

June 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](http://www.keystounderstandinglife.com)

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Cover Design: Practical Photography & Publishing  
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[Statement of Faith](#)

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## SPIRITUAL WARFARE COMBAT TIPS

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### Real-Life Trials Involve Spiritual Identity Crisis: Satan’s Tactics Versus the Holy Spirit’s Leadership<sup>1</sup>

This article brings together several Scriptural concepts that we’ve examined in a four-part series beginning with the March 2011 “Hearts Up” Edition through this month’s Edition. To get the most out of this article, you’ll want to have read up on the other articles’ discussions on the concepts and their application. Be aware that each of the three previous articles presents the Scriptures that deal with the concepts being discussed here; this article summarizes the connections between those concepts and does not repeat the actual Scripture passages.

In short, every trial presents the same general spiritual dynamics: Satan attacks us, the Holy Spirit offers guidance, and we have a couple responsibilities we must fulfill in order to act “in Christ.” When we don’t fulfill our responsibilities for whatever reason, God views us through Christ as being without sin, but from the perspective of our conduct, we are not acting “in Christ.” While that is the general overview of us in trials, that knowledge isn’t always sufficient to help us get through trials in peace or to act as the Lord would have us to act.

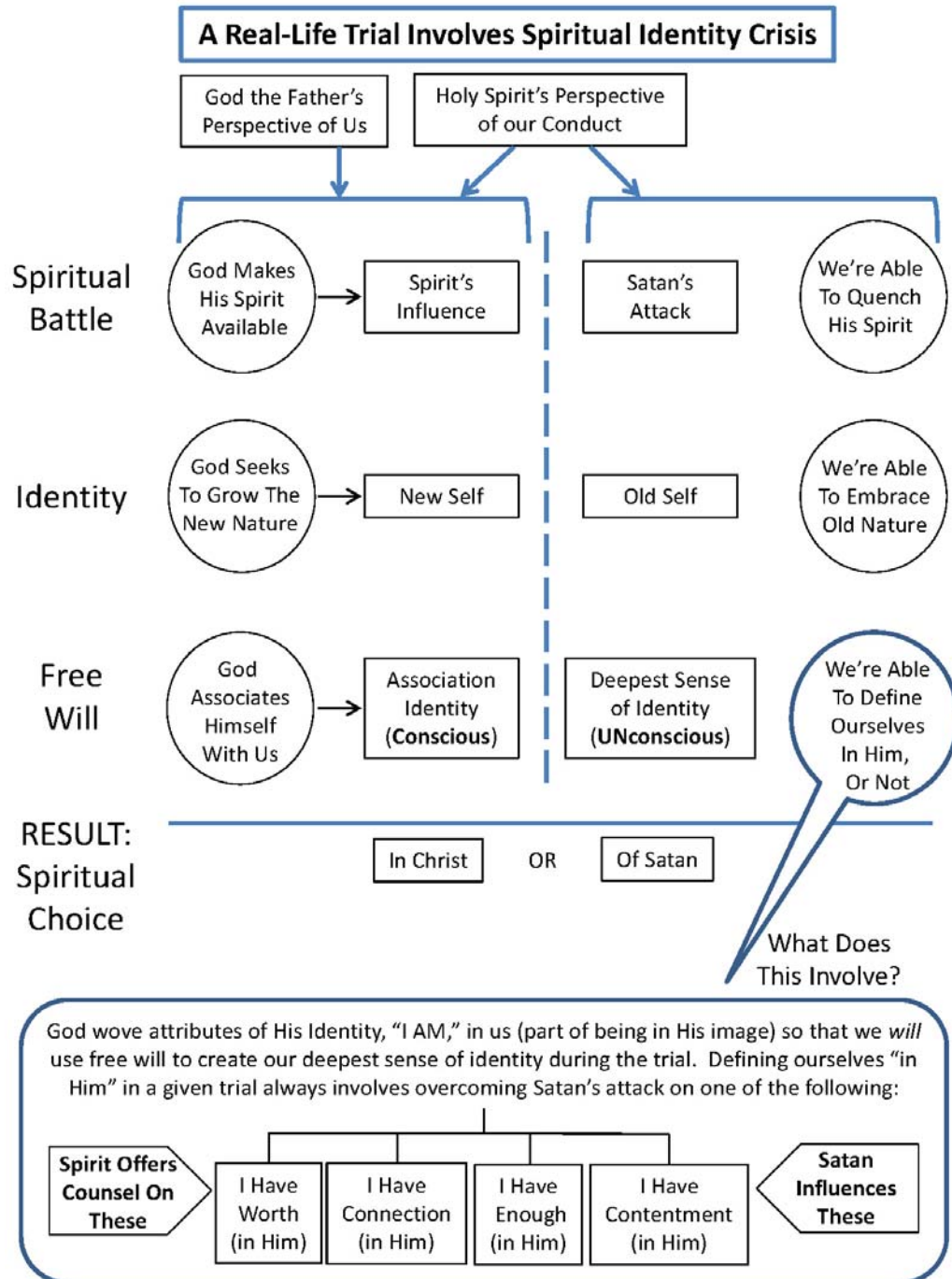
There are some specific areas of spiritual concern that can make trials more or less difficult depending on whether we see how they relate to what we feel and want in our hearts while the trial is actually going on. Together the four-part series of articles examine those spiritual areas of concern.

1. **Part I** – What it means to act “in Christ” from God’s perspective and also from the perspective of our actual conduct during trials, why God designed our hearts to experience disturbances during trials, and why it is so important to transform those disturbances to peace during trials (“Hearts Up” March 2011, *The Bible’s Bigger Pictures* featured article).
2. **Part II** – God designed us to be able to have and experience a sense of identity. This article deals with how each real-life trial relates to our identity as followers of Christ, how Satan uses the external parts of trials to distract us from the spiritual parts of trials, and it includes examples (“Hearts Up” April 2011, *Spiritual Warfare Combat Tips* featured article).
3. **Part III** – What the two parts of our sense of identity are and some crucial differences between them, what some of our responsibilities are in cooperating with God to transform our hearts and to define our deepest sense of identity “in Him,” Old and New Testament references to how God created us from His own image and identity so we have the ability to embrace a godly sense of identity (“Hearts Up” May 2011, *The Bible’s Bigger Pictures*).

Remember that while we may examine and conceptually understand the various dynamics that can come to bear within us during trials, the point is to actually apply the concepts to trials in real-life. We have to actually do the work that constitutes our part of cooperating with the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts and embrace the guidance He gives us during each trial in order to act or not act “in Christ.” The diagram below depicts relationships between spiritual battles and conducting ourselves “in Christ.” After looking at the diagram, we will look at the deeper issues behind our hearts’ feelings and desires and how they relate to our deepest sense of identity. We will look at exactly what we can focus on in trials in order to do our part with the Holy Spirit to affect transformation of our hearts during any given trial.

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The diagram shows several things that come into play during a given trial. The far left hand column (starting with *Spiritual Battle*) shows the general "phases" of a trial. Notice that the top portion is divided into two parts by the vertical dotted line. The left side is God's perspective of us, but it is also one of two possibilities of how we may respond to a trial, provided we fulfill our part of cooperating with the Holy Spirit's counsel so that we are "in Christ." The right side columns show the other possibility of how we may respond to a trial; that is, specifically, in concert with Satan's deceptions in our hearts. There are also relationships depicted in each row. The far right circle in the *Free Will* row deals with the issue of defining ourselves "in Christ" during the trial. This relates to the bottom portion of the diagram: the four fundamental aspects of our deepest sense of identity, over which the Holy Spirit and Satan are in opposition.

While the diagram builds on two basic things God has done for us (provided the sacrifice of Jesus and guaranteed the permanent availability of His Spirit), it shows that Satan can still attack us. The diagram shows that though God the Father sees us as clean, pure, and "in Christ" regardless of how we conduct ourselves (shown on the left side of the vertical dotted line), our conduct is not always going to be "in Christ" unless we define ourselves "in Him" when Satan attacks us during a trial. It is during Satan's attacks that we have the opportunity to be disciplined by the Holy Spirit in our hearts (a.k.a., "discipleship beyond the basics," as that discipleship deals directly with application to real-life). Until we transform our hearts to peace in a trial, the Holy Spirit's guidance includes trying to communicate to us what we must change in order to do so. This is depicted in the rectangular box at the bottom of the diagram. We'll focus on that part for the remainder of this article.

Godly living during trials always deals with one of four deeper identity issues. Again, these are shown in the row of four boxes at the bottom of the chart. Sometimes, perhaps even many times, we *aren't* aware of these issues during a trial. In other words, we are often focused on the external parts of the trial (a family argument, an issue with the boss at work, an issue with a neighbor, a financial problem affecting us, etc.) and so the issues in those four boxes don't always seem relevant, or they simply don't occur to us. Nevertheless, at least one of them is at the core of how we feel or what we want during the trial; as such, it is an influence on our deeper sense of identity and is the essence of Satan's deceptive attack on us personally. The reason we are not always very aware of any of those four issues is because most of the time these issues are handled in our UNconscious mind, which is where Satan's influence in us starts.

BUT, when we seek out the Holy Spirit, knowing He is trying to help us with whichever of those issues about which Satan is working to deceive us, we can become consciously aware of the issue. That, in turn, puts us in a position to focus on opening our hearts and transforming them to peace. This is particularly useful during difficult trials. (While in some trials more than one of those issues may seem relevant, with practice you can use your heart to detect the one that is most applicable to the trial at hand.)

When a trial is painful (whether hopeless despair, slight discomfort, or simply undesirable) we usually experience one of those four aspects of our identity as something like:

1. A sense of feeling unworthy or not good enough.
2. A sense of feeling disconnected.
3. A sense of feeling we don't have enough, or might be lacking in things we need.
4. A sense of feeling no peace in the trial.

With that in mind, in Part I ("Hearts Up" March 2011, *The Bible's Bigger Pictures* featured article) of this series of articles we looked at the fact that while God gave us a brain to think with, the biology God designed us with made it to where we don't think clearly when our hearts are disturbed. As the end of that article hints, that conflict during trials is what creates the need to carefully exercise our free will in a godly way. Doing so requires us to initially "figure things out" with our hearts, because our thinking isn't so clear when we're bothered. This issue with our minds isn't so much about our conscious thinking, but our UNconscious thinking! Remember, we don't have to be psychologists to transform our hearts, but it does help to recognize what all is going on

inside us when we get stumped by a particularly challenging trial. God generally permits Satan to tempt us and work to deceive us; Satan does that by sowing the seed of temptation deep within our minds. The Holy Spirit, in turn, warns us about Satan’s attack by alerting us in our hearts (our hearts become disturbed), and our tainted thinking is diminished by the very biological processes with which God created us. The truth is that when Satan attacks us we can’t think clearly! If we could, we wouldn’t need the Holy Spirit’s guidance!

So, in the moments of a trial while Satan is attacking, our brains try to think, but they don’t do so clearly, and that is actually good! God designed our biology this way because when the UNconscious mind is thinking during a trial, it is trying to figure out how the *external* situation relates to our deepest sense of identity. That, of course, is a problem because our sense of identity is *not* to be defined by the external situation, but in terms of who we are in Christ! Our deepest levels of thinking, when Satan is attacking us, approach trials like this:

1. Does this situation mean I am or might not be good enough?
2. Does this situation mean I am or might be alone?
3. Does this situation mean I don’t or might not have enough?
4. Does this situation mean I can’t be or might not be at peace?

Simply thinking those questions tends to get our attention off our hearts and the big spiritual task of transformation, and it allows Satan to drive us to draw one of the following conclusions UNconsciously. These conclusions are lies, and when we act upon them, whether we are aware we are doing so or not, we sin. **These are Satan’s lies:**

1. I am not good enough.
2. I am alone.
3. I do not have enough.
4. I cannot be at peace.

Simply knowing that these lies *are* lies does not mean our hearts are transformed or that we are actually embracing God’s Truth about us. **This is why, at the same time Satan is lying to us and trying to get us to define ourselves according to the external, the Holy Spirit is trying to remind us of what is true.** To transform our hearts, we must work to **FEEL** the following of God’s Truths in our hearts, depending on whichever one Satan is attacking (lying about):

1. In Christ, I am good enough!
2. In Christ, I am connected!
3. In Christ, I have enough!
4. In Christ, I am at peace!

Our hearts do not think; they have desires and they feel. But in a trial, we can’t just desire to have worth, we have to genuinely FEEL our worth in Christ regardless of the external situation. We can’t just desire connection; we have to FEEL our connection with Christ. We can’t just desire to have our needs fulfilled, we have to FEEL the fulfillment of our needs, even when the situation we face may involve a loss in some way. We can’t just desire peace, we have to FEEL true peace inside, even when we are in a situation which may start with worry over a variety of “what ifs” concerning what may happen. To feel any of these truths of who we are in Christ, we have to change something in us during the trial – perhaps a motive, a desire, or we might have to embrace a new perspective of the

external situation. Our part is to pause and “hear” the Spirit with our hearts. When we do, we WILL feel the peace of Christ within, our thinking becomes clear, and we can discern what the Holy Spirit’s guidance to us is, in terms of how to respond to our trial. It is inner transformation.

Each of us has experienced inner transformation both during salvation and during some of our trials. Identity issues concerning Satan’s lies and God’s Truth about us are a part of every trial we face. Maybe you have not always been aware of the spiritual dynamics going on inside you during those transformations, but whenever it is taking a while to transform our hearts to peace in a trial, being able to focus on these aspects of our deeper sense of identity can make a difference in fulfilling our responsibilities as followers of Christ. It can help us to experience the possibilities in Christ, which make us stand out as being different whenever we face trials. Becoming more skilled at doing our part in response to the Holy Spirit’s counsel causes one to stand in amazement of God’s interest and willingness to try to communicate with us. It enables us to extinguish those flaming arrows of Satan during any trial we face.

Our relationship with God begins with that most amazing message of John 3:16. Once we’ve accepted Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, we see that He, and He alone, is to define who we are as we experience life and its trials. In Christ we can become free from the times Satan seeks to use worry, fear, and the trappings and loves of the world to define who we are. We can be more consistent in fulfilling our responsibilities in Christ, regardless of how things are going or how they turn out externally... just like Jesus. When we fulfill our responsibilities *more consistently*, we experience more of the possibilities in Christ. **The key is hearing with the heart.**



If you want to learn more about the transformation process, the role that peace plays in the dynamics between our hearts and minds, or you want some practical exercises that will help you become more aware of Satan’s tactics and the Holy Spirit’s leadership in your own life, check out *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*. This resource to discipleship beyond the basics is available in a variety of formats from Amazon, Barnes & Noble and a number of other popular eRetailers, both in the U.S. and internationally.

## HEART TO HEART

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### The Battle Sound of the Bugle

Long before the days of telephones, cell phones, texting, and even radios, armies in battle moved, maneuvered, and fought in response to orders that were given by the playing of trumpets or bugles. The trumpet or bugle was loud, but with the battle yells, thundering feet and hooves, and cries of the wounded, soldiers always had to keep one ear attuned to listening for the next call the bugler might make. The bugle wasn’t just used on the battle field. Even the daily activities in military encampments and forts were governed by orders sounded by the bugler. Reveille (Call to Wake Up) and Taps (Call to Retire – either from the field of battle or, more popularly, to go to sleep) are still sounded on many military posts today. Other calls the U.S. Army used as recently as in the

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last 100 years were the Mess Call, the Work Call, Chapel Call, and don't forget the popular call, "Charge!"

There are two interesting analogies to our lives as followers of Christ that we can draw from the bugle being used to communicate information, commands and directives.

1. Our lives are like a bugle which must clearly Call out the message of Christ and the leadership of His Spirit.
2. The Spirit's voice is like a godly bugle that Calls out His guidance, counsel and direction, and we must be skilled at recognizing, understanding and responding to His Calls during real-life trials.

*Is Your Life Making a Clear Sound, or is it Noise?*

The first perspective shows that our lives are like a bugle in that they communicate "the sound" of our understanding of how to be a disciple of Christ! This is supposed to demonstrate to others the healthy relationship with God that He challenges us to model. The Spirit of God through Apostle Paul uses the imagery of the "Call to Arms" as an illustration in 1 Corinthians 14:8 when Paul writes, "For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?" When we struggle to understand what God wants of us in our own trials, or whenever we have a hard time embracing the Lord's discipline for us personally, then this contributes to creating a kind of spiritual noise. In other words, when we continually struggle to hear or obey the Lord in our own lives, then our lives are giving off an indistinct spiritual sound, and they don't serve to motivate others to seek more in a two-way relationship with God.

*...our lives are like a  
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Paul is making a point to the Corinthians in that while they claimed to follow Christ and their preaching proclaimed piety, their living wasn't always reflecting a disciple's heart. Sometimes their actions focused on external demonstrations of being followers of Christ, without actually reflecting the practical application side of a heart that served and honored the Lord. The implied question of 1 Corinthians 14:8 is, "How can you expect others to respond positively to God, when you, who say you know him, live such inconsistent

lives?" The question is relevant to us today. What are our lives reflecting about being His disciple?

During World War II Sgt. Xavier Connors fought at Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, and other places in the Pacific. During his many years of combat, Sgt. Connors developed an unusual way of demonstrating his patriotism. He always displayed an American flag at his gun position (this is not a healthy thing for a foot soldier to do). In 1953 he found himself in combat in Korea. There he painted an American flag on a towel and set it up. The North Koreans shot it down. He set it up again. They shot it down again. This "game" went on until the enemy tired of it and left the American flag standing. When asked why he did this, Sgt. Connors responded that he was proud to be an American and he wanted to make sure others knew it. He wanted to make a clear sound with

his trumpet, so to speak.

*Can You Understand the “Calls” the Holy Spirit Makes in Your Life?*

The second perspective is that the Holy Spirit Calls to our hearts like a bugler, as He works to guide, counsel and lead us in daily living. The way this applies to us is that we must be trained and skilled in understanding the Calls the Spirit makes to us in real-life, and we must have the steadfastness to obey them promptly! This analogy is reflected in Galatians 5:25 “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” In this passage, the word *walk* is στοιχῶμεν, and it means to walk in rows and columns. The imagery in this verse is that of believers marching in formations like the Roman army did, and the Holy Spirit is the one giving out the commands and orders to the individual units. While the armies of old used various trumpet Calls to announce the commands to be followed, the soldiers in battle had not only to understand what they meant, but they also had to listen for them in the midst of battle! The training we are to receive in learning to heed the Spirit’s Calls is what is referred to as, “discipleship.”

When I look back on my life as a believer, I can see how I really worked on the perspective that my life’s bugle needed to have a certain recognizable sound to others. I didn’t see myself like one of the Corinthians or like a Galatian, but in my own way I was. I had lots of room for improvement in learning to hear the Spirit’s Calls in a timely fashion. I tended to measure how well I lived for God primarily by “the Christian things” that I did. I wanted to serve the Lord, and I also wanted to be closer to Him. It wasn’t until much later that I began to understand that walking by the Spirit involves daily interactions with Him. It involved hearing the Calls the Spirit was making to me personally. Of course I understood that the Spirit is always counseling and offering us guidance. I did not realize that while we may *want* to hear His guidance, we don’t automatically hear Him just because He offers counsel during each of our trials, or just because we happened to hear and understand Him before! When Satan influences us during our trials, it makes it hard to hear the sound of the “Spirit’s bugle,” the sound of His voice in our hearts!

*...the Holy Spirit  
Calls to our hearts  
like a bugler, as He  
works to guide,  
counsel and lead us  
in daily living.*

If you’ve ever marched in a formation then you’d know it may *look* simply like walking, but it actually requires a great deal of attention. This is because a formation isn’t just a group of people walking in the same general direction. It is about being part of something bigger than yourself, and being sensitive to what is happening around you. You have to continually adjust your stride in small amounts to align with the person to the left, right and in front, all based on the commands of the leader. When the commander Calls for even a slightest change of direction, everyone’s role changes at least a little bit based on their position within the formation. It takes constant attention to the formation, and you don’t get to gander a whole lot at the scenery you march past! Remember, the formation is for combat or moving to and from battles and daily tasks. It is not for sightseeing, touring or for the purpose of simply enjoying life as if you are independent or on your own. The life of a soldier, especially a Christian soldier, is about enjoying the bidding of our Master and working

with the Body. It is about relishing the opportunity to do what He Calls for us to do when spiritual battles arise and things are hectic, not just individually, but as a group or Body. It is really easy for one person to really mess things up when they walk (spiritually march) by trying to see the whole big picture and anticipating on their own where to walk. Only the commander (in this case God’s Spirit) sees enough of everything to understand the big picture. Our part is to skillfully listen for His Calls with our hearts, and follow promptly.

It is easy, in the face of daily demands, to allow stressful circumstances to cause us to respond, act, speak, or behave in ways that are not exuding peace and love. In the midst of our “battles” we may ignore people, utter harsh words, or react unkindly. In such situations, the bugle Call of our action in trials does not demonstrate the message of Christ; instead, they reflect poorly upon our Master, Who seeks for all to follow. This often happens when we, in turn, do not hear or embrace the bugle Call of God’s Spirit within. While we may have fast-paced lives or may face hectic, time consuming and complex trials, it is our responsibility to heed the guidance, counsel and Call of the Master. We must do this even when it requires us to keep pace with Him; a pace that may not be one the world embraces or recommends! Perhaps it would be helpful to think in terms that while God has placed each of us in the critical position of being His bugler, we too have a Bugler (the Spirit) to Whom we must respond.

As your daily life unfolds, pay attention to that which your heart is listening. Pay attention the kind of sound your life is making.

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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 Us page itself.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> portions of “Real-Life Trials Involve Spiritual Identity Crisis” references with permission *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*, William J. Clark, Jr. with CH (COL) William J. Clark, Ret., Innovo Publishing, 2010, 156-160

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ISSN 2155-5826

June 2011 Edition

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