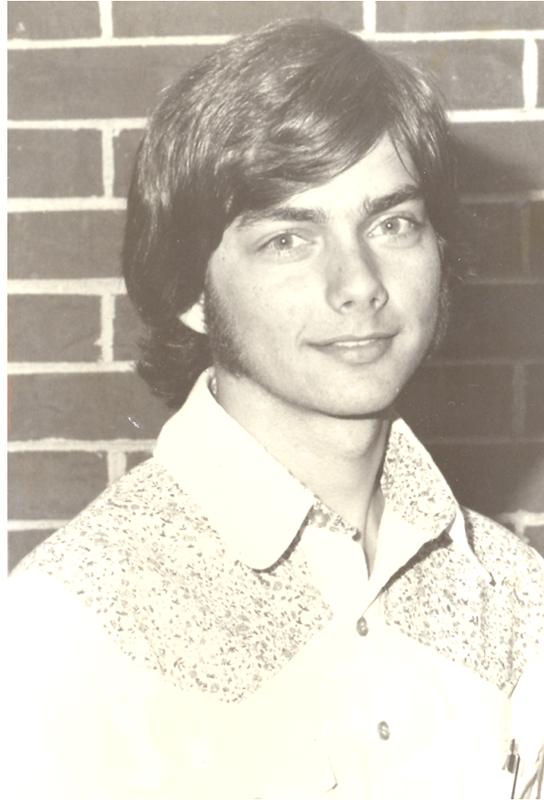


D I A R Y E N T R I E S

December 1975 - April 1976

DIARY OF AN INTROVERT



WITH ADVICE FOR MY CHILDREN

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November 2008

Picture taken in the Fall of 1976

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Prologue

I recently rediscovered my diary entries from December 1975 through April 1976. Over the years I have seen these notes from time to time—usually when we were packing up for Home Ministry Assignment or getting ready to go back to Latin America. I never looked at them much, but held onto them thinking that someday they might be useful to my children—maybe especially to the introverted ones. Thirty-three years later, the time has come. I am putting this in electronic format to preserve it for my children—and maybe for their children. If anyone else is able to benefit from it, I will be glad.

These diary entries were written when I was a senior at Covenant College. So I would have been 21. The year before that—my junior year—the Lord had brought me to a deeper understanding of the gospel. I was a child of the covenant and the son of a pastor. My mom told me that I made a profession of faith when I was three. I don't remember that, but I do remember growing in my understanding of the Lord during my childhood and teen years. I remember "accepting" the Lord on a number of different occasions. As I look back, I interpret these events as the Lord bringing me to a greater level of understanding and faith. I never had a time of rebellion, and always took my faith very seriously. But during my junior year of college, the Lord brought me forward again—a very significant step forward.

He did it in part by pulling the rug out from under me. Going forward sometimes feels like going backwards. He revealed to me a number of things that were interfering with my continued growth in him.

For example, the young lady I liked all through college didn't seem to have much interest in me—at least not as much as I hoped for. She was cordial and sometimes showed more interest than at other times. She accepted my invitation to Covenant's spring banquet. But it was during the beginning of my junior year that she seemed to distance herself from me. I was crushed. The Lord used that to help me see that in practice my sense of identity and worth were more tied to her and what she thought of me than to Christ.¹

Her rejection discouraged me so much that I found myself unable to focus on my studies—which I had always taken very seriously. Let me give you an idea of just how seriously I took my academic endeavors. The academic part of my life took at least 60 hours a week. That's about three hours of study for every hour of class—more than the expected ideal of two hours per hour of class. But now my good grades began falling apart. I failed a test in one of my major areas and as a result I was further crushed. In this area of my life, things were spiraling downwards. But the Lord used this experience to show me that my sense of worth was for all practical purposes tied to getting good grades more than to Christ.

The only other activity that took a significant part of my time was playing soccer.² I was on the soccer team, but not on the first string. I always thought I could do better than the coach gave me credit for, and that if he would believe in me—give me a chance instead of always playing his favorites that he had recruited—that I could do very well. I struggled with how to play soccer for God's glory as opposed to playing for my own glory. During my junior year I broke my collarbone during soccer practice, so that put me out for the entire season. The Lord used this experience to show me that my sense of identity and worth were more tied to doing well at soccer than to him.

¹ Five years later the Lord gave me a different young lady—the one I had been looking for without realizing it.

² Except for Sunday activities. During the last three years of my college experience I refused to study on Sunday.

This falling-on-my-face experience gradually lead me to a deeper understanding of the gospel. During my senior year I was still trying to think it all through and work out some of the immediate implications.³ During my junior and senior years of college I regularly spent a couple of hours a day in prayer and meditation on the Bible. The notes I'm going to share with you are part of that diary.⁴ They only hint at the experiences I've mentioned above, but they are really full of them. You will notice they are also full of references to Scripture and my interaction with them.

During this time I wrote some songs to express my spiritual struggle. Most of the words are taken from portions of Scripture that were particularly meaningful to me at the time. Here is one that shows the depth and despair of my feelings.

In restlessness I groan
My soul distressed within
Oh that I had the wings of a dove
I'd fly away and rest
Far, far away
Wander far away
Live in a desert place

Here's another asking the Lord how long before he would answer me:

Lord, how long?
Lord, how long must I wait?
I am weak and weary
And I want you to be near me
And I know you now hear me
But Lord, Oh Lord, how long?

The next one expresses encouragement to trust. I sang it to the young lady mentioned above on the overlook at Covenant. She said it was nice and that was about it. So that forced me to really take the words seriously. The song goes like this:

Verse 1

Wait on the Lord!
Be courageous too.
Then he will strengthen your heart.
Before him be still,
Give in to his will.
He knows what's best before you start.

Refrain

Whom do I have, Lord, in heaven but you?
Who on the earth can be likened to you?
And even though my flesh and my heart shall fail me—
Lord, you are all the strength I need.

³ And I continue to work out the implications!

⁴ These five months are all I can find.

Verse 2

Be not afraid!
You belong to me.
I have called you by name.
So you will never
Need to be alone
When you go through water or flame.

Refrain

Whom do I have, Lord, in heaven but you?
Who on the earth can be likened to you?
And even though my flesh and my heart shall fail me—
Lord, you are all the strength I need.

The next one expresses joy in the Lord:

Oh Lord, you've made me taste and see
That you alone are good.
I love you, Lord, for loving me:
You bought me with your blood.

My soul is thirsting, Lord, for you:
One taste has made me see
The live you give is far beyond
My plans and all my dreams.

I long to see the day when all
The saints of God will gaze
Upon the beauty of my Lord
And give him all the praise.

The following diary entries are those of an introvert. Back then I didn't even know what an introvert was. I have come to see that introversion is not the bad word our society makes it out to be. Since extraversion is the cultural norm, people in our country tend to see the good things about extraversion and the bad things about introversion. I now see introversion as a gift. But like any gift, we can easily make an idol out of it—that is depend on its strengths more than on Christ instead of using it to be a blessing to others. These entries are not about my journey from introversion to extraversion. Rather, they show the struggles of an introvert to understand how to avoid being enslaved by that gift, and how to use it for God's glory by a clearer understanding of the gospel and its implications. I remember singing to myself often the words "Set my spirit free to worship Thee!" I was a believer, but I knew there was more that I was missing.

These diaries are unedited except for a few misspellings that I corrected. Sometimes you see my normal Germanic writing style⁵ while other times you see bursts of emotion usually indicated by run-on sentences with lots of commas and semi-colons. I think there are three main sections:

⁵ My friend Dave Strumbeck—an accomplished linguist—told me that my writing style is Germanic. You can ask him what he meant by it if you are interested.

1. Struggling to work out the implications of the gospel for my life
12-3-75 through 2-29-76 and also 3-4-76 3-15-76 and 3-18-76
2. An explanation of where I had been a year ago and how things had changed
3-1-76
3. Struggling to understand the structure of Christian thought versus non-Christian thought in light of my deeper understanding of the gospel.⁶

Beginning at 3-16-76 and generally continuing through the end

May my experience shared here be a blessing to those who read it, and may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who over the years has increasingly been my hero, be exalted.

Gary T. Waldecker
November 2008

⁶ During the last semester of my senior year I was focusing on my Senior Integration Paper—which I did on Van Til. One of my struggles during this time was the integration of my spiritual insights with my philosophical ones. I wanted to know the philosophical structure of unbelief versus the philosophical structure of belief. To me it wasn't simply an academic exercise. I wanted to understand my spiritual struggle.

Diary Entries

12-3-75

Rejoice in your justification, and you will grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will die more and more to sin and live more and more unto righteousness.

Rejoice in your sanctification (apart from justification) and you will end up trying to be justified by works. You will either suppress the truth of your sinfulness and become a blatant hypocrite, or you will become depressed in the face of your inability to overcome sin.

12-4-75

Some little place, Lord, is what I fervently desire, if there I could see your face and know the light of your smile; if there I could glorify you with my whole being, and know the love of Christ which passes understanding. I long to know your love, Lord. Your love to me is better than life with all its fame and wealth and greatness. What a glorious day when I will see you face to face and understand more fully your love for me. I have not loved you as I ought; nor loved your people fervently from the heart.

I will praise the Lord with all of my heart; he causes his servants to have confidence in him; he causes them to give up their pride; he breaks their hearts with his love; he is the lifter up of my head which was bowed down in self pity; which he caused to be bowed down in humility because of my sinfulness; which he lifted up by his gracious love; and he set my feet on a rock, and put a new song in my heart, even praise to my God.

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. Forgive me for forgetting it so often.

12-7-75

I would point to you, Lord, in my every thought, word, and action. The implications of my union with you in your death and resurrection are immense. Help me, Lord, to begin to realize some of them, because the good that I would I do not. Cause me by your grace to bow before you continually, confessing my sin and repenting of it, offering you the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving every moment, in every thing, being so distrustful of myself that my first thought in every situation is to look to you, acknowledging my utter dependence—for apart from you I can do nothing, and without faith it is impossible to please God, and whatever is not of faith is sin, and I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Help me, Lord, to be so broken by your gracious love, that I would always flee to you for strength. You are all the strength I need. Forgive me for courting the “strength” of Egypt, because from thence you brought me out of the house of bondage.

12-9-75

Job searched his heart honestly, and could find no specific sins in his life which might be the cause of his affliction. And in the end, God said that Job spoke the truth, and Job wasn't commanded to offer a sacrifice for himself, as he was for his friends, who had not spoken the truth. If I honestly search my heart (but isn't it possible to be deceived—temporarily?) and find no specific sins which I have not confessed and repented of, then there is no need for morbid introspection in the face of affliction. But there is a need to exercise faith and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and to offer up every activity as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the one who is working in me both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

This is what Paul means, I think, when he says he always exerts himself to maintain a clear conscience. I must not become depressed in the face of affliction, after I have honestly searched my heart and confessed my sin. The other extreme is exhibited by those who “shipwrecked their faith by rejecting their conscience” (1 Tim. 1:5, 18, 19). They suppress the truth of their sinfulness by not listening to the accusation of their conscience. They didn't honestly search their hearts.

(But isn't it possible so to suppress sin that one prays to God and thinks he honestly searches his heart? Yes, I'll grant it to be very possible. Then can I ever really know whether I have honestly searched my heart? Dr. S.⁷ says God doesn't bring *judgment* on his children without making known to them their offense. So if my heart does not condemn me, another possible explanation of the affliction is that God, exercising his Fatherhood [Hebrews 11], is working on me for the exposure and removal of one of my many deeply inbred, culturally conditioned, sinful habits, because I am his son and he would have me enjoy the peaceable fruit of righteousness. To what extent then, am I to seek to find out what this sinful habit is that is [or may be] causing my affliction and depression because of loss of fellowship with God?

Possibly it is the case that after examining my heart *as honestly as I know how*, and finding no specific sin, I should stop digging—which seems to lead only to depression—and start praising. He will reveal the sinful habit in his time: ...because sometimes he afflicts a man just because that man is righteous—to demonstrate and strengthen his faith. We can't assume that affliction is always due to sin.)

12-13-75

To have a heart that is continually broken, not to think that once in a while is enough to last a while. Not to think that when the Lord blesses me with his presence⁸ that now I'll just naturally love people and keep from sin. Not to go to the other extreme of morbid introspection. To walk in faith is not within the power of man, I confess

⁷ A reference to Dr. John W. Sanderson, who had a great impact in my life. He taught philosophy at Covenant College while I was there, and Philosophy was one of my majors. The same year I went to Covenant Seminary, he also moved there. So I also had the benefit of his theology classes.

⁸ Of course the Lord is always with his people. I'm not sure but I suspect I meant a special sense of his presence, as in the Lord's Supper or some extraordinary experience.

it—but how easy it is not to act on that belief. Apart from Christ I can do nothing—that is, the good that I would I do not. Yet it is my responsibility (100%) to work out my salvation. But I must do it in fear and trembling, believing that it is God who is working (100%) in me both to will and to do of his good pleasure. That is, I will never be able to do the good that I would if I think there is anything good in me, if I don't recognize my utter helplessness to do anything good in myself. If I know that in myself I am helpless, then I have motivation and ability to do the good that I would, because I also know that it is God who is working in me to will and to do. If I know that I am weak, then I am strong, because the power of Christ abides upon me.

One cannot simply decide that he is now going to recognize his helplessness before God in order that the power of Christ may abide upon him, and then (rightly) suppose after convincing himself of his helplessness that he is walking in the Spirit. It is presumption. God cannot be manipulated. Neither is it right for one to begin a morbid introspection if psychologically he cannot convince himself of his helplessness. That is unbelief and leads to depression and self-pity.

12-14-75

How could I do anything for the glory of God unless I know how helpless I am in myself to produce anything but iniquity unto iniquity? When I come to the end of my rope, and I know—and really believe—that within me, that is within my flesh, there dwells nothing good, then I am able to say, “Not to me, O Lord; Not to me, but to Thy name give glory, because of thy loving kindness and Thy truth. “

12-19-75

I have nothing to defend since I know I am a sinner and that apart from God's gracious working in me I am able to produce nothing but iniquity unto iniquity. I have nothing to prove, since I know that God in Christ has lifted me out of the pit and the miry clay, setting my feet upon a rock, pronouncing me just in his sight, and loving me with his covenant love, and helping me to know that even though my flesh and my heart shall fail me, he is all the strength I need and my portion forever. Since, then, I have nothing either to defend or to prove, I am enabled to begin learning to fulfill my only obligation to my brothers, which is to love them. I have no reason to feel threatened and become defensive when I am abased. I have no reason to feel superior and become haughty when I am made to abound. My chief concern should not be with my own interests, but to please God. And since he loves me, I should love even the most obnoxious person. And since he has forgiven me, I should forgive those who treat me the worst. And since God provides sunshine and rain for those in rebellion against him, in order to lead them to repentance, I should have a burning desire to tell them of the gospel of Jesus Christ—not to “set them straight” as if I were righteous in myself, but recognizing the terribleness of the sin from which I have been and am continually being delivered, desiring that they, too, might be restored by God's grace to fellowship with Him from sin's bondage.

12-27-75

To the extent that I think there is something good in me apart from Christ I am unable to accept praise and likewise I am unable to love those who tend to be dependent on me or try to make me to like them. To the extent that I think (even subconsciously) there is something good in me apart from Christ, I want their praise in order to reinforce my belief.

At the same time, however, I am unable openly and freely to accept their praise without feeling and appearing to be proud. The result is that I do not act toward them in love.

12-28-75

How much greater is the new covenant than the old! The outpouring of the Spirit has been realized in the hearts of believers. The law has been written on our hearts. And by his Spirit in virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, God is working in us the righteousness of the law.

12-29-75

Worldly sorrow results from a frustrated ego; godly sorrow repents of rebellion against a holy God.

Worldly sorrow often reveals itself in self-pity. It grows out of a faulty basis for security and joy. Happiness is not found in success—even success in the Lord's work, if we lean upon such success for security. Leaning upon such a faulty basis blinds us, leading to selfishness, callousness, and despair. God does not always work the way we want him to. Our source of joy must be God himself, not the ways he works.

Worldly sorrow also reveals itself in murmuring. In unbelief we think God doesn't love us any more. The Israelites murmured on the basis of a false understanding of their election. God elected them to save them from bondage, not to let them continue in it.

Further, we should not rejoice in the blessing of God more than in God himself: "Don't be rejoicing that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Joy is "in the Holy Spirit" and is produced by faith. It is not a pious front, but a positive feeling⁹ that God's will is being done. It is delighting in his will.

Godly sorrow produces joy. "There is a kind of direct proportion between sorrow for sin and joy in the Holy Spirit. Those who feel the worst about their sins feel the happiest about forgiveness."¹⁰

⁹ But sometimes not even the feeling is there. Just a deep-down belief –however weak—that God is good and powerful and faithful.

¹⁰ I think this quote—along with the following quotes in this entry—is from John Sanderson's *Fruit of the Spirit* as indicated by the entry later on.

God's chastening is never meant to be a happy experience, but it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it. "If we only knew how bad we are, we would welcome chastening because this is god's way of getting rid of sin and its habits. But chastening is resented because we can't believe that we have done anything worthy of it"—we can't believe we are that bad.

God hates ungodly sorrow—remember that joy is not based on circumstances. Ungodly sorrow is practical atheism "for it ignores God and his attributes. If I believe that God is wise, then this circumstance will have a beneficial result for me." Rejoice. (from *The Fruit of the Spirit* by J. W. Sanderson.)

Peace with God causes us to be confident, because we are assured that god is wholly on our side. It causes us to be carefree in the best sense of the term.

"Having received the promise of good things from God, he can rejoice in the good which comes to another; if the peace of God is humbling hi, then he sees the folly of self-assertiveness."¹¹

We must consciously trust the Lord. We must believe the Scriptures, when they tell of forgiveness. We are assured of our salvation when God has given us a love of the brethren. If our conscience accuses us, we should believe in God's forgiveness.

We must pray and be thankful. "If we approach God in a humble state of mind, rejoicing in his past blessings, and lay specific petitions before him, we induce thereby a certain state of well-being and calmness.

Saints manipulate people by bestowing honors, gifts, and rewards. Prayer is the Christian method for gaining our ends. When we learn to pray we won't be so prone to manipulate. Humility produces kindness.

When we withdraw from others (withhold our help from them on the false-modesty principle that we are no good"¹² we harm the body of Christ. It is true that in ourselves we are worthless, but god has made us in Christ worthwhile, his inheritance. The greater our love for God, the greater will be our involvement for kindness among others. We are needed by our fellows—particularly in the body of Christ, also in the world.

1-4-76

Unbelief is saying to God that I would rather trust myself and bring glory to myself and have the praise of men than humble myself before him, acknowledging that I am his creature, and bring glory to him, and receive praise from Him. And since Jesus Christ has been revealed, unbelief is more heinous, it would seem, since Jesus Christ

¹¹ I assume this quote is also from *The Fruit of the Spirit*.

¹² I assume this quote is also from *The Fruit of the Spirit*. This is another way of saying that faith in Christ generally leads to a state of well-being.

is the ultimate revelation of the glory of God, and since in him, forgiveness is offered as a gift to man, to atone for man's sin of unbelief.

But men continue in their unbelief, rejecting even this ultimate revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. As a result they are locked into a dialectic of pride and despair. Man despairs because he feels guilty (because he *is* guilty). His own conscience accuses him (Rom 2:14-15). In order to avoid this condemnation and feeling of guilt for rebelling against God, who reveals himself in all of creation, including man himself, man suppresses the truth and he builds a wall of self-righteousness around him. Thus he cannot avoid pride—it is his only defense against the despair of guilt. But he cannot avoid despair, either. He cannot completely suppress the truth. And the more he tries to build a self-righteous wall around himself, the more he finds himself estranged from reality because the world was not made to glorify him.

Finding himself increasingly estranged from reality, he begins to despair. Or else he increases his suppression and so becomes further estranged from reality. Thus he cannot avoid either despair or pride, although these are contradictory. It seems that the Christian falls back into this trap and acts *as if* he were under the power of the dialectic when in unbelief he quenches the Spirit. He doesn't believe that the Lord is all glorious, so he gives glory to himself instead. He doesn't believe God in Christ freely forgives, so he feels guilty and he tries to atone for his own sin.

This renders him unable to love. If someone doesn't love him he tries to manipulate that person to love him in order to bring glory to himself. If someone does give him the attention he wants, he doesn't love them, either. He figures they are just trying to gain his favor, and so, that they are just as (proud and) *insecure* as he is. So if people don't "bow down before him," he writes them off as proud. And if they do "bow down before him," he writes them off as insecure unworthy of love. Because he feels guilty, he seeks for a mediator between him and God, but he doesn't seek it in Jesus Christ. Often he looks for someone who is neither proud nor insecure and depends upon that person for worth and even for salvation. If after a while he finds out that he was deceived by that person, and finds out they are just as bad off as he is, he rejects them. Sometimes, if individual people don't work, he uses an abstraction. This is the dialectic a Christian puts himself into when through unbelief he quenches the Spirit. He is delivered from it, and its consequent pride and inability to love, only by humbling himself before God, believing that he is the all-glorious one to whom all glory is due, that in Christ he offers forgiveness for the sin of unbelief so that Christ is the only mediator between God and man. Only then is he free to love, even people who are proud and insecure. He can accept them freely because although he knows he is no better than they, yet God has accepted him freely in Christ just the way he is—a sinner. And if God has accepted him, he has nothing to prove or defend. He is no longer ego-centered, but seeks to give God the glory, and to serve his brothers through love, and to tell the lost about the gospel of Christ.

1-5-76

Even if you don't *feel* a sense of love toward someone, *act* out of *belief* and the feeling will come.

Believe that you are dead to sin, and alive to God. That you are all unrighteousness, that he loves you.¹³

1-8-76

To God be the glory—
Great things he has done:
So loved he the world
That he gave us his Son
Who yielded his life
An atonement for sin
And opened the life gate
That we may go in.
Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice.
Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice.
O come to the Father
Through Jesus the Son
And give him the glory--
Great things he has done.

O Lord, forgive me for not giving you the glory. Father, forgive me for wanting to use your grace so that I might try to justify myself. Let me flee to Jesus. Forgive me for trying to store up manna for myself so that I would be strong without you. Please let me be willing to receive manna from your hands continually, every moment trusting you for it.

The super abounding grace of God! Who can know its depths? Who can begin to fathom the good things the Lord has in store for those who love him? O Father, forgive me for my unbelief. Keep me from it. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1-14-76

By his glorious grace which is sovereign, he breaks down pride. He says to me, "There is nothing at all you can do to please Me."¹⁴ All your works are iniquity." Often I find it hard to believe in my heart, though I convince myself that I believe it. Then he drives me to believe it, often by means of trials. And when he reveals to me some-

¹³ This entry also included a long quote from the book *None of these Diseases*, which I omitted from this document.

¹⁴ That is, on your own, apart from Christ.

thing of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ, he breaks my heart before him and causes me to put my hope in him.

1-15-76

When you¹⁵ try to do penance for your sins—in whatever way—or when you suppress your sins, you aren't glorying in the death of Jesus Christ, but you are glorying in yourself. To glory in the death of Jesus Christ is to cease trusting self as if there were something good in you worth proving or defending, and to trust in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, by whom God freely offers forgiveness, and to glory therefore in your own weakness, because that is how God made you—to be dependent upon him. Do not despise the cross by trying to do penance for your sins to ease your guilt.

1-16-76

Forgive me again, Father, for not being content to fill a little place; for assuming that I know what is best for me; for equating the greatness of the kingdom of God with the greatness of the world; for glorying in my "knowledge and spirituality," instead of in the death of Christ my God and in my own weakness.

1-17-76

Yes! It's true! Your mercies *are* new every morning. They really are. It's not just a "comforting saying" that seldom touches reality.

In my unbelief I take his mercies for granted, assuming they are the result of chance or of my own natural abilities, and wisdom and righteousness.

Bow before him. Repent and burn with zeal. Be humbled by his mercies; be driven to love and obedience, rather than to pride and selfishness and disobedience. Believe that you really are as helpless and sinful and undeserving as he says. Believe that apart from him you can do nothing. You "know" it. Believe it and act on that belief. Believe that he is as great as he says he is. He is the all-glorious creator and Sustainer of the universe, and the Redeemer of his people. He it is who sends sunshine and rain to undeserving sinners who actually deserve his wrath. He is it who sent his Son to die for some of those ungodly people, to give them life, showing in a supreme way his glorious grace. He it is who set his love upon me—a hell-deserving sinner—and rescued me from the jaws of sin and death by the death of Jesus Christ. He it is who promised that nothing shall separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus; that he will not hold back anything good from me. That everything that happens is right and leads to my sanctification. O do not in unbelief exalt yourself upon God's grace or become despairing under affliction, thinking it is the result of chance. Believe that his mercies are new every morning and humble yourself before him and praise him for his super abounding glorious grace. Believe that you are utterly helpless and undeserving and believe that he is omnipotent and gracious. Then you will know that his mercies are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness.

¹⁵ When I say "you" here and in other places, I'm talking to myself.

Everything is of the Lord's mercy. It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. Great is Thy faithfulness.

1-18-76

When Christ commands me to love others he really means it: in every situation and all the time. He wants me to lay down my life all the time. You know it, but can you believe it? O Father, I'm so full of unbelief and the consequent pride and selfishness that I can't love and I don't even know how. Too often a smile is repressed because it makes me feel hypocritical, an evidence of my pride and my unbelief that I'm as sinful and helpless as you say I am, and that your grace is as great as you say it is. Father, forgive me my unbelief. I believe, help my unbelief. Thank you that you've promised never to forsake me. Thank you that your discipline yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it. Help me to lay down my life on behalf of the brothers, even as Christ laid down his life on my behalf. Forgive me for my self-righteous, subtle condemnations. Help me to consider others better than myself. Forgive me for not really believing you mean it. If you should keep in mind our iniquities, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you in order that you may be revered. Through Jesus Christ.

1-21-76

Peace with God! I have peace with God through the death of his Son! He really loves me! Father, forgive me for not believing it. Forgive me for trying to do penance for my sins when I have peace with God already. Forgive me for despising the cross of Jesus Christ deep in my heart. Forgive me for not glorying in the death of Christ my God, and for trying to atone for my own sin—and for all the pride and selfishness that came along with unbelief: for trying to do penance by attempting to be humble in my own strength, for fearing pride so much (that is, appearing proud in front of people) that I withdrew from doing anything publicly or using any of my talents, for being afraid and insecure and for blowing it when forced to use my talents. Father, I confess that poison is on my tongue—help me to believe it and to cling to the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by whose death I have been reconciled to God.

You do know how to give your Holy Spirit to those who ask! You melt my heart of unbelief by your gracious love. If I have peace with God—and I do—Oh my sin! O forgive me Father my unbelief. Forgive me for grieving your Holy Spirit. How can I sin when I know and believe that I have peace with God, that he really loves me, and he shows it by sending his only son to die for me, an ungodly, selfish, proud, rebellious, unthankful sinner, deserving the just wrath of God. Help me, Father, to rejoice in your glory and cause your love to be shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost.

I have peace with God! Even when I sin he loves me, and he causes me to give it up, and he will not let me go. O my unbelief! Please forgive me Father for not believing that you love me.

1-27-76

O Father, please forgive me for my unbelief again. For not really believing that you love me and that you have not held back and you will not hold back one good thing from me. Every single thing that happens works for my good, that I might be conformed to the image of your Son Jesus Christ. Forgive me for not giving you the praise and the glory in everything, for not seeing your gracious hand in *everything*.

Since your gracious hand is in everything, how can I help but praise you continually, except for my unbelief. Help my unbelief. Grant that I might see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, as I have seen, that I might fall at his feet, even as Isaiah and John, and hear his words of grace, “Do not fear...”

And Father, please forgive my selfish motive for wanting to know you. It creeps in so subtly before I know it. Give me pure motives, I pray. Let me now exalt myself upon your mercies—and everything is of your mercy—it is of your mercy that I am not consumed—but be humbled by them recognizing my own unworthiness, and your glorious grace. Grant me eyes of the heart to see it and believe. Forgive me for not living joyfully before you, for not glorying in the death of Christ my God—every moment.

2-12-76

“But they don’t show regard for the deeds of the Lord, and they works of his hands they do not see. Therefore my people go into captivity for lack of knowledge” (Isa. 5:12-13a).

That I might see that hand of the Lord in everything, believing that whatever he ordains is right and for my good; that I might not attribute anything to an ultimate chance or to my own “goodness;” that in seeing and believing I might live joyfully before my heavenly Father, receiving from his hands moment by moment the manna which he is pleased to give me, and not trying to store up a pile of my own to enhance my supposed goodness, or to defend it against the supposed ever-impinging, threatening ultimate chance, which supposedly is uncontrollable or at least very hard to control.

2-29-76

Sinful and rotten—infinately proud and selfish—to the very core of my being, I am; and it penetrates my every thought and my every action. How much more sinful can a person get than to seek the praise of men by means of God’s grace!

But you, Lord Jesus, you keep on loving me still! Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress. Mid flaming worlds in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head.

If you should keep in mind our iniquities, who could stand, but there is forgiveness with you, in order that you may be revered. Open my lips and my mouth will praise you, because your loving kindness is better than life. How could you love me so, Lord Jesus? And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior’s blood? Died he for

me who caused his pain? For me who him to death pursued? Amazing love! How can it be? That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me! No condemnation now I dread. Bold I approach the eternal throne. Who aught to my charge should lay? O Father, grant me faith to believe that what you say is true. I believe it—help my unbelief. My sin has gone over my head, and I am undone. Poison is on my tongue and I am all unrighteousness. I plead for child-like faith, to walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. I am your child, Father. You have called me by your name and by my name; you have loved me with an everlasting love; you have blessed me with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, and in Christ you have seated me in the heavenlies. Who can fathom the wisdom, the knowledge, the love of God? You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power.

3-1-76

Last year about this time, when my elder told me that he had enough sins to deal with already and that he didn't need to keep searching, I confess that I thought he was one of those who didn't take his Christianity seriously enough. I came to see, however, that I was wrong, both in my ideas about him, and in my ideas about myself. I felt myself at a distance from God, and I was constantly searching, introspecting, trying to find that one sin that was destroying my fellowship with God—pleading with him to reveal it to me, that I might confess it and repent, and have the joy of the Lord. I soon came to understand, however, (although in a somewhat vague way) that it was my very unwillingness to admit that I was sinful that destroyed my joy. Not that I didn't count myself a sinner. I surely knew what the Bible said in Romans 3, and I knew it applied to me. But I was unconsciously seeking some sort of perfection from the Lord. Of course, I would have denied any such thing, knowing what Romans 7:25 says. But deep in my heart, what I was really looking for was enough grace to put me on my own two feet so that I wouldn't need grace anymore—and I would have denied that, too. If I were to be a Spirit-filled person, I would need to get rid of all the foolish things which showed the fear and pride and lack of integration in my personality. I didn't know that if I followed my ideas of sanctification to their logical conclusion, I would have discovered that I, like Adam, was trying to be God, instead of his dependent creature. Thanks be to God for his infinite love! He did now allow me to establish myself apart from him in my attempt to be a good, sincere Christian. What I needed was a clearer understanding of justification.

Oh, I knew very well what justification was. I could go into great detail in explaining it and could thank God for freeing me from the curse of the Law and bondage to sin and for declaring me righteous in his sight. And I sincerely believed it. I wasn't consciously a hypocrite with regard to this belief.

But this knowledge wasn't made very explicit and operative in my own life. I was sort of under the vague impression that when I was trusting the Lord and walking in the Spirit, my actions were sinless or perfect. So I kept seeking for that sin which was keeping me from fellowship with God. It worked itself out like this:

When things went well for me, or when I could manipulate people to praise me or recognize my worth, I ended up sooner or later feeling guilty because of my pride which swelled up within me. In order to suppress the feeling of guilt I would often withdraw within myself. Sometimes it led me to flub up on things that I could really do pretty well.¹⁶ And I really tried to do them well, but there was some sort of subconscious drive toward failure within me. If I did well, I would feel guilty, and I'd rather fail than feel guilty. Most often I would just stop trying to do these things altogether. But I found that I had to give up more and more things as I saw my pride in doing them and I became increasingly withdrawn. I was just about afraid to do or say anything for fear of showing my pride and feeling guilty. As I subconsciously followed my drive toward failure in order to avoid guilt, I began to despair and become more and more insecure.

This also caused me to withdraw within myself and in doing so, to put on an air of "having it all together" in order to counteract my insecurity. I was the "wise, humble, silent type." So the more I tried to cove up my pride, the more insecure I became. And the more insecure I became, the more proud I became. What a trap is sin? Soon I came to such a level of despair that I could hardly sleep at night, and I had a lot of difficulty trying to study. I had no motivation whatever.

The Lord lifted me out of the pit of despair very gradually. It was about three months after I had seemingly hit the depths of despair—at least it was my lowest point—that I talked with my elder on a regular visit. As I look back at that visit, I can see that it wasn't until a few weeks afterwards that I began to understand his words to the effect that he had enough sins to deal with already. Even then I had only a vague understanding of my previous misconceptions. And since then, the Lord has been teaching me gradually—as I believe he had been doing for many years previous, to have a clearer understanding of my faith, his gift to me, and its implications in my life.

Romans 3 is true—I am rotten to the very core of my being—and that will always be true until I see Jesus face to face. And walking in the Spirit doesn't mean perfection. On the contrary, it involves admitting that I *am* utterly sinful and helpless to do anything but sin. And it involves clinging to Jesus Christ and his righteousness. I've known these things for as long as I can remember. But now I rejoice in them to an extent that I never believed possible. And yet I feel that I've just barely begun to understand how great God is in his majesty and how glorious in his grace; and how sinful I am. I long to know him, to be transformed by the renewing of my mind, to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ; to walk in the light of his smile—he loves me—to rejoice in his mercies that are new every morning, to offer him the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving; as a little child to receive manna from his hands every moment; to prance in the glorious liberty of the sons of God—I am forgiven and I have peace with God—to love his people, to have a burning desire to tell the lost of him.

¹⁶ Like playing soccer for example.

Oh but my sin! I'm full of it! I still tend to exalt myself upon his mercies in order to gain the praise of men, and I still tend to despair or feel insecure in the face of hard times. And I still tend to seek out mediators other than the only Mediator between God and man, in order to cover up my despair. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God because of Jesus Christ our Lord. He loves me still, and he breaks my pride by his gracious love. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

3-4-76

Isaiah 16. Moab wearied himself offering sacrifices and praying, all to no avail. His pride had been brought low, and he was utterly discouraged. His religious zeal was not repentance, but worldly sorrow, a desire to regain his former security and prestige.

3-6-76

2 Corinthians 3. How much more glorious is the ministry of the Spirit! We have no veil over our faces. We walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Possessed of such hope, we speak quite unreservedly; not because we possess self-sufficiency to regard anything as from ourselves, but because our sufficiency is God-given. Our confidence is through Christ and in him.

3-15-76

How great is the love of God in Christ Jesus! And how great must be my sin! God the Son, having enjoyed from all eternity the mutual love relationship in the Trinity—which love was revealed to man to some extent from the beginning—took upon himself the form of a servant. He was in anguish as he contemplated the approaching time of his death when he would experience the full wrath of his Father against my sin. Yet his love for me was so great, even though there is absolutely nothing I could do to merit that love, that he suffered a discontinuation of God's love in order that I might escape God's wrath and enjoy him forever.

3-16-76

As unbelievers, our subconscious desires controlled our conscious thoughts. As Christians, our conscious thoughts ought to control our subconscious desires. Our conscious thoughts ought increasingly to conform to the Word of God, instead of conforming to our desires which, having assumed autonomy, are still evil to the extent that they are not controlled by our conscious belief in the Word of God. We must be transformed by the renewing of our minds. If they are not controlled by belief in God's Word, our subconscious desires are allowed to operate as if we were still unbelievers, so that they control our actions. They make us act as if we were the ultimate reference point in predication, and as if there were an ultimate chance surrounding God so that he really doesn't control everything that comes to pass, and everything doesn't really work out for our ultimate good, as he says it does.

3-18-76

How long have I known that God gives gifts to his people which are not to be despised but to be encouraged to grow because I need the other members of the body of Christ in order to grow and to contribute to the growth of the body! Yet how long have I looked down upon people as if I were more spiritual, or more capable; or feared people as if they had some sort of advantage over me which should inhibit me; or envied the gifts of others; or idealized people for their gifts; or simply ignored people. I cringe at the thought of my pride and selfishness—its magnitude, its deceitfulness, its subtleness. One should never cringe at his sin in despair, for that in itself would be sin. It would be a worldly sorrow. It would be supposing that one is basically good, but has not lived up to his ideal and must try harder to overcome the irrational aspects of his being.

3-21-76

If the non-Christian asserts his would-be freedom, he loses it; or the more he asserts it the more he loses it.¹⁷ That is to say, in order to know himself as free, he must be able to rationalize and control all things and circumstances. He must make everything agree with his image of himself as ultimately free. If he meets with some circumstance which disagrees with his image of himself and which he is unable to control he feels insecure about his freedom. In order to overcome this insecurity, he has to enlarge his image of himself. The more he meets with obstacles, the more he has to enlarge his image of himself, until he would finally think of himself as God, knowing and controlling all things. But the more he enlarges his image of himself, the more he becomes estranged from reality—from others, from himself, from the situation as it really is. Therefore, to the extent that he asserts his freedom the more he loses it. He loses his individuality and becomes an abstract image of perfection which doesn't touch reality. A man can't live with this situation for very long. So in order to make a certain amount of contact with reality, he makes certain concessions. He tries to hide his pride by pretending to take interest in others, by putting on a humble act, sometimes even by "kicking himself in the pants" as it were. The more he tries to avoid his pride in order to have contact with reality, the more he has to deny himself—his ideal of perfection, that is. In order to avoid pride and maintain contact with reality, he must let those uncontrollable circumstances push him around, instead of trying to manipulate them to conform to his image of himself. The fact of the matter is that there is not one single fact in the universe which does conform to his image of himself. Therefore, in the nature of the case, the more he clings to his ideal of perfection the more estranged from reality he becomes. But when he tries to go in the other direction, when he tries to maintain contact with reality, his freedom becomes meaningless, or absurd. Increasingly he finds that the facts of the universe disagree with his image of himself as free. There is no meaning to life. He becomes increasingly insecure and he tends toward despair. The logical conclusion is suicide. So then, the non-Christian is caught between two goals which are abso-

¹⁷ This is a little hard to understand. Since then my thinking has become clearer on this. To see my thinking on this today, see my article *Bold Humility*" at <http://missiontalk.missional.net>. I was struggling to put into philosophical terms (I was a philosophy major) what I was experiencing in my own life.

lutely necessary for him to attain, but which if he attains will destroy the meaning and reality of his pursuit. He must go off in two opposite directions at once and he must never attain either goal. Thus he alternates between pride and despair.

3-22-76

The Christian principle of continuity: God controls all, he knows all. The Christian principle of discontinuity: God's thoughts are higher than man's thoughts, so man must live by authority. Trust and Obey?¹⁸

3-27-76

The non-Christian principle of continuity is that man can in principle know and control all of reality. This has various levels of expression ranging from philosophical to personal. On each level of expression it has many forms of expression. On the personal level, the various forms find their common denominator in pride. The form is determined by the specific way in which the person asserts his pride. Whatever a person thirsts after, or finds his worth in, is his non-Christian principle of continuity.

3-28-76

My principles of continuity and of discontinuity when I'm not trusting the Lord:¹⁹

1. Continuity
 - a. say something good about myself or receive a compliment
 - b. idealize others
 - c. look down on others
2. Discontinuity
 - a. Deny myself in the wrong way—false humility
 - b. Pretend I don't care
 - c. Pretend I care

When I stop believing in the Christian principle of continuity—that God controls everything that comes to pass according to his sovereign plan which has its meaning in Christ so that everything that happens to me is for my good and for his glory—when I fail to believe this, I become proud and defensive in the face of opposition and difficulty, and (at the same time [or alternately]) I become discouraged and lose all motivation to study or do anything with wholeheartedness. I proudly cling,

¹⁸ The principles of continuity and discontinuity come from Van Til. I was trying to bring my world of ideas and my experience together. Notice the question mark here. I wasn't sure. I had a glimmering of something but it wasn't clear to me. Today I would say: Yes. This means trust and obey. See my article *Bold Humility* at <http://missiontalk.missional.net>.

¹⁹ This entry is pretty hard to follow. I was diving into ideas that I was just beginning to grasp. The main point here is that coming up with ideas in submission to Scripture is a lot more freeing and helpful than trying to prove a point outside of that authority. So we know by authority and learning should be submissive to Scripture.

for example, to my idea which was challenged, thinking that the challenger is kind of ignorant. Then I feel a necessity of vindicating myself. But then I become discouraged because I realize that I'm not really sure that my side is right; and it would take an awful lot of research to prove my point. It's unlikely that I'll make any great discoveries, so I become discouraged. In effect, I set an impossible goal for myself, making myself the final reference point in predication. If I followed my logic, I would have to have exhaustive knowledge in order to prove my point. Clinging to this ideal as a limiting notion, I become discouraged under the burden of such a high goal (only implicitly held). I begin to lose my motivation to study. I could decide to make my ideal more than just a limiting notion and try to prove my point. But I've learned from experience that would alienate me from my challenger, and I am not desirous that this should happen. So my ideal remains more or less a limiting notion, and I remain more or less discouraged.

If I assert myself to motivation, I alienate myself from my challenger, so I remain more or less unmotivated. Then I feel guilty because I know I haven't done my best, and I become more discouraged because I can't expect to come up with anything to vindicate my idea if I haven't really worked at it. This leads to further discouragement and lack of motivation.

Then, by God's grace, I am made to remember my Christian principle of continuity. God controls everything that comes to pass, and he has promised that everything that happens to me is working out for my good and for his glory. This means that I no longer have to worry about proving my point. It may be right and it may be wrong and I can investigate it freely. My worth no longer depends on its truth. I no longer have an impossible ideal set before me. I have new zeal and motivation to study, confident that God is teaching me about himself, that even if I fail to come up with some astonishing truths, I have no reason to be despairing, because I have done my best and God has promised to work out everything for my good and for his glory. And here we see that the Christian principle of discontinuity is bound up with the Christian principle of continuity. For even if I can't understand the way things work out, I must live by authority because I am a creature. I must believe that what God says is true—that all things do work together for good—even if I can't see it happening.

When I fail to believe that God controls everything that comes to pass, I assume implicitly that I don't need to live by authority, that if something doesn't make sense to me it can't be right—and vice versa.

Therefore, when I run into difficulty (which is inescapable in the sense that we must run into mystery at every point) and fail to hold to my Christian principles of continuity and discontinuity, I implicitly set myself up as the one who determines right and wrong and who controls whatsoever comes to pass.

My idea must be right and the difficulty must be a threat to it and to me. Therefore, I must set out to prove that I am right. But it dawns on me that if I do prove my point....

4-13-76

If I am acknowledging my principle of discontinuity by obeying God's commands on the authority of his Word, and believing what he says it true, then I have every right to rejoice, no matter what may come, because he works out everything for my good and his glory. But this doesn't lead to a sort of legalism, because even if I disobey, he works everything out for my good and his glory.

Advice for my Children

As I look back on these diary entries, several things come to mind that I would like to share with my children--and anyone else who might be interested for that matter.

1. Faith, which is a gift of God, is like a seed that is planted within us. It doesn't look like much when it begins, and it takes a lifetime or more to grow, but it has within it everything you need for life and godliness.

So many times I remember wondering about the strength of my faith and comparing myself to others. Not knowing what I was missing, sometimes I would see my faith as very strong and look down on others. Other times I had the feeling that I was missing something and shrunk into the shadows as I compared myself with others whose faith seemed to be stronger.

For example, I remember having a vague notion of what it meant to live for God's glory. I remember thinking, "Do I really do that? What does it mean? I must be missing something." And I was, but I had a basic idea of what it meant. And I'm sure I'll go on learning what it means, even throughout eternity.

I remember having a number of peak experiences with the Lord as I grew up. At times I would wonder if I had even been a Christian in comparison to my new understanding and experience. But as I look back I see the Lord working in my life from a very early age, cultivating, watering, pruning his plant. He was not in a hurry. Skipping steps to get there more quickly wouldn't have been helpful or good. A strong tree takes time to grow.

So be patient with where you are right now, even if you feel you are missing something. Because you are! There is a lot more ahead. But God isn't in a hurry. On the other hand, patience doesn't mean complacency. Always be eager for the *more* God has in store. And ask for it! If an earthly father would never give his children a stone when they ask for bread, how much *more* will the Heavenly Father give us the *Holy Spirit* when we ask!

2. The most important thing about the seed of faith isn't its strength, but where it is planted: in the house of the Lord where it receives good nourishment. It is like a tree planted by a river. Even in times of drought, such a tree will continue to prosper. In New Testament terms, we are united to Christ in his death and resurrection. We draw our nourishment from him—from his love, faithfulness, wisdom and power demonstrated in his death and resurrection. Every time we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are reminded of our union with Christ and how he nourishes us. As we partake we are saying by faith that our joy, identity and sense of worth don't depend on anything but Christ—not even on the pleasant feelings of peace and joy that he can give. Of course we are never fully consistent with that, but we are growing in that direction. So when you are discouraged, remember that God has given you everything you need for life and godliness in the seed of faith he has given you, and that he assures the growth of the seed by planting you in the house of the Lord.
3. Affliction might be due to any number of things. If it's due to some specific sin, the Lord will let you know. But affliction is not always due to some specific sin. Many

times we suffer simply because we have been growing well. The loving Father gives us challenges to exercise our faith. It needs exercise to grow just as athletes need exercise to do well in their sport. When the coach sends you for one more lap, it hurts. But you know he's preparing you for the big event.

4. Notice how often in the diaries I ask the Lord *again* for forgiveness. Of course, such a pattern could possibly be due to rebellion and a selfish attempt to ease the conscience. But repenting of the same thing over and over can sometimes be normal. What I'm saying here is not meant to be an excuse for continuing in sin. But you need to be able to distinguish between continuing in sin on the one hand, and learning a lesson thoroughly on the other. Having to repent repeatedly of the same thing is often the result of the Lord exercising *all* our spiritual muscles. In other words, he gives you the opportunity to put your faith to work in one situation. But then he gives you opportunity to put it to work in a very different situation. Exercises in many different kinds of situations make for good, solid, integral growth—growth that can be built upon. So watch your heart and be concerned if you see rebellion and an unrepentant heart. But don't be too concerned if you see yourself repenting of the same things over and over again. It doesn't necessarily mean you aren't making progress.
5. Knowledge of the Lord and of the Christian life is deepened through experience. You read a passage of Scripture and it moves you. You read it a year later and you understand it more deeply. It's the same passage with only one meaning. But the meaning is rich and multifaceted. The point here is that meaning is not found only in words. The locus of meaning is found at the integration point of words, actions and motivations—as these are integrated around Christ. God's words provide the authoritative interpretation of our experience. But our experience helps us see things in Scripture that we hadn't noticed or understood well before. When you are young with little experience, you can understand everything you need to know to put your faith in Christ. But as you get older and continue to exercise your faith, your understanding deepens. It's not so much that you learn new things—although that happens too—but you learn what you already knew more deeply. And this deeper knowledge will make you increasingly productive in the kingdom. Sometimes you will understand some spiritual truth as if “from afar.” You understand it, you think, but you also sense you are missing something. Experience with the Lord will make things increasingly clearer. But in the meantime, don't worry about it. Be faithful with the level of understanding you have now.
6. There is a sin beneath all other sins. I'm talking about the sin of unbelief, which opens the door to and gives strength to all other sins. Dealing with this sin is also the best way to deal with all other sins. Unbelief is always an implicit (if not explicit) rejection of Christ and what he has done for his people. And unbelief is always a sign that something has become more important than Christ. Find out what it is. In addition to talking to the Lord about it, and getting insight from trusted friends, also talk to yourself about it, as the Psalmists did. Ask yourself what's the worst that could happen if you lost this whatever it is? Would Christ still love you? Would he still work all things together for your good? Remind yourself of Christ's love, power, faithfulness, and wisdom. In this way you are proclaiming the gospel to yourself. Then turn away from the Christ-substitute and look once again to Christ in belief.

7. Everyone longs to have a life with significance. What's the point if you have no impact for the kingdom? But God measures kingdom impact very differently than most people. You might be good at something, but kingdom impact is not in direct proportion to the strength and development of your gifts. What counts is the integration of your gifts with belief in and love for Christ. An inch of integration is worth infinitely more than a mile of gifts. Interestingly enough, it's gifts that most people pay attention to. But when we get to heaven I have no doubt that the recognition will not be given as we might expect. The "sheep" on Jesus right in heaven were not even aware of their kingdom impact.

Jesus says, "Drink of me." What he meant by that was "Believe in me." If you do, rivers—the Holy Spirit—will flow out from you to bless others and make a kingdom impact. Others may or may not notice. You may or may not make the local, national or world news. Kingdom impact isn't necessarily tied to being noticed and recognized by others. But it will change the world.

8. Don't be afraid to use your gifts. The Lord gave you gifts for the benefit of others. If you don't use your gifts, others will suffer. Don't be cowered into unbelief by the social pressure that would make you believe using your gifts is not the humble thing to do. Don't let false humility keep you from being a blessing in the kingdom of the Lord. Christ brings humility and boldness together in a way that goes beyond our comprehension.
9. It's often hard for us to see the difference between using our gifts for our own glory and using them for God's glory and kingdom. The difficulty here is due to the blinding effects of sin. From God's point of view there is a huge difference. Bold humility is replaced by an alternation between two mutually exclusive and yet mutually necessitating poles that I will describe for now as significance leading to pride and freedom leading to fear. We attempt to find significance apart from God and so end up with pride. We try to find freedom apart from God and end up being anxious and fearful. It's possible to learn to balance these in a way that for a while might look like bold humility. But they are really complete opposites. One is the fruit of the Spirit while the other is produced by the flesh.

Because of the existence of the flesh, we will always be tempted to turn away from the bold humility produced by Christ to the alternation between pride and fear. Fighting against the flesh is normal. Just make sure you keep using the weapons the Lord has given you to fight against the flesh so that sin doesn't capture you.

Don't let the constant battle make you think you aren't progressing. Make every effort to find out the difference between using your gifts for God's glory and using them for your own, but don't wait until you have it all figured out because it takes a whole lifetime. So in the mean time, jump in and use your gifts as you maintain a good conscience before the Lord. It's in the process of using your gifts that the Lord will show you how to use them better and more effectively. If fear of letting people see you are a sinner keeps you from using your gifts for God's glory, you may be slow in developing a Christ-centered integration.

10. As believers in Christ we have a kind of secret weapon: the Holy Spirit. I say "secret" because he isn't obvious except to the eyes of faith. But he gives us power to live for

him and to impact the kingdom. It is in the context of the Holy Spirit living in us that we have use of spiritual weapons. Our battle is not only against the flesh, but also against the world as organized in opposition to God and against the evil one. So make extensive use of the weapons the Lord has put at your disposal for making use of his power. For example, the Word of God is a sword, and faith in Christ is a shield. The Christ-like character that comes from believing his Word—at whatever level of experience you have with the Lord— will also protect you. This character includes truth—the sincerity of mind that is the opposite of deceitfulness and hypocrisy. It also includes righteousness—obedience to God that results in a good conscience. It includes the readiness to reach out to others because of the peace with God the gospel has brought you. Prayer is another weapon he has given you. As you believe the gospel and so maintain a good conscience before the Lord, the Lord builds up in you a kind of defense against the evil one, the world and the flesh.

Reading God's Word, reminding yourself of the gospel as you face different situations, praying and reaching out to others in faith aren't magical, but the Lord uses these things to give you power. Do them, not simply as a duty, but in faith that as you make use of these weapons, the Lord gives you kingdom power—the same power that was at work in the resurrection of Jesus. I suggest spending time every day reading God's Word and praying. How much time? I don't think there is a formula. But just as important is reaching out in faith to use your gifts to be a blessing to others. This is also a way of finding spiritual nourishment. How much time? Again, I have not found a formula. Also, partake regularly of the Lord's Supper. It will help you remember that all these things come together only in Christ. How often? I don't have a formula. But if you find the works of the flesh showing up in your life more than the fruit of the Spirit, I suggest you take a look at your spiritual nourishment habits.

Of course, we don't do these things so God will love us. He already does! No, we do them because we want to be increasingly useful in God's kingdom. You won't always feel like doing these things. And sometimes you will miss a day, or even more. Don't be too concerned. Sometimes you're too busy serving others to read the Word, and other times so focused on reading and prayer that you don't have extra time to help others. But I have come to see that lack of spiritual nourishment through reading the Word, prayer and reaching out with one's gifts is as debilitating spiritually as not eating food is physically.

Introverts will tend to focus on the reading and praying while extraverts will tend to focus on the reaching out. But these must go together or else the reading and prayer become inward focused and irrelevant and the reaching out becomes selfish.

11. Get regular exercise and eat well. It will help you think more clearly and will make you healthier, thus giving you a greater and longer impact in God's kingdom. Enjoy a good meal—and sometimes you might eat more than you need on some special occasion—but don't make a habit out of overeating.
12. Get enough sleep. The Lord gives his loved ones sleep. You can't do everything, and the Lord doesn't expect you to. When the Lord finished his ministry on earth, there were still many sick and many unbelievers. But he finished what the Lord gave him to do. The more you love the more you will be able to discern the things that take priority. This will help you focus on the important things, and allow you time to

sleep. Taking time to sleep is a statement of faith: I believe that God can get done what he want to do through me even if I take time to sleep. God doesn't need me to be sleep deprived to get things done through me. I don't mean to imply that you can never stay up late. There are special events and special circumstances. My point is your sense of worth should be tied to the Lord and not to getting things done.

13. Live with margin financially. Don't live beyond you means. Save money. Give a tenth to the Lord. Doing all this is a statement of faith that the Lord is more important to you than anything, and that he can do great things for his kingdom though those who have little as well as through those who have much.
14. Introversion is not bad. I feel a need to say this because in our society introversion has negative connotations. I want to say clearly that introversion is a gift from the Lord and reflects his glory. Of course, any gift can be affected by sin, and introversion is no exception.

Because of my introversion I sometimes became morbidly introspective. It's as if I put on my scuba diving gear to plumb the depths of my interior and find any sin that might be there. I later understood that what I was doing was a result of practical unbelief. The forgiveness of Christ wasn't enough for me. I also wanted to avoid the embarrassment of having sin come up from inside and become public. So I wanted to find all of it and get rid of it. But because God made us as beings who learn and grow over time as we relate concepts to outer and inner experience, the only way to get rid of it all immediately would be to go to heaven. I later understood what David and Paul meant by having a good conscience before the Lord. At first I thought it sounded arrogant. But understanding it saved me from morbid introspection. Having a good conscience doesn't mean being perfect or without sin. It means that as far as you know yourself you are walking in faith, and you see in yourself a sincere desire to please the Lord. No doubt there are still sinful tendencies in the flesh, but the Lord will reveal them to you as you are able to bear it. And this illumination is often a process—you gradually become aware of the sin. In the meantime, those sins are all forgiven.

Soon after I went to Chile for the first time, I discovered more deeply that my introversion was indeed affected by sin. I saw more deeply how it was more due to indifference than to wisdom. I was using my gift of introversion to keep from having to reach out to others.

But don't ever think that true spirituality is found in extraversion—which also has traps due to sin.

Also, introverts can express just as much emotion about the Lord as extraverts. They just usually prefer to do it alone before the Lord. I'm not, of course, saying that it's wrong to express this emotion in public. What I'm saying is that the way you express it is more an issue of personal preference and giftedness than a matter of spirituality.

Introverts can be very good at thinking things through, sometimes taking information from various people and putting things together into a meaningful whole. This is one way you can use your introversion to bless others. I enjoy listening to extraverts talk because it gives me an idea—usually from various perspectives—of what people are thinking. It can fuel my own thinking.

Introverts are usually good at listening carefully to others—something we need a lot more of in a society that tends to value extraversion.

15. Remember both parts of the answer to the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: the chief end of man is to 1) glorify God, and to 2) enjoy him forever. Having fun is very biblical. Don't let fear, worry or pride take away the joy of walking with the Lord--enjoying the blessings of his creation, of family and friends, and of his salvation--as a child with his parents is carefree in the best sense of the word. As you progress in the Christian life you will find his promises are more true than you ever dared believe, that his power goes beyond your wildest dreams, and that he loves you greater than you ever thought possible--working itself out both in the smallest details and the overall significance of your life--the name he has given you and that you are in the process of discovering.