

January 2011

ISSN 2155-5826

“Hearts Up”

E-Publication



Keys to Understanding Life Series

“Hearts Up”
ISSN 2155-5826

Published by
William J. Clark, Jr.
with
CH (COL) William J. Clark, Ret.

Keys To Understanding Life Series

www.keystounderstandinglife.com

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Cover Design: Practical Photography & Publishing
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“Hearts Up” is the official e-publication of keystounderstandinglife.com (“Keys” website). When we want to alert one another to something important or perhaps even to a potential danger, we usually say, “Heads Up!!” To assist us in being alert to spiritual dynamics behind our real-life experiences, we offer “Hearts Up”! This monthly e-publication works to inform, but mainly to help lift our hearts up during trials! The articles are intended to be substantial, giving you much to reflect on and work to experience with God; as such, the articles are “meaty.” The articles often build on the Scriptural concepts discussed in the [spiritual warfare materials](#) we offer, as well as in other “Hearts Up” editions and on the *Keys* website. “Hearts Up” articles are intended to support readers who seek the spiritual growth in Christ which comes from interacting well with the Lord during trials and real-life difficulties. Our materials often talk about interacting with the Holy Spirit with the heart; this interaction is not about speaking in tongues, but about hearing, understanding and embracing the counsel of the Lord with our hearts. We trust the material will challenge you to desire more in your relationship with Jesus Christ in terms of interacting with Him in real-life decision-making and problem-solving. “Hearts Up” works to facilitate an on-going dialogue between readers of the *Keys Series* materials and the authors; so if there is a particular discipleship topic, issue, or sentiment you would like us to consider speaking to, [Contact Us](#). If you received this edition of “Hearts Up” from a friend and wish to learn more about other features which sometimes appear in this e-publication, click the link below while connected to the internet or visit this menu button on the *Keys* website.



[Statement of Faith](#)

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KEY IN-SIGHTS

The joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). This is not the joy which comes from things the world wants. It is not the joy which might come from what I want in a trial. It is joy of the LORD and comes from doing what He wants in trials. Experiencing the joy of the Lord in a trial gives us strength in that trial. However, this possibility in Christ is not always an easy one to experience in difficult and trying times. There is a certain amount of acceptance that is required to experience His joy and to be strengthened joyfully during trials. This is especially true when we are in a trial that doesn't go away quickly. While we may sometimes feel strong in a trial, feeling joy that is of the Lord can seem like a whole different and challenging level of being strengthened.

*“The joy of the Lord is your strength”
(Nehemiah 8:10). If you think about one of your tough trials, the idea of feeling joyful in it almost seems paradoxical.*

If you think about one of your tough trials, the idea of feeling joyful in it almost seems paradoxical. In a way, accepting the “negative” aspects of trials seems wrong though, doesn't it? It seems to imply that if we accept something about the trial so we can feel that joy, then we might end up being a doormat. Clearly God doesn't want us to be a doormat. How do we reconcile the need for acceptance of trials (so we can experience His strength *AND* joy) with the fact that we sometimes have the ability to try to address and change the negative things happening to us?

James 1:2 says, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds....” This verse from James is one of the clearest in terms of expressing that part of our responsibility in trials is to embrace a change of perspective about the trial itself. We *can* be joyful in the midst of a trial when we don't resist the fact that we are experiencing a trial. Said differently, we are to experience pure joy of the Lord in our hearts *BECAUSE* we are experiencing a trial! But, we have to change our perspective and embrace the trial in order to do that. If we are willing to try to do this (accept the trial and embrace it by changing our perspective), then there is only one thing left to do. We must be certain of God's will for us in the trial. This is going to include specific things He wants us to do or not do *today* in response to the trial.

There are certain things we will tend to do if we resist the trial and are not at peace. There are different things we will do if we *embrace* the trial and *are* at peace. If we cannot be certain about what God wants for us to do in the trial today, then Satan can generate doubts, fears and cause us to founder. If this goes on long enough it can begin to diminish the joy we feel due to the hopes we can have in Christ and which we read about in Scripture. As a result of not being certain about what God wants us to do in a trial, our hearts may go back to being disturbed again. This is because God wants us to know what to do in response to the trial, and our hearts will become disturbed when we aren't

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hearing that. It is also because Satan is seeking to block our ability to hear God’s will, or to prevent us from following through with it from a place of peace and joy, once we understand it.

So, when you ask God what His will is and you say, “Do you want me to do this?” or you ask “When will you open that door for me, Lord?” or “Will you fix this problem for me Lord?” pay attention to the answer. If God’s answer to you seems to be “wait” or you hear nothing, ask different questions until you get an answer that tells you what to do NOW! You may have questions about tomorrow or the future, but just don’t forget to ask about today. Whatever you do, get the answer for today. There may not be any stupid questions, but some questions may definitely be more relevant to His will for you today, than are other questions!

Being certain of God’s will for you today is a vital part to experiencing the joy of the Lord, His strength, and to being able to persevere in trials one day, and one trial, at a time.

THE BIBLE’S BIGGER PICTURES

The following is a question that has been asked by visitors to the *Keys* website.

What is a trial?

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ....

The Scriptures do not provide us a textbook or dictionary kind of definition for the word “trial.” We usually define trials in terms of what is going on externally when we have a problem, a crisis or some kind of important issue. If you talk to enough people, you’ll discover that in practice, people often have different perspectives on what a trial is. Some consider trials mostly to be about really big issues or disastrous events: death, a life-threatening situation, a huge financial crisis, etc. Some believers mainly view trials as times when they try to help a non-believer to find the Lord, and it is really tough getting through to the person. Still others may consider trials as also including disappointments, frustrations, and the concerns and challenges associated with everyday living.

Trials often *do* correspond to what is going on externally during an undesirable situation. But, sometimes trials arise when nothing is wrong externally. Sometimes we may have uncomfortable thoughts in our minds or feelings in our hearts, even though nothing “wrong” is happening outside of us. In the final run, defining trials according to our individual perspectives of life’s difficulties is limiting at best. Defining trials based on our own individual views of the significance of various degrees of our hardships is limiting not because of similarities in people’s trials, but because of the vast, possible differences.

Many of the stories of men and women in the Scriptures demonstrate that we can experience a spiritual trial and not even recognize it (see an example with Peter on [Keys webpage Can God Use Your Heart To Reach You?](#)). Our own knee-jerk reactions in “the heat of the moment” are a testimony to our failures to recognize we are in a trial until *after* we’ve acted in sin! Not recognizing a trial *before* we act is spiritually dangerous. It causes us to deal with the trial without the sense of spiritual urgency of seeking out God’s leadership first, before we act. This leads to sin and regret for followers of Christ. It *is* possible to experience a trial and not recognize the true spiritual significance of it, even as believers. Therefore, we have to realize that a true definition of a trial must be greater in scope than defining it by our own experience of life’s hardships in this physical world.

The Greek word for trial is πειρασμός. The dictionary defines trial as “the act or process of testing, trying or putting to the proof by actual or simulated use and experience.”¹ The Scriptures also refer to trials as “hardships” or “tribulations.” In the physical world, we go to trial (in court) in order to prove what did or did not happen in the past. In terms of spiritual trials, we are on trial during an event in order to prove or demonstrate what we will do or not do today, i.e., during today’s trial.

We all experience trials, but we all don’t always see them as trials. Everyone experiences trials. Some may talk about a having bad day, or a bad week. They may say, “I’m going through a tough time in my life.” We all experience trials, but we don’t always call them trials. Those who don’t seek God’s leadership don’t always look for the spiritual significance of trials in terms of trying to recognize Satan’s attack on themselves. When we want to do things our own way, we don’t always look for the spiritual significance of trials by seeking out the Holy Spirit’s counsel. As Christ’s disciples, we are supposed to be different. Unfortunately, we can get focused on the external such that we minimize the significance of or forget to seek out the spiritual lessons of our trials.

...trials really aren’t up to us to define according to our individual perspectives.... Trials are best defined in terms of what is going on spiritually within ourselves.

Trials are spiritual battles, between God and Satan, which happen within us. The Scriptures describe various life circumstances as “trials” because they are about proving something spiritually. Trials are best defined in terms of what is going on spiritually within ourselves. Part of not being sufficient of our own accord (2 Corinthians 9:8) means that, even as believers, we cannot see the spiritual goings on within ourselves without Spirit-led self-examination. The effort we sow in self-examination is fruitful when we actively interact with the Holy Spirit with our hearts.

The things of the Spirit and of the flesh are in conflict with one another (Galatians 5:17). When the circumstances of our lives disturb our hearts, we are experiencing the conflict between the Holy Spirit and the father of the flesh – Satan. Broadly speaking, trials are times when Satan is deceiving us and the Holy Spirit is seeking to counsel us. More specifically, trials are times when we need answers in terms of how God wants us to respond to the trial. This is because, during trials, the results of our action or inaction carries spiritual implications (i.e., can result in sin on our parts).

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Differences in trials. Trials can be deceptively simple, complicated and sometimes complex because the spiritual side is so closely interwoven with our real-life events. As a result, we sometimes draw trials out unnecessarily. Sometimes we get overwhelmed by trials that come quickly one right after another. The various ways we experience trials sometimes makes it difficult to discern the relationships between the events going on outside of us and the dynamics of the spiritual battle within us.

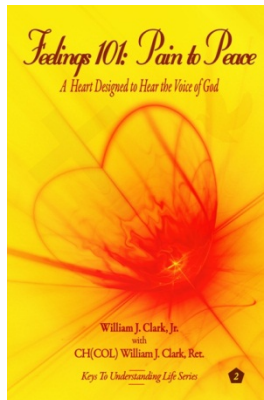
When we see that someone we care about is experiencing a trial, we can be affected by it and end up experiencing our own trial. When that happens, Satan is attacking us because we are living vicariously through the other person. We may desire to support the other person in their trial because the Scriptures say we are to share in each other’s burdens. However, when we do that in a way that causes us to lose our own inner sense of peace, then it means Satan is attacking us and we are in our own trial. One of Satan’s purposes for attacking in such situations is to cause us to fail to support others and to share their burdens from a place of being centered in Christ. To overcome that attack on us personally, we have our own spiritual work to do first. If we can’t recognize that, we may “share” the other person’s burden in an ungodly way for us. We may even end up being used by Satan such that we become a stumbling block in the person’s effort to find peace in the Lord. We may be used by Satan to mislead the person when it comes to them hearing for themselves what God would have them to do in response to their trial!

When we get in a hurry because we are concerned we might be late or something, we may get “really concerned” or “focused.” This is “new self code” for TRIAL 😬. When an employee, child, spouse, coworker, or boss isn’t “tracking with what we need to have happen,” this too is “new self code” for TRIAL 🤔. Who likes paying bills? That’s normal! But, when we procrastinate because we dread the task or don’t want to see something we may not like – “new self code” for TRIAL 😊!

We know we are in a trial when our hearts are not at peace. Just because our hearts are not at peace in Christ does NOT mean we are sinning... but it might mean that. When our hearts are not at peace, it always means sin is at our door and it desires us (Genesis 4:6-7)! Colossians 3:15 says the peace of Christ is to rule in our hearts. Colossians 3:17 says that we are to do everything in the name of the Father and giving thanks. When this isn’t happening within us – “new self code” for TRIAL 🙌!

Goal of trials. A trial presents specific challenges in terms of having faith, honoring God, and trusting God. We must know exactly what God wants us to do to DEMONSTRATE those things during a given trial. What we do or don’t do in response to a trial proves who we follow in the trial (Romans 6:16). Our conduct expresses (proves) to God the nature of our understanding of His will, as well as our level of faith and trust in Him during that particular trial. It can also prove a lack thereof. This is how our everyday living meshes with living for Christ, or not.

Trials require us to overcome Satan’s deception in us by interacting with God and His Spirit within! Something happens when we seek to improve in recognizing our own trials by recognizing the spiritual goings-on within us. We begin to see that we experience more trials than we typically think we do. We come to see that Satan is at work deceiving us a lot more than we think. This increases our spiritual workload. That may sound bad, but it also means we have a lot more opportunities than we thought to get better at hearing the Holy Spirit’s counsel with the heart! It means we have many more opportunities to show the light of God through our own actions! It means we have more training opportunities to become discerning and decisive spiritual warriors, who serve Christ Jesus and are skillful in letting love and peace rule in the heart during real-life difficulties.



Feelings 101 is a course on the Scriptural “how to” of recognizing trials and transforming the heart during trials. It focuses on listening with intention to 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, as a follower of Christ, by connecting with The Teacher (God’s Spirit) within. It is supported by downloadable Supplemental Information that is available to readers from the *Keys* website. (The book indicates when there is more info on the website which is related to a particular discussion in the book. The e-formatted versions of the book have links to Supplemental Information pages on the *Keys* website.)

Feelings 101: Pain to Peace is available in hardback, paperback, Adobe Digital Edition™, Kindle™, iPhone, and iPad, both in the U.S. and internationally! You can order it from your local bookstore or find links to popular e-retail sites by looking at the bottom of www.Feelings101.com.

HEARING THE HYMNS

Take Up Your Cross²

The words to this less familiar hymn were written by Frederick Whitfield (1829-1904). This hymn not only describes God’s work of salvation in a person’s heart, but also the work of transformation in trials. Through the writer’s faith in the work of Christ on the cross, he has made peace **with** God. His submission to God in his daily life trials brings him the peace **of** God. Let’s see if we can recognize these distinctions in this wonderful, heartfelt hymn!

Verse 1 – I saw the cross of Jesus, When burdened with my sin;
I sought the cross of Jesus, To give me peace within;
I brought my soul to Jesus, He cleansed it in His blood;
And in the cross of Jesus, I found my peace with God.

Verse 2 – I love the cross of Jesus, It tells me what I am—
A vile and guilty creature, Saved only through the Lamb;
No righteousness nor merit, No beauty can I plead;
Yet in the cross I glory, My title there I read.

Verse 3 – I trust the cross of Jesus, In every trying hour,
My sure and certain refuge, My never failing tower;
In every fear and conflict, I more than conqueror am;
Living, I’m safe, or dying, Through Christ, the risen Lamb.

Verse 4 – Safe in the cross of Jesus! There let my weary heart
Still rest in peace unshaken, Till with Him, ne’er to part;
And then in strains of glory I’ll sing His wondrous power,
Where sin can never enter, And death is known no more.⁴

Everything the writer shares in verses 2-4 is possible for him because at some point in his life he recognized his separation from God and placed his belief in Christ (**Verse 1**).

During trials we often don’t want to see the vile and guiltiness of our old self, its ill motives, improper attitudes, and ungodly desires. As **verse 2** brings out, recognizing this aspect of us is an important part of having a proper perspective of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. In terms of real-life application, it means that when we are in a trial, we must be aware of what our old nature (old self) desires. If we are not aware, we may mistakenly believe that our desires are of God when they actually are not. When Satan attacks us, it is possible to assume our desires are automatically the result of who we are from *God’s* perspective: sinless and pure. When Satan attacks in a trial, our desires (and conduct) can only be sinless if we submit to the Spirit’s corrective discipline and counsel during the trial!

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Having recognized Satan’s attack on us (and what our old selves are driving us to do or not do), it is necessary for us to center ourselves in our new-self identity – **who we are in Christ**. This is described by the writer in **verse 3**. Satan would have us believe his lies about our new-self identity – that in some way we are *less* than who we are or can be in Christ. It is important to be able to see both the old and the new within us, so that we can claim and act in the new through the sacrifice of our Lord and the power of His Spirit.

Remember, (John 18:1-11) in Peter’s trial when Jesus was about to be arrested, Peter felt if he didn’t defend Jesus then he would not be the disciple of Christ he should be. However, Jesus rebuked Peter and pointed out that he should let Him be arrested because it was the Father’s will that He be arrested peacefully. For Peter to have been aware that his attempt to “protect” Jesus was selfishly driven, Peter would have had to recognize that his inner conflict corresponded to a spiritual trial. Peter would have had to seek out what were his own old-self desires, and transform his heart. It might have looked something like this, “Here is my desire – I, Peter, do not want Jesus to be taken away.” Peter then could have taken that issue to His Lord Jesus and asked Him how **He** wanted it to be handled. Generally speaking, this is exactly what we are able to do in our trials.

In trials, we must remember what Christ has done for us and the power He has made available to us through His indwelling Holy Spirit. Drawing on that power is necessary in order to be conquerors over Satan’s attacks in a given trial! When we do draw on that power, we will be solidly connected to our Lord and Savior during that trial. As a result, we will experience the peace of God (**Verse 4**) in the trial. This kind of interaction with God is challenging to do sometimes. Working to get better at it is part of being disciplined by God’s Spirit through our hearts.

May we each be still. May we each see the cross of Jesus in our trials. May we each see both the old and the new within us, so that we might draw on the Lord to act in the new self.

KEYS WEBSITE ALERTS

The following was revised on the *Keys* website since we released the November 2010 “Hearts Up” edition. This change pertains to material that can be found under the *Keys* website navigation menu button shown below:



The *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace* Workbook Binder video (found on the Supplemental Information page) is no longer viewable on YouTube, though it is still available from the *Keys* website. We have upgraded the *Keys* website with a new video feature that allows us to run videos (the ones on the Supplementary Information section of the website) off our own server (as opposed to YouTube’s server). We have to do this in order for Supplementary Information videos to remain completely behind the “gateway” pages that lead to them. Presenting the Terms of Use on the “gateway” pages is a legal requirement we have to honor. We appreciate your understanding and patience in this area.

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STATUS OF THE *SERIES*

Next in the *Keys To Understanding Life Series* publication queue is a free, downloadable e-pamphlet that is coming soon for *Feelings 101* readers. If you have read or are reading *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*, you will want to look forward to this spiritual warfare material. It supplements *Feelings 101* by focusing on how to take your Painful Pattern Tool (a tool presented in F101) to the next level. The Painful Pattern Tool itself remains as simple to use as it always has been. This supplementary pamphlet works on developing your self-examination skills in very practical ways. The material in the e-pamphlet is fresh. It offers realistic and tangible questions you can ask yourself as you use the PPT (in partnership with God’s Spirit) to recognize your old self in trials. It provides lots of examples too. The practice of old-self identification in trials really helps when it comes to discerning the changes the Holy Spirit tries to communicate to you through your heart. This tool will help you discover specific applications to your own unique life circumstances, as you work to discern what the Holy Spirit has to say to you about Satan’s attack on you in any trial.

The draft of the e-pamphlet is complete and is currently being edited. We hope to complete the publishing of this project by Spring 2011.

HEART TO HEART

If you write poems, psalms, lyrics or prose of faith, and would like to share one of them with others in a “Hearts Up” edition, you may submit it for consideration for the *Heart To Heart* feature. You may also submit a personal story or testimony of your own to share how one of the articles or the *Keys* materials helped you draw closer to God during a trial. You can email your submission through the [Contact Us](#) page or send it to the snail mail address provided on that webpage. Be sure to read the **Contribution Guidelines** before sending making your submission. You can view those guidelines by clicking the link provided on the contact page itself.

ENDNOTES

¹ The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Houghton Mifflin Company, © 1981, page 1369

² 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

We decided to include the following information on gifts and donations in response to questions some of our readers have asked. We have not been in the habit of pressing for, or even asking for, financial support. While “Hearts Up” is offered to readers at no cost, our ministry is indeed a faith ministry.

If you find this e-publication beneficial to your walk with Christ and would like to give a financial gift to the Keys To Understanding Life ministry, you may do so by mailing your gift to our Snail Mail Address (our current Snail Mail Address is always listed on the [Contact Us](#) page on our website).

Our ministry is not yet a non-profit ministry, although our goal is to be a fully non-profit organization by 2012. God willing, we will realize that goal. As it is, at this time any gift that is given is a “true gift” in the sense that it is not tax deductible.

Gifts should be made to the name: William J. Clark.

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