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Keys To Understanding Life Series

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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

“It is worth reiterating that realizing peace in one’s life is not about living in a box, isolated from the world due to ... fear. Experiencing peace more regularly during trials involves identifying the trials and the errors we may make in the process of learning to listen to the heart. At first, while we are learning how to listen to the Holy Spirit, we may hear incorrectly and so will not experience the peace during trials, though it is possible in Christ. However, if we continue to [work on it], our interaction with the Holy Spirit will, over time lead us to vast improvements and an experience of peace during trials that is unnatural to this world.”¹

THE BIBLE’S BIGGER PICTURES

The following are a couple questions that have been asked by visitors to the *Keys* website.

What are some key things to remember when trials (spiritual battles) arise?

There is no trial in which Satan is not actively deceiving us or trying to lead us to err. There is no trial in which God’s Spirit is not actively working to counsel us so that we can conduct ourselves as disciples of Christ. When we are seeking to know God’s will for us in a trial, Satan is working to block us from hearing the Spirit’s counsel. Satan works to corrupt or twist our understanding of that counsel because he is in opposition to it.

*There is no trial in which
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actively working to
counsel us....*

On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is working to counsel and teach us about both Satan’s attack and how God wants us to respond to our trial! We must interact with the Holy Spirit in our hearts to keep in step with Him (1 Thessalonians 5:19; Galatians 5:25). Remember, working to hear the Holy Spirit’s counsel does not take away from the significance of Christ and His sacrifice; rather, it capitalizes on one of God’s gifts to us. God’s Spirit works not for Himself, but to bring glory to the Lord (John 16:12-14).

Spiritually speaking, responding to a trial in a godly way involves...

1. Recognizing our heart disturbances (this is the key to recognizing our spiritual trials). 1 John 3:18-24.
2. Discerning between Satan’s influence and the Spirit’s influence. (Galatians 5:17)
3. Proving by our hearts and our actions who we will obey during the trial. 1 John 3:18-24.

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Once we recognize we are in a trial (number 1 above), **the key is to take action on God’s will for us quickly and consistently.** While there is a lot to that, sometimes we act as if the godly way to handle trials is simply to endure them. Sometimes we really struggle to figure out what God wants us to do in the trial, and we may spend a lot of time asking, “Why?” When we can’t get to peace and understand what God wants us to do in tough trials, we may end up thinking that the point of the trial is about not going crazy or “losing it!” When we can’t figure out what God’s will is for us we may mistakenly conclude that the point of the trial is to endure it. Spiritually speaking, this is the same as going to court and acting as if the purpose is to simply make it through the trial process regardless of the verdict!

Perseverance, is often required in trials (Hebrews 10:36). Endurance is more about lasting through something. On the other hand, perseverance carries more of the flavor of knowing exactly what God expects of us during the trial. It involves being steadfast in doing it with a content heart for the duration of the trial. To do that, it is extremely vital that we are certain of what God wants from us, and that we can clearly define what kind of attitude and behavior the Holy Spirit is saying must be exhibited during the trial. That certainty is necessary for persevering in peace! The condition of our hearts and our conduct is what WILL be proven righteous during that trial. The Holy Spirit wants us to interact with Him in our hearts so He can help us prove ourselves in a godly way.

How does Satan influence us? How does the Holy Spirit influence us?

There is a lot that can be said about these two questions, more than can be covered here. One of the best ways to see these influences is by examining our hearts and minds during our own trials (especially while we are in them).

Generally speaking, the following is true about the influences of the Holy Spirit and Satan:

1. The Holy Spirit has a very specific action plan that He seeks to guide us to take in a trial. While we say the Spirit “guides” us, that guidance doesn’t just mean He offers us only broad or general direction. His guidance is usually very exact, detailed and unambiguous. To understand the specificity of that guidance, a believer has to be aware of the patterns which he or she tends to follow in the old self.
2. Satan, on the other hand, has a bit of an easier time influencing us to take ungodly courses of action. Because the Spirit’s guidance is usually quite specific, Satan doesn’t care which of any number of other courses of action we take. Satan can even settle for having us do the external that the Spirit wants, but with an ungodly heart. Satan’s goal is to get us to do anything but the explicit guidance which the Spirit seeks to get through to us during the trial.

One of the reasons we sometimes believe the Holy Spirit’s guidance and influence is broad in scope is because we are not strong in examining:

1. Ourselves.
2. Our conduct in trials.
3. The desires we have when our hearts are disturbed.
4. The implications of being joyful in undesirable trials.

Another reason we sometimes believe the Holy Spirit’s guidance is unspecific and that His influence is more of a “behind the scenes activity” is *because* God gave us a brain to think with. Satan

confuses us as to how our thinking is affected during trials. God gave us a brain to evaluate things, and He gave us free will to make our own choices. The irony we often overlook is that when our hearts are disturbed, our brains do not think clearly. The heart is the God-designed, spiritual warning mechanism which tells us about our spiritual condition during a trial! This is why Proverbs 27:19 says that it is the heart which reflects us, and not our thinking or our brains/minds!

Muddled and unclear thinking results when our hearts are disturbed. It is a biological fact that is based on God’s design of our physiology and how He made it to mesh with our own spirit! God designed our thinking processes to be diminished when we are disturbed. God did this because in times of trouble (when Satan attacks us personally), Satan influences our thinking in the wrong direction –this is the essence of deception. We must interact with God to begin the process of transforming our hearts to peace... DURING the trial! We have to exercise our free will to work with His Spirit to do that. This is how our free will relates to renewing our minds during trials. Let’s look closer at how the influences of Satan and the Holy Spirit relate to free will and thinking.

Why is our God-given free will related to our trials?

Both God’s Holy Spirit and Satan seek to influence us to use our God given free will in two very different ways. God gave us free will in order to be able to make SPIRITUAL CHOICES. **God designed us such that we *will* exercise the free will He gave us one way or the other during our trials.** We cannot be in a trial and avoid choosing either to go to God and transform our hearts to peace, OR, to try thinking harder, miss the Holy Spirit’s guidance pertaining to Satan’s attack, and end up cooperating with Satan often without realizing how we are doing so! Satan’s deceptions are frequently unapparent to us! His deceptions can make logic, which leads to sin, appear true. Only with the eyes of our spiritual heart can we work to “see” through deceptions consistently.

1. Satan attacks Christ in us in order to drive us to miss the mark (sin) in a trial by acting or failing to act with a heart that is not centered in Christ. When our hearts are not centered in Christ during a trial, ungodly actions are the result. Satan seeks to control and manipulate us. Satan doesn’t care whether we miss the mark willingly, or whether he has to deceive us deeply in order to control us during a trial.
2. The Holy Spirit brings glory to Christ in order to help us hit the mark (not sin). He does this by trying to help us transform our hearts to peace and by trying to teach us (in the moment of trial) how to act or not act. When our hearts are centered in Christ during a trial, godly actions are the result. The Holy Spirit cares whether we are willing to hear Him. The Holy Spirit will not control us in order to get us to hear Him; this is out of respect for the free will God gave us. Because the Holy Spirit and Satan both are trying to influence us in a trial, it can be hard to hear the Spirit’s counsel clearly. This is spiritually normal. It means that we may have to work hard and skillfully during some trials in order to figure out how to submit to the Holy Spirit’s leadership (that focuses on Christ).

What to look forward to next month:

- God gave us a brain, but are good intentions enough to cause us to serve Him?
- What does it mean to act “in Christ?”
- What exactly is the heart (spiritual heart)?



Feelings 101: Pain to Peace (www.Feelings101.com) assists believers in developing the self-examination skills which are so important to developing the eyes of the spiritual heart in Christ. It focuses on the Scriptural “how to” of discerning between the influences of Satan and the Holy Spirit. It provides personal training in transforming the heart during trials in very practical ways, so that we may live Scriptural teachings more consistently and skillfully in real-life.

KEYS WEBSITE ALERTS

Readers of *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace* (F101): we have posted a new version of the Painful Pattern Tool! That tool is now available in both landscape and portrait orientations. Some of you wanted the tool in a portrait version since it would be easier for you to use – we finally got it done! Both versions are available on the Downloads page in the Supplemental Information section. For new F101 readers: the Home page of the *Keys* website has directions to this section.

STATUS OF THE SERIES

Both *A Disciple's Heart* and *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace* are now available in the NOOKbook format from www.bn.com (Barnes & Noble online).



These spiritual warfare and personal discipleship materials are also available in hardback, paperback, Adobe Digital Edition™, 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 www.ADisciplesHeart.com or www.Feelings101.com.

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HEART TO HEART

No One Understands!!!

When we face trials there are many sentiments we may feel or think as Satan attacks us. Some examples are:

- Why does God allow ____ to happen?
- It isn't fair that I have to deal with ____.
- I am alone.
- Why me?

Another one that may arise is, “No one understands what I am going through.” Throughout my life I've often focused so much on the external aspects of trials that frequently I felt I was too different from others. As a result, I have sometimes felt that God doesn't understand.

At some point in life many of us have felt kind of like God was a “satellite” circling the earth, round and round He goes. From time to time we may have felt like He zeroed in on us, and we were aware of His presence. But later, it seemed that His “orbital motion” moved Him on and we were left alone once again. This certainly does not describe the God of the Bible. However, sometimes Satan's attacks can cause us to feel as if it does. Satan's attacks can cause us to feel left out, forgotten, or as if we are in a situation that is completely different than what the Son of God experienced.

When we feel as though even God may not understand what we are going through, it is because Satan's deception is causing us to struggle to experience a connection with the Lord in light of the common bond of trials. If you think about it, it is really interesting how often God gets blamed for allowing things to happen that are awful. We forget that since the beginning, it is *Satan* who has fought God and Christ within us. Satan is the cause of the trouble in us! Still, when we don't like something that we experience or see others experiencing, God is sometimes the one who gets questioned why. It seems to me that we should be blaming Satan instead, and then partnering actively with the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts to peace, and to fight Satan's attack in us!

Look at what the Spirit of God, through the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, says:

Hebrews 2:18 For since He Himself was tempted (tested in trials) in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted (tested in trials).

This verse tells us that God has first-hand experience of what you and I face in life. This was one of the reasons Jesus took on flesh and blood: to experience life as you and I experience it, and to show us by His example how to receive His peace and counsel during trials. Isn't it true though that Satan's attacks sometimes lead us to think, say or believe things that really aren't true about God, particularly when we are in a tough trial? We cannot think or say to God, “You don't know the heartache of standing at the side of a grave!” Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, and certainly he wept when Joseph died. On the other hand, I guess we can say such things when we are hurting, but it certainly isn't accurate. Again, that's Satan's distorting influence on us.

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We cannot say to God, “You don’t understand loneliness!” Jesus could confide in His disciples on the eve of His betrayal and arrest, but which of them provided Jesus comfort and understanding? Jesus’ disciples did not really understand what Jesus told them in the upper room; they even resisted and questioned Him. Later, Jesus also felt loneliness and abandonment when His own disciples deserted Him. Jesus was slandered, ignored, abused, misused, rejected, criticized, lied about, and laughed at. Jesus was unjustly accused and executed. I have a hard time imagining what that must have been like without feeling some sense of loneliness too.

We cannot say to God, “You don’t understand the fear, frustrations, tensions, and anxieties that I face.” Jesus felt these in the Garden of Gethsemane as He worked to be at peace with the Father’s plan for Him. How tough that must have been to feel understood while at the same time knowing that the Father’s plan for His death wasn’t going to be comfortable, desirable, or pleasant!

Jesus may not have experienced the exact same external situation that we face in a trial, but He certainly experienced the gamut of unwanted feelings and emotions we face. Those disturbances of the heart are universally common to mankind; it is a normal part of spiritual warfare! However, to deal with it, we must skillfully do our part to partner with God’s Spirit within and work through Satan’s deception. When we do, we can feel a strong and comforting sense of connection to God. We feel peaceful and His compassion for us brings relief. Transforming our hearts to where frustration and isolation are replaced with inner peace and love is vital to gaining a sense of certainty of His will for us (in terms of how He wants us to respond to our trial situation).

Later in the letter to the Hebrews, the Holy Spirit through the writer tells us that we must go beyond the elementary teachings of Christ (Hebrews 5:11-6:2), and that persevering and faith are vital to that (Hebrews 10-11). Having an intellectual awareness that Jesus understands our struggles, pains and concerns, is not the point of Hebrews 2:18. The point is to encourage us to do our part in transforming during the trial, so we *can* experience a solid awareness of His understanding during the trial. That comes through the heart. When we are aware of His understanding in a heart-felt way, it changes everything, at least in the sense that it changes us!

Oh God, help me to recognize that You understand what I am going through. Thank You for being available to help me. Help me to discern the deceptive influences of Satan by the power of Your Holy Spirit! Help me to recognize how You need me to change. Help me to listen to Your Spirit and learn to follow Your Son’s example as His disciple!

Submitted by: William J. Clark, Jr.

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 us your submission. You can view those guidelines by clicking the link provided on the contact page itself.

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ENDNOTES

¹ *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*, William J. Clark, Jr. with CH (COL) William J. Clark, Ret., Innovo Publishing, 2010, 339

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. 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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