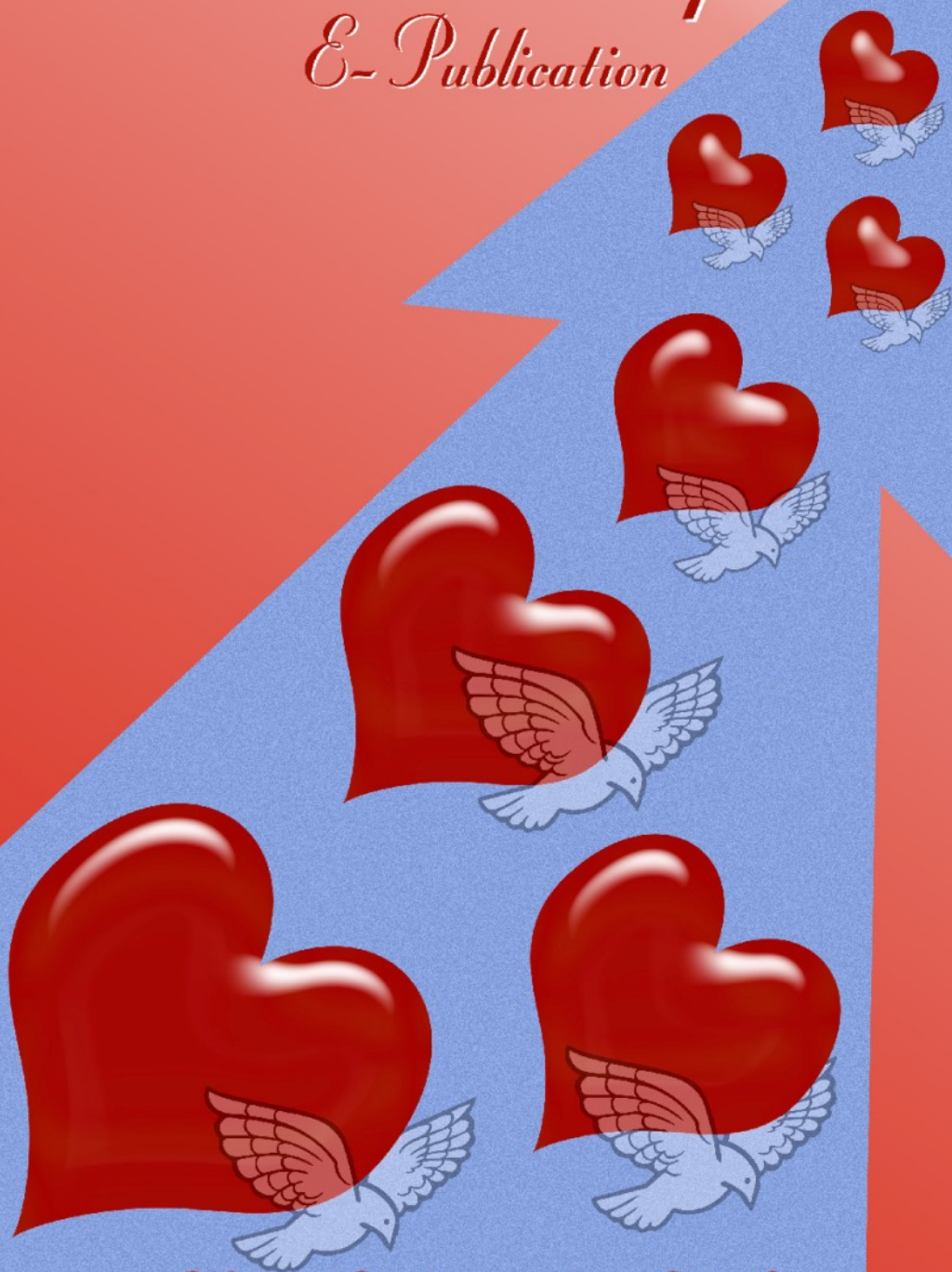


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# *“Hearts Up”*

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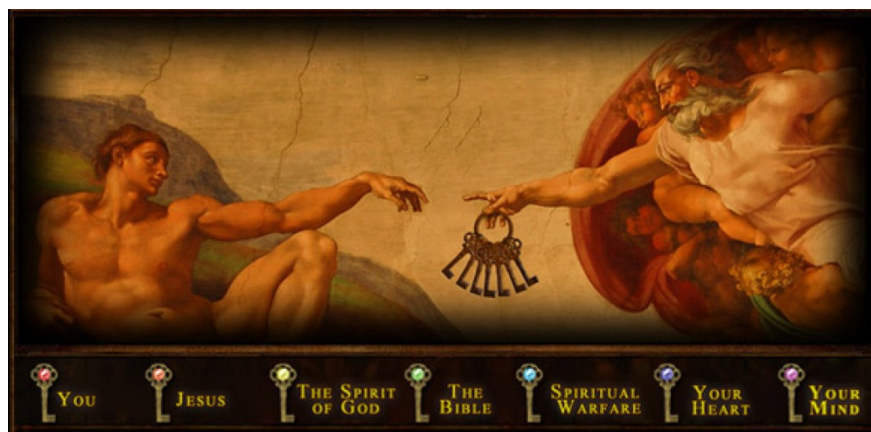
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[Statement of Faith](#)

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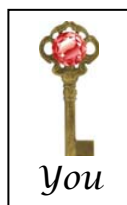
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## SPIRITUAL WARFARE COMBAT TIPS

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### Satan’s Tactic: The Spiritual Ambush



One of the Keys to understanding life is *you*. That may sound uncomfortably self-focused at first, but it simply means that when spiritual battles arise for us we will act either in the old self or the new self. It also means that when spiritual battles arise, each of us personally in Christ, will have to change our attitudes, behaviors, desires, etc. in order to overcome Satan’s attacks in *us*. That spiritual, real-life responsibility is what creates the need we have to be attentive to God’s Spirit, and to work with Him to hear and apply the counsel He gives us not only in God’s written Word, but also His Word in our hearts.

A knowledge of Scriptural “do’s and don’ts” may help us with decisions we must make during our spiritual battles. However, often times the only thing we have to tell us we are about to make a spiritual mistake (sin) is the fact that the Holy Spirit makes sure our hearts *aren’t* at peace! God designed us to be able to experience heart disturbances because they work to prompt us to hear Him, but we must focus on spiritual listening! In each trial, we have to do our part to embrace a godly kind of self-focus that all disciples must cultivate in order to respond to God’s Spirit within so as to act in the new-self more consistently. So, while “you are you” so to speak, it is not a given that we always pay attention to certain aspects of ourselves that are keys to understanding our own spiritual lives and battles (1 Peter 5:8)! That enables Satan’s ambush to be more successful.

*...often times the only thing we have to tell us we are about to make a spiritual mistake (sin) is the fact that the Holy Spirit makes sure our hearts AREN’T at peace!*

### What is the Spiritual Ambush Tactic?

Simply put, the Spiritual Ambush is Satan’s tactic that is designed...

1. To catch us off guard, to catch us unaware, to sneak in a spiritual issue even behind a relatively “normal” real-life issue,
2. To try to cause us to think that we really aren’t in a spiritual battle at all,
3. And if that doesn’t work, the Spiritual Ambush is intended to keep us deceived in terms of the *extent* of the spiritual issue we are facing, which is, of course, associated with a troubling real-life situation.



### **When does Satan Use the Spiritual Ambush Tactic?**

Satan can use this tactic in practically any situation; however, it works really well against us when any one of the following is true about us. When more than one is true, this tactic is *very* effective.

1. Satan can ambush us when we are having heated conversations with others, or when we face relatively short-fused decision-making.
2. Satan can ambush us when we are physically or intellectually fatigued.
3. Satan can ambush us when we are not strong in godly introspection skills (this is related to discipleship beyond the basics – see [March 2010](#) “Hearts Up”, *The Bible’s Bigger Pictures* featured article).
4. Satan can ambush us when we are caught up in the external experience of a situation and we aren’t paying a lot of attention to what is going on internally within us.

### **What is Satan’s goal in using the Spiritual Ambush Tactic?**

Of course Satan’s overall goal is to use a situation to drive us into making a spiritual mistake, i.e., to sin. Most of us are, no doubt, familiar with that concept. But the point of becoming more spiritually aware of the real-life aspects of Satan’s tactics is so we can become more responsible and consistent in doing our parts to recognize the associated spiritual dynamics in us during a trial. That, then, assists us in cooperating with the Spirit to overcome the challenges of transforming those spiritual dynamics. That’s the overall picture! So, what is the *specific* goal Satan seeks to accomplish in using the Spiritual Ambush tactic?

By catching us off guard Satan seeks to influence our perspectives of a situation in ways that enable him to apply his other follow-on tactics against us. Previous “Hearts Up” editions have looked at some of those tactics:

1. Flaming Arrows (Fiery Darts) tactic ([September 2009](#))
2. Illusory Victory tactic ([November 2010](#))
3. Influence Our Sense Of Identity tactic ([April 2011](#))
4. Spiritual Blindness Through “Lesser Trials” tactic ([March 2010](#))

### **How do we experience the Spiritual Ambush Tactic?**

There are a number of ways that we may experience Satan’s attack when he uses the Spiritual Ambush tactic. The following are a couple examples:

We may feel concerned because we become aware that someone is doing something we know isn’t good for them, isn’t godly, or isn’t right according to some part of God’s written Word. Satan can use his deceptions to prompt *us* to say something or to not say something. The way God would have us to respond may be different at different times, even when we are dealing with the same person. Even though saying or not saying something may be OK according to God’s written Word as a *general* rule, it may not be possible for us to follow our initial inclination with the right heart given the *particular* spiritual battle we face. (Proverbs 17:27).

Another time we may notice Satan’s Spiritual Ambush is when we feel that “surge of resistance” inside (a strong sense of passion) when someone says something we don’t like or that we disagree with. Satan can use his deceptions to prompt us to say something that we think, but without openly disagreeing. This sometimes causes difficult-to-repair confusion and disharmony in relationships. Satan can prompt us to express our own view in a politically correct way, but not a spiritually correct way. Satan can also deceive us into saying nothing (which may also be politically correct) such that we aren’t open about what we really think. The point is that the way God may have us to respond will often be different in different situations, depending on how Satan is attacking *us*. Part of our responsibility, in cooperating with God’s Spirit and not quenching Him, is to introspect and get the Spirit’s help when Satan ambushes us (Lamentations 3:40; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

Another mark of the Spiritual Ambush is when we encounter a situation in which we have to make a decision relatively quickly about something that isn’t necessarily immoral or scripturally wrong in and of itself. Such decisions could include:

- how to spend our time or energy for the day,
- changes, at some point during our day, in how we planned to spend our time or energy,
- how to respond to a person we meet, who we don’t like, or even someone or something we see on TV (remember, a troubled heart isn’t always a mark of righteousness, but simply the mark of a troubled heart that needs to transform to peace!),
- how to respond to some bad news or an undesirable turn of events,
- whether to make a certain financial decision,
- how to handle a “discussion” over strong differences of opinion among friends, family, or even other believers.

### **What are Other Ways Satan Tries to Get Us to Respond to the Spiritual Ambush Tactic?**

1. While we may recognize we are having some issue externally, when the Spiritual Ambush tactic is at work against us we will typically think the issue or problem at hand has little or no relation to *us* being attacked or deceived by Satan within *our* own hearts. This can happen whether we are facing an issue that just involves us personally, or whether someone else is involved. When we face something that just involves us, Satan gets us to see the *situation* as being the problem, not something in *us* personally. When someone else is involved in a troubling situation (no matter how big or small) Satan tends to get us to focus on how clearly we see that the *other person* is being attacked by Satan, not *us* (Matthew 7:3-5).
2. One thing about Satan’s Spiritual Ambush tactic is that if we are confronted by someone, or even if we just think about having to make the time to work through an issue spiritually, we may tend to downplay the importance of doing so. Even when our hearts may be quite troubled, Satan gets us to thinking God gave us a brain to think things through, and that that thinking is how we fight the spiritual battle within and deal with on the spot real-life issues (Psalm 26:2-3). Again, this thinking can cause us to fail to introspect and to transform.

3. The Spiritual Ambush tactic is often most effective when we are really busy, even when doing good and healthy things: taking care of the kids, being involved in lots of healthy church or social activities, working hard to provide for our families, taking some vacation time or quality time with a spouse or family, etc. When we have lots of commitments and our plates are really full, Satan is able to more easily influence us to think that God wouldn't want us to postpone let alone put aside any of those things to deal with an inner spiritual battle (Matthew 6:33)!
4. Sometimes we are doubtful as to whether an issue is really a spiritual battle (number 2 above). Or, we may be “on the fence” as to whether God would want us to set aside a commitment or two from our busy schedule and instead do some impromptu and extra spiritual work (number 3 above). These are times Satan's Spiritual Ambush tactic gives us plenty of good reasons to downplay introspection. The result is we can get the mindset that introspection and pausing to listen to God is best accomplished mainly before we go to bed or upon waking, not so much during the day (Hebrews 5:14).
5. One last example of ways Satan tries to get us to respond to his Spiritual Ambush tactic actually happens when we seek out the Spirit's guidance! Often, when we seek it during the course of our busy day, Satan can get us to hurry in discerning the Spirit's guidance such that we fail to completely transform our hearts to peace due to limited time or energy. This, in turn, causes us to fail to see the situation as the Lord would have us to, and we can overlook something important. That thing we overlook, more often than not, will be something that makes all the difference in whether our response to the trial is godly (Galatians 5:25).

### **What are Some Things We can Do to Overcome the Spiritual Ambush Tactic?**

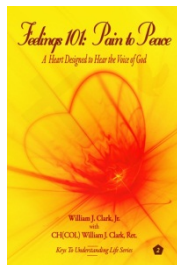
1. It is important to regulate a few key aspects of our lives.
  - a. We must regulate our Bible study in a way that ensures we are also studying our lives too (introspection). It is important to make this kind of study time. The purpose is to actively interact with the Holy Spirit in our hearts, so that He can disciple us concerning old self patterns in our lives (Romans 12:2). This prepares us to anticipate our old self patterns in spiritual battles, and it helps us to keep a more watchful and consistent spiritual eye.
  - b. Doctors say rest and how we eat are important to our health – these things are huge for our spiritual health as well. We must always be as ready as possible to exert the energy required for spiritual battles no matter how great or small (Hebrews 12:4-6).
  - c. We must regulate work, play, etc. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8). This helps us to minimize our vulnerability to Satan's stressful attacks. Keep in mind that balance does not eliminate our vulnerability to his attacks. It is impossible to be so balanced that we do not experience spiritual battles!
  - d. We must also regulate our social interactions to ensure we are being adequately challenged and fulfilled by spiritually intimate fellowship. Spiritually intimate fellowship gives us opportunities to share, study ourselves, and support one another concerning our real-life trials. Most importantly, this aspect of fellowship is to aid us in becoming better at being discipled by God's Spirit in our hearts during our trials (Hebrews 10:24-25).

2. Be on the lookout for ripe conditions for Satan’s attacks (Ephesians 6:11-13). This task is not something we do by ourselves, but by actively partnering with and submitting to the Counselor (the Holy Spirit) within. By studying how Satan attacks us using our own real-life events, we can be better prepared to fulfill our responsibilities with God to fight the battles that are ours. Being on the lookout for ripe conditions involves being highly attuned to your “key environments and key people (or players)” in your life. Key environments are simply environments in which Satan regularly attacks you. Key people or players are people who, when you are around them, Satan regularly attacks *you*. Study and pay attention to these.

*Being disciplined by God’s Spirit in real-time involves actively hearing... His counsel about two interconnected activities: spiritual transformation in trials and our real-life decision-making!*

Being disciplined by God’s Spirit in real-time involves actively hearing (with “spiritual ears”) and obeying His counsel about two interconnected activities: spiritual transformation in trials and our real-life decision-making. This continual process of being disciplined happens in response to real-life situations that have spiritual battles behind the scenes. These spiritual battles must always take first priority over *everything else*, regardless how inherently good our outward activities seem at the time. This is what ensures that our action or inaction is always as God would have it to be.

The bottom line is that we are all part of the spiritual war by virtue of God’s plan. He created mankind within the environment of spiritual war. A big part of our responsibility as disciples of Christ is to be more attuned to how our own spiritual battles arise in conjunction with the real-life events in our lives. We can eliminate some of our spiritual battles by increasing our study of the relationships between ourselves and our spiritual battles. We can eliminate some spiritual battles by getting better at recognizing the ways God would have us change. And, we can eliminate some of our spiritual battles by becoming more practical application oriented and more attuned to the Spirit’s voice in our hearts. However, we cannot eliminate our spiritual battles altogether. We can only be more prepared for spiritual battles by increasing our spiritual vision and hearing through the continual transformation of our hearts in Christ and by His Spirit Whom He gave us!



[Feelings 101: Pain to Peace](#) is a course in hearing with our “spiritual ears,” being disciplined by the Holy Spirit, studying our old self patterns, and the 7 *Spiritual Principles* of hearing the Holy Spirit’s counsel with the heart. It focuses on the “how to” of being disciplined by The Counselor and Comforter Christ gave us – the Spirit.

**Note for *Feelings 101* Readers:** For exercises on identifying the spiritual dynamics and patterns you experience with key environments and players, see *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*, pages 171 (Questions 1 and 2) and page 315 (Exercise 2).



## KEY IN-SIGHTS

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One of the most important benefits and reasons we need introspective skills is because God continually seeks to open our spiritual eyes to patterns in our lives, which reveal the effectiveness of Satan’s deceptions in us. Godly introspection is a bridge between being a student of Christ or a disciple of Christ. That bridge must be crossed continually. It requires energy, attention and a deep humble love of God.

## HEARING THE HYMNS

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### The Lily of the Valley<sup>1</sup>

Song of Solomon 2:1 uses the words “Lily of the Valley” to describe one whom Solomon loves. The author of this hymn, Charles W. Fry (1837-1882), uses those same words to describe what our Lord and Master, Jesus, means to him. This very pleasant and soothing hymn was set to music by William S. Hays (1837-1907).

**Verse 1** – I have found a friend in Jesus, He’s ev’rything to me,  
He’s the fairest of ten thousand to my soul;  
The Lily of the Valley, in Him alone I see  
All I need to cleanse and make me fully whole.  
In sorrow He’s my comfort, in trouble He’s my stay;  
He tells me ev’ry care on Him to roll;  
He’s the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star,  
He’s the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.

**Verse 2** – He all my grief has taken, and all my sorrows borne;  
In temptation He’s my strong and mighty tow’r.  
I have all for Him forsaken, and all my idols torn  
From my heart and now He keeps me by His pow’r.  
Though all the world forsake me, and Satan tempt me sore,  
Through Jesus I shall safely reach the goal;  
He’s the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star,  
He’s the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.

**Verse 3** – He will never, never leave me, nor yet forsake me here,  
While I live by faith and do His blessed will;  
A wall of fire about me, I’ve nothing now to fear,  
With His manna He my hungry soul shall fill.  
Then sweeping up to glory to see His blessed face,  
Where rivers of delight shall ever roll;  
He’s the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star,  
He’s the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.

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**Verse 1** reminds us of John 15:14-15 where Jesus says that those who follow Him are His friends. Mr. Fry recognizes that in Jesus alone can his life made completely whole, or Holy. He acknowledges that while God tests us in life’s sorrows and troubles, and He also offers us comfort for every care we have. 1 Peter 5:7 says, “...cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” Taking advantage of that aspect of our friendship with Jesus is both an opportunity (as His friends) and a responsibility (as His disciples). It requires a real-life trust in God. Trust in God requires both a spiritual and practical understanding of what He wants from us in the trial at hand. It requires an active dependence on His Holy Spirit within us, Whose counsel offers comfort during our trials.

**Verse 2** reminds us that all people, including believers in Christ, experience grief, sorrows, and temptation. Again Mr. Fry’s words speak to how he looks to Jesus to bear these and to give him strength to withstand temptation. (Ephesians 3:16 and 6:10-11 indicates it is possible to stand in God’s strength against Satan’s schemes.) God’s indwelling Holy Spirit alerts us to Satan’s attacks by disturbing our hearts. But as Mr. Fry says, we must forsake whatever “idol” is associated with Satan’s temptation during our trial. Sometimes the hard part is identifying what the idol is! This is why we must pause during trials, remember who we are in Christ, and recognize and change what God says we must in order to replace the old with the new. This is the process by which we resist the evil one’s influences and attacks within us by God’s power through the Holy Spirit made available through Christ.

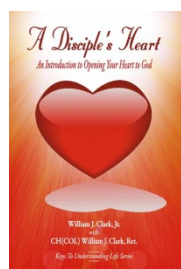
*...we must forsake  
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trial. Sometimes the  
hard part is identifying  
what the idol is!*

Mr. Fry admits to having idols in his life: those things in his heart, which he seeks after, yet which also come between him and God. What were those idols? He doesn’t say. It could have been money, prestige, a certain lifestyle he preferred, disharmony with others he didn’t agree with, desires that weren’t God’s will for him to fulfill, or even a human relationship that Satan could use to tempt him to place ahead of God. Whatever his idols were during his troubles, Mr. Fry turns his back on them and leaves them behind. That is his cooperation with the power of God’s Spirit, which

enables him to move ahead in his life as a disciple of Christ. Mr. Fry’s is an example just like the example of the Apostle Paul in Philippians Chapter 3, summarized in verses 13 and 14, “...forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Jesus told His disciples that when He left, He would send One (the Holy Spirit) to be in us. This One would seek to guide us, to teach us, to enlighten us, to convict us, to help us, and to comfort us if we would but follow His often soundless lead from within (John 14:15-27, 16:5-16). Mr. Fry admits that his friends may leave him in this world and that Satan may continually hound him with temptation. BUT, he reaffirms confidence in Jesus, Who will help him reach the goal(s) God has for his life.

Throughout this hymn we see Mr. Fry’s confidence in God’s written Word and his inner dependence upon the voice of God’s Holy Spirit to his heart. In **Verse 3** Mr. Fry alludes to God’s promise in Hebrews 13:5 where it reminds us that God said, “I will never leave you, nor will I forsake you.” Like Mr. Fry, even when we go through the fire of testing, we too can transform any of our fears by hearing and submitting to God’s will for us in that trial, and by trusting His will. God is ultimately the only One Who can satisfy the longings and desires of the heart. Mr. Fry likens the satisfaction his soul experiences to manna. Remember, manna was one of the things God provided the children of Israel as they wandered through the desert. They found fresh manna on the ground every morning; it kept them from dying of hunger. God’s provision of the Spirit is Mr. Fry’s manna!



Mr. Fry’s hymn expresses both the challenges and the wonderful perspectives of being a disciple of Christ. His hymn clearly comes from a disciple’s heart, a heart that is strong in submitting to God in order to be molded and changed by Him during trials. May we all, like the writer of this hymn, look ahead to the eternal pleasure we will have in the presence of the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star, the fairest of ten thousand, Who knows each of us. But until that day comes for us, may we all live well as His disciples today, ever aware and attentive to the spiritual battles He calls us to fight in our own inner lives.

## HEART TO HEART

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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> “The Lily of the Valley”, Charles W. Fry, (1837-1882) as quoted in *The Baptist Hymnal*, Convention Press, Nashville, TN, 1991, 189

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