

Learning to Live *as Sons & Daughters of God*

1

"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir." — Galatians 4:4-7

Our thesis: When it begins to dawn on me that I am God's loved child, it changes everything!

As we begin, we will make a simple but rather profound assumption: that each of us here wants the Gospel of Jesus Christ to impact our lives more deeply and powerfully - so that, as we are changed, God will propel us into ministry that will see others come to know him and be changed by him in the same way. *Agreed?*

Back in the mid-1980s, Dr. C. John "Jack" Miller, professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in the US, developed a discipleship course called "Sonship" for a group of failed first-term church-planting missionaries from Ireland and Uganda. He began their first lesson with this question: *"How can we take the Gospel to the nations if we are not being mastered by the Gospel ourselves?"*

Grace4Life, rooted in the grand tradition of that early course, answers, "We cannot". Oh, we may plant Christianity as a noble religion, but unless our lives and theirs are being transformed by the message, what is the point? The Great Commission is to "Go make disciples," not just save souls. And what did Jesus tell us is the acid test of our discipleship? *"A new commandment I give to you: love one another as I have loved you... by this shall all men know that you are my disciples."* (Jn.13:34). **So...**

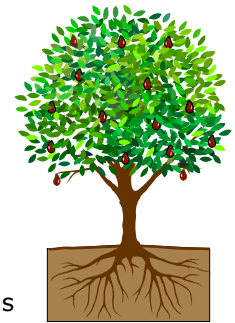
This course of study is designed to do just that—to teach us, and, teach us to teach others, what it means to live a life mastered by the Gospel—for the glory of God through the salvation of this lost and dying world. (2Tim.2:2)

Thankfully, the Scriptures make it clear: spiritual transformation cannot be powered by human effort. This new life of love is not an achievement. We don't grow by mastering spiritual disciplines or keeping rules. Don't misunderstand: Spiritual disciplines are good and the law of God must be kept, but, where does the power come from? From *faith*... Gospel faith... our union with Jesus Christ by *faith*. Simple as it may sound, the same Gospel that saves us makes us grow.

We will prove this premise by Holy Scripture, and, we trust in the weeks to come, see it powerfully demonstrated in our experience.

I. A SIMPLE PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Our life is like a tree—root, trunk and limbs. See the tree diagram on page 1-4.



II. OUR LIFE-GOAL IS THE GLORY OF GOD.

READ: Ezekiel 36:22,23 and Paul's parallel in Ephesians 1:3-14 noting verses 6,12,14.

Now here's a novel (and humbling) thought:

"It's not about you!"

Are you ready to abandon all thoughts of your own glory and reputation, and commit yourself unreservedly and wholeheartedly to pursue the glory of God alone?

What might such a commitment entail as you minister to others? As you have a tiff with your wife, or disagree with a teammate?

III. UNDERSTANDING OUR PROBLEM – What is our *root* sin? Let's try to get to the rock-bottom of it.

C.S. Lewis rightly called us "*sons of Adam and daughters of Eve*," and what a disaster our mother and father brought upon us!

The doctrine of "Federal headship" is the Bible's teaching that Adam's monkey is on our back. "*By one man sin entered into the world and death through sin.*" "*As in Adam, all men die...*" "*...as many died by the trespass of one...*" See: Romans 5:12-21.

Some have vigorously protested, accusing God of unfairness for imputing Adam's guilt to us, but it's a moot point. The fact is, we are sinners every one and have our very own personal sins to account for. The verdict has been handed down: "*...there is none righteous, no not one. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" - Rom.3:10;23,24

But the question remains: With everything to lose, why did our mother and father sin? What motivated them? This is key, because if we fail to identify the *root* of sin, we will inevitably try to fight it at the *fruit* level.

DISCUSS: Why do you think our mum and dad ate the "apple"? Try to peel back the layers of the onion of their hearts. We think it was:

S ___ F ___ S ___ - L ___ E.

THINK ABOUT IT: IF the New Covenant is to bring glory to God by renewing us in holiness, it will have to provide a workable answer to our root problem—sinful self love. But why not just outlaw sinful behaviour? Perhaps a solid set of laws do the trick?

One might hope so, but that idea has been proven totally unworkable.

IV. THE TWO COVENANTS: Law & Gospel

"The law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." – John 1:17

A. Consider the benefits of the new covenant of the Gospel. *"The law is holy and righteous and the commandment good"* (Rom.7:12). Indeed, God gave his people a rule to cover every conceivable infraction from idolatry to incest. So, why wasn't sin eradicated altogether? Why was the Old Covenant system of law replaced?

Think it through:

WHAT benefits does the Gospel offer that the Old Covenant could not provide? ¹ (See page 1-3.)

1) The old covenant of law did not really solve our SIN problem. The blood of non-moral sacrificial animals cannot possibly atone for the sins of human beings. Hebrews 7:18, 19; 10:4. (O.T. sins were put on Jesus' BARCLAYCARD. See Heb.9:15.)

2) The old covenant of law didn't solve our GUILT problem. (Conscience cleansed by Christ) Heb. 10:1-4; 9:1

3) The OT did not solve our POWER OVER SIN problem. The law was powerless to change us. (Ex.24:3; 1K.14:22-24; Isa. 57:3-6) But, the indwelling Holy Spirit working through the Gospel can! (Rom.7:22; 8:3)

John Bunyan - *"Run sinner, run! the law demands, but gives me neither feet nor hands. A better law the Gospel brings; It bids me 'Fly!', and gives me wings!"* (What "wings"?)

B. New Equipment for the New Covenant
Spot the two pieces. **READ: Ezekiel 36:24-27**

a. A new H ___ ___ ___ to replace the one of stone, vs. 26.

b. The H ___ ___ **Spirit** to indwell and control the new heart, vs. 27.

c. A new L ___ ___ written on our new hearts of flesh rather than on stone tablets.

So, in the new Covenant, we are enabled by the Spirit to fulfill the deeper demands of the law—to love God and others rather than just comply outwardly to the Commandments.

Jeremiah 31:31-39 (vs. 31, 33b):

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... ^{33b} "... But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

V. SPIRITUAL ENTROPY (DEvolution)

Physicists tell us that the universe is dying—that all energy is devolving toward a state of inert uniformity (The Second Law of Thermodynamics). So, the iron bar rusts and our tea gets cold. We can see the same in our spiritual lives. Our hearts tend to grow cold toward God and others.

A. A sadly typical scenario of the Christian life:

PHASE ONE: The New Birth (exhilaration)

PHASE TWO: The shift to Christian busyness. The learner-novice stage. We learn the rules.

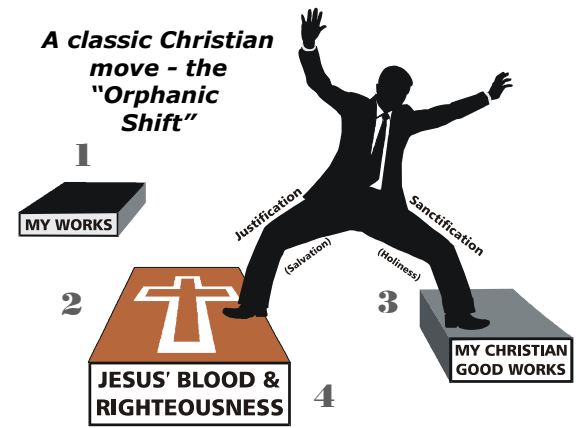
PHASE THREE: The "insider-enforcer" stage. We keep and enforce the rules.

PHASE FOUR – Spiritual failure, our hearts grow cold - Gospel words without Gospel power.

OPTIONAL PHASE FIVE – Renewal (Christianity rediscovered). We learn to rest in *"the value of the blood of Christ for our present life."* (See Francis Schaeffer's article on page 1-6.)

THE THREE FOUNDATIONS

1 In our pre-Christian period, we trusted in our good works to save us. **2** Then, we put our trust in Jesus' work on the Cross and were saved. **3** But then we made an "Orphanic Shift." We began trusting in our good works (our record) for a sense of our ongoing acceptance with God and significance before others. **4** Gospel renewal comes when our we return to trusting in Jesus' work alone to save, sanctify, and assure us.



B. Signs of Spiritual Degeneration. We develop excessive concern about our reputation, how we look, how we are perceived. We fear looking bad or failing. We compare ourselves with others.

This will tend to manifest itself either -

1. self-righteousness - looking down on others, boasting in our record, needing to be right and look good. **Viz.** the 1990s BBC sitcom, *Keeping Up Appearances* starring Patricia Routledge as Hyacinth Bucket ("Bouquet"), the hilariously pathetic upper-class wannabe. **Or,**



2. inferiority - feeling horribly about ourselves because we have nothing to boast in.

Both these have the same rotten spiritual root—self-centredness. Both of them long for a righteousness of our own manufacture, and neither has the glory of God as a goal.

VI. THE CURE FOR SPIRITUAL MALAISE: THE GOSPEL - trusting Jesus' righteousness as our righteousness. It is here we begin to enter into the fullness of our position as God's loved children. **Here's how that looks:**

A. I "know and rely" on the love God has for me (1Jn.4:16). We cannot love a God we are terrified of. *"Perfect love casts out all fear...the one who fears is not made perfect in love..."* (1Jn.4:18). Our trust in God's unconditional love replaces fear with confidence. Otherwise, even though we *are* in fact his dearly loved children, we will *feel* like orphans or slaves. Note the contrast of fear and joy at the *two mountains* mentioned in Hebrews 12:18-24.

B. Because I know I am unconditionally loved, I call God my "Abba, Father!"—the very name Jesus used to address him! (Mk.14:36; Rom.8:15) Am I still imperfect? Oh yes! But, I am a loved child. God is my Dad. He is safe and I am safe with him. I tremble at the foot of Sinai no more. Because of Jesus, he accepts me, delights in

me, cares for me. [The double name, a Hebrew sign of intimacy: Abraham - Gen.22:11; Moses - Ex.3:4; Samuel - 1Sam.3:10; Saul - Acts9:4]

C. I surrender daily to God's provision of Christ's perfect righteousness. (Rom.10:3; 13:14; Gal.3:27; 1Cor.4:6-8) **I take comfort** in the fact that Jesus, my great high priest is on duty at the Father's right hand 24-7-365, interceding for me, clothing me in his righteousness. Rom. 8:15-17; Heb.7:25).

By faith, I go beyond the *concept* that Jesus is my righteousness and I *consciously clothe myself* in Him. As I walk in the conscious awareness of my new standing before God, it transforms the way I related to him and others.

I let Jesus' gift-righteousness satisfy me. Like Paul, I celebrate it! (Rom.10:4; Phil.3:7-9) I have no need to weave and wear a righteousness of my own. *Ahhhh... freedom... joy... motivation to share this Good News!*

D. I am ready to be changed. I can face the real me. I can take that painful inner look to see where sin has deceived me, blinded me, and warped me to the core. I can live a life of repentant faith, cooperating with the Holy Spirit to remake the old me into a new me.

As I consciously rely on the power of the indwelling Spirit, he fills me with a Jesus-like compassionate love for other people.

TO END our session let's read Charles Wesley's hymn "Arise, My Soul, Arise!" - page **1-5**.



GRACE ASSIGNMENTS

1. READ: "Orphans vs. Sons & Daughters" list. Tick three items in the left column you most struggle with, and be prepared to discuss the list next session. Think through how believing **a.** that God is your loving heavenly Father, and **b.** that Jesus is your whole and sole righteousness, can move you from the left to the right side of the page - page **1-7**.

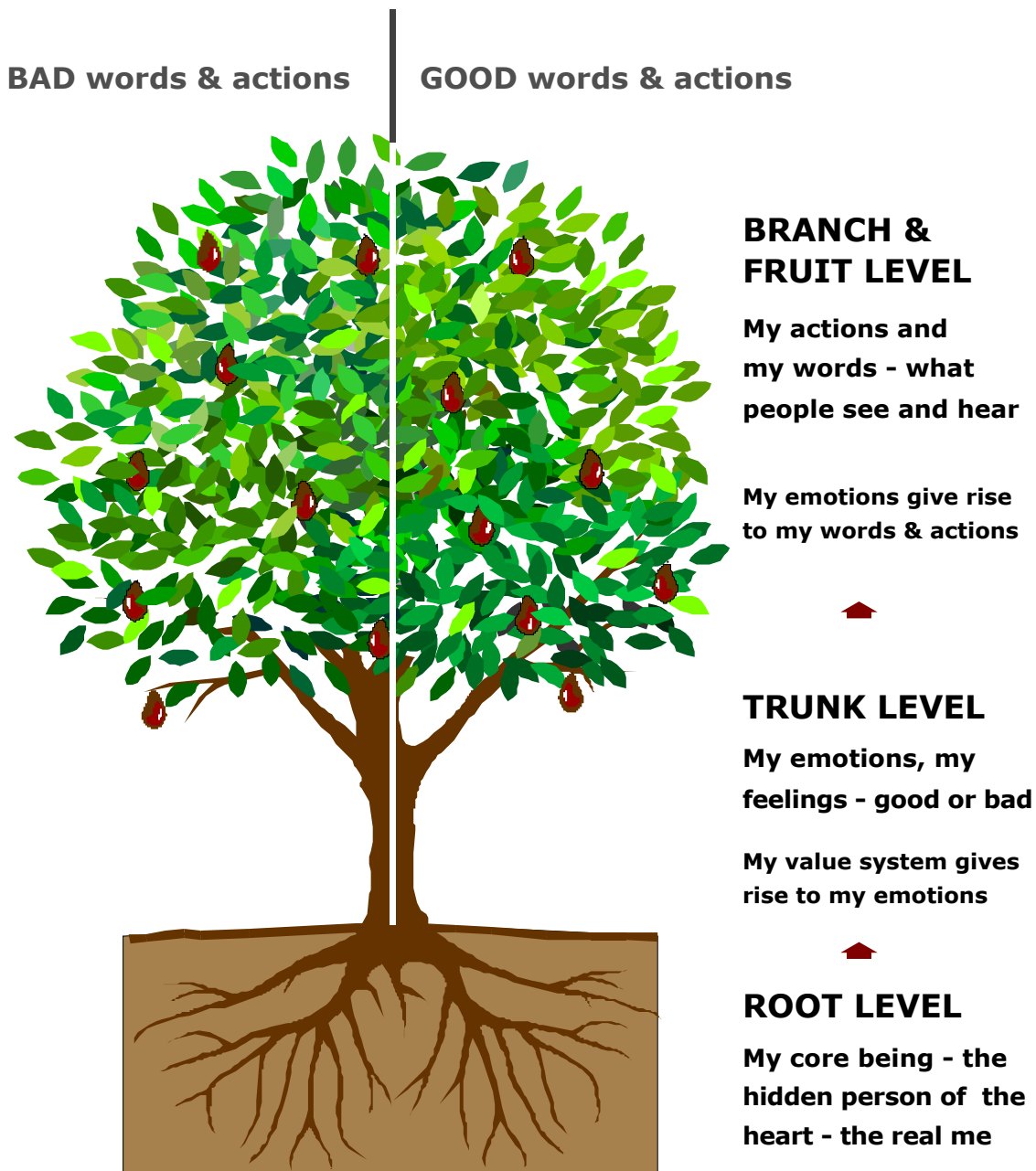
2. BEGIN to memorise Galatians 4:4-7 for a stammering group recitation next class meeting. You will find the NIV text on the front cover of your manual.

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¹ **Just how big is the Gospel?** It is much bigger than just "Jesus for me". The Gospel is **cosmic** and **universal** in scope. **It is cosmic** in that Jesus' Cross redeemed the whole creation which is groaning under the curse of sin. (See: Col. 1:19,20; Rom.8:18-25). *"There is not a square inch of the universe over which Jesus Christ does not cry, "MINE!"* - Abraham Kuyper. **It is universal** in that Jesus' death secured the redemption of some from every nation, tribe and language on the earth. See: Jn.12:20-23. Jesus is the Redeemer-King of Creation, Lord of the Nations, and King of his Kingdom, the Church. We are here to pray and work to see **"Thy kingdom come!"**

OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE – a fruit tree

Our thoughts and behaviours move from root to fruit.



ROOT: The realm where the Holy Spirit exerts his holy leverage; my core, who I really am. My unseen and often unexamined value system - the reason I react the way I do to people and situations.

This is the level at which our evangelism and discipleship must labor in order for deep and lasting change to take place.

Proverbs 16:2 - *All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD.*

Hebrews 4:12 - *"the joints and marrow, the thoughts and intentions of the heart."*

Matthew 23:25 - *"Everything they do is done for men to see."*

1 Corinthians 4:5 - *"The Lord... will expose the motives of men's hearts."*

Arise, My Soul, Arise!

Romans 8:33, 34 *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies, who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*

Words by Charles Wesley, 1742 - Tune: Lenox, by Louis Edson, 1782

Arise, my soul, arise; shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding sacrifice in my behalf appears:
Before the throne my surety stands,
Before the throne my surety stands,
My name is written on His hands.

He ever lives above, for me to intercede;
His all redeeming love, His precious blood, to plead:
His blood atoned for all our race,
His blood atoned for all our race,
And sprinkles now the throne of grace.

Five bleeding wounds He bears; received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers; they strongly plead for me:
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry,
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry,
"Nor let that ransomed sinner die!"

The Father hears Him pray, His dear anointed One;
He cannot turn away, the presence of His Son;
His Spirit answers to the blood,
His Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God.

My God is reconciled; His pardoning voice I hear;
He owns me for His child; I can no longer fear:
With confidence I now draw nigh,
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And "Father, Abba, Father," cry.

Galatians 4:4-7 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

Romans 8:15 *God has not given us a spirit of slavery that leads to fear again, but he has given us the spirit of sonship, and by Him, we cry, "Abba, Father!"*

"I have a record," said a Wesleyan missionary labouring in the West Indies, "of two hundred persons, young and old, who received the most direct evidence of the forgiveness of their sins while singing 'Arise, my soul.'" - Ira D. Sankey

MUSIC: www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/a/r/arisemys.htm

<http://nethymnal.org/htm/a/r/arisemys.htm>

Folk arrangement: <http://www.igracemusic.com/hymnbook/demos/AriseMySoulArise.mp3>



Why we Christians may Fail to... "Possess our Possessions"

an excerpt from **True Spirituality**

by Dr. Frances Schaeffer

IN THE LIGHT OF our calling to exhibit the existence and character of God between Christ's ascension and the second coming;

- **IN THE LIGHT OF** the terrible price of the cross whereby all the present and future benefits of salvation were purchased on our behalf;

- **IN THE LIGHT OF** all this, the real sin of the Christian is not to possess his possessions by faith. This is the real sin....

The Christian life should be a joyful life.

But we should also have a measure of sorrow when we compare the spiritual poverty we often experience with the riches that are offered—and sorrow when we bring forth the fruit of the Lord's enemy the devil instead of the fruit of the lover of our souls.

Why are we [Christians] not bringing forth the fruit we should? It may be due to ignorance, because we may never have been taught the meaning of the work of Christ for our present lives. There are five possible "ignorances" in this area.

FIRST, the Christian may have been taught how to be justified but never taught the present meaning of the work of Christ for him.

SECOND, he may have been taught to become a Christian through the instrumentality of faith, but then he may have been left, as though from that point on the Christian life has to be lived in his own strength.

THIRD, he may have been taught the opposite. That is, that having accepted Christ, in some antinomian way it does not now matter how he lives.

FOURTH, he may have been taught some kind of second blessing, which would make him perfect in this life when he receives it. This the Bible does not teach. And therefore he just waits hopelessly, or tries to act upon that which is not.

FIFTH, he may never have been taught that there is a reality of faith to be acted on consciously after justification. This last point is the point of ignorance of many who stand in the orthodox and historic stream of the Reformation.

Because of any of these ignorances, the Christian may not "posses his possessions" in this present life.

But when a man does learn the meaning of the work of Christ in the present life, a new door is open to him. And this new door then seems to be so wonderful that often it gives the Christian, as he begins to act upon the knowledge of faith, the sense of something that is as new as was his conversion.

And it has been true for many of us that at a certain point, after we have been Christians for a long time, suddenly, through the teaching of the Bible—directly or through someone teaching us—we have seen the meaning of the work of Christ and the blood of Jesus Christ for our present life, and a new door opens for us. [Note that Schaeffer is speaking autobiographically. It was Jack Miller hearing Schaeffer explain this truth that set him on the path to profound spiritual renewal.]

So what is needed is the knowledge of the meaning of the work of Christ in our present life, for our present life, and then for us to act upon it in faith.

However, we may know the doctrine by mental assent without making the doctrine ours, and that is the other reason we do not bring forth the fruit that we should.

In the last analysis it is never doctrine alone that is important. It is always doctrine appropriated that counts.



True Spirituality, Francis Schaeffer, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, ILL, 1973, pp. 83-84
[The formatting and bold emphases are ours.]

Spiritual Orphans or Sons & Daughters?

Spiritual diagnostics: am I growing - or not growing in my faith?

When we fall ill, our GP runs a series of diagnostic tests to determine the cause. This chart is a diagnostic tool to help us see where our faith may be out of sorts. Jesus said, "I will not leave you as orphans" then promised to send the Holy Spirit (Jn.14:18). On the left are twenty symptoms of an "orphan spirit." Opposite them are the corresponding fruits that will appear as we learn to rest in the loving care of our Heavenly Father, and as we learn to trust in Jesus as our "whole and sole" righteousness (Luther).

SPIRITUAL ORPHANS ▼

GROWTH →

▼ SONS & DAUGHTERS

"Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" – Gal.3:3

"I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you." – Jn.14:18
 "So, we know and rely on the love God has for us." – 1 Jn.4:16

I feel distant from God, anxious, and joyless. I'm a vacuum of self concern.

1

I have a growing intimacy with God. His love frees me from self-centredness. (1Jn.4:16; Mt.5:25ff)

I give in to my pet sins and am growing less sensitive to them. I don't feel needy. (1 Jn.1:6-10 - "If we say we have no sin...")

2

I still mess up, but I'm repenting more quickly. I have a growing consciousness of and sensitivity to my sins. (1 Tim.1:15; Rom.8:1-9)

I live on a success/fail basis. I need be right and look good. (performance oriented)

3

I want to make *God* look good. *It's not about me*. Only God is always right.

I feel guilty, insecure, and unworthy. I worry about how people view me and whether I fit in.

4

I feel loved, forgiven, and secure because I am *consciously* clothed in Jesus' righteousness.

I doubt that "all things work together for good", or that God has my best interests at heart.

5

I have a growing childlike trust that God's sovereign plan for my life is wise and good.

I say "yes" to everything and fear saying "no". I try to please everybody, but then burn out.

6

I say, "Can you wait a bit, please? I want to ask my Senior Partner first." (Jn.14:13; 15:16)

I tend to use rather than love people. I'm self-centred. I want to be helped, not be helpful.

7

I am growing more self-forgetful and often think, "What can I do to help and bless them?" (Phil.2:4)

I get angry and defensive at the suggestion that I might be self-righteous. I am resistant to praying "Search me O God..." (Psalm 139:23,24)

8

I know I'm self-righteous. I want God to show me my sin so that I can repent, be cleansed, and so bring more glory to Him. (Ps. 139:23,24)

I must be right about everything. I can't tolerate criticism. I crave the approval and praise of others. (Matt.23:5; Jn.5:44; 12:43)

9

I can admit to wrong and can accept criticism because Jesus is my righteousness. I need no "record" to boast in. (1 Cor.10:31; Phil.3:7-9)

I feel I must point out my accomplishments or they might go unnoticed. (Gal.6:14)

10

I point others to Jesus, and am learning to boast in my *weaknesses*. (2 Cor.12:9,10)

I think "I'll show them!" "Just watch me!" "Where those people failed, I will succeed." (will-power)

11

"I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength!" (Phil. 4:13 is not just a memory verse.)

I use my tongue like a sword to cut others up. (Jas.3:5-8)

12

The Spirit is helping me use my tongue to praise, thank, edify, and build others up. (Eph.4:29,30)

I constantly compare myself with others which leads me to either pride or depression—depending on how good I appear in comparison.

13

I am growing more secure in God's love for me in the Gospel, so I don't need to get my sense of worth from others. (Phil.3:9; 1 Cor.4:3,4)

I'm a charter member of the R.O.C.L. (Royal Order of the Curled Lip). I'm an expert at pointing out anything and everything wrong. Favorite meal: *Carp & Chips*.

14

I am not blind to the wrong all around me, but as I grow to love the good, like Paul, *I choose to focus* on what is "good and lovely." (Phil.4:8)



SPIRITUAL ORPHANS... ▼

I gossip quite a bit (confess other people's sins). Perhaps I have the gift of discernment? As a bonus, when I criticise others, it diverts attention away from my faults. (Prov.17:9)

Prayer? Actually, I'm quite prayerless. When all else fails, I pray. To be truthful, I pray more in public than I do in private.

I'm rather self-centred and controlling. "*They must see things my way!*" I have a deep need to be in control of people and situations.

Position, possessions, and busyness make me feel worthy and significant. Knowing Jesus doesn't satisfy me. (Compare Phil.3:8)

I'm not good enough. If I could just do more, I might feel worthy, accepted, and *righteous*.

I find it difficult to share my faith. After all, one's faith is an intensely personal matter. When I do say anything for Christ, it's more to defend my position than to express my loving concern for lost people. (Rom.15:13)

▼ SONS & DAUGHTERS...

15

Nowadays I am able to be honest about my faults and can confess them to others. I'm becoming more teachable and correctable. Good heavens! I'm often wrong! (Jas.5:16)

16

I don't limit conversations with my Father to morning devotions. He wants me to partner with Him throughout the day. (1Thess5:16-18)

17

I'm becoming more Christ-controlled and so am learning to pray and trust the Holy Spirit to change people and situations. (Gal.5:24)

18

"And having Him, I desire nothing else on earth." (Ps.73:25) "*May I never boast except in the cross of Christ Jesus my Lord...*" (Gal.6:14)

19

I'm believing the Gospel more! Jesus is my worthiness, my *whole* and *sole* righteousness.

20

I long for others to know God the way I know him. "*May God...fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*" (Rom.15:13, and see 2Cor.5:11,14)

Are you frustrated that your spiritual growth is so sporadic? Welcome to the club. Our progress from the left to the right side of the page will vary from rapid to snail-like. Worse, at times we will suffer painful retreats back to the left—what one of my clever students called "the orphanic shift". But take heart. Jesus died for messes like you and me, and when we struggle, we're in the best of company—with St. Paul himself (see Rom.7:15-24 "*The good that I want to do, I don't do...*" †). The Bible variously describes the Christian life as a race to be run (1Cor.9:24; Heb.12:1-3), a wrestling match (Eph.6:12), and a fight (1Tim.6:12, etc.). So, Peter says, "*Don't be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you!*" (1Pet.4:12). Apparently some of us have been told that the Christian life is a victorious romp in the park. Phil Yancey's "Unhappy Secrets of the Christian Life" unmasks this dream. Should you meet someone who claims to have found "the secret of holiness," beware. Ask if you can stay in their guest room for two weeks. Then, watch and listen. Chances are you will see more sin than you bargained for—a lot more. Isn't it reasonable to assume that if perfection were possible, Paul, the man who penned no less than thirteen of the New Testament's twenty-seven books, would have achieved it?

But if there really are no "Seven Easy Steps to Holiness" and no secret formulas, *how can we* begin to move away from that spirit of "orphanhood" toward thinking, feeling, and acting like who we really are—God's radically loved sons and daughters? Paul made clear that "human effort" cannot move you in that direction, but looking to Christ in faith and depending on the Holy Spirit will. Would you like proof of that? **Do a little exercise:** Try to determine *what one must believe* to produce the twenty lovely byproducts listed on the right side of these pages. "Believe," you say? Yes...

1. Believe that the Father has set his love on you, adopted you into His family, delights in you, and, for his honour and glory, is totally committed to your care and keeping—now and for all eternity. (Rom.8:1,14-39; Eph.1:3-21; 1Jn.3:1)

2. Believe that the Son died to pay for all your sins, that he was raised to life for you, and *this very moment* he is seated at the right hand of the Father "interceding" for you, i.e., presenting himself to the Father *as your righteousness*. The result is that in the Father's eyes, sinner that you are, you are *beautiful* because He sees you clothed in what Luther called the "gift-righteousness" of his Son (Rom.8:34; 1 Cor.5:21; Heb.7:24f; Gal.3:27). Hold on, this gets even better.

3. Believe that the Holy Spirit is in your heart this instant crying "*Abba, Father!*" so that as his adopted child *you* can echo back that same cry. (Gal.4:6; Rom.8:15). *Cry it!* Fix your eyes on Jesus and keep them there (Heb.12:2). It is our trust in *Jesus' gift-righteousness* that saves and sanctifies us. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will come in fuller measure—like *rivers of living water*" as we "*keep coming*" and "*keep drinking*" of Him. (Jn.7:37ff).

Your brother in Christ, *Johnny Long*

BREAKOUT ACTIVITY

1. Private: Read the left-hand column and tick 3 items you sometimes struggle with.

2. Group: Gospel Application. If you are a courageous lot, share one item each and discuss how: a. trusting in the Father's love more fully, and/or b. trusting in Jesus' righteousness as your righteousness, will move you from left to right.

† Despite the fact that in Romans 7:14-27 Paul writes in the first person present tense, some Bible teachers deny that he refers to himself. Others like Luther, Calvin, Haldane, Hodge, Murray and F.F. Bruce insist that Paul's description "is truly autobiographical" (Bruce, Paul: *Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, p.197). Calvin says that Paul speaks for himself *and* for us all (Commenatry on Romans, Pringle. pp. 266ff). To think otherwise is to dangerously underestimate the power of our flesh. And yes, Satan is a most formidable foe as well. But, it is interesting that Paul gives him no mention in Romans 7 where, like Walt Kelley's famous little cartoon character Pogo (an opossum), he laments, "*We have met the enemy, and he is us.*"