



PLAIN AND SIMPLE SERIES®

Against The Tide

Getting Beyond Ourselves

By
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The King's High Way Ministries, Inc.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
1. Choices: The Key to Our Christian Walk.....	5
2. Our Free Will.....	31
3. Our Supernatural Willpower.....	49
4. Single-mindedness vs. Double-mindedness.....	77
5. Faith Choices	101
6. Emotional Choices	127
7. Whose Life Will Be Lived in Your Soul?.....	153

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Against The Tide

Getting Beyond Ourselves

This is a book about *faith*.

This is also a book about *choices*,
because faith is simply a series of choices.

Ultimately, this is a book about having
enough “faith” to “choose” to go *against the
tide*—the tide of our own natural thoughts
and emotions—and follow God.

Chapter One

Choices: The Key to Our Christian Walk

Toni’s letter began, “I am married (separated now) to an abusive man who is an on-again-off-again drug abuser. We have been married now for five years. In the beginning of our marriage, I prayed for my husband and kept my heart open to God’s Love and had such peace. However, over this past year I have become so bitter as a result of all the betrayals, ugly words and lack of commitment, that I have come to deeply hate this man.

“Today, I just got out of the hospital from losing our child (I was four months along). I almost lost my life because I hemorrhaged so badly that I was in shock and had to have a blood transfusion. My husband never even came to see me or call me.

“It’s these kinds of things that I seem not to be able to forgive. When I am in prayer, I truly *want* to be released from all of these negative emotions and to walk in Love, but each time one of these incidents occurs, I react in anger and hatred instead. It is to the point now where my husband no longer sees his own sin, but instead sees the anger in me. Thus, he believes he is a good husband and I am the wicked one.

“The question is...*how do I get out of this? How do I get beyond my emotions when I am so hurt that I can feel it in the deepest part of my stomach? I just can’t seem to get free from these emotions and I feel like I’m tottering on the edge.*

“I really want a relationship with Jesus again, like it used to be. I pray daily for strength and that I would be able to walk in Love, *but I can't seem to break free from these horrible feelings* that explode when I am confronted with another situation. What do I do? Please help me.”

Bob's letter began, “On October 15th, my wife filed for a legal separation. She placed a restraining order on me and evicted me from our home.

“...the day after being tossed out of my house, I sat in an empty room in a state of shock and said, ‘Father, what have I done?’ As I wept before the Lord, He began to reveal things that I had never seen before. He showed me that I was all tied up in knots by the enemy and by the indulgences that I had allowed my own flesh to participate in. *I was in the clutches of bitterness, resentment and bound by dependencies that I couldn't even see.* He showed me that while I continually begged Him to make Himself known to my wife, I wouldn't respond to what He was asking me to do. I had chosen to harden my heart against her and had allowed a root of bitterness to grow and grow and grow, until it finally just grew into a mighty tree.

“God showed me that these were the things that caused our problems and this is why He had to ‘hit me over the head with a bat’ to get my attention. All His previous subtle and gentle attempts had failed. My cold and hardened heart (full of bitterness and resentment) had simply quenched His Spirit in me.

“But Lord, what do I do now? *How do I get rid of my bitterness and resentment?* And, where do I find the genuine love that I need?”

Recently, I had a wonderful luncheon with a dear friend. But, towards the end of our time together, Sandy asked my opinion on her personal situation. When I gave her my suggestions, she reacted violently. “*What am I supposed to do, fake it?*” She yelled at me. “*I simply don't love him anymore. I used to, but I don't any longer! I'm just going to get a divorce!*”

“Movers” of our Soul

Natural thoughts, emotions and desires. The dictionary calls them “the movers of our soul,” because what we think and feel is what we naturally choose to follow and act upon.

Both Christians and non-Christians alike struggle with these elements of life. Our thoughts stir up our emotions; our emotions influence our desires (or our choices); and our choices produce our lives. In other words, everything we say and do is built upon these driving components of our makeup. Our days are even defined by *how we feel*. We have “good days” and we have bad days. We constantly ask one another, “How do you feel?” “How are you?” Most of the time it's not our physical health that we are inquiring about, it's our mental and emotional status.

What we think and how we feel determines all aspects of our lives, as seen in the comments of the above letters.

Confirming this, listen to some of the new book titles and articles that are in our local bookstores now: *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway, You Don't Have to Feel This Way, Glamorous Scents for Your Every Mood, Choose Happiness, Intimacy, Feel Good Naked* and *If It Hurts, It Isn't Love*. And, of course, half of the books in the relationship section are on the mental and emotional feelings that go along with sexual intimacy.

If we are not able to control and tame these “movers of our soul,” however, they can easily overwhelm and drown us. As someone once dramatically expressed to me: *“I just can't seem to change how I feel. I am a Christian, but I feel how I feel regardless of how much you prove to me that 'I shouldn't feel this way!'”*

Should our thoughts and feelings carry this much weight? Should they be the basis of our choosing, our acting and our existence, especially as Christians? How do we control them? How do we tame them? And, most importantly, how do we get beyond them? As Sandy so aptly stated, “What are we supposed to do, *fake it?*”

The bottom line is, how are we able to go *against the tide* of our own thinking and feeling, choose God's will and still be genuine?

How can Toni break free from her feelings of betrayal by her husband? How can Bob ever get rid of his root of bitterness against his wife? And, poor

Sandy, is it possible for her to ever fall in love with her husband again?

These are good questions! And they're questions we all ask. Again, the bottom line is, *how do we change what we really think, feel and want to do, in order to follow God, but still not be phony?* If faith is simply a series of choices to genuinely manifest Christ's Life, what happens when we don't know how to make choices we don't feel?

This is the subject of this book: “How do we, as Christians, overcome the “justified” hurt feelings, the anger, the bitterness, the resentment, the fear, the unforgiveness, the insecurity, the guilt and the memories (the movers and shakers of our soul) that consume us daily? Is it possible to make choices to follow God when we really don't feel like it, want to or even think it will work? Will God honor something we choose simply by faith, but that we don't feel?”

“A Damascus Road Experience”

Here's a remarkable real-life example. Read it and then, you decide.

“It was the last day of our trip home to Florida to visit our family and I was at my husband's parents' house where we'd always stayed, packing alone. All the kids were at the beach and Ken, my husband, was out fishing with two brothers-in-law.

“The Lord had me stay home alone and soon I would find out why. As I was packing, the Holy Spirit led me to Ken's suitcase and had

me lift up the bottom of the inside of it to find an address book with over two pages of women's names and their descriptions. At first, I froze, as tears of unbelief welled up deep inside of me. *I wanted to run* (I felt like I had finally found my ticket out of a very unhappy marriage), but the still, small voice of the Spirit of God within constrained me. "*Remember, I'm in control,*" He said. "*How you handle this and the choices you make are critical. Choose to walk by faith, not your feelings, and your life will change.*"

"I called a friend and placed myself under her accountability and received some wise counsel as to how to proceed. My husband arrived home shortly after that and with the book in hand, I asked him if this was happening now. He said, "yes." He just looked at me and said, "I am going to hell." "You know Jesus, will you please pray for me!"

"Those were perhaps the most honest words I have ever heard him say. So, I did pray and I asked God, "May *Your* will and not *mine* be done. I give this to You and it is now in Your hands." (My own feelings inside were screaming, "run, get out, this is your chance!" But I chose, by faith, to really mean what I had said in my prayer.)

"Immediately, Ken began to confess everything. He took the book from my hands, ran into the adjoining bathroom and lit it on fire. When he came back he said, "It is time to expose my sin."

"A dear pastor that we know came over that night and spent three hours with Ken out in the street. Later, the pastor asked me to come out and told me that, "Ken has just had a Damascus Road experience." I wouldn't have believed him, except that I had prayed those very same words for my husband many times. And in a prayer meeting just a month earlier, someone gave me a word for my husband, using "the Damascus Road" analogy. Then the pastor said to me, "God has heard your prayer. Ken was saved tonight and baptized out in that street." Well, you can imagine how I was feeling!

"The next few weeks involved a lot of pain, but an unfolding of the Glory of God like I have never seen before. Ken confessed to all the men that he is close to. He confessed to our four teenage children, my mom, sisters and two pastor friends that he was a false convert living a life headed for hell. He even named all his sins sparing the grossness of the details to protect their imaginations. Telling the children was the hardest of all. They each began to cry. They thought their dad *was* a Christian. But God's glory shined, even through this, and He began to heal all of our hearts.

"Eventually, Ken asked me to marry him again and our lives have never been the same. He now calls me from his car and holds the phone up to the marriage tapes he is listening to, so I can hear. For the first time in 19 years, we are experiencing the oneness in the Spirit

that God so desires. We are continually in the Word and praying together. We have had more conversation in the past year than we've had in all our 19 years put together. Our children are alive as never before. I didn't realize till now that they, too, were dying.

“There is so much more to share, but God has given me a heart filled with the joy that is born out of pain, a great new love for my Savior and a hunger to know God's Love in an even deeper way. Isn't He wonderful!”

(As an aside here: Be careful not to put God in a “box.” Sometimes, in situations similar to Anna's, God might tell you to leave for your own safety, because He knows about dangerous extenuating factors towards you or your children. The most important thing is to hear what God is telling you for *your* particular situation and then make the appropriate choices to follow Him.)

Choices: The Key to Our Christian Walk

What makes the above story so miraculous? It's miraculous because, in spite of how Anna felt, in spite of what she thought and in spite of what she wanted, she chose to trust God and, by faith, do His will. God then supernaturally changed her feelings to align with her choices and restored her marriage. This story is miraculous because Anna made non-feeling choices that allowed God to intervene and thus, change the course of her life.

What would have happened had Anna chosen to follow her own justified feelings? She would have immediately split with Ken and her story would have ended up like hundreds of others that we see and hear about today. Our choices are critical, because if we can learn to make choices by faith, they can *change the course of our lives!*

Naturally, even as Christians, we are still full of “self,” our own natural thoughts, emotions and desires—especially in trials. Now, some of our hurts, unforgiveness, bitterness, and resentments *are* fully “justified” by the world's standards (i.e., the above example). But by God's standards, because we hold on to these things, mull them over in our minds and usually act upon them, these negative thoughts and emotions end up quenching God's Spirit in us. If we can learn to give our real feelings and thoughts over to God, like Anna did in the above example, and choose by faith alone to follow God's will, again like Anna, then He will align our feelings with the choices we have made and make us genuine, like with Anna.

Matthew 16:24 tells us that, “If any man will come after Me, *let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.*”

To *deny* in the above Scripture does not mean to push down and bury our real feelings, nor does it mean to negate their existence. As Christians, many of us have been doing this, thinking we are not supposed to feel this way. But one of the beauties of the freedom that Christ has given us is that we can be honest with Him, acknowledge these things, confess

and repent of them, give them over to Him and be free from them altogether. Thus, to deny simply means to *bar ourselves or to prevent ourselves from following what we naturally think and feel*. We're all human and we'll have these kinds of negative thoughts and feelings until we see Jesus.

Thus, it's important we look at these movers of our soul, call them for what they are so we will know exactly what we are dealing with and then, know how to give them over to the Lord. We must learn to "bar ourselves or prevent ourselves" from following what these negative elements of our lives are telling us, and instead, learn to give them to the Lord so we can be free to follow what He desires. (We will discuss each of these principles in more detail in future chapters.)

Can We Make Choices We Don't Feel?

As humans, we are programmed from our birth to *feel* everything we choose. When we don't "feel" our choices, we don't think they're genuine. In God's kingdom, however, this is not the case. Born-again believers are the only ones who possess a supernatural authority (God's Word) within them to choose to go *against the tide* of "self"—what we think, feel and desire—because we're the only ones who possess a supernatural power (God's Spirit) within us to perform something different than what self wants, thinks and feels. Let me explain:

Certainly non-believers have a choice to do as they please. But none of them have the authority or the power to choose *to go against* how they feel or

what they think because they don't possess another power source (another spirit) within them to perform anything different than what "self" tells them.

Therefore, even though they might desperately want to change and go a different direction, they don't possess an ability within them to do so. Thus, they really don't have any other choice but to follow what their own thoughts, emotions and desires are telling them. (Ephesians 4:17-18) Christians, on the other hand, do! We don't have to be carried on by the tide of emotion, since we have God's Spirit within us; this Spirit not only gives us the authority to choose God's will, but also His power to perform that will in our lives.

In other words, believers and nonbelievers alike can choose whatever they wish. We all can make non-feeling choices. *But only Christians have the supernatural power and ability of God within them to be able to implement those faith choices in their lives.*

A Classic Example: Did You Tell Him Off?

Here's a perfect example:

One Christmas, years ago, we rented a house at Lake Tahoe for two weeks. Our intention was to be totally alone—just our family. What a dream. We would be together for two whole weeks, playing games and reading. I could even work on my upcoming speech for a new class I was teaching. I couldn't wait! My own mom and dad were visiting

my brother in San Francisco, and we could have easily invited them down to Tahoe for a few days. But Chuck had said no, this was to be our own special vacation—just our family—with no intrusions.

One fabulous week went by. Our family never seemed closer. There was no T.V. and no outside influences to disturb our unity. We all read, talked, lied around and did our own thing. It was absolutely wonderful!

Then one morning, out of the blue, Chuck announces to all of us, “I hope you don’t mind, but I have invited a business associate and his wife up here to join us for a few days.” Well, you could have knocked me over dead. Chuck is the one who had made such a big deal about having no outside interferences! If I had known he would allow company, I would have much rather had my own folks!

“How long are these business people going to stay?” I asked. “Well, as long as they want, I guess,” he responded. He had actually left the invitation open ended! At that moment, in the flesh I could have killed him! I was so upset and so angry!

Here we weren’t supposed to have anything or anyone disturb our family or our privacy, and now we’re not only having an outsider over (someone I had never even met before), but they were staying for who knows how long! I just couldn’t believe Chuck would do something like that. I needn’t tell you how I wrestled with anger and bitterness towards him. How would you have responded?

Later, when I was sharing this story in one of my seminars, someone stood up right in the middle of the story and asked, “Well, Nancy, did you tell Chuck off right then and there?”

I laughed and responded to this precious sister, “Man, I wanted to. It’s our natural human tendency to immediately tell the other person how we feel, but that’s not always what God would have us do. So, no, I didn’t tell Chuck off right then, and there were two good reasons why I didn’t: 1) Chuck had already extended an invitation to this couple, so it was already a fact that they were coming, and I couldn’t do anything about it by throwing a tantrum; and 2) I wasn’t clean. I was full of my own wild emotions and uncontrolled thoughts. Therefore, I had to first deal with my own anger and resentment before I could take a stand in God’s Love with Chuck.”

Later, when I was clean (after I had confessed and given God all my feelings) and my emotions were back in place, I did tell Chuck in Love how disappointed I was that he had gone against what he had promised. I know he heard because all the kids had already gone to him and shared the very same thing.

So, there’s definitely a time when we can share how we really feel, but we must make sure it’s done in God’s Love and in His Character and not our own. Otherwise, we’ll end up deeper in the pits than when we started.

The day after Christmas, we heard from the couple that they were on their way. In order to prepare for their arrival we had to: rearrange the children’s rooms

so the guests could have a room of their own; make a special trip to the grocery store to buy extra food; and, clean the house as you would for company. So much energy and fuss goes into having guests, especially when they are business acquaintances and you have never met them before. These were all things that I shouldn't have had to do on *my* vacation.

I will never forget the day they arrived! Our girls were watching for them out the window and all of a sudden they yelled, "Mom, here they are! And Mom, they have brought all of their kids!" At that moment, if Chuck had been close enough, I think I would have strangled him! This now made 12 people to feed three times a day, clean up after, and entertain for who knows how long! And all this on *my* vacation!

I can't tell you the number of times I went to the Lord, frustrated and crying, saying, "You know I came up here to work on my speech for the next *Way of Agape* seminar, and now, Lord, I can't!" But you know what He would always answer? "I want you to work on the material for your next seminar, but I want you to "live" it first! I am giving you a perfect opportunity to glorify Me and be full of My Life to these people." I replied in all honesty, I'd much rather "write" about it than "live" it!

Constantly, I had to make a choice as to which way I would go. I could make an emotional choice to follow what my anger, resentment, and bitterness were telling me (to tell Chuck off, put on a smiling "face" for the guests, and get rid of them as soon as possible). Or I could make a faith choice and follow what God was telling me to do, which was to give

Him my hurts and anger, and know that He somehow would give me the Love, grace and strength I needed to genuinely put Chuck and these new people first.

Don't let me kid you—it wasn't easy! Making choices you don't feel, and especially ones you don't want to make, is extremely difficult. But as I kept choosing over and over again to follow God and go His Way, He was faithful to take away my anger and resentment, and fill me with His Love—not only for Chuck, but also for these people.

The business associate and his wife turned out to be a delightful Jewish couple. They even taught us some Hebrew and answered many of our questions about the Old Testament. We ended up having a marvelous four days with them. It was during this time that God sparked the idea for the *Be Ye Transformed* study.

Can you imagine what kind of an impression I would have made on these people if I had chosen not to surrender myself and follow God? I would have been full of my own hurts and bitterness with a plastic smile over my face, pretending to be happy and glad, but showing forth "self life" and not God's Life at all. One of those "phony-baloney Christians." You know they would have sensed it.

"...ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." (Matthew 23:27)

Faith choices or "contrary choices" (I like this latter term because these kinds of choices are definitely *contrary to what I feel, think and desire*),

are the only ones that can free us from ourselves and unleash all of God's Power to come to our aid.

As Christians, we can be totally honest with God and admit, "I don't love this person anymore. In fact, I really can't stand him right now. But, by faith, I give these negative thoughts and feelings to You, for I know I have Your authority to claim, like Jesus did in Matthew 26:39, "...not my will [not my natural feelings and desires], but Thine." Then I can be assured that (since I am a cleansed vessel) God will align my feelings with that choice, make me genuine and perform His will in and through me.

To me, this is one of the most incredible gifts God has given us. We don't have to "feel" our choices, we simply have to be willing to make them. God, then, in His perfect timing and way, does the rest.

Our Goal and Purpose as Christians

The basic goal and purpose for all of our lives as Christians is to be conformed into the image of Christ so that *His Life* and *His Love* from our hearts can flow freely out into our lives. (Romans 8:29) God wants us to love with His Love; He wants us to think with His Wisdom and to function on His power and ability. He wants us to be *at one* with Him, so all that is seen through us is Him. Then others will want what we have and the Gospel will have a chance to be truly passed on.

Most Christians would agree that we've not been called simply to gain knowledge *about* Christ, but to gain more of His Life to give to others. Most

understand that true Christianity is not about "head knowledge," but about Christ's Life being personally experienced and then, passed on. *The problem is, most Christians don't know how to make that happen!*

We don't know how to make choices to yield ourselves to the Lord, so that His Life can come forth. What happens instead, is that when we get hurt or offended, we end up consumed with our own negative thoughts and feelings, which in turn, quenches God's Spirit in our hearts and blocks His Life from coming forth. Then, the life that shows forth in our souls is not God's, as it should be, but our own *self-life*. Consequently, rather than bring people closer to the Lord, our fleshly behavior pushes them away and the Gospel is unable to be passed on.

An Example: Searching For A Reason To Live

Many years ago, a woman called our office who was searching for a reason to go on living. She had been a Christian for about 11 years, but didn't have the slightest idea as to how to experience Christ's Love, either for herself or for others. She had read Romans 8:29, but didn't know how to apply it personally to her life. Thus, she never saw God's Wisdom at work in her relationships, nor experienced walking in the Power of His Spirit. Without personally experiencing these things—His Life at work in her and through her—she had no basis to understand what true Christianity was all about. Up until then, it had all been "rules and regulations."

When I questioned her about laying her life down to God and committing everything to Him, she said, “Of course, I’ve done that!” However, when I asked her about making faith choices or non-feeling choices in order to do this, she had no idea what I was talking about. *There was the problem!* Knowing how to make faith choices to yield ourselves to God, regardless of how we feel, is absolutely imperative to experiencing the abundant Life. Without this step of saying, “Not my will, but Thine,” it’s impossible to genuinely yield our lives to God, unless, of course, we bury our real feelings, only prolonging the emotional explosion. (Again, we will cover this principle in more detail in future chapters.) Doing God’s will goes hand in hand with making choices we don’t feel. We can’t do one without the other.

For example: How many of us “feel like” surrendering ourselves to God when our flesh is screaming just the opposite? None of us do, especially when it means dying to our own desires! We’re still human and we still naturally value our “selves.” That’s why Jesus tells us we must learn to *deny self, pick up our cross and follow Him*. (Matthew 16:24) In other words, we must learn to *get beyond ourselves!* This only occurs by making choices by faith, not feelings.

The above lady has now rejected Christianity and is out in the world, seeing an analyst and searching for happiness elsewhere. I asked her if she had found what she was looking for and she yelled back at me, “Are you kidding? I am more angry, hopeless and empty now than I ever was before!” She went on to

admit that she hates herself and cannot accept the fact that God still loves her.

I believe there are thousands of Christians out there, just like this precious woman, who have tried to live the Christian life by their own natural love, wisdom and abilities, and just like this woman, have failed miserably. They have never heard of faith choices or contrary choices or non-feeling choices, and thus they have simply gotten tired of the hypocrisy and quit trying. Many of these wonderful people have strived for so long to be “model” Christians—doing, doing, doing—and yet, like the above woman, never really experiencing Christ’s real Life at work in or through them. Thus, they have finally just given up. *The tragic part is that they have never really experienced true Christianity at all!*

Therefore, it’s essential not only to know what God’s goal and purpose is for our lives as Christians—that Christ may be formed *in* us and lived out *through us*—but also to know how to make faith choices so that goal may be reached!

God Wants Us to Exchange Lives

Consequently, being a Christian doesn’t mean simply “copying” or “imitating” Jesus’ Life, but *exchanging lives* with Him! We give Him ours; He then gives us His. In other words, He wants to replace us with Himself. He wants to exchange our image for the image we were created to bear from the very beginning, which is His image.

The dictionary tells us that an image is an exact likeness of something. (Hebrews 1:3) It's a visible representation or reproduction of the form of a person. As we allow God to conform us more and more into His Image and His Likeness, it will be His Image and His Life that we'll portray to the world and not our own.

Galatians 2:20 validates this, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Thus, as Christians, it's not our job to fix up, repair or mend our "self life." That's what psychology teaches! *God wants us to learn how to make choices to set that "self" aside so that Jesus can live His Life out through us.* Again, He wants us to "deny ourselves, pick up our crosses and follow Him." Again, "deny" does not mean hide or bury our real feelings. It's imperative that we allow God to expose and bring up our real thoughts so that He can then replace them with His own. In Chapter Seven, we'll learn exactly how we are to do this.

People often ask me, "What is the best thing I can do for my unbelieving spouse and my wayward kids," or "my wayward spouse and my unbelieving kids?" "What book should I get?" "What tapes should I listen to?" "What class would you recommend?" My answer is always simple: *Live Christ's Life! Live His Love!* Show that it works for you in the bad times, as well as the good times.

The first Commandment tells us we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind and soul. Loving God—totally giving ourselves over to Him—simply means exchanging ourselves (our own thoughts, emotions and desires) for His Self (His Love, His Thoughts, and His Power).

"It Doesn't Matter What We Look Like"

Here's a perfect example of how this exchange of life occurs:

A few years ago, Dutch, a Viet Nam veteran, came into our ministry offices looking for Chuck and me. This dear man had lost an arm, a hand, an ear and an eye in the war, and had many other physical disabilities besides. When he saw us, he burst into tears, grabbed the two of us and began to tell us his incredible story.

He had been a Christian for over 18 years, but had struggled for most of those years trying to find meaning and purpose for his life as a Christian. Understandably, he had suffered severe marital and relationship problems, financial problems, as well as many other serious physical problems. He told us how he had become a part of several church outreaches, trying to find personal fulfillment. But, he said, "*something was always missing.*"

Then someone handed him *The Way of Agape* book on loving the way God designed; he said his life changed forever. Through that little book Dutch

learned that God’s purpose in choosing him was to conform him into His image—to exchange lives with Him—so that His (God’s) Life could flow *through him* to others. Dutch told us how the Lord began to work this message of the exchanged life into his heart and how he was seeing himself genuinely change from the inside out. He said he had finally found what his real meaning and purpose was as a Christian: *to be a cleansed vessel so that God can live His Life out through him.* Dutch then went on to say, “*The neat part is, that it doesn’t matter what that vessel looks like. The important thing is that God’s Life is reflected through it.*”

Exchanging Lives Doesn’t Happen Naturally

Unfortunately, this exchange of life doesn’t happen automatically. How I wish it did! Wouldn’t it just be great if we could push a button and automatically Christ’s Life would be out there. I wouldn’t even mind if I had to choose only once in the morning (like getting dressed) and then stay filled with Him all day long. But, this isn’t the case. We must choose every moment of every day, to deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow Him.

Just because we are Christians does not mean that God’s Life will *automatically* flow from our hearts out into our lives. It won’t! *It all depends upon our moment-by-moment choices!* As we said, even as Christians we are still full of self, especially in trials. And the fears, hurts and justified feelings that we choose to hang on to (just to make us feel better), will end up quenching God’s Life in our hearts and preventing us from reflecting His real Life.

Now, some of these feelings that we experience are fully justified by the world’s standards as in Anna’s story at the beginning of this chapter, but if we mull them over in our minds or bury them, these negative emotions will quench God’s Spirit in our hearts and separate us from His Life.

Lest I confuse you, let me explain exactly what I mean when I say “*separate us from God’s Life.*” If we are believers, then we always have God’s Life in our hearts. Romans 8:38-39 states that “nothing separates us from His Love (and His Life),” and 1 Corinthians 13:8 tells us, “His Love never stops coming.” However, if God’s Spirit is quenched because of something we have chosen to hold on to that is not of faith, then that Life of God (in our hearts) will not be able to flow out into our lives (or our souls). Technically, yes, we still have God’s Life in our hearts, but practically, until we deal with that sin and self (confess it, repent of it and give it over to Him), we will not experience His Life in our souls. Thus, Isaiah 59:2 is also true for a Christian: “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that he will not hear.”

(Note: The original negative thought is not what separates us from the Lord. It’s what we choose to do with that ungodly thought that makes it sin or not. In other words, when we choose to nurture, entertain and continually mull over ungodly thoughts or ones that are not of faith—rather than give them to God—then they will become sin and they will separate us

from His life. We will discuss this principle further in Chapter Six.)

If, however, we choose to surrender our negative thinking to the Lord and become a cleansed channel for His use, He then will be able to pour His Life out through us.

Can you imagine what our marriages, our families and our churches would be like if more of us did this on a regular basis? Scripture tells us that the world will know we are Christians not by our words, our signs, our doctrines, or even our knowledge of Scripture, but simply “*by being open vessels genuinely showing forth Christ’s Life.*” (John 13:35)

Reflecting God’s Life Involves a Choice

But, again, in order to genuinely reflect His Life, we must constantly make a choice—the choice to allow God to use us. Again, just because we are Christians does not mean that Christ’s Life will automatically flow through us. It won’t! It’s only as we make choices to deny ourselves (set ourselves aside) and be open, that His Life can manifest itself.

When we do this, we’re not saying: “I will love this person if it kills me.” We’re saying, “I choose to set my self aside (all my thoughts, emotions and desires that are contrary to God’s) so that God can love this person *through* me.” It’s God’s Love; it’s His wisdom; and it’s His ability to perform these things in our lives. A whole different way of thinking...

Thus, only *our willpower* is involved (not our emotions, our thoughts or our desires), which, of course, is completely opposite from our natural, emotional way of loving. Thus, much of the time we won’t “feel” like making these kinds of choices. However, as we will see throughout this book, it’s absolutely essential that we know how to make faith choices, *because they determine whose life will be lived in our souls—God’s or our own.* Choices we make to follow God’s will, regardless of how we feel or what we think, allow God’s Life from our hearts to flow out into our lives. Choices we make to follow what we feel and what we want, quench God’s Life in our hearts and force us to show forth our self-life.

Are You Willing To “Go Against The Tide?”

The question the Lord continually asks us is: “Are you willing?” Are you willing to go *against the tide* and choose, by faith, to follow Him?

Are you willing to tear up that long list of justified hurts that that other person has done to you and choose, instead, to do God’s will? Can you unconditionally forgive that family member, that Christian friend or that business associate who has humiliated and betrayed you over and over again, and for the hundredth time, choose to give yourself totally over to God?

If you are a believer, then you have the authority and the supernatural power to do so. The question is, will you?

Please understand that it's totally impossible to do the above things in our own strength. Unconditionally loving and forgiving those who have hurt, rejected or betrayed us is completely opposite to our own emotional way of thinking and acting. Remember Anna. Only God can do these things *through* us. And it's only when we make faith choices to yield ourselves to Him that He can manifest Himself through us.

The secret, the key, the truth that has changed my life, and that can radically change yours, is learning *how* to make choices that literally take away your negative thoughts and emotions, and in their place, be filled up with His. Again, we don't have to feel these choices. We must only be willing to make them. God, then, will align the "movers of soul" to match the choices we have made, make us genuine and restore our joy.

John 12:24 validates that, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."