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The Way to Go (Psalm 32:8)

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Prayer

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Your Faith Heals You (Mark 5:34)

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A Future and a Hope (Jeremiah 29:11)

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Must Have Vision

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Pr 29:18 KJV). A synonym for "vision" is to have a revelation of the direction you are going. If it is the wrong direction you may get out of control. The Greek word "perish" means to cast off restraint. When you restrain yourself you hold back from doing the wrong thing and keep yourself under control. But if you make only arbitrary choices you go your own way. "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Jdg 17:6). In Micah's case he had a "graven image" (:4) and "household idols" (:5). By neglecting responsibility you don't discipline yourself to do the correct thing. You have to focus on the vision or goal. You need a roadmap for your future.

"Would that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would discern their future!" (Dt 32:29). Perhaps you have a map but haven't looked at it. Furthermore, God says "I know the plans that I have for you . . . plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope" (Jer 29:11). If you follow God's revelation there is a guaranty. "'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all my good pleasure'" (Isa 46:10). "The counsel of the Lord, it will stand" (Pr 19:21). Your "descendants will inherit the land" (Ps 25:13). If you trust in these promises it will happen.

Know God's Will

How do you discover the vision? "The God of our fathers has appointed you to know his will" (Ac 22:14). How do you discern God's will? "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God" (Jas 1:5). God gives wisdom "to all men generously and without reproach" (:5). Ask God "that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will" (Col 1:9). Then you will be able to "stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (Col 4:12). "Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph 5:17). It is your privilege since "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (Jn 4:34). It is "the work to which I have called them" (Ac 13:2). There are "good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Eph 2:10).

Understanding comes with knowledge. "I will instruct you and teach you" (Ps 32:8). Counseling is intimate. "With Your counsel You will guide me" (Ps 73:24). Directions can come spontaneously, or instructions and teaching can be received over time. The Bible is the main resource because "Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors." (Ps 119:24). "From Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (:104-105). "The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (:130).

There's no reason to waste your time for you want to be "making the most of your time, because the

days are evil" (Eph 5:16). Since God gives you "the desires of your heart" (Ps 37:4) then is it okay to just do what we feel like doing? "The mind of man plans his way" (Pr 16:9) but "many plans are in a man's heart" (Pr 19:21). "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Pr 16:25). However, there is a "way you should go" (Isa 48:17) because only God can "instruct him in the way he should chose" (Ps 25:12). It is personal. It is the "way which you should go" (Ps 32:8).

God had a job for Gideon and He would provide the power to get it done (Jdg 6:34). Since both were involved it was "'for the Lord and for Gideon'" (7:18). By obedience we take up our cross (Mt 16:24) acknowledging that it is by grace and follow (:24) indicating that practical endeavors in life must spiritually work themselves out. We are to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Php 2:12). The Greek word for salvation is the same one Paul uses in Philippeans 1:19 for being saved (delivered) from prison. This is the practical side of working it out. "I will show you my faith by my works" (Jas 2:18). But we are saved "not as a result of works" (Eph 2:9). How do we keep from doing it our own way? We "walk by faith" (2Co 5:7). Then God "leads you" (Isa 48:17) and "directs his steps" (Pr 16:9). "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Php 2:13). But we aren't robots. However, we must pay attention because in the Tribulation they "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" (Rev 14:4). Therefore,

exercise your faith through your actions because God enables you to properly carry it out.

Plans are Dynamic

How do we implement these plans? You must "be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is" (Ro 12:2). It is through "spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col 1:9). It is with a renewed mind (Eph 4:23) that it is discerned. "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts" (Pr 20:27) which lights up the things to see. The "Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Ro 8:16). "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and . . . His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and . . . you abide in Him." (1Jo 2:27). "Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night" (Ps 16:7).

His "sheep follow him because they know his voice" (Jn 10:4). Hearing implies that you stay close. This means close by because "You have taken hold of my right hand" (Ps 73:23). "I will counsel you with My eye upon you" (Ps 32:8). "The Lord knows the way of the righteous" (Ps 1:6). You begin to spiritually see because "your eyes will behold your Teacher" (Isa 30:20). "Your ears will hear a word behind you, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right or to the left" (:21). The result is peace of mind. It is the "peace of God, which . . . will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Php 4:6). It happens because of letting "the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col 3:15).

Start moving in a logical direction because you can't steer a ship unless it's underway. Don't presume that you know everything that God wants to do "for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9). God realizes "who is blind but My servant?" (42:19). However he says "I will lead the blind by a way they do not know" (42:16). Therefore "do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Pr 3:5-6). "Commit your works to the Lord, and your plans will be established" (Pr 16:3). The results are positive since he "teaches you to profit" (Isa 48:17). You will "abide in prosperity" (Ps 25:13).

It is God's purpose to build you up and protect you. "He restores my soul; He guides me" (Ps 23:3). "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." (:4). A shepherd leads and protects his flock with these implements. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" (:4). "You are my rock and my fortress . . . [and] will lead me and guide me." (Ps 31:3). "The Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places" (Isa 58:11). "He leads me beside quiet waters" (Ps 23:2). Therefore "cease striving and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10).

Walk with God

To lead or guide means to direct someone by a certain route to a destination and be involved on the way. "Plans" (Pr 16:3), "purpose" (Isa 46:10), and "the steps of a man are established by the Lord; and He

delights in his way" (Ps 37:23). "He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (Ps 23:3). A path is a trail and doesn't zig-zag all over the place. "He will make your paths straight" (Pr 3:6). God will "make darkness into light before them and rugged places into plains" (Isa 42:16).

Walking with God depends on relationship. Enoch was taken because he "walked with God" (Ge 5:24). "We are his workmanship . . . for good works . . . that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). Walking is step by step. Since "the Lord will continually guide you" (Isa 58:11) that explains how steps can be established. It works because "I am continually with You" (Ps 73:23). To be able to hear effectively we have to improve our hearing by "practice" (Heb 5:14) having our "senses trained" (:14). You've heard the saying "use it or lose it." Through practice you protect against becoming "dull of hearing" (:11). "The complacency of fools shall destroy them. But he who listens to me shall live securely" (Pr 1:32-33).

Abraham is a prime example of how God can guide you. "The Lord said to Abram: 'Go forth from your country . . . to the land which I will show you'" (Ge 12:1). Abraham was attentive in that "he who has an ear, let him hear" (Rev 2:7). He also concurred with "prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers" (Jas 1:22). Abraham "with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Ro 4:20). God promised "I will make you a

great nation; and I will bless you" (Ge 12:2). It would work out over the years. Abraham was "fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform" (Ro 4:21). "So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him" (Gen 12:4). You can only act on what God has spoken to you. Any other basis is presumption.

Walk by Faith

How can you be sure it's God speaking? There are "many kinds of languages in the world" (1Co 14:10). "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1Jn 4:1). Fortunately we have "the Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:17) in us. With the Holy Spirit there is no guesswork. "You will know the truth" (Jn 8:32) convincingly. Communication that comes abruptly and disturbs is not from God. Instructions demanding to do something quickly before it's too late are not God's. "God is not a God of confusion" (1Co 14:33).

Because the Spirit is in you, guidance speaks as "deep calls unto deep" (Ps 42:7). A higher plateau of interaction exists because God says "'I will make all My mountains a road, and My highways will be raised up'" (Isa 49:11). You become aware of what to expect ahead of time. Reminders may come regularly as inner assurances or observable confirmations. Long-term conviction will persist and it may grow as evidence of anticipated fulfillment. With Abraham "the Lord appeared to Abram" (Ge 12:7), "the Lord said to Abram" (13:14), Melchizedek "blessed him" (14:19),

"the Lord came to Abram in a vision" (15:1) and "the word of the Lord came to him" (:4). It must transpire "according to that which had been spoken" (Ro 4:18). It is for today because "it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham" (Gal 3:7) and "blessed with Abraham" (:9).

"All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal 3:27). You have "laid aside the old self" (Col 3:9) and have "put on the new self" (:10). This is only possible with the help of the Holy Spirit. "The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Ro 8:6). It is activated by those who "set their minds on . . . the things of the Spirit" (:5). You then serve in the "newness of the Spirit" (7:6). The result is "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22).

"You are saved, if you hold fast" (1Co 15:2) to "the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand" (:1). Initially it is with that "same spirit of faith . . . we also believe" (2Co 4:13). "God was causing the growth" (1Co 3:6). It demonstrates that "your faith would not rest in the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1Co 2:5). Then we are to "stand firm in the faith" (1Co 16:13). In a human way you get tired when you stand or hold on to something for a long time. But God handles that too. It is "He who establishes us" (2Co 1:21). "In your faith you are standing firm." (:24). Therefore it is God giving you the faith to stand.

You then become aware that you "walk by faith, not by sight" (2Co 5:7). It's possible to "take pride in

appearance, and not in heart" (:12). But you live by what is in your heart. This is no surprise because God "gave us the Spirit in our hearts" (2Co 1:22). Then "your faith grows" (2Co 10:15). You can depend on God's help because he "is faithful, through whom you were called" (1Co 1:9). There will be challenging moments but "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able" (1Co 10:13). Monitor your standing and "test yourselves to see if you are in the faith" (2Co 13:5).

Rejoice in Hope

"We exult in hope of the glory of God" (Ro 5:2). To rejoice is to celebrate something rewarding, and God's glory would certainly qualify. But since it is a hope it is unseen because "hope that is seen is not hope" (Ro 8:24). "Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off" (Pr 23:18). Central to this hope is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). This is the "hope that is in you" (1Pe 3:15) because it is the "hope of salvation" (1Th 5:8). Through rejoicing you proclaim "the hope and resurrection" (Ac 23:6). You rejoice because your "faith is the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1) since you know "hope does not disappoint" (Ro 5:5).

Hope is in being "fellow heirs" (Ro 8:17) in terms of "the revealing of the sons of God" (:19) regarding "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (:21). We rejoice knowing "we have a building from God . . . eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). We don't rejoice selfishly because "a horse is a false hope for victory"

(Ps 33:17). Consequently one's "hope is in the Lord his God" (Ps 146:5) and "my hope is from Him" (Ps 62:5). Therefore rejoicing means resting on "the hope of eternal life" (Tit 1:2) and "looking for the blessed hope" (2:13).

Hope is the end product of tribulation because it "brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope" (Ro 5:3-4). We are to rejoice in hope and persevere in tribulation (Ro 12:12). "This hope we have as an anchor" (Heb 6:19). The expectation is for "the redemption of our body" (Ro 8:23) because "in hope we have been saved" (:24). Tribulation causes you to remember and "this I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope" (La 3:21). "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Ro 15:13).

Permissive Will

"He who has an ear, let him hear" (Rev 3:13). But if you hear will you also obey? Be careful not to dismiss what God is saying to you. Balaam had this problem even though he proclaimed "the Lord [is] my God" (Nu 22:18). Balak had asked him to curse Israel (:6). Then Balaam sought God for direction and God said, "Do not go with them" (:12). He talked to God, heard his voice, and got his answer. Then Balak said, "I will indeed honor you richly" (:17). Balaam was enticed and rationalized thinking "what else" (:19) God might say. When asked again God permitted him to proceed but cautioned him (:20). Furthermore "God was angry because he was going" (:22). Why did God

allow it the second time? Romans 12:2 says there is a “good and acceptable and perfect” will of God. In Balaam’s case God acceded to a less than perfect compromise. Some call this God’s permissive (i.e. not perfect) will. If a person lacks faith then “let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord” (Jas 1:7). But if you “delight yourself in the Lord He will give you the desires of your heart” (Ps 37:4).

Israel’s Attitude

God “leads the humble in justice, And He teaches the humble His way” (Ps 25:9). “Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way he should chose” (Ps 25:12). Humility is the right attitude because then you’ll be receptive to God. “None of those who wait for You will be ashamed” (Ps 25:3). “Trust in the Lord with all your heart” (Pr 3:5). Israel was guilty of going their own way. They “tempted God in the desert. So He gave them their request” (Ps 106:14-15). There are consequences to disobedience because he “sent a wasting disease among them” (:15). They “quickly forgot His works” (:13), and additionally, “forgot God their Savior” (:21). If we don’t pay attention and pray we can forget too. When you follow the Lord he “will go before you . . . [and] be your rear guard” (Isa 52:12). “But you will not go out in haste” (:12). Making haste presumes you are doing your own thing. Doing so represents lack of faith because he “who believes in it will not be disturbed” (Isa 28:16). Israel suffered the consequences of doing

their own thing. We must realize that these things are “written for our instruction” (1Co 10:11).

Wait on God

We are to wait on God for an answer when we have a problem or decision to make. However, it is appropriate anytime as in waiting “for your God continually” (Hos 12:6). To wait means to tarry, hope for, or to expect. It doesn’t mean to put yourself “on hold” or be sitting next to the telephone waiting for a call not knowing when it will come. You must be actively involved and positive. “I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Ps 27:13).

Waiting isn’t just academic. You might be in a “time of trouble” (Ps 37:39) or in a “pit of destruction” (Ps 40:2). The psalmist exclaimed “I am weary with crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail while I wait for my God” (Ps 69:3). Another cried “I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Your words” (Ps 119:147). A third professed “O Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong” (Ps 30:7). And there are times where “the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression” (Isa 30:20). Paul told the Corinthians about “our affliction which came to us in Asia” (2Co 1:8). The rationale is that “the sufferings of Christ are ours” (:5). Paul said “we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so we despaired even of life” (:8). The purpose is “so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God” (:9). God said

“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness” (2Co 12:9). Jesus said “apart from Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). The result is that God “comforts us . . . so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction” (:4). Paul cited that God “delivered us from so great a peril of death” (:10).

God has “acted on our behalf” (Ps 68:28). He “acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him” (Isa 64:4). God “delivers the afflicted from him who is too strong for him” (Ps 35:10). “He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power” (Isa 40:29). “He is their strength in time of trouble . . . [and] helps them and delivers them . . . and saves them, because they take refuge in Him” (Ps 37:39-40). God is “my rock and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be shaken.” (Ps 62:6). He is “the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God” (:7). God has said, “‘I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,’ so that we confidently say, ‘the Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’” (Heb 13:5-6).

“Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength” (Isa 40:31). It applies to all ages because even “youths grow weary and tired” (:30). “Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage” (Ps 27:14). “With the heart a person believes” (Ro 10:10). Therefore, without this strength you will lose heart (Ps 27:13). But remember it is “‘not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit’” (Zec 4:6). Make sure you aren't trying to save your own life for you “‘shall lose it’” (Mk 8:35). But whoever “loses his life for My sake and the

gospel's shall save it" (:35). You defend against being self-centered with this mindset. "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men" (Col 3:23).

Trust God

Waiting on the Lord has benefits. "May those who wait for You not be ashamed" (Ps 69:6). "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him" (La 3:25). "The Lord favors those . . . who wait for His lovingkindness" (Ps 147:11). "They all wait for You to give them their food in due season" (Ps 104:27). Trust in God and you will be blessed (Ps 40:4). To Israel possessing the Promised Land meant to seize or occupy it. "Those who will wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land" (Ps 37:9). "Keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land" (:34).

"Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Ps 37:7). "Wait in silence for God only" (Ps 62:5). "It is good that he waits silently" (La 3:26). When you are quiet you can hear God when you pray. It is God's character your faith is based on, therefore "I will wait on Your name" (Ps 52:9). "In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence" (Pr 14:26). "The people who know their God will display strength and take action" (Da 11:32). Therefore "let the weak say 'I am a mighty man'" (Joe 3:10).

Wait for God's response because it is the intervention you require. "I wait for Your word" (Ps 119:74, 81). "In His word do I hope" (Ps 130:5). "We do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit

Himself intercedes for us . . . according to the will of God” (Ro 8:26-27). Then God’s “EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER” (1Pe 3:12). As a result “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Ro 10:17). It is the “conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1) because it’s component of faith convinces you. “Wait for the Lord, and He will save you” (Pr 20:22). Then you must appropriate the solution.

Be Strong

God told Joshua to “cross this Jordan . . . to the land which I am giving . . . to the sons of Israel” (Jos 1:2). God said “no man will be able to stand before you” (:5) because “the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (:9). He commanded “be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed” (:9). He promised “I will not fail you or forsake you” (:5). But he warned “be careful to do according to all the law . . . that you may have success” (:7).

To be courageous you “let your heart take courage” (Ps 31:24). You believe in and focus on God’s promises. “The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You” (Isa 26:3). Jesus, himself, was resolute because he said “the Lord God helps Me . . . therefore, I have set My face like flint” (Isa 50:7). Courage means to make your heart firm. You hold firm to your goal when circumstances try to dissuade you. You will have to persevere to prevail. Encourage yourself by cultivating your faith so it develops. A tiny mustard seed grows into a tree (Mt

13:32). Be assured that "for all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (Ro 8:14). "For such is God, our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death" (Ps 48:14).

If you need help you have the assurance of Psalm 91:15. "He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him, and honor him." It is more than God just coming to the rescue. "With a long life I will satisfy him, and let him behold My salvation" (:16). "You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created" (Rev 4:11).

Pray

Prayer is communication with God. We are to "pray to God" (1Co 11:13, 2Co 13:7). Jesus instructed "pray to your Father who is in secret" (Mt 6:6). In a sense it is talking because Jesus said, "When you pray, say" (Lk 11:2). Daniel was "speaking in prayer" (Da 9:21). However, Jesus warned, "you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray on the street corners" (Mt 6:5). He instructed rather to "go into your inner room, [and] close your door and pray to your Father . . . who sees what is done in secret" (:6). How can you be sure the message has been received? We know that "if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us . . . [and] we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1Jo 5:14-15). Even Jesus stated, "I knew that You always hear Me" (Jn 11:42). Daniel expected the

communication to succeed. He prayed, "Our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and . . . let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary" (Da 9:17). Solomon expressed, "O my God, I pray, let Your eyes be open and Your ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place" (2Ch 6:40). "The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears attend to their prayer" (1Pe 3:12).

Prayer

How and when do you pray? "Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness to pray" (Lk 5:16). "He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives" (22:39). "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there" (Mk 1:35). "After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone" (Mt 14:23). "It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God" (Lk 6:12). However, it didn't require Jesus to be in isolation to pray. "Praying alone, the disciples were with him" (Lk 9:18). But for a little privacy he said, "Sit here while I go over there and pray" (Mt 26:36).

Prayer originated in the Old Testament. Worship occurred during the Feasts of the Lord such as when "the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering" (Lk

1:10). Daniel was devoted to prayer and "continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God" (Da 6:10). Even Cornelius, a Roman soldier, explained, "I was praying in my house during the ninth hour . . . [and he was told] your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God" (Ac 10:30-31). Paul said "I want men in every place to pray" (1Ti 2:8). Methods vary. Jesus "knelt down and began to pray . . . [and then] rose from prayer" (Lk 22:41,45). He referred to when you "stand praying" (Mk 11:25). It is a matter of relationship and respect. Jesus taught them to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Mt 6:9). "Jesus spoke these things; and [lifted] up His eyes to heaven" (Jn 17:1).

Prayerful

Prayer is serious as when someone is ill. "The prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up" (Ja 5:15). Times are tough because "the end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer" (1Pe 4:7). You are to take it seriously and "devote yourselves to prayer" (Ro 12:12, 1Co 7:5, Col 4:2). To be devoted is to be focused and attentive by "keeping alert in it" (Col 4:2) and "on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Eph 6:8). Paul urges that prayers "be made on behalf of all men" (1Ti 2:1) and wants "men in every place to pray" (2:8). He directs to pray "in everything" (Php 4:6) "at all

times" (Eph 6:18) "without ceasing" (1Th 5:17). Jesus taught "that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart" (Lk 18:1). Paul said he was "always offering prayer with joy in my prayer for you all" (Php 1:4). "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (Ja 5:16).

Praying

"One of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples'" (Lk 11:1). Paul said "we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will" (Col 1:9). Prayer and asking are associated. You can't ask without praying, but you can pray without necessarily asking for anything. However, asking is commonly associated with prayer because "we know we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (Jn 11:42). "In all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Mt 21:22). Jesus said, "All things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted to you" (Mk 11:24). "In that day you will not question Me about anything . . . [for] if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you" (Jn 16:23).

There are certain characteristics of prayer. "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit" (Eph 6:18) A petition is composed of requests. "Be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (:18). Paul also instructed "that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be

made on behalf of all men" (1Ti 2:1). He said "be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Php 4:6). Daniel said "I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications" (Da 9:3). He had been "praying and giving thanks before his God" (6:10). Solomon emphasized the value of prayer when he interceded for Israel. He said God would deliver them if they "'repent and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity'" (2Ch 6:37) and "'pray to their land which You have given to their fathers'" (:38). Of course, preventive maintenance is also important. Jesus said, "'Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone'" (Mk 11:25). He also said, "'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation'" (Lk 22:46).

Entreat

What is our so-called "world view?" Jesus told the Jews, "'You are of this world'" (Jn 8:23). There are the facts of life. Paul says "if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either: (1Th 3:10). It is a matter of survival. However, Jesus told his disciples "you are not of the world . . . [because] I chose you out of the world" (Jn 15:19). Which side then are you on? Is it just survival of the fittest, or is there another way? It is a matter of perspective. "Whatever you do, do all for the glory of God" (1Co 15:31). "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col 2:3). But you still have to exist. However, "your

heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Mt 6:32). The most common translation of the word "prayer" in the Bible is to make requests of God. Jesus taught regarding prayer to ask, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Mt 6:11). Paul refers to God's promise to provide for our needs by saying "my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Php 4:19). "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above" (Ja 1:17). So "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (:33). Paul instructed "be anxious for nothing, but . . . let your requests be made known to God" (Php 4:6). Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself" (Mt 6:33). He said, "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it" (Jn 14:14) because "everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds" (Lk 11:10). The promise is for believers who "trust in the Lord . . . and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps 37:3-4).

Intercede

Jesus asked them to keep watch while he prayed, but when he returned, he found them asleep (Mt 26:38,45). He warned them to "keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation" (:41). Prayer has its part in survival. He told them to pray so they would "have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place" (Lk 21:36). You need God's protection both physically and spiritually. It is a spiritual endeavor. Paul said "pray at all times in the Spirit" (Eph 6:18). But Jesus pointed out that "the spirit

is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41). That is why you must be consistent and "devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving" (Col 4:2). "Keep on the alert at all times" (Lk 21:36). "Be on the alert with all perseverance and petition" (Eph 6:18). Paul followed the advice saying "unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers" (Ro 1:9-10). He engaged in intercessory prayer on the behalf of others "with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Eph 6:18). Peter pointed out to "be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer" (1Pe 4:7). Jesus' parable showed a judge bringing justice to a widow who petitioned him continually for action (Lk 18:1-8). Jesus also taught to pray to "not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Mt 6:13). For when you "encounter various trials" (Ja 1:2) you will have prayed "to escape" (Lk 21:36) so "with the temptation [God] will provide the way of escape also, so that you may be able to endure it" (1Co 10:13).

God's Plan for Healing

Healing is a facet of God's plan. His plan for Abram was to "make you into a great nation" (Ge 12:2). In addition, God said "To your offspring I will give this land" (:7). The location was at Shechem and the Canaanites were there (:6). The Lord confirmed it by making a covenant with Abram (:18). "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (:6). Many years later God said to Abram "I will

confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers" (Ge 17:2). He even changed his name to Abraham (:5). God again promised to give Canaan to his descendants (:8). Furthermore he said "my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you" (:21).

Another part of God's plan unfolded when he brought "the Israelites out of Egypt" (Ex 12:51). Moses reminded them that Canaan was their destination because it was "the land he swore to your forefathers to give you" (13:15). After they crossed the Red Sea "the Lord made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them" (15:25). Not only did he deliver them from Egypt but he became "the Lord, who heals you" (:26). However, their responsibility was to "listen carefully . . . [and] pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees" (:26). If they were disobedient he would not protect them against the diseases the Egyptians suffered (:26). Healing was one of God's provisions for the Israelites but it was conditional. "Worship the Lord your God, and . . . I will take away sickness from you" (Ex 23:25). "The Lord will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt" (Dt 7:15). "However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees . . . all these curses will come upon you" (Dt 28:15).

Basis of Healing

God's choosing and leading Israel is valuable history. "These things happened to them as examples

and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1Co 10:11). Old Testament content is meaningful to Christians even though "Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant" (Heb 7:22). Are we permitted then to copy-and-paste only what we feel applies from the Old Testament to the New Testament? You can only be selective if the New Testament states that something has been superseded. We must realize that "I the Lord do not change" (Mal 3:6). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). Therefore, his desire to heal continues.

The Psalms confirm this. The Lord "forgives your sins and heals all your diseases" (Ps 103:3). Some ills are your own fault. They "became fools . . . and suffered affliction" (107:17). Then they called for help and "he sent forth his word and healed them" (:20). Was this physical or spiritual? It was partly the former since they "loathed all food and drew near the gates of death" (:18). Is it strange that God's word was involved in the healing? Not scripturally. God's words are "life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body" (Pr 4:22). If you follow the instructions you can be healed. Then you must profess the advice because "the tongue of the wise brings healing" (12:18). "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (8:21).

Took Infirmities

Is the healing manifested in the Old Testament in effect today? "Christ is the mediator of a new

covenant . . . to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15). How are the old and new connected? The new cites that he "healed all the sick . . . to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases'" (Mt 8:17). Isaiah 53 is quoted. The word "diseases" used by Matthew refers to Isaiah's "sorrows" (:4). That fulfillment occurred when "Jesus went throughout Galilee . . . healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Mt 4:23). "The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5). The meaning is that it applies currently. At the Last Supper regarding his crucifixion Jesus said "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Lk 22:20). Those wounds cover our healing today.

Anointing

Jesus "stood up [in the synagogue] to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him" (Lk 4:17). He read the prophetic message about the Messiah which includes "the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me" (Isa 61:1). It prophesied that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power" (Ac 10:38). "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (1:8). "He went around doing good and healing all who were under power of the devil, because God was with him" (10:38). Jesus said, "it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (Jn 14:10). God's "power had gone out of him" (Mk 5:30). Jesus acknowledged

"the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees the Father doing" (5:19).

Jesus also read, "He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind" (Lk 4:18). To Isaiah this was "release from darkness for the prisoners" (Isa 61:1). This happened literally since Jesus directed them to tell John "the blind receive sight" (Mk 11:5). For others "these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name . . . they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (Mk 16:17,18). "Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (Jn 14:12). "The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people" (Ac 5:12). "People brought the sick into the streets . . . so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them" (:15). "Stephen . . . did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people" (6:8). "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul . . . and their illnesses were cured" (19:11).

Point of Contact

Is there a method to follow for healing? There is usually a point of contact through which God's power flows. A woman in a large crowd thought "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed" (Mk 5:28). Then "she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering" (:29). "She [had] heard about Jesus" (:27) and approached him from behind in the crowd. Others had heard also. "When the men of that place

recognized Jesus . . . [people] begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed" (Mt 14:35,36). Also Paul's "handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured" (Ac 19:12). Did God impregnate the cloth with supernatural energy? That would be science fiction. God is omnipresent. In his omnipotence he knows when to personally manifest his power. "I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled" (Jer 1:12).

Another point of contact is touch. "Jesus put forth his hand and touched him . . . and immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Mt 8:2,3). "He touched her hand and the fever left her" (Mt 8:14). He "put fingers into his ears . . . and touched his tongue" (Mk 7:33) and his "ears were opened . . . and he spoke plainly" (:35). "They brought a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him" (Mk 8:22).

Laying on Hands

You might say the official method for healing is "the foundation of . . . the laying on of hands" (Heb 6:1). People were aware of this because "they begged him to place his hand on the man" (Mk 7:32). Jairus "pleaded earnestly with him . . . come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live" (Mk 5:23). Laying on of hands is doctrine because it was part of the Old Covenant and used in the annual festivals. The priests were to "lay their hands on its head" (Ex 29:10). This transferred the sins of the people to the sacrifice which was a type of Christ.

"Jesus put his hands on the [blind] man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored" (Mk 8:25). In the synagogue where he was teaching Jesus saw a crippled woman. He said to her "you are set free from your infirmity" (Lk 13:12). "Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God" (:13). Then after the resurrection Jesus told them "these signs will accompany those who believe" (Mk 16:17). "They will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (:18). The father of the chief official of Malta was ill. On Paul's visit "after prayer, [he] placed his hands on him and healed him" (Ac 28:8). We can surmise that the miracles God did through the apostles (5:12), Stephen (6:8), and Paul (19:11) were accomplished by the laying on of hands.

Motivation

Healing is a two-way street. It is available to everyone because Jesus "went around doing good and healing all" (Ac 10:38). "The people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all" (Lk 6:19). But you have to be open to accept the healing. You can't have a closed mind. For example, Jesus made a trip to the town where he was born and raised. The people remarked "Isn't this the carpenter?" (Mk 6:3). Then "they took offense at him" (:3). Consequently "he could not do any miracles there, except lay hands on a few sick people and heal them" (:5). It is more than just a lack of cooperation. "Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of

the miracles had been performed, because they did not repent' (Mt 11:20). Few allowed miracles in Nazareth. Jesus was saying "it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you" (:22). He was "amazed at their lack of faith" (Mk 6:6) of the people in his hometown.

You've heard "necessity is the mother of invention." If you are sick you have a motivation to become well. If there is hope for a cure you optimistically take advantage of the opportunity. "A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing you can make me clean" (Mt 8:2). A centurion asked for help saying, "Lord, . . . my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering" (:4). "A ruler came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live" (9:18). "Two blind men followed him, calling out, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David!" (:27). "Ten men who had leprosy met him . . . and called out in a loud voice, 'Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" (Lk 17:13). Notice that they all had confidence in who he was and that he was capable of healing them.

Believe

It requires a commitment on the part of the recipient to receive healing. It had to be ascertained verbally or in some way spiritually substantiated. Jesus asked the blind man ""Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (Mt 9:28). A Canaanite woman even had to provide proof by saying "even the dogs eat crumbs

that fall from their masters' table" (15:27). Although Jesus said he'd go to the centurion's house to heal his servant, the centurion had confidence in orders and said, "I am a man under authority . . . [and] say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it" (8:9). Therefore he said to Jesus "just say the word, and my servant will be healed" (:8).

The result of being healed was predicated on the petitioner's belief. When the blind men answered "Yes, Lord" (Mt 9:28) Jesus said, "According to your faith will it be done' . . . and their sight was restored" (:29-30). To the Canaanite woman "Jesus answered, 'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour" (15:28). In reply to the centurion Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith" (8:10). Then he directed the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.' And his servant was healed at that very hour" (:13).

Faith

Jesus is willing to heal, for when the leper asked, he said "I am willing, . . . Be clean!" (Mt 8:3). But you have to be ready to receive. When the blind man said he was ready Jesus replied, "According to your faith will it be done to you" (9:29). You have to have faith to believe. "It is with your heart that you believe" (Ro 10:10). "Faith comes from hearing" (:17) so you must have input. But it is with your inner self and not exclusively with your intellect that you believe

in spiritual things. "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mk 9:23).

Jesus said, "Have faith in God" (Mk 11:22). To believe is having faith. "If you believe you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer" (Mt 21:22). "Therefore all things which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you" (Mk 11:24). Verse 24 beginning with "therefore" is predicated on the preceding one. Jesus explained "if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him" (:23). The person commands something to happen and then believes he has already received it. Also he does not doubt it will be done. When Peter "saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out" (Mt 14:30). Jesus caught him saying, "You of little faith . . . why did you doubt?" (:31). Peter had the faith because Jesus said, "Come" (:29), but doubt cancelled faith.

Your Words

The centurion knew that all Jesus had to do was "just say the word" (Mt 8:8). "He drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick" (:16). Faith is released by words. "By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (12:37). "The tongue has the power of life and death" (Pr 18:21). "The tongue of the wise brings healing" (12:18). Jesus taught "out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Mt 12:34). The faith you have is

expressed in speech. "What he says will happen" (Mk 11:23). It works because of the characteristics of the communication. Jesus said "the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (Jn 6:63). He also reveals "I am in the Father . . . [and] the words I say to you are not just my own" (14:10).

Authority

God gave Jesus "the name that is above every name: (Php 2:9). He had "the highest place" (:9). "At the name of Jesus every knee will bow" (Php 2:10). By this authority he commissioned the disciples to spread the Good News (Mk 16:15). They would manifest this power "in My name" (:17) and "signs will accompany" them (:17). Their efforts would be "greater things . . . because I am going to the Father" (Jn 14:12). This would "bring glory to the Father" (:13). Jesus said "I will do whatever you ask" (:13). He had said "in that day you will no longer ask me anything" (Jn 16:23). When he was with them their questions were posed to him. But with Jesus in heaven "my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name" (:23) "so that your joy may be made full" (:24).

Peter knew because he told the cripple "what I have I give you" (Ac 3:6). He had the faith because he understood that "by his wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5). Peter got the man's attention by looking "straight at him" (Ac 3:4) and the man was "expecting to get something from them" (:5). Peter transmitted the faith because he gave (:6) it. It was a heavenly request

because he expressed "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (:6). The Father "will give you" (Jn 16:23) the response and Jesus "will do" (Jn 14:13) what you ask. So when Peter "helped him up . . . the man's feet and ankles became strong . . . and [he] began to walk" (Ac 3:7,8). The people "were filled with wonder and amazement" (:10).

Ask

There is liberal permission for what to ask of God. "Ask, and it will be given to you; . . . for everyone who asks receives" (Mt 7:7,8). Your Father will "give good things to them that ask him" (:11). "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Php 4:6). "You do not have because you do not ask" (Ja 4:2). "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives" (:3). "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Mt 6:8). Paul "implored the Lord three times that it might leave me" (2Co 12:8) but God said 'My grace is sufficient for you' (:9). "If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him" (1Jn 3:21-22).

Therefore "if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1Jn 5:14-15). Then do like Paul who said "I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told" (Ac 27:25). "We who have believed enter that rest" (Heb 4:3). Therefore "Do not

fear or be dismayed . . . for the battle is not yours but God's" (2Ch 20:15). However we are to "fight the good fight of faith" (1Ti 6:12) because "for without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb 11:6). But to fight doesn't mean self-effort. "Are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal 3:3). God works miracles among you by hearing with faith (:5).

Receive

Years ago a "name it and claim it" doctrine surfaced. It sounded like guarantying something on your gift list or getting money to miraculously materialize as in winning the lottery. "Your heavenly Father knows that you need" (Mt 6:32) provisions to eat, drink and wear (:31). If you seek God first "all these things will be added to you" (:33). The Bible says this and Jesus is "the Word" (Jn 1:14). He said "if you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (Jn 15:7). The deceptive doctrine says that you can speak just about anything into existence you wish. But it doesn't consider that it has to be in accordance with God's words "in you" (:7). The words are there if you meditate on the book of the law (Jos 1:8). They are there because "Your word I have treasured in my heart" (Ps 119:11). "Jesus answered, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Mt 4:4). He repeats it being written in verses 7 and 10. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa 8:20).

By the Church

God officially established healing in the church. "To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1Co 12:7). One is "gifts of healing" (:9). In this case the gift is a ministry through the one assigned. We know that you need faith to receive healing. "Faith by the same Spirit" (:9) is provided so you possess it to receive healing. You might say the gifts are interactive. Faith to operate and receive the gift of "miraculous powers" (:10) is necessary. "God has appointed . . . workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing" (:28). "Do all have gifts of healing?" (:30). "He gives them to each one, just as he determines" (:11).

In the church if anyone is sick he should call the elders (Ja 5:14). They should "pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord" (:14). It will heal him and "the Lord will raise him up" (:15). It is a collective endeavor to "pray for each other so that you may be healed" (:16). "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (:16). This is illustrated in the case of a fig tree (Mt 21:18-20). Jesus told them they could "do what was done to the fig tree" (:21). Furthermore "if you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer" (:22). "Believe you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mk 11:24). "By his wounds you have been healed" (1Pe 2:24). It has already been done and just needs to be manifested. Jesus instructed the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would" (Mt 8:13). He told the

woman, "Go in peace and be freed from your suffering" (Mk 5:34). Healing is the "children's bread" (Mt 15:27). Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour" (:28).

Your faith heals you (Mk 5:34). You have faith because "My words abide in you" (Jn 15:7). Paul said "the word is . . . in your heart" (Ro 10:8). "Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you" (Col 3:16). It "comes from hearing" (:17). It's "by the word of Christ" (:17). It's "the word of faith which we are preaching" (:8). Faith is confidence built on the trust that the word is "forever . . . settled in heaven" (Ps 119:89). Faith is inspiration because the "unfolding of Your words gives light" (Ps 119:130). Therefore "walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light" (1Jo 1:7) and it will work out.

Overcoming Depression

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). If you are in a depression you are not free. A doctor told me that the reason it is called depression is that it depresses the functions of the body. You might not be able to explain it, but you have a sense that something isn't right. This example sounds gruesome, but you've probably heard the rendition of the frog in a pot of water on a stove where, when the heat is turned up, it will cook and not even realize it should jump out of the pot. It didn't know the truth, but the scripture says you will know it and it will set you free.

You are healthy when your body works properly. But there are holistic aspects of your being involving emotions, feelings, mood, thoughts and behavior. It is said this is your mental health. If you get physically sick it is called an illness. Most people don't worry about catching a cold. A mental problem would be categorized as mental illness. Unfortunately that can have a negative connotation. But it might have a biological source and it is regarded as a medical disorder. It is treatable and should be treated. It is more common in our society than you might think. But depressed people often don't seek treatment possibly because they don't even recognize they have a treatable disorder.

Symptoms

Depression is identified by its symptoms. A common attribute is sadness. When people have an ordinary mood swing they'll say they are depressed. But if it lasts for over two weeks and you "can't pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" then it may be a symptom of a disorder. At that point it is good to seek help. Otherwise it may go on for week after week, month after month, and year after year. That kind of prolonged problem is called a clinical depression because it requires treatment. Symptoms persist and strongly affect thinking, feelings and behavior. They can become so disabling that they interfere with the ability to work, sleep, eat, and enjoy once pleasurable activities. But not all symptoms may be present and their severity may vary. Serious manifestations may

indicate a major depression. Less severe signs may point to dysthymia which is chronic, though manageable, but will prevent you from functioning at full potential and make you susceptible to further depression.

If you're depressed the symptoms pertain in a large way to your feelings. There's a tendency to think of this as psychological. You might say to yourself you have to "shake yourself out of it." Others might counsel "pull yourself together." But you hear of many people who just can't even get out of bed in the morning. This is why its an organic, medical disorder. But how can a biological cause be responsible for emotional manifestations in the mental realm? Its because brain chemistry is unbalanced which affects thinking and nerve functioning.

One of the characteristics is the persistence of the symptoms 24 hrs/day with no end in sight (not even a "light at the end of the tunnel"). One person said its like having the flu which never goes away--at least with a virus or germs the body will eventually heal. Even though the source is biological it has the result of affecting you emotionally because your thoughts monitor the predicament and your hope suffers because you can't visualize a solution. You, in effect, become helpless to figure out your own dilemma. This inadequacy leads to lack of confidence in yourself and feeling worthless. If you've always been a responsible person you may even begin to feel guilty. Then pessimism could be right around the corner. Pessimism is a tendency to look at everything

negatively. One person commented that you become a different person. If your condition is chronic then its possible to lose sight of who you once were. Also, with your will power strained its possible to make bad decisions. If your behavior changes its good to get counseling so you don't go off in the wrong direction.

Depression is more that feeling blue (i.e. down in the dumps). It is also a matter of exhaustion and fatigue. It is not only psychological but physiological. You don't feel energetic and you may feel slowed down. It is not a matter of being deprived of calories because depression "depresses" the whole body. You feel fatigued all the time and its difficult to motivate yourself. Thinking can be tiring and making a decision may seem impossible. Concentrating and remembering things may be beyond your capabilities. You may feel restless and unable to focus. You may not be able to accomplish your work properly and could be ineffective in other areas. A mental burden weighs you down and it seems you must carry it wherever you go. Activities you previously enjoyed no longer interest you. Its like someone's turned on a low frequency wave generator which neutralizes all positive and meaningful expression and leaves the world with only superficial activity. Another symptom of depression is not sleeping very well or sleeping too much. Any solution for a Christian is contained in God's promises. This one is "he grants sleep to those he loves" (Psalm 127:2). Therefore, to overcome this concern "cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Road to Recovery

Recovery will take a different approach. "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, it will stand" (Proverbs 19:21). If you are genuinely depressed then grandiose plans are beyond your capabilities. "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (16:9). You need to take it one step at a time. Even taking a step can be baffling. You still have responsibilities but multi-tasking may be too difficult. The old saying "necessity is the mother of invention" applies. Deep in your heart man believes" (Romans 10:10). If you know in your heart something needs to be done then your mind won't mislead you. You can feel confident and at rest when you take that step. God does "enlarge my steps under me" (Psalm 18:36).

Accomplishing each manageable task satisfies. But if too much is attempted it disappoints. Its easy to become disappointed. Self-condemnation may result leading to thoughts of suicide. At the state employment office they interview a person before they send him out to a job interview. They want to determine if the applicant is qualified and don't want to waste the employer's time. But just as importantly they know that a person will become disappointed if he gets rejected for one job after another. You know the old saying "variety is the spice of life." Vary your activities and do things differently where applicable because one of the contributors to your depression may be too rigid a mind set and expecting too much of yourself.

At some point you must exercise your will power to give yourself a push to get going. But shelving this phase may reinforce not trying, and this attitude may become self-perpetuating. A rationale for it may be necessary. If you can apply your thought processes to solving a real-world problem then practical feedback will encourage you. If the project has a realistic application in your life then it will build you up because you perceive that you can succeed at something. It provides a direction to go in instead of around in circles without any goal. But without pacing yourself you'll "jump out of the frying pan and into the fire." You need periods of rest and exercise. Pushing yourself too hard unnecessarily for too long causes fatigue and loss of ground gained. You must have some realistic long term goals, but locking yourself into them prevents the freedom and flexibility you need to work yourself out of your depression. "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Professional Help

There are various causes of depression and it will take a doctor to diagnose it. The solution might involve a combination of medicine and counseling. An aspect of the latter is changing cognitive behavior. Stress is a major factor and its possible you precipitate it yourself as with a Type A personality who constantly pressures himself. If "survival of the fittest" is your motivation then stress is very likely to result. Jesus said "all who draw the sword will die by the sword"

(Matthew 26:52). "Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). But the answer is in the other direction for "whoever wants to save his life will lose it" (Mark 8:35). Counseling will give you the chance to change your behavior to alleviate stress and overcome depression. If you cooperate then God "will give you the treasures of [this] darkness" (Isaiah 45:13) for answers. You have the opportunity to learn the meaning of "you are not your own; you were bought at a price" (1 Cor 6:19-20).

Professional advice in pamphlets suggests not to make major life decisions without consultation. Does that mean depression makes your mind vulnerable as if "not running on all cylinders?" Research indicates that vulnerability could be due to imbalances in the brain neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine. Deficiency in the first may cause sleep problems, irritability and anxiety. The same in the second may contribute to fatigue and depressed mood. What's interesting is that when you read labels on memory enhancement supplements some ingredients are supposed to build up transmitters which cause brain cells to communicate with one another.

This communication takes place within the neuron or nerve cell. It takes place when an electrical pulse is transmitted along the cell's axon connected to another neuron. There are neurotransmitters stored in small vesicles which get released by the electric current into the synaptic gap between two neurons which activates the adjacent cell. These molecules are

then either destroyed by enzymes or reabsorbed into the neuron. But there is an antidepressant called SSRI which stands for **S**elective **S**erotonin **R**euptake **I**nhibitor. This antidepressant postpones the neurotransmitter's recycling so it can operate longer.

Treatment

One of the primary causes of depression is stress. But it can also have biological, genetic, or psychological sources. Therefore a doctor's diagnosis is essential. However, if it is complicated a misdiagnosis is possible. As a patient you are entitled to ask questions you might have and you should not hide any information which might be crucial. You should not be so cooperative that you just take drugs without thorough investigation. Going the wrong direction will just postpone a solution. You are entitled to becoming informed, but doctor's visits are costly. Printed material should be made available so you aren't kept "in the dark" and would worry all the more about what you don't understand.

Antidepressants are supposed to speed recovery by eliminating symptoms and enhancing motivation and energy. Therefore, drugs are not meant to be curative in themselves like an anti-biotic would be. Newer antidepressants target different or combined brain chemicals. A significant number of patients find relief within 6-8 weeks and most on the first or second drug tried. But a third may require further refinements. There are also side effects to consider. Most medication is approved for shorter

periods, but long term use depends on successful intervals without occurrences of depression. You see testimonies of people who find the correct drug and have to stay on it permanently. Its important to resolve the problem early because major depression is a recurrent illness and the more episodes you have, the worse they can get, and the less stress it takes to trigger them. But recent research has discovered that anatomical changes are reversible and complete recovery is possible.

The brain needs energy. It uses 20% of the body's supply, 50% of the sugar in the blood, 20% of all inhaled oxygen, and 25% of the body's metabolic activity takes place there. Proteins are crucial to the brain. They are composed of amino acids and there are ten essential ones obtained only from the diet. Foods contain different combinations of them but they must be balanced and over the limiting amount to prevent deficiencies of them. Lack of certain amino acids causes depression. You might think that gobbling up a lot of them will load up the brain. But there is a brain-blood-barrier that prevents water-soluble toxins from entering. Since most major brain nutrients are water-soluble this complicates things. For this reason, if you wanted to manufacture brain neurotransmitters you'd have to use precursor loading which involves eating more of the nutrients that the body converts to neurotransmitters.

In order to be processed efficiently these amino acids cannot be bound up in molecular chains but must

be in free form. A proper precursor is the chemical starting point for changes made which result in the desired neurotransmitter. Serotonin is an important end product. L-tryptophan is its precursor which, midway through its conversion process, becomes 5-hydroxytryptophan. Today there is a product called 5-HTP which represents this state and would create serotonin. Another important neurotransmitter is norepinephrine and a precursor to it is L-tyrosine which goes through a couple of conversions requiring additional chemical input. You can increase the effectiveness of the process by ensuring that the required vitamins (e.g. vitamin B6) and other ingredients are present. A factor to consider is that amino acids compete with one another for absorption by the body, so the precursors should be taken at different times to avoid conflict. However, self-medication may, at best, just be supplemental. Proper treatment should be by a doctor and possibly a therapist.

Cast Your Cares

What if your situation seems insoluble and you feel like giving up because you don't seem to have the strength to continue? Have you tried "casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you" (1Pe 5:7)? "Do not be anxious for your life" (Mt 6:25). Jesus instructed some in Smyrna to be "faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10). In a manner of speaking, Jesus cast his cares on God saying, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit" (Lk 23:46). These last two situations seem more

desperate than normal, but they illustrate the importance of the spirit as opposed to the flesh. Jesus promised that "the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (Jn 6:37). Anxiety is worry, being overly concerned, or excessive preoccupation. How do you know in what way God will care for you (1Pe 5:7)? "He cares for those who trust in him" (Na 1:7 NIV). "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken" (Ps 55:22).

Jesus said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it" (Mt 16:25). "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones" (Psalm 116:15). But our culture equates losing with not winning, or worse yet, not surviving. However, Paul asks, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win" (1Co 9:24). Therefore consider Jesus saying "whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it" (Mt 16:25). Surviving to some means doing just about anything to succeed, but to Jesus, saving your life means deference to what he has done for you. This framework for guidance says "whatever you do . . . do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col 3:7) "heartily, as for the Lord rather than men" (:23) "all to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31).