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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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THE BIBLE’S BIGGER PICTURES

To Have Peace and Contentment More Consistently Requires Seeking and Hearing God’s Voice More Consistently (Part 2 of the Differences and Relationships between Peace, Pain and Distraction)

The November 2011 edition of “Hearts Up” looked at some of what it means to experience peace and contentment. As believers, we’ve all experienced the unique peace of God. We’ve all demonstrated godly contentment in some of our trials. Still, sometimes it can be difficult to experience those same things in each of our trials because we are having a tough time hearing God’s specific guidance to us. **The goal of this series of articles, then, is to examine the “why” behind some of the challenges we face in some trials, which tend to make it harder to hear God’s voice. Our prayer is by exposing some of the relationships between spiritual dynamics we experience in various trials will make it harder for Satan to use them secretly against us!**

The goal of this series of articles is not necessarily to identify the “1, 2, 3...,” so to speak, of hearing God’s voice with the heart. For that we trust you have access to solid discipleship training that goes beyond the elementary teachings of Christ (Hebrews 6:1-2). (The *Keys To Understanding Life* equivalent of that kind of training begins with *Feelings 101* – learning how to open your heart to God’s voice during trials more often.) Another of our prayers is that any knowledge or insight you gain from these articles will encourage and motivate you to be diligent in applying the Scriptural principles involved in being disciplined by God’s Spirit in trials!

In this Part 2 of the Series, we will continue by looking at how experiencing peace and contentment more consistently requires doing our parts to hear God’s voice in our hearts more consistently. This will involve looking at why it is that we sometimes experience stronger heart disturbances in some trials than in others, and whether hearing the Holy Spirit’s guidance to us in “big trials” is actually more important than hearing Him in “smaller trials.”

Relationships between Peace, Godly Contentment, Action and Inaction

Experiencing contentment during trials involves not only being content in our relationship with God through Christ, but *demonstrating* contentment in the real-life aspects of our trials. The godly contentment one may have or desire can only arise from a heart which is truly at peace with God’s will for the person during the trial at hand. Our God is a God of peace. When we are content with who we are in Him during a trial, we can rejoice because we experience the peace which passes understanding during that trial (Philippians 4:4-7).

Being content, in a godly way, with the circumstances of this trial or that one doesn’t necessarily mean that God wants us to do nothing in the trial. Rather, it comes from being certain with your heart about what is God’s specific will for you in the trial, and from being at peace with doing *whatever* He directs for you in terms of responding to the trial. Again, godly contentment can only arise from a heart that is at peace with His will for you as it pertains to the trial at hand. With that in mind, from this point on we will talk mostly in terms of experiencing *peace* in trials. Let’s agree that when we experience the true peace of God during a trial, it is only then that we can experience the proper, godly contentment with the direction God has given us.

When we face a trial, it helps to discern...

1. ...what action God is disciplining us to take with a heart that is at peace,
2. ...what actions God doesn’t want us to take, i.e., which actions Satan is driving us to take,
3. ...what inaction God says we must accept in peace,
4. ...and what inaction is contrary to what God would have us accept in peace.

Because God designed us so remarkably, sometimes we can discern these four things so quickly that it would take longer for us to verbalize or express them than it did to actually become aware of them. However, when we are having a hard time discerning those four things quickly, it is useful to start by remembering that they are among the things we need to know and seek out. God knows this too. His Spirit seeks to communicate with us about them. Even when we know these are things we must discern, the actual act of discerning them and hearing God’s guidance is still hard. Why? Well, let’s take a look at...

What’s going on when Discerning God’s Guidance is Harder?

*Because peace is of
God, as opposed to
Satan, we CANNOT
experience God’s
peace in certain
situations!*

The bigger picture the Bible shows us is that when our peace is disturbed, the Holy Spirit is speaking in our hearts *because* Satan is attacking and deceiving us (Ephesians 4:26-27). When our peace is disturbed, Satan is working to drive us NOT to do whatever God actually wants of us. Whenever a disturbance of our heart is transformed to peace, we can know we’ve heard the Holy Spirit’s message. Having said that, whether we consciously realize what part we played in submitting our will to His as part of that transformation and whether we can skillfully do the

same thing to hear Him in other trials are separate issues! Regardless, peace or lack of it functions to highlight the Holy Spirit’s attempts to correct our faulty mental errors; errors in our thinking which arise *because* Satan is deceiving us. Because peace is of God, as opposed to Satan, we CANNOT experience God’s peace in certain situations! This makes it almost impossible to hear Him with our hearts. We can’t experience peace and hear God’s will while we are...

1. ...being deceived by Satan,
2. ...in the act of sinning (being led by Satan),
3. ...not actually changing something in us to become more Christ-like,
4. ...not certain about what God would have us to do in response to a trial.

When we are not experiencing peace, then at least one of those four things is happening to us and we need to partner with God’s Spirit within to figure it out! This is why discerning God’s guidance is sometimes hard. In *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace* and in other “Hearts Up” editions we’ve discussed that the God-designed nature of peace makes it a spiritual “tool.” Properly “using” peace as “spiritual tool” starts by seeking what we must change in us to be at peace in Christ during a trial.

Some Misconceptions We Sometimes Have
When It Comes To Hearing God’s Instructive Guidance

There are certain misconceptions we sometimes have that keep us from seeking out what God wants us to change in us, so that we might be at peace. Believe it or not, the difficulty in experiencing peace more consistently actually lies in taking the first step of recognizing and admitting when we are not at peace! Satan’s deceptions against us can remain quite seamless and impossible to recognize without our active, two-way interaction with God’s Holy Spirit. But, while we may intellectually understand these concepts, our own misperceptions can impact how we go about trying to apply Scriptural concepts.

*...the difficulty in
experiencing peace more
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admitting when we are
not at peace!*

MISCONCEPTION 1: “My primary responsibility in being guided by God is to want to be guided.” Having this desire is important, but it is not the full extent of our part of actually submitting to being guided and led by God’s Spirit. We might be embracing this deceptively passive view of being guided by God’s Spirit whenever we think, “Because I’m a Christian and I love God, the Spirit is guiding me.” As a result of that limited perspective, when we recognize Satan’s attacks we usually think we recognized them because of our knowledge of God or the Scriptures. While such knowledge is definitely important, Satan can use a heavily mental approach to following God to cause us to inadvertently remove our hearts from their God-given roles. Satan can do this to us when we are more comfortable with using our minds in relationships than our hearts!

In some ways this misconception of simply desiring to be led by God dangerously minimizes our *interactive* role with the Holy Spirit. It minimizes the responsibilities we have in being disciplined by the Spirit through our hearts in order to change our minds whenever Satan is influencing them. Remember, God looks at the heart (1 Chronicles 28:9). This misconception turns the task of transformation and submission to the Lord into a mental exercise instead of a total heart, mind and soul renewal (Matthew 22:37).

The ability to nurture our part of a *proactive and intentional interaction* with God’s Spirit during trials, for the purpose of *hearing* His guidance, hinges on a deep love for God. That is demonstrated not just by saying, “I love You, Lord,” but by actually changing during a trial. A proactive and intentional relationship with Christ and His Spirit hinges on a willingness to acknowledge and face each trial, regardless how inconvenient or tough that may be. Many times we don’t want to acknowledge how annoying or unwanted some trials are *because* they are uncomfortable, time-consuming, or inconvenient to deal with, even though we know the Bible says we must. And, as a result, we sometimes underestimate or ignore certain trials. That is NOT a skillful way of resisting Satan! Peace is absent from our hearts when we ignore or underestimate certain trials. Usually we really don’t want to admit that *because* we don’t want to have to deal with them, or we believe we are too short on time/energy to deal with them!

MISCONCEPTION 2: “When we want to hear God, that intention neutralizes our old selves.”

This is flat false. When we enter in to a relationship with God, from the Father’s perspective is that we are white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). This is because He chooses to see us through the sacrifice of Christ. However, we still have free will. Once we have a relationship with God through Christ, we must exercise our free will to choose to follow Him (new self) and the guidance of His Spirit during a trial. Though we have a relationship with Christ, Satan can still tempt us, deceive us and lead us into sin (old self).*

* For more about these concepts, see “Hearts Up” editions: [March 2011](#), The Bible’s Bigger Pictures; [September 2011](#), Key Insights. You may also want to read about the hugely important grammatical context of 2 Corinthians 5:17 explained in *Feelings 101*, bottom of page 187 to 189.

Whether we will actually act in our new selves during a trial is not guaranteed through our relationship with God. The guarantee is that it is possible that we can act in the new, but only IF we actively cooperate with His Spirit within. Seeking out the guidance of the Spirit with our hearts is undesirable to our old selves, and it isn’t always easy. (This conflict between the old and new is what makes a trial a trial.) It is spiritually normal that our old selves resist. Our old selves, driven by Satan, don’t like the task of seeking out the Spirit’s voice because it is corrective and instructive, and it challenges our old self control issues. Our old selves want to be in charge of our own problem-solving and decision-making. Our old selves like the idea of *intending* to follow God, as opposed to doing the work we must do to actually submit to and follow God in a trial.

We experience the Lord’s rest and yoke as easy only when our love for God is so deep that submitting to change seems as nothing in comparison!

MISCONCEPTION 3: “God loves us, and following Christ in trials isn’t supposed to be so hard.” This is kind of true. Jesus says His yoke is easy and His burden is light, but He also indicates we must learn from Him (Matthew 11:28-30). That learning involves being disciplined, which is not easy to our old selves! We experience the Lord’s rest and yoke as easy and light only when our love for God and being disciplined by Him is so deep that the responsibility of submitting to change in a

trial seems as nothing in comparison! Hearing God’s specific guidance on how to respond to a trial isn’t hard because He made it that way, but because Satan’s deceptions and attacks make it that way.

We correctly know the Lord’s voice is a loving voice, but we may incorrectly think we will always perceive His messages as loving in the sense that they are easy to hear, or that they will always make us comfortable, as in immediately. The message of God’s still small voice always indicates a choice is at hand. That choice involves whether to listen to the Spirit through our hearts or to inadvertently obey the influences of Satan in our thinking during our trials. Having to recognize and make the godly choice is often an uncomfortable experience *because* Satan is getting our old self worked up and worried. Of course we have to think during trials, but we need to have the renewed mind that comes from a heart that is at peace. Tough trials are NOT uncomfortable and painful solely because the external situation is that way, but because *recognizing and overcoming* Satan’s attack is not what our old selves like to do.

1 John 3:18-24 indicates that whatever level of disturbance we experience in a trial is due to the presence of a faulty mental error, even though our heart disturbance also corresponds to an external situation (for more on this see *Feelings 101*, Chapters 3-4). The Holy Spirit’s guidance is about discerning and correcting that faulty mental error. If this weren’t true, it would be impossible to experience peace during trials (for more on that see *Feelings 101*, Chapter 5, the section called, “The Painful Side of God’s Relational World”). The faulty mental error is Satan’s influence, and it only constitutes sin when we act on it as if that error is truth. In other words, Satan’s influences in us lead to sin when we aren’t transformed during the trial. These are times when we inadvertently believe Satan’s lie to us in a trial.



The trouble we experience in a troubled heart is due to two conflicting things (Galatians 5:17): Satan is attacking us by driving our old nature; the Holy Spirit is seeking to communicate to us and grow our new nature. When we experience a troubled heart, then, as with Cain, the Lord’s voice is telling us how to master sin (Genesis 4:6-7). At the same time, Satan is deceiving us somehow in order to drive us into sin. From this we can conclude that part of what can make hearing God in trials hard is a lack of “hands on” discipleship training that uses our own personal trials to walk us through hearing Him during trials.

Here is one last observation about the misconception that hearing God’s guidance isn’t supposed to be hard. In order to both intentionally and consistently abide by the principles and spiritual dynamics by which God facilitates listening to His Spirit, then, in practical every day terms, we must correctly and regularly discern the differences between peace, pain and distraction as they exist in our own individual lives. Regardless how skilled we are at hearing God’s voice with the heart on a consistent basis, there are three points we must constantly remember to embrace and respect in our hearts:

1. When our hearts are disturbed, peace is absent, the Holy Spirit is trying to guide us, and Satan is deceiving us. (John 16:13; Galatians 5:13-18)
2. Once there is a disturbance in your heart, the Spirit’s loving and corrective teaching is the only path that can lead you back to God’s peace. Each believer has experienced this teaching through the heart. However, the idea is NOT to approach spiritual problem-solving by seeking to “happen” upon hearing the Spirit’s guidance and instruction. The point is to hear Him intentionally whenever you notice your heart isn’t at peace. (Galatians 5:25)

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3. Just because the Holy Spirit’s voice is often subtle (not associated with a heart disturbance that is too painful but is more mildly uncomfortable, etc.) does NOT mean His message is of little consequence or that you do not urgently need to hear what He is saying. Just because we *intend* to do good doesn’t mean that we will. We must *actually* do good. (1 Corinthians 10:11-13; Galatians 6:7-9; John 16:12-15)

MISCONCEPTION 4: “Big heart disturbances are important, little one’s aren’t as important.” Don’t extremely painful feelings and *really* strong desires indicate messages from the Spirit that are more important than subtle and barely noticeable ones? From a worldly perspective, that is true, but in spiritual terms, it is not true. Even when we consistently hear God’s guidance for our trials, sometimes the voice of the Spirit is like a sledgehammer that knocks us up side our hearts to get our attention! In other words, we are forced to deal with an awful trial because it just won’t go away and it’s too uncomfortable to ignore or distract ourselves from. In such trials our peace is quite noticeably troubled because peace has been replaced by very strong desires or feelings. At other times, when the voice of the Spirit isn’t a sledgehammer, His voice is very soft and subtle (1 Kings 19:11-13). If, unlike Elijah, we do not seek out His voice, we will not hear it and we will NOT tend to do God’s will in that trial! When we don’t hear His voice, we miss out on need-to-know guidance the Spirit offers. We will fall to Satan’s unseen deceptions, and Satan will get us to accept a substitute for the peace of Christ: false peace through distraction.

When it comes to hearing God’s guidance and trying to be content with it, we’ve looked at four misconceptions that we sometimes have or that we may sometimes inadvertently act as if are true. Those misconceptions can make it quite difficult to be content and at peace in all trials, even though God offers us His peace.

When our hearts are disturbed and peace is temporarily absent, the Holy Spirit’s teaching to us includes three overall lessons. It is vital to get these lessons quickly, *before* we sin (James 1:13-15)!

1. **Lesson 1:** Satan is attacking and influencing our perceptions and thinking!
2. **Lesson 2:** To be at peace, there is something in us we must change and embrace.
3. **Lesson 3:** How, specifically and exactly, He wants us to respond to the trial we face.

Perhaps the following may sum up the problem of recognizing when the Holy Spirit is offering us guidance on how to get back to a place of peace with godly contentment in any trial:

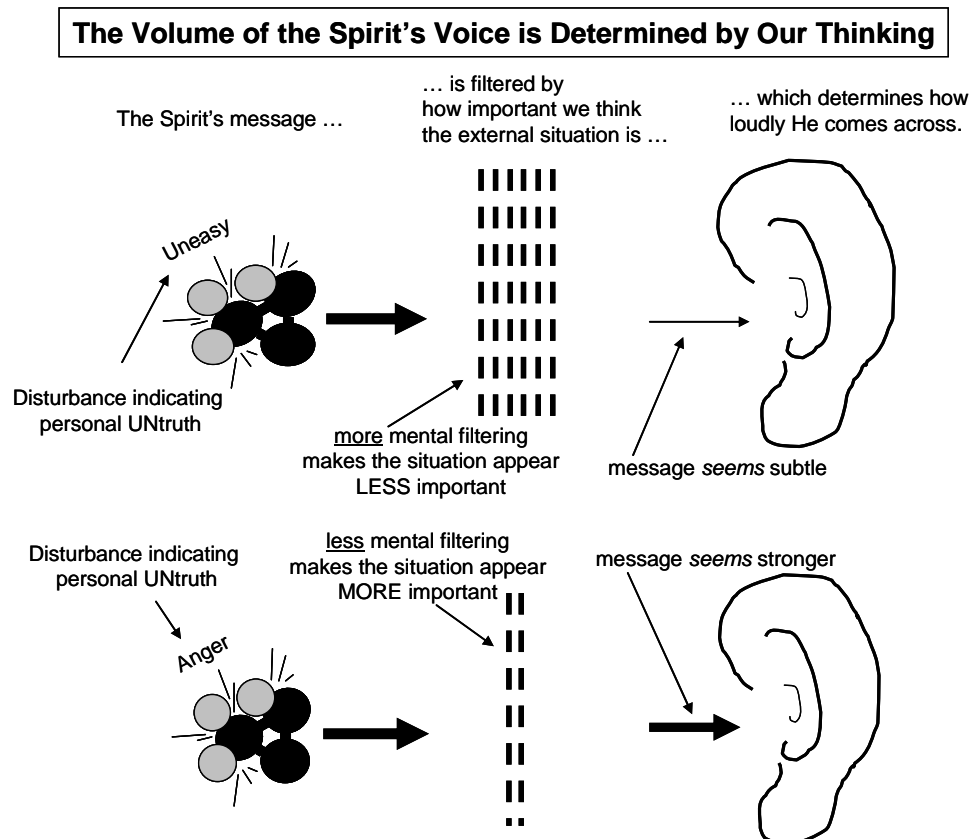
How loudly the Spirit’s voice comes across to us
is not determined so much by the Spirit per se, but by our thinking
and our perceptions of how important the external aspects of the trial are.

In short, we are talking in terms of how “loud” the “volume” of the Holy Spirit’s voice seems to us in trials. It is easy to conclude that when His voice is louder, the message behind it is probably more important. We might conclude that when He comes across loudly to us, it is because He *really* wants us to understand and do our part in getting to a place of peace and contentment. This misconception, like the others, makes it easier for Satan to cause us to overlook some trials because on the surface they may seem insignificant.

Take a moment and think about how you deal with your finances. If you only keep track of the big expenditures and not the little ones, then the little ones build up in a way that can eventually throw off all your calculations. You may think you are in a solid position for a purchase, but in truth, you may be overdrawn without knowing it! **Similarly, all our trials share spiritual connections between them. When we study our trials regularly and skillfully, we can identify *patterns* in Satan's attacks, as well as *patterns* in the Holy Spirit's guidance to us as individuals.** However, when we overlook some trials, we miss out on recognizing some connections in those patterns, which makes it easier for Satan to cause us to filter out the Spirit's voice in harder trials.

From God's perspective, His guidance is always loud, clear, and of a critical nature given that each trial we face is part of the spiritual war and Satan is attacking us. BUT, how strongly the Spirit's messages *come across to us through the ears of our hearts* is determined by how important *we initially* perceive the external situation to be! This perception is not necessarily influenced solely by our conscious thoughts and thinking processes. It is heavily influenced by our *UNconscious* thinking processes, which in turn are being influenced by Satan! But don't worry; God designed us to be able to become consciously aware of our Satan-influenced perceptions. To do that we must discover how God says we must change. To overcome the deep-seated temptations and issues each of us experiences within our deeper being, we have to connect with God. Again, we've done this in some trials. The point is to become aware of the inner workings of these "spiritual goings-on" so we can get better at consistently hearing more of His lessons more often.

With these things in mind, let's look at the diagram below in the final portion of this article.



Both the top and bottom rows in the diagram begin with a heart disturbance we experience. In the above examples, the heart disturbances are feelings.** In actuality, disturbances in our peace and contentment can also be associated with desires, attitudes or motives. Also, the term “personal UNtruth” in the diagram references a concept discussed in *Feelings 101*, Chapter 4. It is just a way of looking at Satan’s attack on one’s self in a trial: it is personal and Satan’s attack contains untruth.

** As a side note, if you want to see how this diagram ties into the discipleship training in *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*, note that the black and grey circles labeled *uneasy* and *anger* have other significances that tie into related diagrams from pages 152, 196, 229.

While the diagram shows a physical ear, there are limits to the depiction. Just because you know your heart is disturbed doesn’t mean that whatever you are thinking is automatically the result of “hearing” the Spirit correctly! The ear only means that when we notice a strong desire or emotion within our hearts, then we’ve simply noticed that the Spirit is saying *something* to us. Figuring out what that is (a much larger task than just noticing the disturbance) is accomplished when you fully hear and apply His three overall lessons we mentioned earlier (page 9). In short, the diagram simply shows why we experience certain disturbances more strongly, and recognize them more readily.

The diagram also reflects the spiritual dynamics behind why one person can experience a certain kind of trial as very overwhelming and another person can experience a very similar trial as barely uncomfortable. Neither experience is right or wrong in itself. Each experience contains disturbances in the heart; both indicate messages from the Spirit. The only difference is the filtering.

How important a person tends to interpret the external situation to be determines the volume with which the Spirit’s voice is noticed by that person’s spiritual ears. When Satan attacks, he causes us to begin the trial by unconsciously filtering, or padding, the Spirit’s voice with our ignorance of what He is saying to us about us. The dynamic in the diagram depicts “having cotton in your spiritual ears.” The “cotton” is put there by Satan in our deeper, unconscious thinking. This makes it difficult to hear God and be content. It makes it hard to understand what He is trying to tell us to change, let alone what to do in response to the trial. You can’t will Satan’s attack away, and you can’t out-think it; the heart must be transformed. This causes the mind to be renewed by God during the trial and leads to a total transformation of our being *in that trial* (1 John 3:18-24 and Romans 12:2). That is where we have to get to with Him in order to understand what He is actually saying to us in a trial.

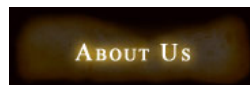
The unconscious filtering, or “spiritual cotton in the ears,” depicted in the diagram has a relationship to Satan’s attacks on your deeper sense of identity in Christ. Knowing this is useful if it motivates you to study spiritual dynamics in your life and trials. You can study patterns in Satan’s attacks on you in your trials to determine the kinds of situations during which you tend to have a greater or lesser degree of filtering going on. This is part of godly introspection and new-self awareness. By training yourself to recognize more of your heart disturbances, you can catch yourself minimizing the Spirit’s voice and pre-judging situations in terms of their spiritual importance (the importance they have in the Spirit).

BOTTOM LINE: Recognize that **EVERY** one of your trials is important *because God is speaking to you and Satan is attacking you*. When you set your mind to approach any trial as being spiritually important (because you know the Spirit has something to say to you about you), you have a better chance of opening your spiritual ears to His voice and choosing to listen to Him. Such an approach enables you to seek out how God desires to change you, as opposed to you focusing on the other guy or your initial assessment of the situation’s rightness or wrongness. This is a critical part of the practice of being led by the Spirit. It has the effect of weakening the filter Satan influences within the thinking so your heart can better tune in to God’s voice (removing the cotton from your spiritual ears). Studying patterns in your spiritual trials is a vital part of these aspects of being disciplined through the heart.

In the January 2012 “Hearts Up” edition, we will look at some examples of times we might perceive trials as “big” or “little,” as well as how we perceive others and ourselves when trials happen. We will also look at some additional diagrams that depict how we experience other spiritual dynamics associated with trials. We will look at the difference it makes in our trials when we train to quickly hear and understand what God is saying to us, versus taking a while to absorb or embrace the disciplining and training He offers us.

KEYS WEBSITE ALERTS

One of the things we wanted you to know about us is how we measure success in the *Keys* ministry, so we’ve added a new page that talks to [Keys’ Yardsticks for Success](#) (remember, you must be connected to the internet for the blue links to work). This page can be found under the *Keys* website navigation menu button shown below.



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

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Correction to November 2011 “Hearts Up” Edition

Well, it’s been a long time since we had a correction to make, but we’d need to point out an administrative correction for last month’s, November 2011, “Hearts Up” edition. We overlooked editing the month on header of the interior pages of the edition. So, if you downloaded the “Hearts Up” during the first 12 hours it was made available then the tops of the interior pages of your copy probably says it is the October 2011 edition of “Hearts Up”. That is incorrect. However, the front cover of the e-Publication does reflect the correct month, November 2011.

We ran a booth at Spirit Fest 2011 two days before the “Hearts Up” was due to go out and this crunched our timing a bit upon our return...which lead to the oversight and error. We apologize about that. We caught this error the day after we published and replaced the copy online with a corrected version of the November edition.

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 in 2012. As it is, any gift that is given is a “true gift” in the sense that it is not tax deductible right now.

At this time, donations or gifts to *Keys To Understanding Life* may be made out to: William J. Clark.

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