next six Commandments cover relationships between people.

In the first Commandment (“You shall have no other gods before me”), God tells us that the highest place in our lives must belong to Him. If we choose to worship something or someone other than God, that’s sin. The second Commandment (“You shall not make for yourself an idol”) reinforces the first; we must put God first in our lives. Why would two similar ideas be right next to each other? The Bible often uses repetition to emphasize its most important points. Since the idea of putting God first in our lives is in both the first and the second Commandments, it must be very important to God.

If it’s so important to Him, I should make it important to me, too. In the second chapter of this book, the concept of central focus was examined. Your central focus can be work, recreation, money, family, church, revenge, etc... or your central focus can be God. The first two Commandments require our central focus to be God.

The next Commandment (“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God”) instructs us to not blaspheme the name of

God. This gets broken frequently in today's society. God is called by many different names in the Old and New Testaments, and each has a specific meaning. As we grow closer to God, we begin to sense His awesome holiness and power in the names we call Him. Admittedly, this is a difficult concept to understand for someone who has not experienced it. I believe the third Commandment gives us a clue about the amazing power in God's name and also warns us of the danger of profaning it.

The fourth Commandment instructs us to both remember the Sabbath and to keep it holy. One day a week, we are commanded to rest (i.e. not work) and to honor God. Many people ignore this Commandment, working seven days a week. That behavior takes a toll in their lives. A day of rest is a good idea. We all need to rest and recharge, at least once a week.

In the fifth Commandment, God moves from our relationship with Him to our relationship with our neighbors. Since our first and closest neighbors are our parents, we are instructed how to treat them. The instruction is simple and to the point; we are to honor our parents. The Commandment does not say, "Honor your parents if they met all your needs," nor does it say, "Honor your parents if they did a good job in raising you." It simply says we are to honor our parents.

When I observe the brutality that some parents have inflicted upon their children, I want to cry. If you were raised by a parent or parents who treated you very badly, my heart goes out to you. If you had parents who did a poor job of meeting your needs as a child, this Commandment may be difficult to obey. Whether difficult or not, obeying this Commandment is essential for maturing into functional adults. We don't have to pretend things were wonderful as children; we certainly can't change what happened to us. We don't need to honor our parents' wrong, sinful behavior. We do, however, need to forgive. We must honor our parents simply for giving us life.

The sixth Commandment tells us not to murder. This is one Commandment society has done a fair job of enforcing. Most of us understand that murder is wrong. Most of us do well at finding

a way to settle our disputes with others without resorting to murder.

The seventh Commandment receives less honor in today's society; many people are not quite sure about avoiding adultery. The Bible, though, clearly teaches the importance of avoiding all sexual sin. In the book of Genesis, we are told that God created men and women and that they should leave their parents and come together as one for life. This lifetime marriage is God's plan for people. All sexual activity outside that man/woman, permanent, loving, committed relationship is sin.

The eighth, ninth and tenth Commandments instruct us not to steal, lie, or covet. A generation or two ago, American culture stressed the importance of such basic morality. That is not to say that these rules were perfectly obeyed, but most people would have recognized them as appropriate behavior. Contemporary culture, however, tends to avoid moral absolutes. People attempt to judge each situation based on its own merits and their own feelings. These situational ethics have not improved our society, nor do they conform to God's teachings.

Table 2

The 10 Commandments

	Love of God
1. You shall have no other gods before me.	1. No other gods
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol.	2. No idols
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.	3. No profaning God's name
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.	4. Honor God's day
	Love of one's neighbor
5. Honor your father and your mother.	5. Honor parents
6. You shall not murder.	6. No murder
6. You shall not commit adultery.	7. No adultery
8. You shall not steal.	8. No stealing
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.	9. No lying
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.	10. No coveting

Many people consider the Ten Commandments as rules that take the fun out of life. In fact, the opposite is true. God provided the Ten Commandments to help us truly enjoy life. The joy that comes from putting God first in your life is incredible. I have known several cancer patients who turned their lives completely to God as they battled the disease. Some of my friends died and some survived, but they all said the same thing: “If I had the option to not have cancer and have my old relationship with God or to have cancer and have my fully-committed relationship with God, I would choose cancer.”

Similarly, the prohibition on sexual sins is often viewed as God wanting to take the fun out of life. Again, the opposite is true. The highest level of joy in sex comes from the deep, abiding love in a committed marriage relationship. While promiscuous sex can certainly be alluring, the emotional and physical price is high. When God instructs us to avoid sexual sin, He is not trying to take the fun out of our lives. He is trying to direct us toward the highest level of joy and satisfaction. In short, God loves us and wants what is best for us.

There are many, many things I don't understand about God and the world He created. Frankly, when I find someone who thinks they understand every aspect of God, I find him or her pompous and boring. The truth is we will never understand everything about God while on this earth, but we can still benefit from acting on what we do know.

I use a computer extensively and gain tremendous help from it, yet I have practically no idea how it really works. And I have less understanding of how the electricity works that runs the computer. But I have a functional knowledge of computers and electricity, and accomplish many worthwhile tasks by using them.

Therefore, since we can not fully understand one small piece of God's creation (electricity), it is unrealistic to expect to understand everything about God. Having to understand everything about God before believing in Him is just foolishness.

Many people fall into that trap. On the other hand, to honestly search for the truth about God is wise. If we search for Him with sincerity, we will find Him.

My Own Spiritual Journey

As a child of four or five years old, I remember talking with my father about God as we drove in the car. Dad would listen to my simple observations and treat them with respect. He would also give me his views on whatever we were discussing. I particularly remember going along with Dad when he would get service calls for electrical problems at the United Zion Nursing Home. It was a big old cavern of a building, and we would usually be working in the basement where the electrical panels were located.

I'd hold the flashlight for Dad as he checked out the various circuits. My attention span, which has never been too long, was quite short when holding the flashlight. I'd start thinking about something else and let the light beam move away from Dad's work. He would say to me, "Ned, hold the light up here!" as he was now trying to use a screwdriver in the dark among live electrical circuits. After having to say that several times in a few minutes, Dad would start to get annoyed. Nevertheless, Dad continued to ask me to go along on his service calls and help him. It took me quite a few years to realize that Dad just propped the flashlight when I wasn't along and had much less aggravation.

The service calls to the United Zion Nursing Home were important to me for another reason: I met Mr. Kaylor there. I remember walking through the dining room at meal times and hearing this man pray with a severe speech impediment: his name was Lehman Kaylor. Lehman was born with cerebral palsy and had never walked in his life. He had been pulled around in a wagon as a young child on the farm, and when his mother died, he and his father moved into a basement room at United Zion. Lehman had a sharp mind, but few people could understand his words because of his speech problems.

He spent almost all his life sitting in a wheelchair with little control of his arms and less control of his face and saliva. One might expect Lehman Kaylor would have been bitter about the tough breaks he had in life, but Leaman never saw it that way. I remember hearing him pray fervently with such joy and thankfulness to God. Since Dad could always understand Lehman, he would tell me what he said. The joy of Lehman Kaylor made a huge impression on me.

On another occasion, I recall attending church with my parents when I was 11 years old and hearing an evangelist from India. This man preached a powerful message about the love and salvation of Jesus Christ. During prayer at the end of his message, he asked if anyone wanted to ask Jesus to live in their heart; I felt my hand rise. He then asked those of us who had raised our hands to come to the front of the church. I answered that altar call, hardly even knowing what it meant. I remember that wonderful feeling and being quite disappointed when the feeling faded in a day or two.

Some time after that experience, I mentioned to my mother that I might want to become a minister some day. Mom told my sisters, and the taunting began. One of my sisters called me “Preacher boy,” and would bring up the issue often to embarrass me. I wished many times I had never uttered a word about preaching, and in time the idea faded.

When I was 15 years old, I remember hitchhiking into Lancaster City and visiting a hip bookstore. I hitchhiked a good bit in those years and am amazed, as I look back, at the amount of freedom my parents gave me. I bought books on Eastern Meditation, Yoga, and Buddhism. The idea of Enlightenment fascinated me, and the Eastern religions seemed to make sense. In my late teens and early twenties, I meditated and did yoga exercises and studied Buddhism.

During those years of our lives, we often search for anything that makes sense. If we find something that is very different from what our parents think makes sense, so much the better. I loved the writings of Gandhi and tried to practice non-violent re-

sistance. There were probably not many Division One collegiate wrestlers who were trying to practice active non-violent resistance. I suppose I enjoyed many of the aspects of Eastern thought simply because they were different.

I also began attending the Princeton Friends Meeting House on Sunday mornings during my college years. I would walk through the beautiful Institute for Advanced Study woods (where Albert Einstein worked for many years) to a charming little meeting house. The old stone building was built in the 1700's and was heated by a big open fireplace in the winter. I enjoyed sitting in silence at the Quaker Meetings and waiting on the Spirit of God.

Not to portray myself inaccurately here; the vast majority of my time was spent ignoring spiritual things and focusing exclusively on myself. Cursing, lust, alcohol, and drugs were important parts of my life at that time. I spent most of my time working and playing, and I prided myself on doing both of them with intensity. I was not a deeply spiritual person (I was a real jerk fairly often), but I did maintain an interest in things of God.

When I graduated with my engineering degree, I thought I was quite a valuable commodity in the marketplace. I was rudely awakened. While working on the road for Clair Brothers Audio, I made \$700 per week, which was excellent money for a 20-year old. However, my first job as a Construction Engineer paid only \$280 per week. Debby and I had decided that we wanted to move back to Lancaster County, PA, and that we would not stay married if I worked on the road. So I took the job in construction, worked hard, and got laid off after 18 months.

Getting laid off was hard on my ego (which in retrospect is usually a good thing), and turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I next worked as a foreman for an excavating contractor; and I learned a tremendous amount about working in the field on big projects. I was running a crew in Maryland and spent long days working and driving. Through these early working years, I had little time for God and it showed in my life. Debby and I were not getting along well, and everything seemed sort of pointless.

From my viewpoint, Debby becoming pregnant with our first child was a major turning point in my life. As we considered the consequences of bringing a child into this world, we began to examine our lives a bit more intently. We began to attend the church where Debby grew up, and that was where I felt the changes happening. We learned to know families where strong love was evident. We observed many truly happy marriages in which the husband and wife laughed together and were best friends.

We also taught the three-year-old Sunday School class for several years. As I told and retold the simple Bible stories I had learned as a child, spiritual interest stirred in me. I learned there was a difference between simply reading the Bible and studying the Bible. Studying required some thought, introspection, and analysis of what I read; it helped me tie the stories together into a more coherent whole.

The Truth Comes into Focus

I studied through the New International Version of the Bible, with Commentary and began to understand more truth about God. I began to see how the Bible was consistent in its basic teachings. Essentially, the Bible taught the following clear message:

We must love God with all our heart. Period. That means we have to choose between selfishly wanting our own way or obediently following God's way. And we have to make that choice before God will show His way to us. We are commanded to love God totally and unequivocally.

Solomon, the wisest man in the world, said in Ecclesiastes 12:12:

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Solomon concluded, in this most philosophical book, that a life not centered on God is purposeless and meaningless. So how do we center our lives on God?

We begin by acknowledging that God, the Creator of all things, is completely pure and holy. In our human weakness, we necessarily fall short of the holy and pure standard of God. I need only honestly examine my life to recognize that many of my actions have mixed motives (some noble and some self-serving) and that those mixed motives are not as holy and pure as God's standard. All of our efforts toward good behavior will simply never match God's. If we can never be holy enough, what is the point of even trying?

The answer to that question is one of the most amazing concepts ever taught. The Bible teaches that the Son of God came to Earth as a human child named Jesus about 2000 years ago. Experiencing all the temptations that are common to humans, Jesus nevertheless lived a perfect, holy life. He willingly went to His death on the cross as a perfect sacrifice for all people for all time. Jesus allowed Himself to be put on the cross in order to become an atoning sacrifice for anyone who calls on His name.

The term "sanctification" means to be made holy, to be made acceptable to God. Jesus, by His position on the cross, made any person who comes to Him holy and acceptable to God. This "Positional Sanctification" is the central message of Christianity. We can never behave well enough for God on our own. We would be doomed, if not for the work Jesus did on the cross for us.

You may wonder, as I have, "Why did Jesus, an innocent man, have to die? If God was willing to forgive us, why didn't He just do so without having an innocent man killed?" Since God is perfectly pure and holy, He deserves perfection from us. Our sins create a debt that can not just be swept under the rug; it needs to be paid. We deserve death and torment and suffering for the sins that we commit. Jesus Christ came and willingly paid our debt for us; He suffered and died in our place. We need only accept His offer of forgiveness.

Do not make the mistake of classifying Christianity as simply another ethical teaching, as one of many paths that lead to the top of the mountain (i.e. God). The teachings of Christ will not allow that conclusion. Either Jesus Christ is the one and only Son of God and no one gets to Heaven except through Him, or He is a liar. The words of Jesus Himself do not allow us to group Him as one of many outstanding teachers and gurus. Jesus is the only teacher who claimed to be the Son of God and the only way to Heaven.

A study of Jesus' own words clearly shows this:

I am the Way and the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me.

These words, spoken by Jesus, were recorded by an eyewitness, John the Apostle in The Gospel of John 14:6. Jesus was even clearer when He was on trial for His life. Matthew 26:63-67 records:

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

⁶⁴"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. ⁶⁶What do you think?"

"He is worthy of death," they answered.

⁶⁷Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him.

If one reads the Bible without prejudice, seeking to objectively understand what is recorded, one concludes that Jesus did, in fact, claim to be the one and only Son of God. The Bible tells us the only way to reach God is through Jesus, by accepting the sacrifice He made on the cross for each of us.

After Jesus was crucified and resurrected, the Apostle Peter was preaching in Jerusalem and explained to the people that they had taken part in crucifying the Son of God. The people to whom Peter spoke were upset and asked, as recorded in Acts 2:37:

“Brothers, what shall we do?”

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Peter went on to say in Acts 4:12,

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

Therefore, one can not logically believe that Jesus was simply one of many great teachers in history. A great teacher would not so mislead his followers by claiming to be the Son of God. One can take the position that Jesus was a liar and that Christianity is the biggest hoax in history. However, it seems odd that almost every one of the apostles (who would have had to be in on the hoax), was killed for refusing to deny Jesus as Christ. The longevity of Christianity also contradicts the hoax theory. So many people over the past 2000 years have completely dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ, it is unreasonable to believe there is absolutely nothing to Christianity.

The best proof for Christianity will make no sense whatsoever to non-believers. Jesus told His disciples, shortly before He died, that if they believed in Him and tried to follow His teachings, they would be sent a Comforter. This Comforter, the Holy Spirit, came to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would always be with His people and would actually be in them. The Holy Spirit would continue to make the truth of God more and more clear to His people.

Having investigated several other religious traditions in my earlier years, I was familiar with the emotional highs that can

come from spiritual things. I am not saying this is a good thing or a bad thing, I am only stating that spiritual experiences often have strong emotional impact. I enjoyed the peace that came from yoga exercises or Buddhist meditation.

When our son Lex decided to become a Christian at age nine, we had a baptism service at our church. Many people over the years chose to have their baptism in a nearby stream, and Lex, following in the tradition of his mother, also decided to be baptized in the stream. It was the middle of November and quite cold and windy. I decided to be baptized in the stream on the same day as Lex since I had never experienced believer's baptism.

As Lex and I prepared to be baptized that cold Sunday morning, I had no idea what to expect. When I waded into the stream with Eric Brubaker, one of our ministers, the very cold, very fast-moving water stunned me. We went to the middle of the stream and I knelt down. Let me tell you, that water was COLD! The Church of the Brethren baptizes by dunking your head under water three times ("in the name of the Father" ...dunk... "in the name of the Son" ... dunk ... "and in the name of the Holy Spirit" ... longer dunk). With each dunk, the swift current carried me downstream a few yards, and Eric had to struggle to keep his hand on my head.

After the third dunk, Eric put both hands on my head and began to pray. As he prayed, I felt the most amazing thing happening. I felt a warmth from my head down to my feet. I could actually feel the Holy Spirit enter me and fill me. I am skeptical of one-time religious experiences and was not sure what to make of this one. The genuineness of this experience was proved over time, however, as I felt the Holy Spirit within me week after week, month after month, and year after year.

I must not mislead here. I want to clearly describe what I experience as the Holy Spirit within me and what I do not experience. I do not experience God's constant presence and unfailing clear direction. I wish I could say that I always feel the Lord within me and always know just what to do, but that wouldn't be true. In fact, as I've studied the lives of many Christians over the

years, they all indicated times of feeling alienated from God and not knowing what to do. Do not hold the misconception that a conversion experience will somehow take all your problems away.

The way I do experience the Holy Spirit within me happens in a number of ways. When I teach the adult Sunday School class in our church, I sometimes feel a wave of emotion sweep over me as I am speaking; sometimes I say things I was not planning to say, and I can simply feel God's presence and power. It is a marvelous feeling. Other times, when I'm on my knees praying, well-formed thoughts come into my mind that I believe God wants me to act on. I need to be careful with this one. I have a little saying, "Not every goofy idea that pops into my head is a leading from the Holy Spirit!"

Writing this book was another way I've experienced the Holy Spirit in my life. Many times as I sat at the keyboard and wondered what to say next, words would come to me that seemed so clear, and I would be amazed. On these occasions, I would thank God for His kind direction. Of course, other times I would write and be amazed at the absolute drivel I was producing.

My experience indicates that the infilling of the Holy Spirit is not an all-or-nothing deal. There are moments and hours and even days when I strongly feel the presence of God. There are also many times when I feel nothing at all, when I give in to my despicable motives and actions. During these times, it is hard to imagine that God could have any interest in me at all. But because of my solid foundation built on the truth of God's word, I know that God continues to love me and wants what is best for me even when I disappoint Him and myself.

The manner in which the Holy Spirit acts is important to understand. Suppose you need to get some place. Perhaps you want to see a Broadway show in New York City and don't know exactly how to get there. If someone wanted to help you, they could give you a detailed map with directions. Then you would be on your own to follow the directions and find your desired location. Conversely, someone could say, "Just get in the car and

drive, I know the way very well and I'll drive there with you. I'll be your co-pilot." God generally uses the Holy Spirit like a co-pilot for our lives.

Since I obviously enjoy the sense of being filled with the Holy Spirit, how do I get more? As one may expect, the answer is found in the Bible. In the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to his followers. He says, in John 14:15-17:

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- ¹⁷the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

We are given the Spirit of Truth (or the Holy Spirit) when we obey the commands of Jesus. As we strive to follow the teachings of Jesus, the presence of the Holy Spirit becomes more prevalent within us. Therefore, we gain a clearer understanding of God's will as we obey the things we already know to do. In a sense, God rewards our obedience by providing a better vision of what we need to do.

Christianity turns everything we would think to be true on its head. Our human nature would think, "If I work very hard, I will be rewarded by not having to work so hard in the future." Our culture is built on that premise. Christ, though, set things up quite differently. If we work hard for Him, we can expect a clearer vision of the additional work we must do. Jesus never promised ease for His people here on Earth. He promised understanding and truth, joy, peace, fulfillment, direction, and much more, but not ease.

Jesus Christ offers any person complete forgiveness of all sins and an everlasting life with God in heaven. Because of His great love, Jesus offers this free gift of salvation to anyone who will receive it. This grace, this free and unmerited love and favor

of God, is given to us if we ask for it. So why in the world doesn't everyone immediately accept God's grace?

As discussed in the section on truth and lies, the world contains both a force of love and creation (God) and a force of evil and destruction (Satan). Satan's goal is to keep people from understanding this basic truth of God's grace. If people do not accept God's grace, they are not saved. One of the clearest statements of this fact comes from the prophet Jonah as written in Jonah 2:8:

“Those who cling to worthless idols, forfeit the grace that could be theirs.”

Our worthless idols can be money, pleasure, sex, general self-centeredness or any of a number of things. For a person to accept the gift of salvation, though, that individual must be willing to put Christ first, to let go of worthless idols. In order to truly repent and accept salvation, the central focus in our lives must change. Our focus must be God.

Following Jesus requires self-denial and all the dedication and obedience one can muster. Jesus tells a story in Luke 14:25-35 about the costs of being His disciple. He says we must weigh the costs before we begin. He uses the example of a person who wants to build a tower. A prudent person would not just begin to build; he would have a plan, calculate the quantity of materials, and estimate the cost. Jesus recommends the same when deciding to follow Him.

I have a good friend who was telling me about his mother-in-law. He mentioned that she had been unhappy for a long time and described some of her bizarre behavior. She had succeeded in driving almost everyone in her life away from her because of her incredible selfishness. Her daughter had talked her into seeing a psychologist, and they were hopeful some progress could be made. She actually saw a series of therapists, but did not seem to improve in any way.

She told my friend one day that she was through seeing therapists. “There is no point in going to see them,” she said. “They all just keep talking about things I need to change.” The situation was quite clear to my friend’s mother-in-law... other people needed to change, certainly not her. And that attitude dooms her, I’m afraid, to a joyless life of blaming everyone else for her lack of happiness.

If we choose to be followers of Christ, we must be willing to continually change. As followers of Christ, our goal must be to move closer to the will of God. “Positional Sanctification,” as defined earlier, makes us holy by Christ’s position on the cross. “Progressive Sanctification” is being made holy by our day-to-day actions that glorify God. We need to struggle on a daily basis to know God’s will and to accomplish it. In that struggle, we move closer to God.

Our salvation is not something we earn, though. Jesus died on the cross so that any sinner can come to Him and experience the forgiveness of God. No matter how good our behavior, it would never be good enough to earn our salvation. We can only find salvation through the atoning work of Christ. Once we accept His salvation, though, our work must begin. Our lives must be dedicated to finding and doing the will of our God. Even though we will have many failures, we are called to that struggle for the rest of our lives.

The Bible tells us salvation is both an event (at the time of conversion) and a process (continually being saved as we conform to the will of Christ). Therefore, the concepts of positional and progressive sanctification are the framework on which our lives must be built. Everything we do, everything we attempt, should be viewed from the framework of our sanctification.

This process of becoming more holy can not happen just by our efforts. As we give our lives to Jesus, God helps transform us. This transformation, this progressive sanctification, is the whole of our work for the rest of our lives. Christianity must not be just a theory; it must be our whole way of life. I love the quote from Kallistos Ware:

“No one can be an armchair traveler on this all-important journey. No one can be a Christian second hand. God has children, but He has no grandchildren.”

“So how do I move toward God?” you may ask. The most effective first step involves Bible study. God has provided a huge amount of information in the Bible. As we read it, we continually gain new insights about our world and our God. The more we understand the Truth of God’s Word, the more life’s puzzle pieces fit together.

The Bible can appear overwhelming to those not very familiar with it. Don’t be intimidated, though. Simply begin reading the New Testament as you would read a story book. Jesus taught by using so many parables and simple stories because He didn’t want His teaching to be only for learned people. Even children can, and usually do, understand the basic lessons in the stories of Jesus.

A wonderful aspect of Bible study involves levels of meaning. A passage I’ve read a dozen times before, can suddenly take on a new and deeper meaning for me. I love that sense of excitement when the meaning of the Bible passage moves to a new level. I guarantee these gems of wisdom will also appear to you as you continue in dedicated Bible study.

Don’t expect to understand everything too quickly, though, as it rarely works that way. The reward of Bible study is a gradual understanding of the Truth. Most of us want all the Truth at once, but perhaps God knows that we couldn’t handle that.

You will benefit greatly by committing yourself to a daily time of Bible study. You don’t have to read large amounts of text; just read carefully and prayerfully; consider what you read. Make notes in the margins of your Bible, underline things that strike you, and write comments. These will often be helpful to you in the future.

The value of daily Bible study amazes me. It seems like such a simple thing. Yet I can assure you, over time, your Bible

study will become one of your most profitable investments. I cannot overstate the importance of daily Bible study.

Only a daily time of prayer surpasses the value of daily Bible study. To develop one's inner life, time must be spent in prayer. There is no other way.

Jesus prayed as a regular habit; He often retired to quiet places to pray while His disciples slept. Jesus also turned to prayer in every stressful situation. When Jesus struggled, He consistently turned to prayer. The value of prayer is probably best illustrated by the importance Jesus placed on it in His own life.

When I began praying every morning, I struggled. After a time, though, I began to feel some of the benefits. The closeness with God is, of course, a wonderful thing to experience...yet there is so much more. A consistent time of prayer in the morning starts my day in the right direction. I know daily prayer affects my life in positive ways, many of which I barely understand.

In a nutshell, daily prayer just feels right. My daily time of prayer helps keep the focus of my life toward God as opposed to the many other directions I tend to take. Prayer does not make my problems go away; it simply helps me be a little bit more of who I want to be.

“Prayer – secret, fervent, believing prayer - lies at the root of all personal godliness.”

William Carrey

“Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays.”

Soren Kirkegaard

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

James 5:16

Daily Bible study and daily prayer are a means of growing one's inner life. However, the process of progressive sanctification involves more than just our inner life. In order to glorify God

with our lives, we need to be developing both our inner life and our relationships with others.

When I think of the Christian's relationship with other people, I am reminded of the quote by Richard Foster in his wonderful book titled, The Celebration of Discipline. Foster wrote about the scene in the upper room when Jesus washed His disciples' feet, "...Then Jesus took a towel and basin and redefined greatness." Jesus taught His followers that relationships with friends and acquaintances must be founded upon service, love, and humility. As we treat others in this manner, we build our relationship with both man and God.

Our progressive sanctification will not be carried out only on our knees. We need to be actively building our relationships with others. We need to be struggling and failing and struggling some more in our day-to-day relationships. Our joy in this endeavor will be our best witness to others.

On the other hand, if we live somber, rule-centered, smug and self-righteous lives, we show our lack of Godliness. If we create ugliness in our daily living, we are not following in the footsteps of our Lord. When our priorities are centered on self, our life is not glorifying God. The strongest argument against Christianity is Christians who live this self-serving way.

These thoughts can be summarized with a quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was a Christian martyr in Germany during World War II:

"When all is said and done, the life of faith is nothing if not an unending struggle of the spirit with every available weapon against the flesh. How is it possible to live the life of faith when we grow weary of prayer, when we lose our taste for reading the Bible, and when sleep, food and sensuality deprive us of the joy of communion with God?"

We all share these struggles; every one of us trying to live a life dedicated to Jesus Christ will contend with these issues. Some days we will barely struggle; other days we will struggle might-

ily. I know God honors our sincere efforts, even when we fail, and will encourage us to continue. In the end, this struggle for holiness is the only thing that matters.

Conclusion

One of the great discoveries a man makes, one of his great surprises, is to find he can do what he was afraid he couldn't do.

Henry Ford

When you began reading this book, you probably knew very little about me or my ideas. Now you know lots about me, maybe too much! My purpose in sharing so much information about myself came from previous teaching experience. I've found that most people relate better to the failings and successes of a real person than to a theory.

I've certainly failed often in my life and continue to fail every day. Yet I feel blessed by the experiences I've had. I love deeply and try to constantly expand my understanding of the truth. While the circumstances of my life may bring joy or despair, my life is not controlled by my circumstances. My life consists of the love and honor I bring to these situations.

Being a person that hates to be surprised, I've always tried to anticipate bad news. I suppose some basic desire for self-preservation motivates me to prepare myself for hard times. I have discovered, though, that I can do what I was afraid I could not. I can persevere in times of adversity because I am more than my feelings. I am prepared to take what life hands me and to do my best.

As you began this book, what was it that you were afraid you couldn't do? Were you afraid of not being able to rise to the challenges life may present, as I was? Or were you afraid of having to make changes? Perhaps you were afraid that if you looked too deeply at yourself, you would see only weaknesses and inability. Regardless of how you started, I hope you have begun disproving your most basic fears.

As you've worked through this book, you have identified talents, abilities, as well as personal weaknesses. You've clarified your life values and faced your emotional struggles. Memories and past relationships were examined; hopes and plans for the future were formed. You considered God's place in your life.

This process took time and effort but the returns on your investment will be phenomenal! You will develop new habits and you will be changed!

I'm not a person who concludes things well. I love to begin a new project, to create a plan. I enjoy persevering through the middle of a project, handling all the details and keeping everything moving forward. I excel at getting things done on time; I get them functional, just not completely finished. That last one percent of a project tortures me. I hate the final stage, and avoid it when I can.

Our many home renovations and additions illustrate this. We have light fixtures hanging from wires for years, waiting for me to get the right sized screws. I look at them sometimes, or Debby reminds me on rare occasions, and I think, "I'll finish that soon." But I don't.

Even the building projects I do for other people torment me in the final stage. Once the exciting part of the construction is

completed, I must force myself to pay attention to the small final details. I make myself finish my building projects, but I don't like it and I don't do it too well.

As I come to the conclusion of this book, I encounter the same tendencies. In fact, someone commented about an earlier draft, "The conclusion basically says, 'Man, I'm glad I finished this thing!'"

Since that's not the message I want to send, I struggled with how to conclude. I decided to conclude the way I live, not with a summary but a look ahead to other exciting possibilities.

Do you ever want to repeat a joke and can't remember it? Or forget the names of the spouse and children of an acquaintance? Perhaps you feel down and wish for some insight. Where do you turn?

The Joyful Living Database could solve these problems and many more. Your own, personal Joyful Living Database could be developed from the Worksheet information you have just completed. You could place all the most useful, important and valuable information about your life in one, organized place. That place is a Microsoft Access database program, which lets you easily search and retrieve and sort information.

Let's think about a few of the specifics of this Joyful Living Database:

1. The names, addresses, and various phone numbers of all the people you've known would be here.
2. You could actually be reminded of birthdays, anniversaries and other significant dates a few days ahead of time.
3. As you look up a phone number, you could also see information about the individual's personality type, love language, central focus, or other attributes. You could be reminded of that valuable information right when you need it.
4. As you speak with someone, you could jot your conversation notes directly into their file, never to be lost or mis-

- placed. Since today's computers have almost endless memory, those notes can be permanently accessible.
5. Enough about people, how about a laugh? Any joke or story or quote can be saved in the Joyful Living Database and easily retrieved. Whether you need to pep up a speech or just need to laugh at some funny stories, you can search through your personal database of things that made you laugh (or things that motivated you).
 6. Another great benefit comes from recording memories of your children. If you have young children, imagine sitting down once a month and inputting a few of the touching, cute or silly things your little ones did recently. What a tremendous resource that information would become in a few years! Wouldn't it be great to have your parents' recollections of your younger years?
 7. When life seems overwhelming, imagine being able to search for your own personal truths (or the lies that snag you) and recognize those thought patterns that cause you defeat and despair. You could decide to focus on behavior that reflects your chosen central focus.
 8. Your own memories could also be recorded here, as well as memories you hear from other loved ones. Your parents may never do this program, but you could record their memories so your children and grandchildren would have them.

Imagine having all this useful information accessible to you. If you completed the Joyful Living worksheets, you've got a vast amount of data. The Joyful Living Database could help you utilize that data often in your daily living. While you don't need the Joyful Living Database to benefit greatly from your plan, the database seems like the next logical step. I will make this integrated database available on my website (www.pelger.com) for your use.

So, we conclude by looking ahead, by considering an idea that may help us live more effectively and joyfully.

I hope and pray that you will continue to work out a plan, year after year, and struggle toward its accomplishment. In that struggle, you will find joy and purpose and meaning and truth!

I commend you for your efforts and wish you well for the future.

Remember – YOU have the ability to choose your level of joy!

Sincerely,

Ned Pelger

Appendix A: Obtaining Blank Worksheets

Blank Worksheets are available to you in several ways. You may download and print the blank Worksheets from my website at www.pelger.com. A better method involves downloading the software application programs and completing the Worksheets on your computer (see Appendix D) . If you don't have internet access, you may call ATA Publishing Company toll free at (888-627-7744) for copies of the blank Worksheets or a CD with the software application programs.

Appendix B:

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Appendix C:

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- *Discovering Your Own Uniqueness***
- *Why Goal Setting Rarely Works***
- *The Need for More Hope in Your Life***

Chapter 2 – Understanding Who You Are

- *Optimists and Pessimists***
- *The Values You Live***
- *Your Central Focus***
- *Personality Styles***
- *Love Languages***

Chapter 3 – Understanding and Managing Emotions

- *Eight Primary Emotions***
- *Emotions, Moods and Temperament***
- *Emotional Hijackings***

Chapter 4 – Your Memories

- *Earliest Memory***
- *Childhood Memories***
- *Memories, Memories, Memories***

Chapter 5 – Understanding and Managing Relationships

- *Functional and Dysfunctional Families***
- *Relationship Bank Account***
- *Relationships with Family and Friends***
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- *Relationship with God***

Chapter 6 – Your Ancestors

- *Family Stories***
- *Be Aware of the Risks***
- *Story of Naaman***

Chapter 7 – Truth and Lies

- *Finding the Meaning of Life***
- *Finding Truths***
- *Ned Pelger Truth #1: It is hard work to find the truth***
- *Ned Pelger Truth #2: We have the freedom to choose our response***
- *Ned Pelger Truth # 3: We all sin***
- *Ned Pelger Truth #4: We must admit our ignorance to learn the truth***
- *Ned Pelger Truth #5: Personal character proceeds truth***
- *Ned Pelger Truth #6: Joy motivates us to the truth***
- *Ned Pelger Truth #7: Love is action***
- *Ned Pelger Truth #8: There is a universal battle between good and evil***
- *Your Truths***
- *Defining Lies***
- *Ned Pelger Lie #1: I have a right to be happy***
- *Ned Pelger Lie #2: Possessions provide security***
- *Ned Pelger Lie #3: We deserve the treatment we received early in our lives***
- *Ned Pelger Lie #4: Only good people are in church***

Chapter 8 – The Plan

- *A Time of Retreat***
- *The Value of a Simple Plan***
- *Significant Observations from Previous Worksheets***
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Courage

Common Sense

Daily Time with God

Rest

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The Nature of God via the Ten Commandments

My Own Spiritual Journey

The Truth Comes into Focus

Conclusion

Appendix D: Your Computer as a Tool for Personal Growth

I'm a packrat. Sometimes that causes me problems, but the stuff I've saved helps me once in a while. For the past twenty years, I've struggled with personal growth and self improvement. As I review the notes I've saved, I remember many of my early frustrations:

1. Learning important truths and then forgetting them.
2. Not being able to remember family memories.
3. Writing a plan and then losing the paper.
4. Running out of room to track plan progress or write comments.
5. Wanting to keep my plans confidential, yet nearby and accessible.

Though these frustrations may seem minor, I found it didn't take much for me to drop my commitment to self improvement.

On the other hand, as I placed my self improvement information on the computer, everything went smoother. I could find things, changes and tracking were simple, and my sense of progress was clear. Don't miss the importance of that last item. A clear sense of progress provides the best possible motivation. When I feel good about part of my plan, I redouble my efforts to achieve the other parts.

Since I find the computer so useful in this process, I thought you might also. So I offer the simple application programs I've developed. The specific programs are based in the Microsoft Office 2000 suite and include the following:

1. **Blank Worksheets:** All blank Worksheets in Microsoft Word 2000 format.
2. **Ancestor Profiles:** A Microsoft Excel 2000 series of spreadsheets which chart ancestors' traits.
3. **My Stories:** A Microsoft Access 2000 database to record your personal stories.
4. **Quotes and Stories:** A Microsoft Access 2000 database to record the wisdom and humor of others.
5. **My Plan:** A Microsoft Excel 2000 spreadsheet to create and track your plan for life improvements.

My self improvement efforts produced few results prior to my use of the one-year plan. I found the one-year plan helped me focus on clear objectives. Since I used a one-year plan on a sheet of paper for several years, I also experienced the frustration of difficult updating. As the year progressed, I wanted to record my progress or make some changes, and never had enough room on the page.

While this problem seems minor, I was consistently frustrated by it. When I started to put my one-year plan on an Excel spreadsheet, I loved the flexibility. I record more information, make minor changes when necessary, and feel better every time I review the plan. Though it sounds odd, the use of the computer spreadsheet really does make a huge difference in how I feel about the entire process.

The advantage of recording a bit more information each month on the one-year plan surprised me. The added history allows me to see trends in my thinking and my personality. For example, I have a perennial plan item of taking each child alone for a special time each month. When I tracked my progress on paper, I only had room to make a quick notation of what we did. On the spreadsheet, I fill in some details because the cell expands to hold all the information I put in.

Now, when I look back over the old plans, I spot trends in my relationships with the kids. That extra information allowed me to notice that I often took our one daughter shopping to the same place, while I did more of a variety of things with the other kids. Now I had a clear and simple problem to solve! I got more creative, talked to her about some other options, and we did some cool things together.

Another advantage of doing all the worksheets on computer is the search capabilities. Many times I remember a portion of the information I need but simply can't recall everything. I strain to bring in that additional information that would help clarify the situation. People make worse decisions when they don't have the best information available. Rational intelligence is based on being able to access the appropriate information at the time it's needed.

I find my rational intelligence greatly increased by the computer search function. Think about having all the pertinent information from your life, all the things you've learned and the experiences you've had, accessible to you. The people I've known over the years who I considered to be very intelligent seemed to have this information all easily accessible in their brains.

My brain just doesn't work that well, my information isn't so accessible. I can choose to whine about my lack of brain-power or I can use the computer as a tool to leverage the brain-power I do have.

The ability to easily search through memories, truths, lies, old stories, etc. benefits me greatly. I gain that bit of information, that single insight, that helps me see the situation more clearly. I make better decisions when I have more of my past experience accessible to me.

This concept is especially well-illustrated in the software for the Ancestor Profiles. If you took the time to research your ancestors to the fourth generation and recorded their information, you have developed a powerful tool. The

four generations of attributes could provide insights on so many levels.

Consider looking at the cause of death of your four generations of ancestors. Do you see any trends that provide worthwhile information? Is there a history of heart disease? Do certain cancers occur often? This information can help you make lifestyle choices about diet, stress, etc.

A friend of mine retired from his high stress construction superintendent job in his early 50's because of the high incidence of heart attacks in his family. He decided to simply live with less things and spend time gardening and doing things he enjoyed. Fifteen years later, he relishes his decision, believing he would not have survived otherwise. Who knows?

The Ancestor Profiles provide much more than simply family health trends, though. Check out the personality styles of your ancestors. Think about the trends in love languages and central focus. You may gain significant understanding about your background by studying these trends.

As you spot these trends, consider their basis. Is the trend primarily genetic or environmental in its nature? I see plenty of mental illness in my own Ancestor Profile and it seems to have some genetic basis. With that thought, I would choose a different direction for treatment of mental illness in my immediate family than if I thought the problem was primarily environmental in nature.

Another advantage of using the computer as a tool for personal growth involves our current relationships. Most people have some sort of people database. It may be as simple as names, addresses, and telephone numbers written in a book. Or, it may be a computerized database which lists lots of personal information (e.g. work and home info; phone, fax and email info; birthdays; anniversaries; etc.). If you use a people database on your computer, consider adding fields for personality type, central focus, and love language. This informa-

tion will help you understand and communicate more effectively with the person.

For example, as you look up someone's cell phone number on your computer database, you see the other fields that describe them emotionally. As you wait for them to answer, perhaps you take a few seconds to think about one of the aspects of their temperament. When you speak with them, you have that information in mind and use it to better communicate. Everybody wins!

The last benefit to consider is confidentiality. When you work through this Joyful Living process, you compile some sensitive information. The completed worksheets are definitely not a coffee table book. Obviously, you can keep the information in a confidential file. But I've found paper tends to be difficult to keep confidential (even for the US government).

The computer offers some great attributes for confidentiality. Password protection of various worksheets and files will keep information confidential. You can choose the level of confidentiality by the way you set up your password protection.

With all these advantages, I hope you try the *Joyful Living* process on your computer. You'll be glad you did!

Appendix E:

References and Suggested Readings

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Reader Response Page

Writing can be a lonely business. As I sit at my keyboard in the morning, I often wonder if my effort will connect with anyone else. Perhaps my writing connects with you? If so, I'd love to hear from you. The following list may get you thinking, but send me whatever you like:

- Things that connected with you
- Things that you didn't like
- A funny or touching story from your life or the life of an ancestor (I enjoy hearing the best stories of people's lives!)
- If the *Joyful Living* process helped you

The next page contains the information you need to contact me. Thank you, in advance, for sharing.

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