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Keys to Understanding Life Series

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[Statement of Faith](#)

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SPIRITUAL WARFARE COMBAT TIPS

Holy Spirit's Leadership: Recognizing the Old is Part of Hearing God's Direction

In the last few editions of "Hearts Up" we looked at the importance of identifying the flesh during trials. When Satan is attacking us, the first portion of the Holy Spirit's counsel to us deals with communicating to us what the flesh is up to during a trial. This is akin to "getting the plank out of our own eyes" (Matthew 7:3-5), whether our trial deals with a person or a situation. In this edition of "Hearts Up" we are going to look at why it is that recognizing the flesh is a critical part of the "listening to God" process during a trial in terms of its relationship to discovering the steps of faith God wants us to take in response to a trial.

A believer once said to me, "Seeing so much of the flesh makes me feel like I'm a wreck!" discerning the flesh asserting itself in a trial isn't pretty, but it is a routine and critical part of God transforming us and us hearing His direction! In order to cultivate this necessary level of self-honesty in the Spirit, it is important to realize that just because the flesh isn't pretty doesn't mean you are a wreck. Rather it means that when the flesh isn't tended to, it causes wrecks known as sin. The Holy Spirit wants to reveal the flesh so we see the need for transformation and don't sin!

Let's look at the flesh and its relationship to God's direction. Here is the first issue we need to clarify.

When we talk about the steps of faith God wants us to take in a trial, that can include taking action or inaction, but it will always deal with specific issues of growing us in a specific trial. The first question is what is the Holy Spirit indicating the spiritual issues are for you?

*Seeing your old self
asserting itself in a trial
isn't pretty, but it is a
routine and critical part
of transformation and
hearing God's direction!*

Action certainly includes things we say, do, ask, clarify, etc. Actions can also include our points of view, the "lines of thinking" we dwell on or struggle to accept. Actions can include the preferences we reinforce or not, or the attitudes we have or don't have, etc. Actions can deal with life directions and major decisions, such as choosing the right job, church, spouse, dating partner, or school for your child. It could also include "lesser" decisions or issues, such as whether or not to respond to an offensive comment from a stranger,

whether to change the TV channel, how to respond to a pet's behavior, how to handle yourself while in a hurry, whether to volunteer at school, or how to spend your time off. Trials can involve almost any kind of situation (James 1:2). **Any time you are in a trial, you will need to find God's direction, AND you will need specific answers for a specific trial because you WILL take some kind of actions in a trial!**

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Let's clarify a second issue.

There is a relationship between trials and God's direction,
just like there is a relationship between how the flesh attacks and the Lord's discipline.

Trials and seeking God's direction work in relationship to one another. They are two sides of the same coin so to speak in that two things are going on spiritually at the same time: Satan attacking; the Holy Spirit speaking. In other words, when we want to know what God's will is for us about anything, we cannot approach the situation as if no change is needed in us. This is because seeking His will is an act that happens in relationship to a trial. If you are seeking God's direction, then He will want to transform something in you. The flesh is attacking (to keep you from discerning) and the Holy Spirit is offering counsel *because* you are in a trial and *need* it! Conversely, if you are in a trial, then the flesh is attacking you and the Holy Spirit is offering you counsel ... simultaneously! God will need to transform (change) something in you to overcome the fleshly attack so you can discern God's direction for the steps of faith He has for you.

Let's clarify a third issue.

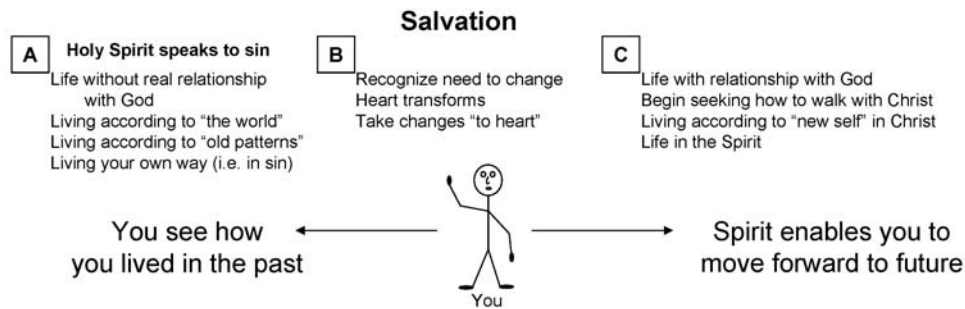
Recognizing the flesh within ourselves is often difficult
because in trials Satan and the power of sin deceives us.

When we are being deceived, we do not see clearly. However, when we see the flesh by actively discerning the Holy Spirit with our hearts, then He makes us aware of how the flesh is attacking who we are in Christ – our new self identity. The Holy Spirit then enables us to focus on connecting with God's truth about us with our hearts. When we center on who we are in Christ with our hearts, we can discern God's presence, His love, and the truth of who we are in Him, and our hearts shift from being disturbed to being at peace in the Lord. This is when we are able to discern and embrace the changes God would make in us in the trial. By desiring embracing His changes we are able to discern God's unique and specific steps of faith for us in the trial we face. It all starts with opening our hearts to the Holy Spirit's instruction on how the flesh is influencing us.

Trials and “seeking God's direction” work in relationship to one another. Two things are going on spiritually at the same time: flesh is attacking; the Holy Spirit speaking!

Transforming pain to peace and deception to clarity is a result of interacting with the Holy Spirit in the heart. **This process of discerning the Holy Spirit's counsel in trials is the same process by which we came to respond to the Spirit's call such that we entered into a relationship with Christ in the first place.**

**The Holy Spirit's Counseling Process During Trials
is the Same as it is During Salvation Conversion –
The Difference is the Counsel Itself will be More Specific in Trials
Part 1.**



In this figure we see the overall process through which the Holy Spirit led us as we came to know Christ. We could not appreciate our need for change (step B) without first recognizing the true nature of our lives up to that point (step A). This involved "discerning" the Holy Spirit speaking to the sinful nature of

our past which was continuing in the present (step A). Sometimes that is called, "The Spirit 'convicting us' of sin." While we may have been aware of facts with our minds, the discerning occurred with our hearts (step B). With our hearts (in step B) we believed the things from Step A to be true about us! We accepted the changes God would make in us and we moved forward "in Christ" (step C). This is a broad and big picture summary of the salvation process; as such, it covered all the failures, sins, and self-centered issues of our lives which separated us from God. Of course the sacrifice of Jesus cleansed us from all that in God's eyes. We have been forgiven; we were "saved." The direction God then leads us from there, again broadly speaking, is to serve and glorify Him. This opens up greater opportunities, using a very similar process, by continuing to discern God's Spirit as we walk with His Son.

When it comes to dealing with a specific trial in our walk with Christ, the sacrifice of our Lord ensured the Holy Spirit is with us continually to offer the counsel we need to be saved from Satan's deceptions (the flesh) in a given trial. In short, the Holy Spirit, THE Teacher, speaks to our hearts during a trial to help us recognize how to avoid (be saved from) the errors (sin) that come with fleshly deception. By hearing that specific counsel, we can get the specific direction (steps of faith) we need in a trial. Let's look at the similarities between salvation and the discernment process in any given trial.

The top portion of this Figure is the same as the previous one, showing the Holy Spirit's counseling process during salvation. The bottom portion shows a similar process in a given trial. The difference is that in a given trial, the Holy Spirit's counsel is more specific about Satan's attack (step A), about the flesh patterns relevant

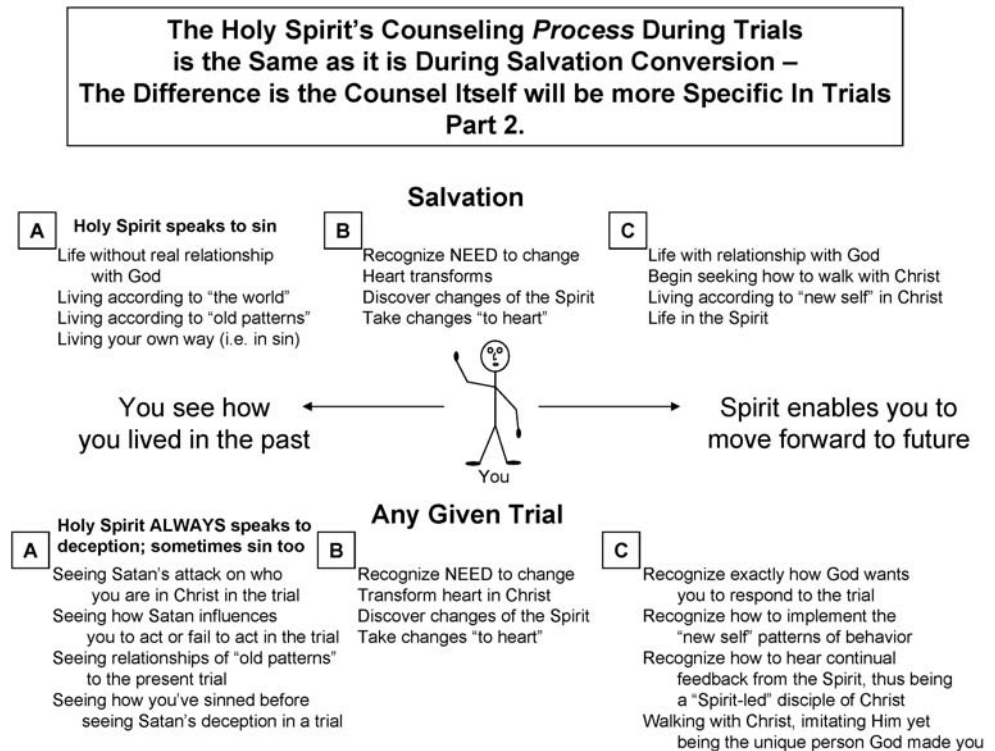
to the trial (step A), and about the transformation God wants to make in you (step B). **The deception, to which the Holy Spirit speaks (step A), is Satan's deception on us in the trial.** It is the attack of the flesh that we can't overcome on our own. We must discern the aid and counsel of the Holy Spirit! If you are willing to see and embrace that (in step B), THEN the Spirit reveals the steps of faith the Lord wants you to take to "live in the new self" in Christ in the trial at hand (step C). Each of us experienced this discernment process in salvation; the point is to

open our hearts in a similar fashion in trials so we surrender to the Lord and His Spirit within.

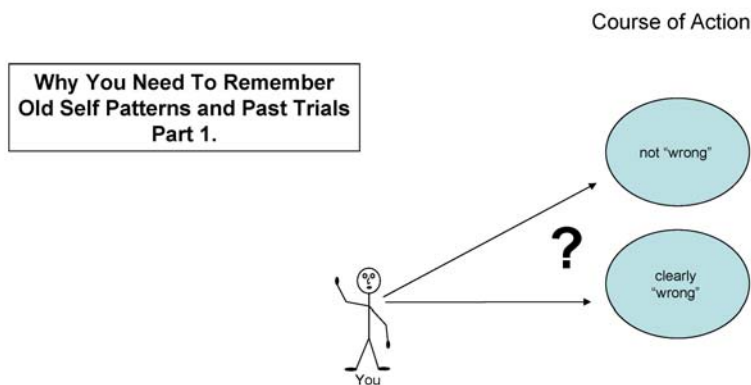
As Step A also indicates, when Satan attacks and we don't hear the Holy Spirit's counsel and embrace God's changes for us, we sin. This can happen in seconds when emotions flare and situations get heated. Even if words aren't exchanged in anger, we may sin in our hearts. When this happens, the Spirit's counsel will also include attempting to draw our attention to action(s) in sin.

The key is to recognize that when embracing God's changes in us in a trial seems more difficult, it is because we are missing something in steps A and/or B and are trying to hustle on to step C in order to find out what faith step God wants of us for the trial! Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit is trying to keep the inner conversation between us and Him on steps A or B. We have to follow His lead and seek out the flesh and embrace His changes first! Faith steps come after that. This is the application of Romans 12:1-2 to a trial. The transformation takes place in the trial leading to the renewing of the mind. The flesh has been recognized and the changes embraced. The heart will shift to peace. To the believer with such a heart centered in Christ, the Holy Spirit can then communicate God's direction (steps of faith), for that believer to take in response to the given trial.

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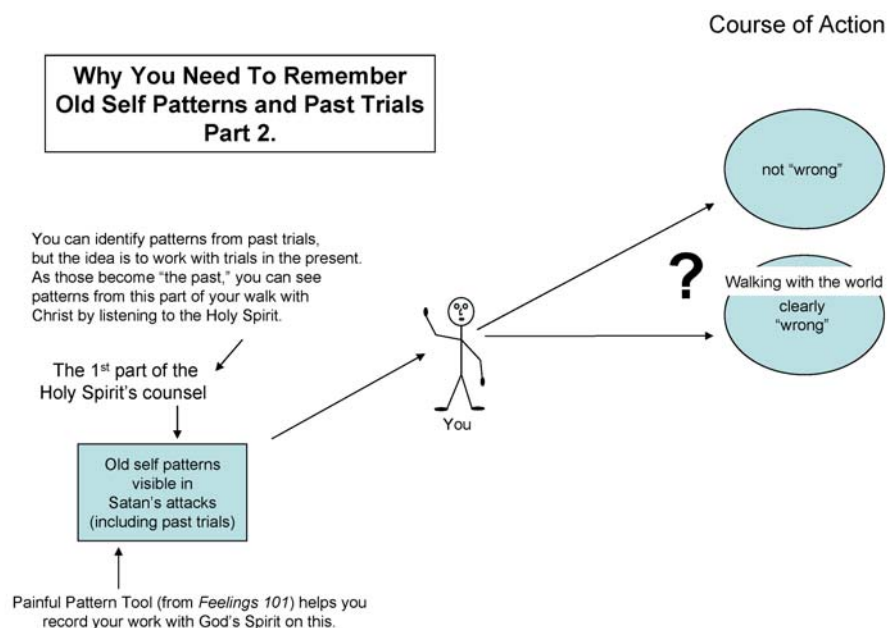
Let's shift gears and see what usually happens when we forget to discern the Holy Spirit with in or when we are not challenging ourselves to open our hearts to listening to God with *intention*.



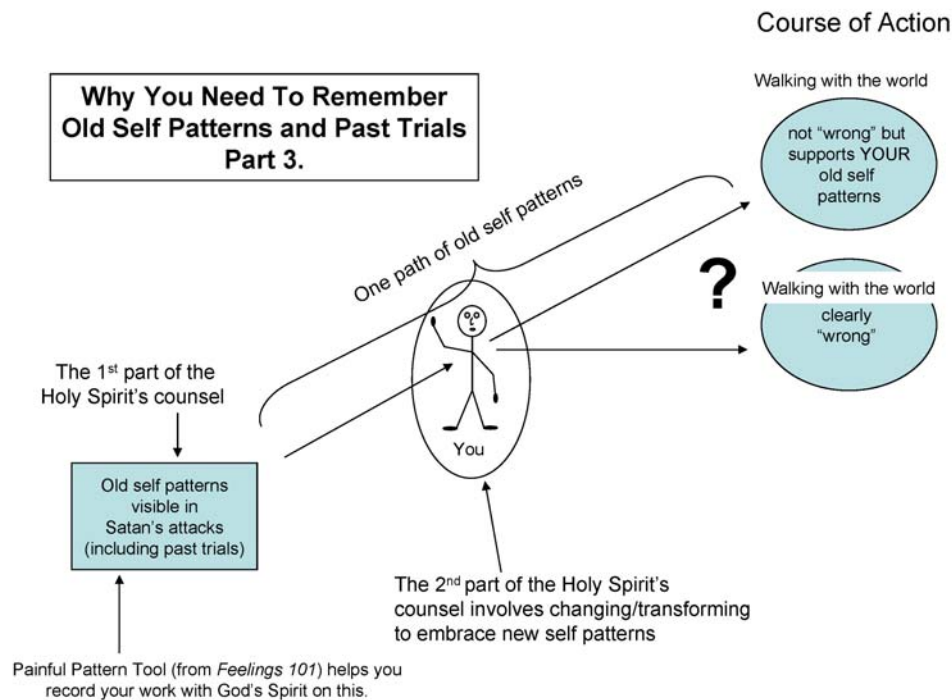
This Figure shows a trial, and it appears we have two options. This is a trap of the flesh: it gets us to focus outward from his inner attack on us. Flesh does this by getting us wrapped up in the external for the most part. Flesh gets us to evaluate the external options *before* we discern all the Spirit's guidance. We judge courses of action based on the "spiritual qualities" of the action as opposed to discerning the flesh which prompts us to select the actions. Falling for this is the same as thinking that us doing certain

things with good intentions automatically means our hearts are right with God. That is the same thinking for which Jesus rebuked the Pharisees (Matthew 23), although we usually do not see ourselves as being subject to that kind of fleshly deception.

Notice, the right of this Figure represents that we may often identify options in the "clearly wrong" category. Often times our Scriptural knowledge is helpful in eliminating options like this. However, this is *not* the sum total of listening to the Spirit's counsel. We must discern the Spirit, which isn't just about head knowledge (Ephesians 4:17-18). On the left of the figure we see that the first part of



discerning the Holy Spirit's *specific* counsel with your heart deals with seeing the old self patterns. **Seeing the flesh doesn't mean you've sinned, but if, by the Spirit's counsel, you don't discern it (often in seconds) then you will sin whether you recognize how or not!** Discerning the flesh is the part of His counsel that reveals Fleshly Tendencies and Lying Beliefs in the trial at hand. This includes recognizing what the flesh wants us to say, do, ask, and avoid saying, doing, asking, clarify, etc. Let's carry this further.



In this Figure we see that the 2nd part of the Holy Spirit's counsel pertains to changing to the *new self*. It reveals that some options that are "not 'wrong'" still may not be "right" for us if they support Fleshly Tendencies patterns! This is something that can only be discovered by discerning one's own specific patterns and

embracing transformation, one trial at a time while letting Christ lead. Of course this creates a dilemma: often times in a trial there may not seem to be any other viable options. More often than not, this APPEARS to be the case when fleshly patterns continue to be embraced ... even unknowingly.

At this point, it is important to emphasize that discerning the Holy Spirit's counsel requires a true love for and trust in one's relationship with God on a trial-by-trial basis. You must expect this because the inner struggle between old and new makes this trust hard. When it gets hard, you might interpret this as being spiritually abnormal when in fact it isn't (Galatians 5:17; Hebrews 12:7-11). In the course of surrendering a Fleshly Tendency, say, for example, a weak area is that you tend to be controlling in certain kinds of situations. It may not be clear exactly how God would respond through you after hearing only the 2nd part of the Spirit's counsel. You may discover, for example, that His counsel challenges you to say and do nothing and trust the outcome to Him by restraining yourself. Be at peace with that! On the other hand, if asserting yourself is your weak area, you may be challenged to speak up and stand for something God wishes of you, which may

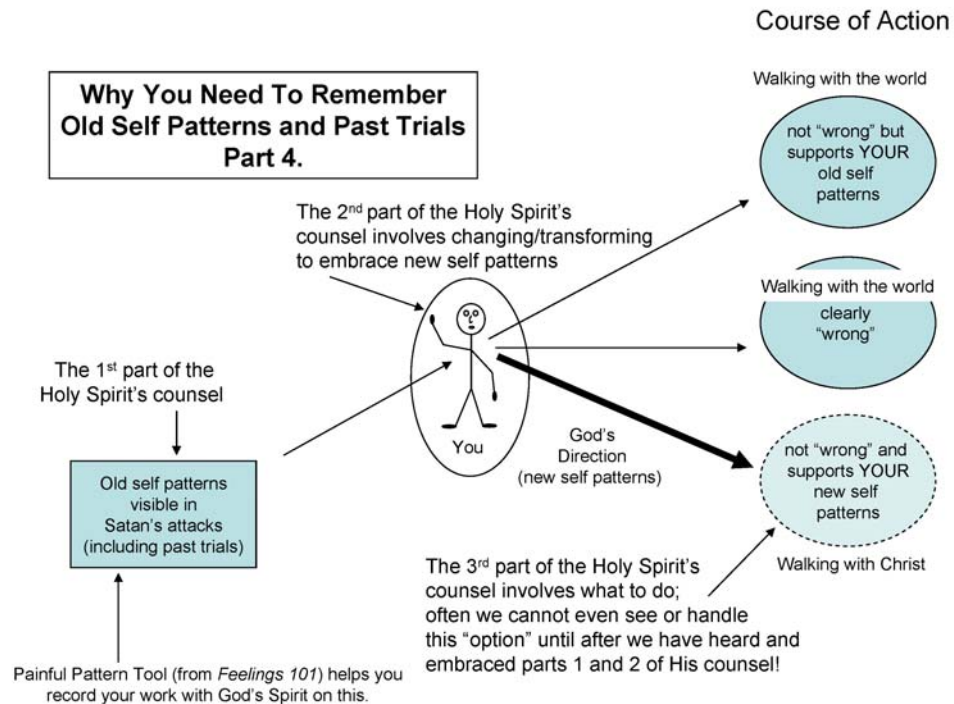
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require you to trust in God in ways that are hard for you. You will be at peace and have trust in God if you embrace the changes He seeks to make in you (2nd part of His counsel) and if you expect to have any degree of certainty and assurance with the final part of His counsel to the trial! In short, the final part of the Holy Spirit's counsel is the actual steps of faith He seeks of you in the trial. His counsel won't have fullest impact in you until your heart embraces the new-self change God wants to make in you. (Of course if we have trouble trusting the Lord in some situation, then our hearts aren't certain of His direction and won't be at peace. This is because the flesh is not overcome and is still at work. This takes us back to where we started. The Holy Spirit will offer us counsel and we have to start the discernment process over.)

In this Figure we see that when our hearts embrace the 2nd part of the Holy Spirit's counsel, our eyes open to other options that are options of the new self (right side of the Figure). Sometimes we may see these options before our hearts transform without fully appreciating why they are God's best option for us. At

other times we may not even consider them as viable options because of the impacts those options might have on our lives. However, when we are in a trial and have not embraced the Lord's changes in us, then we are still being influenced by the roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8) and his deceptions. As such, new self options will be much less appealing to us. Remember, things of the Spirit and things of the flesh are in conflict with one another (Galatians 5:17). (That message from Paul to the Galatians was written to believers, not unbelievers.)

When we recall trials during which we have experienced the amazing peace, certainty, love, and trust in God that comes with the transformative aspects of responding to the Spirit's counsel within, we may not distinguish between three distinct parts of His counsel to us in each case. Sometimes we may have a sense of one or two parts of the Spirit's counsel, but not another. Perhaps you may simply recall the special grace you experienced as part of the miracle of walking with the Lord.



These experiences are spiritually normal. However, if you find that there are other trials during which you struggle to experience that same grace and miracle as fully or as quickly, it simply means that you can increase your awareness of the various parts of the Holy Spirit’s counsel by seeking to be discipled by Him in your heart more intentionally during your trials. This is the focus of the individual discipleship training and tools presented in *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*. It requires individual, proactive introspection, application and specific evaluation of one’s own trials. Regardless of what tools you use to assist you as you seek to apply the Scriptures to real-life situations and to hear the Lord’s will in them, it is vital to open your heart the Holy Spirit to discern the Lord’s guidance and embrace change, so that you might walk well as our Lord leads.

Note for *Feelings 101* Readers: *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace* presents and trains to the *7 Spiritual Principles* of hearing the Spirit’s counsel during a trial (Chapters 7 and 8). The exercises in the first six chapters of the book, however, focus on using the Painful Pattern Tool in order to become intimately familiar with the first portions of the Holy Spirit’s counsel to you. This foundation is critical. The purpose is to strengthen your part of letting Christ overcome the self-deception that Satan will seek to foster in you as you seek to apply the Scriptural principles of listening to God’s voice in your heart. The importance of this, and the humility it requires, cannot be overstated! The first instruction before Principle 1 is, “Make an entry on your Painful Pattern Tool first, before you begin working through the actual *7 Spiritual Principles*.”¹ Without knowing this first part of the Holy Spirit’s counsel to you, it is almost certain that you will “hear God” tell you to do whatever it is that the flesh makes you want to do in a trial. Submitting to the Lord within to identify the old is one of your vital “checks and balances” before Him in working toward not skewing the process of discerning how He would lead in the trial.

KEY IN-SIGHTS

“**T**o get closer to God, we have to learn how, ‘in Christ,’ to become comfortable with looking at how the flesh keeps us from getting closer to God.”

Jesus’ message is about change, not just one time change but continual change. He says, “Follow me.” That journey starts freely when we begin our relationship with Him, but it continues best when we allow the love for Him, which is deep within us, to come bravely out. Our desire to live out our devotion and gratitude for Him is a key part of what we can cultivate to help us accept the challenges He leads us through when it comes to being transformed. This is especially true in the moments we sense that the latest transformation He has made in us will impact and alter the normal way we have been living. If we can manage to have faith and embrace the changes, He will grow us closer to Himself and His presence more regularly. It’s a journey. If it doesn’t seem to be happening fast enough, look forward to what He will change in you in your next trial! This isn’t said sarcastically or to be insensitive (James 1:2-3); there is a direct relationship between growth and actually being changed during trials.

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HEARING THE HYMNS

Search Me, O God²

This hymn is a prayer to God from a believer in Jesus Christ, J. Edwin Orr, who seeks to be open and honest about his life. Mr. Orr’s hymn brings out the realities of deception by Satan, our need to surrender the old to the Lord in each trial, and the role of the Holy Spirit in assisting us in our walks with Christ. Let’s hear the hymn.

Vs 1: Search me, O God, and know my heart today, Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I Pray.
See if there be some wicked way in me; Cleanse me from every sin and set me free.

Vs 2: I praise you, Lord, for cleansing me from sin; Fulfill Your Word and make me pure within.
Fill me with fire where once I burned with shame; Grant my desire to magnify Your name.

Vs 3: Lord, take my life, for I would live for You; Fill my poor heart with Your great love so true.
Take all my will, my passion, self, and pride; I now surrender; Lord, in me abide.

Vs 4: O Holy Spirit, revival comes from You; Send a revival, my own heart renew. Your Word
declares You will supply our need; For blessings now, O Lord, I humbly plead.

In verse one, Mr. Orr indicates that he is aware of the human problem of self deception and asks God to search him, cleanse him, and fill him with zeal to live in such a way as to magnify His name. The opportunity to ask God for this help is based on his salvation experience, which he describes in verse two with thankfulness for God’s power to change his heart and his way of life.

The writer desires to go beyond the lifestyle of being a Christian in name only (verse three). He asks God to take his will – intention and choice; to take his passion – that striving for what one desires; to take his self – the old self that lives according to the flesh and not the Spirit of God; to take his pride – that sin that can cause destruction of every kind in a person’s life. This request can be fulfilled by God when:

1. It is based on a relationship with God (verse two).
2. We recognize that the flesh can cause us to sin against God (verse one).
3. We surrender to the teaching and guidance of the indwelling, abiding Holy Spirit (verse two – in His Word, and verse four – through our hearts).
4. We surrender in the present, in the “now” of each actual trial we face (verse three).

From how the word *revival* is often used by Christians today, it seems the emphasis is typically to bring unbelievers to accept Christ as Savior. However, *revival* (in verse four) is actually from the Latin *reviver*; re, again + vivere, to live and means a coming back into or restoration to vigor or

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activity after a decline.³ This can be applied to the Christian being stirred up after being indifferent. Mr. Orr recognizes that reinvigoration of the new (or revival) by passing away the old in a trial comes by the Holy Spirit's ministry to the Christian who seeks to accept that counsel by listening and having his own heart renewed.

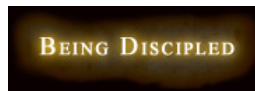
As we each face our own unique trials and issues in daily life, let us open our hearts to the Lord with the attitude of "search me, O God" and do our parts in keeping pace with His Spirit as we walk with His Son.

Words to "Search Me, O God" by J. Edwin Orr, 1912-

"Search Me, O God" was put to music by Edward J. Hopkins, 1818-1901.

KEYS WEBSITE ALERTS

The following web pages were revised with new materials this last month. They can be found under these navigation menu buttons on the *Keys* website (remember, you must be connected to the internet for the blue links to work):



The pages are listed under the "Spiritual Warfare and Discipleship" Section:

- a. [Purpose of Spiritual Warfare Training](#)
- b. [The Holy Spirit: THE Teacher](#)



Look for a new page under this navigation menu pertaining to "Hearts Up" e-Publication. Our goal is to make all editions of "Hearts Up" permanently available to visitors to the *Keys* website, and to the internet search engines at large in accordance with our Privacy Policy and Terms of Use. The new page will accomplish this goal by having the current and past editions of "Hearts Up" available for individuals to download at any time. Please be patient while we work to convert the past editions into a search engine friendly format and put them on the new page.

Generally speaking, past editions will be posted as they were originally published, so though they indicate one must subscribe to "Hearts Up", subscriptions are not required. We will be updating the *Keys* website Terms of Use and Privacy Policy accordingly; the specific changes can be viewed at the bottom of the Home page of the *Keys* website. **We will be deleting email information we have for former subscribers from the email database and will not be retaining that information on file.** We will also no longer collect the kinds of data via the "Hearts Up" notification email which we formerly used for general analytical purposes, as was indicated in our Privacy Policy.

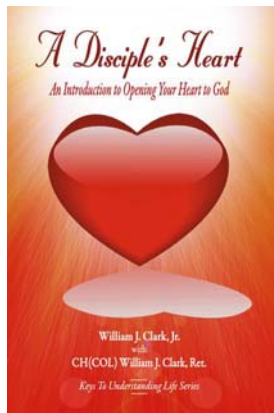
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The following materials can be found by clicking the links in blue (remember, you must be connected to the internet for them to work) or by looking for them under this navigation menu button on the *Keys* website:



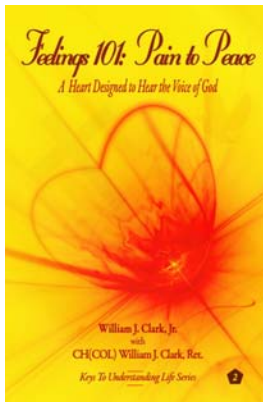
[A Disciple's Heart](#) (ADH):



This thought provoking book challenges readers to examine how well they are being discipled "beyond the elementary teachings of Christ" during real-life trials. In addition to examining why the Holy Spirit seeks to teach us during life's difficulties, the material discusses the importance of learning more about the spiritual warfare dynamics within our hearts and minds. The Scriptural "how to behind these concepts are presented in detail in the second *Keys Series* book, *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*.

Available in hardback, paperback, Adobe Reader™, Kindle™, iPhone, and iPad, both in the U.S. and internationally! You can find links to popular e-retailers at the bottom of the page at www.adisciplesheart.com.

[Feelings 101: Pain to Peace](#) (F101):



Feelings 101 focuses on the Scriptural "how to" of being transformed during trials by discerning, with intention, the counsel of God's Spirit in times when Satan seeks to influence us otherwise. This resource offers multiple tools specifically oriented on assisting you to deal with your specific trials by connecting with The Teacher within. The Scriptural and scientific examinations this handbook contains are augmented by Bible-based application training tools and exercises. It is also supported by supplemental information from the *Keys* website (the book indicates when to go to the website).

***Feelings 101* Readers:** Several places in *Feelings 101* reference supplemental materials and downloads that are provided to F101 readers on the *Keys* website. To access these materials, *Feelings 101* readers must look for the Supplemental Information Section listed on the bottom right-hand side of the *Keys To Understanding Life Series* navigation menu.

Feelings 101: Pain to Peace is available in hardback, paperback, Adobe Reader™, Kindle™, iPhone, and iPad, both in the U.S. and internationally! You can find links to popular e-retail sites based on the format you want by looking at the bottom of the www.feelings101.com page.

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ENDNOTES

¹ *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*, by William J. Clark, Jr. with CH (COL) William J. Clark, Ret, Innovo Publishing, 2010, 283

² “Search Me, O God”, J. Edwin Orr, (1912-) as quoted in *The Baptist Hymnal*, Convention Press, Nashville, TN, 1991, 297

³ Joseph H. Friend and David B. Guralnik, eds., *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language, College Edition* (Cleveland and New York; The World Publishing Company, 1960), 1247

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