

*Throngs  
of  
Iniquity*

Misop Baynun

# Throngs of Iniquity

By

**Misop Baynun**

A picturesque, philosophical word path that converges with and depicts the author's life, as he sees it, through agitated, dismal, longing, hopeful, etc., etc., eyes. It's a story of pain and hope, as God perseveres in his tenacity to hold on to the hearts of those to whom he won't let go.

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"Throngs of Iniquity" - Misop Baynun

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## 1) Shape Without Color

So here I sit, riding on a purple bus. My visions claim no other lust than to ride on this eternal purple bus.

Who'll wait another stop for this, and throw their chains over your loud babbling mouth and convince you to derail with me?

But I can't. I haven't. I'm worse than the same. There is no cast to play its part. I lift their arms and throw their hearts into the shameless winds...

...which I detest, but under their cool breeze, that's where I rest.

I lie there alone. No one can touch me there. No one can even come near.

You laugh and talk and get along. You sit inside an empty bong, alone together.

Oh boy, oh boy - if only I could get so far away from myself and be happy like you.

There's only one thing worse than not knowing what's going to happen, what the outcome will be when you've made your move; and that's: not knowing if you have the balls enough to even make it - the move that is.

I saw a multicolored jungle gym.

Your mind drools like a mad dog for truth, doesn't it? If it doesn't, you may want it to someday. Your hands shake when she walks up to you. You smile like a goofy baboon and watch as she patronizes you one more time. Oh, but you're too smart. You've figured it out and got hard. Wear shades and lift weights till you look deformed. That's it. That's how to get 'em eating out of the palm of your hand. Now yell at her. For no good reason, just yell. Now you've got her.

If you're so freuqing happy, why do you seem so phony?

What is it with you? Why do you all taste like ice? I think I'd rather taste like two week-old fish than like ice.

And why am I mad that you taste like ice? It's not my problem or it shouldn't be.

Well maybe it should. Why not, you're in my freuqing world?

What do you think the world owes you: at least a blow job now and then – or if you're of the other sex, a good plowing?

Do you think you deserve to be worshipped, do you think you deserve to be killed; or do you go back and forth between the two?

Would you really let that arrogant bum-crevasse taste your tits right after he slaps the crap out of you? Why not, you can't get any better anyway? You're worthless.

No you're not. I'm just kidding. You're worth more than you can possibly imagine.

Freuq that; that sounds too corny. You're a snot in a piss bowl that needs to be flushed.

Okay, you're not again; but I don't know what you are – do you? Well, if you don't, maybe you should figure it out so we all won't have to deal with your ungrateful freuqing attitude and be crying all the time about what you deserve from this stinking world like I do.

Do you think like I do? I hope not, `cause you're probably freuqing miserable.

It's just so damn easy to sit back and watch everything rot around you; but to the man or woman who sees that rot and is oppressed by it, but still fights it and really attempts to cure it and not just label it...

...well there you have it. There you go.

But enough answers, we want to hear about the crap. God, we'd rather complain. Well so could I.

So what the hell is wrong with your parents? Oh, I'm sorry, enough people have complained about how lousy parents are. It's a tired subject. In fact I don't feel angry anymore. I feel a strange feeling. It's not boredom, but then again, maybe it is. Maybe it's the acceptance of boredom. Maybe I'm getting old or maybe I'm getting boring or maybe I'm getting mature.

I can actually enjoy myself at a coffee shop for hours on end.

I'm not eager to get off this bus and go out clubbing. Now that I've re-read everything up to this point, I no longer think I'm a good writer either.

But it's much safer to criticize yourself than wait for someone else to do it.

What the hell do you care what I think anyway? Who gives a freuq about anything (without trying to sound too pessimistic)? Everyone's so damn tangled up in their own little worlds, including myself, to give a freuq about anything - about God, about their grandmothers (like mine whom I haven't visited in the nursing home in two months), about their girlfriends.

You wouldn't die for your girlfriend, or your wife, would you? Of course you say, "Yes," but if you'd die for her, then why wouldn't you go out of your way to pick her up cigarettes when she needs them (even if they are going to kill her eventually)? You're too freuqing selfish. You don't care what she wants; you want what you can get from her in return for the cigarettes. If you bought `em for her, you'd want something back. You couldn't just give them to her just `cause she wanted them and not expect a

single thing in return could you – not even a smile, or a "Thank you," or that little glimmer in her eyes that keeps you around even though she treats you like crap?

Yeah, and you'd freuqing die for her. You're too freuqing insecure. You're afraid of being used. Let yourself be used – not really used in the most degrading sense of the word, but more like leaned on. Don't be so freuqing worried about it.

What gives me the right to swear at you? I'm a freuqing moron. But I shouldn't have to apologize for the way I'm thinking today, should I? It's my mind. I hate the way I think and talk and write. I don't think there's anything special here. I'm just writing so some psychologist can read it and see that I'm freuqed up and come and label my mental disorders – then I'll be happy.

What the freuq are these black bum-crevasses always walking around with one hand in one pocket for, as if they're ready to pull a knife any minute with their death stares painted on their ugly faces? Give it a rest, will you? It's so freuqing tired. (PS, I'm not prejudiced – I'll explain later.)

And these poor bums, the homeless, some have nothing left to give and we're too weak to help them. They're overgrown children, whose needs were never met and now they have few to no attractive or redeeming qualities that the average human can see. They're bothersome, annoying; they themselves are uncaring. They talk to you only to eventually lead up to the ominous words that they're doomed to say, "Could you spare a little change?" Sure it's only 80 cents, or 25 cents, but once they say those fateful words, no matter how much they need the change, they've sealed their fate – because the world is too damn tight to give and give freely. It can't do it (it's not just the money, it's emotionally too).

The bum is giving nothing emotionally because he has nothing left to give. He's feeding on a black void for his power. He's selfish and empty and stuck in a world that not only won't die for him, but it won't even smile at him. "Why not," you ask? It's because you receive nothing from this person from being in contact with him. He's a mosquito that's flying around your

head, or other exposed flesh areas, for one reason and one reason only: to get something from you, to con you into giving him something - either by his pitiful appearance or a smooth tongue or by being so annoying that you'd give him anything to get him out of your face. So you throw a quarter at him and speak coldly, `cause if you warm up he might want more - which he probably will. He'll recognize a sorry-hearted sucker when he sees one.

Is it fate or fault, and what exactly is fault? What is the way to be? Are the alcoholics right? They've found something enjoyable and use it to the fullest. Who's wiser: the man who marries and stays with his woman all her days and never strays, or the man who loves and leaves and has no chains on him? He hurts, but it may only make those he hurts stronger. He's more fun. He's free to screw any chick he wants to (if she agrees of course). But the married man, he must be patient. He must stay with the woman he marries. But what if he chose the wrong woman? What if the woman he marries... he later realizes that he married her because he was lonely and he was afraid that he'd always be alone for the rest of his life if he didn't marry her?

I'd swear you have to be stupid in order to fit in. You have to talk about the most earthly, boring things. If I want to talk about the Spirit of God, I'm a freuqing madman; but if I want to talk about the rising tax on a 12 pack, well there's a basis for a conversation. Now we're blood brothers for life.

But I don't want to talk about the Spirit of God either, `cause six-eighths of the time I'm far away from him and would much prefer to talk about the glory of a woman's butt than anything. `Cause at the time, that's where I'm at.

There really are few things as beautiful as a woman's butt, or I should say, a well-fit woman's butt. It's perfect. It's gorgeous. It bounces so prettily, so sumptuously across the floor.

Lust - we'll wait on lust. It's too big to tackle right now.

But marriage, marriage is big - at least it should be. You're becoming one flesh. Why would you become one flesh with the wrong girl? I think it's

better to be alone than to marry your second choice. There are many cases when your second choice becomes your first; but to marry someone you know isn't your soul mate, why do it? You'll probably only regret it, but then again maybe you'll grow to love her first.

But I think we give up too easily these days. We want the quick way out: instant results, instant relief – satisfaction at a hand signal.

Abraham waited till he was one hundred years old before he had a son [with his wife Sarah]. I'm sure he thought the whole thing was a little ridiculous (though he might not have). To wait till you're one hundred for the thing you want more than anything, and he really wanted a son; but the thing of it is... he got one – two actually, I think (I forget, read the story yourself in Genesis).

Oh, I'm sorry, you don't read the Bible.

We all have our long, sad, angry stories why religion turns us off.

Who the freuq is talking about religion? I'm talking about God.

But then again, who wants to talk about God? He's too imposing.

Sometimes I wish I didn't (I pause, can I really complete this sentence – I'm scared to; if I say it, I don't really mean it, I mean in a way it might be easier, though I know it really wouldn't be in the long run) know him (I did it, God, forgive me – I really don't mean it; I love you, but let me go on), `cause I could do whatever I want and not feel bad about it.

I always used to dance around this topic `cause I wanted to be close to God and still do whatever I wanted, but one hinders the other – sin and God that is. You can't enjoy sin fully with God around, and you can't enjoy God fully with sin around, so pick one or the other.

But even if you pick God, you can still sin. That's the nature of the beast. We're all beasts. But don't we love it when someone who claims to be a Christian, or close to God, falls? It makes us feel a little more credible for leading such pointless lives.

We're all freuqing hypocrites; we all believe in higher things than we can attain.

No, I'm sorry, we're not all hypocrites; more of us are cowards and self-absorbed.

But if we're cowards and self-absorbed, why is that?

Thank God I haven't felt accepted by this world or I might be like it – not that I feel better than the world, though sometimes I do. That's when I'm at my worst, or maybe I'm at my worst when I feel I'm worse than it.

But my beer is low and I'm trying to figure out whether I have enough money to spare to buy my third.

It's tiring to think so much. The "Sox" are on the TV. Watching baseball can be a bit boring at times. I don't feel like writing anymore.

I'm lonely, as often I am. I had a brief high of writing these last few pages – which is good. Man should work and work hard in order to stay sane and not have too much time on his hands to feel sorry for himself.

But I'm about to anyway. I feel it coming on; but it can be good for you too, if you do it the right way – like in prayer.

I use God and prayer like I use beer or naked women, though prayers are a bit more productive, to help to deal with the pressure. I lie down and sulk before my maker. He seems to be the only one who doesn't get sick of me. I curl up in my bed in the fetal position and pout and cry and scream in pure agony of this dismal life – and I believe it works.

Oh the wise man changes his position on his vinyl comfy chair and positions his hand as if he's holding a drumstick. He formulates an intriguing jumble of sound waves, choosing very good words but putting them all in the wrong places of the sentence – all to refute the power of prayer, but hey.

I'm a cheap bastard, I just realized. The waitress took my beer and there was an ant's piss worth on the bottom, but I asked for the beer back to

finish – what a prick. She smiled anyway. And that's the answer to it all: to smile when someone is being a prick to you – because they're probably only being a prick because of overwhelming circumstances. All they need is someone to brake the circle, the vicious circle that rules America, and very few have the strength, or the whatever, to brake it.

I'm going to eat my corn muffin now. I told the waitress I was amazed at how she was taking care of the whole place so well. I never would have complimented her if she didn't smile when I acted like a prick, but she started a chain of goodness that started with a smile. Later, she came back and said, "Thank you for saying that." She then went behind the bar, feeling good `cause of what I said (I assume), and made a warm friendly comment to someone at the bar. The whole bar laughed in a chorus of relief; and I started thinking, "These guys, that earlier inspired me to write the part about, 'You have to be stupid to fit in,' were some really great guys – goodhearted men out enjoying a 'Sox' game," all because of one smile.

I've been redeemed by that smile. It changed my whole mood. Now, in the matter of ten minutes, I'm seeing the good in the people around me instead of the bad – and they can feel from me that I'm seeing the good in them and in return see the good in me. It's that freuqing simple.

But just as the last dismal circle was broken, I'm sure this good circle will be broken soon enough (but only if I let them break it).

I wonder what it will be. What will trigger me into my depression again? Just writing these last sentences opens me up to letting depression have its way with me again.

Where is stability? Where is the man who can be happy for more than an hour at a time? I'd like to hang out with him – though maybe I wouldn't. Happy people can be pretty boring and annoying when you're in the throes of self-pity.

There is a beautiful blonde at the other table distracting me a bit. I call her blonde, but I call all girls with light brown hair blonde – she's sandy blonde. But anyway, she's with three guys in white shirts. They all must work at some restaurant.

She's very sexually attractive, very feminine; but I'm (well I don't know if I should write this) ... in love - have been for three and a half years (with the same girl I might add). It's kind of pathetic `cause we're not even dating, but she feels like the one (more on her later).

Why later? `Cause I'm sick of talking and thinking about her so much. It's time I do something about it instead of burdening you with another long boring story about unquenched love.

I'm listening to the battle of the bad one-liners at the bar. It seems to play all you have to do is yell something stupid and unfunny. Then the person spoken to must let out a phony (or at least it looks phony - it would have to be, it was such a stupid joke) laugh, and say something louder and less interesting in return.

But I shouldn't be so bitter towards them. What do I think ... I'm freuqing above them? (But I still wish they'd shut up - God bless their souls, and God bless mine.)

Freuq you, you bum-crevasse. Well, it's time to leave this Howard Johnson's bar. I don't think I'll be missed if I go.

Why don't I just become like the man at the bar who's been acting out his phony manly mannerisms for so long that they actually seem natural now? It's easy to act like him, and I often do.

The mindless macho bum-crevasse approach, it feels pretty good when you're so drunk that you don't realize what a bum-crevasse you look like.



## 2) Blow Cool, O Merciless Winds

The shameless merciless winds blow cold again. They give no mercy to the beaten battered women. They show no pardon for the tenderhearted children. In fact, they seem to prefer them. The weak are pushed lower. They wear their broken hearts on their sleeves for the whole world to see, and see it they do. To the merciless winds it's a bull's eye. To the heartless it's a stuffed doll to hold up for their equally heartless or cowardly mate.

Is there no mercy; is there no shelter from this wind?

Why must we break so easily? Or even worse, to be broken so much that we become so hardened that nothing is let close enough to break us.

Why when you go into a McDonald's in the city, you look around you and everyone seems crazy? Put the same people in some rural town and they would be locked up.

But there's too many in the city. We're all living like dogs, like animals: food, sex, pleasure, pride... survival.

Whose fault is it though; or is it better to live like an animal?

I don't mind it sometimes. At least you know where you stand. You're out for yourself and so are they - nothing phony about it. It's clear and simple.

You don't trust anyone. You don't show any mercy or expect any. You don't have to go through all the emotional bullcrap of reaching out. You just are.

You are miserable, but at least you can't lose anything. When you're at the bottom you can't lose anything.

You loathe your own life, so whom do you fear? You don't fear because there is nothing anyone can take from you. Now you finally know who you are - you're scum and proud of it. I think I'd rather be looked upon as scum and feel like scum and not care how I'm looked upon, than to be in fear of how I'm looked upon. That's hell, to walk on eggshells for the pitiful task of being accepted by man. Who cares?

But it seems like this: ... well, my train of thought was broken because my roommate asked me to sign our leaving the apartment papers. Anyway, I wouldn't want to bore you with one topic for more than twenty seconds, so off to the subject of the three-legged dog ballet.

Or better yet, I'll re-read the last few pages.

Well, I got halfway and thought to myself: ...

Where is pleasure? Where is my peace? Where is my cup flowing over? Where is my wife? Where is my acceptance in the world, my place, my security... my place of honor? Or not even that, where's my mate? That's what I want - a mate, a shapely woman to enjoy. Well, she don't have to be shapely, but she does have to be the only girl in the world for me (if there is such a thing).

I talked to an old ex-hippie security guard once, and he was telling me about his many wives of old. I asked him which one of his wives, (he had had three), if any, did he feel was his soul mate. He said none of them; the only one he felt that way about was a woman he never married.

Genius - freuqing genius! "Why didn't you wait for her and marry her?" I thought. "What are you afraid of being happy?"

That very well may have been. I'm scared to death of being happy. I'm too used to being miserable. I wouldn't be able to feel bad for myself anymore or brag about how tough my life is.

Plus, the less you have, the less you've got to lose. It's safe on the bottom `cause you can't fall.

But what I wouldn't give for a little sex right now. Well, my desire isn't as strong as it can be `cause I'm a little closer to God these days and am dwelling a bit more in the Spirit that releases a lot of lust's grip.

Plus, if you let yourself dwell on it, it can get a hold on you.

But sex would be great right now. Sex with the only woman in the world for me would be freuqing grand.

But God knows if that will ever happen. Why not – why the freuq not? I was about to go on and pout but I caught myself.

Marriage – is it okay to screw a girl if you're not married? What a laugh it is to, even, ask the question; of course it is. What are you honestly going to wait till you're twenty-seven, when you finally get married, to screw a chick (or more romantically stated, to make love to her)? Come on; get realistic.

Well why not marry younger, that way you can release your juices freely within the confines of monogamy?

It seems to make a lot more sense.

When you sleep with someone (or so you don't misunderstand, I should say screw someone), in a very real sense you're becoming one flesh. You're becoming one. Why become one with the girl that doesn't even attract you until you've had two 6 packs, and then she looks kind-a cute after all? You know you could give a freuq about her. (Well maybe that's the only thing you could give her.)

You become one with her anyway `cause it'll feel good, but the pain that takes place after joining together with the one you don't want, the separation that takes place, the shallowness, may make it not worth it.

If you don't feel bad after, you're probably shallow from doing it with anything with two tits and a hole – numb from past experience or denying that it doesn't feel right.

Or maybe it does feel right to you. Maybe it is all right.

Maybe there's nothing wrong with it. You're both mutually getting your kicks – no harm done. You're fulfilling a natural desire. In fact, it's unnatural not to have sex.

But this is all kind of trivial when you're holding a gun to your head.

I was going to go on about how the family suffers because of the sexual freedom we exercise, and how we don't try to find or wait for our soul

mate, the one we'd rather be with than anyone, because it's too much effort. Just have shallow meaningless relationships with people of the opposite sex you don't really care that much about. It's much easier that way.

But hey, what do I know? I'm sitting here alone.

I must spend more time alone than anyone I know.

There are some a lot more alone than I am, I must admit, but that doesn't help me much when I'm still alone.

Sometimes I prefer it. A lot of the time I prefer it. Probably `cause I'm selfish, and most people expect a certain amount in return for what they give, and I generally don't equal anyone's efforts. I want them to act exactly the way I want them to; but that's how we choose our friends. I choose the ones that can deal with me being a bum-crevasse. Usually they're bum-crevasses themselves, that's why we get along.

But this section is getting screwy about friends. I love my friends. I have some of the best in the world. In this respect I'm lucky; but I've been so boring and miserable and poor lately that I'm straining my ties, and then I feel lousy. So it's best, for now, to be alone.

`Cause the only one I really want to be with right now is the only girl in the world for me. But she's not here and I don't want to see her either, I want to marry her but not see her.

It's so tiring calling her up, talking about nothing for two minutes and seeing her for two hours once a week or so `cause she's so busy. I don't want to have casual conversation with her; I want to be with her all through the day, every day, until I get sick of her. I want to get sick of her because I know I love her so much I'd never leave her. But to be in the position where I actually could get sick of her for a while, that would be great.

But instead of being with her I think I'll go beat off.

Well, I did it, and afterwards I went into a deep depression.

I felt incredibly low, looking for some way, no praying for something to put an end to the overwhelming feelings of despair that attacked me: Like nothingness suffocating me, drowning me in my own inadequacies, afraid of the future, scarred by the past, reeling in blood spurting agony, or more of a deep blackness, a numbing of all the senses that sense joy and satisfaction, a lightless void where colorless, tasteless, soundless masses are piling on top of me weighing me down.

This lasted quite a long time. Its companionship I could not escape, like an annoying acquaintance not getting the hint that it's time for them to leave.

I prayed, "God, let something happen to get me out of this pure emotional agony."

My agony continued until my alarm clock went off and the song was rocking (Boston's "Peace of Mind" song). So I thought maybe if I crank the big stereo I'd feel better.

So then I thought maybe if I shoot heroin I'd feel better – just kidding.

But the music helped, and a few phone calls came to distract me from how miserable I was and so on...

...till I finally got enough courage to order a pizza.

Slowly but surely I came from utter blackness to just blackness, but it's a step in the right direction.

Now some may say, "Utter blackness, my eye," but they don't know unless they have had the privilege of being me. Some would say, "Until you're starving and homeless you can't complain," but that's stupid. It's not stupid to complain when you're starving and homeless (or maybe we shouldn't complain about anything), but it's stupid to think the physical needs are the only things that can depress you. Others will judge, even, degrees of emotional pain.

You say you feel like killing yourself `cause your girlfriend left you. Someone might answer you, "Look, my wife of ten years left me and my dog hates me too, so you don't know pain you pussy."

But maybe your pain is greater than his pain. Maybe he really didn't mind seeing his wife go and his dog was a pain in the butt anyway. Maybe you loved that girl like you've never loved anything in the world; and maybe you're not strong enough to deal with the pain.

Never belittle anyone's pain, even if they're "daddy's little girl" living in a mansion.

Though some people do overdo it unnecessarily, but who's to know who's faking and who's on the edge, so be careful.

Why do you think Jesus says, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged." Probably `cause we're not equipped to judge, we don't see everything.

Once I had lain out in the sun for fifty minutes and got a bad burn. For three days after, I was in intense itching pain. I considered killing myself to end the pain - not really though.

My roommate saw me jumping around, running from room to room looking for anything to put on my skin (mainly my chest was in pain) to relieve me. He said, "God forbid you should get a real burn." He has olive skin. I have very light skin. Also, I hadn't lain out in about four years. He has no idea what I'm feeling `cause he can only judge by what fifty minutes of sun would do to him.



### 3) Prelude to Life

So here I sit – not happy not sad, not depressed but nor elated either.

Tomorrow's the day my life changes, the day when three and a half years of emotional hell comes to a conclusion.

I plan to ask the only girl in the world for me to marry me.

Why do people still fall in love after all these years? You'd think we'd learn.

Love is for the weak, the sappy... the emotionally incomplete.

Or maybe it's for the strong. To be able to pursue what you see to be true love, to deal with the rejection and get up and come back for more until you're so strong that even if they spit in your face you'd still love them.

Are these the actions of a pathetic masochist or the sign of true Godlike (but not quite) love?

Don't misunderstand me. I don't mean invite them to spit on your face, or after they do, stick around and immediately apologize for your face accidentally getting in the way of their saliva.

But now it's later. I've finished my work for the day: The work of mending lost loves, the work of following an ex-girlfriend for a friend, to help reunite them – for money of course.

I'm alone in my room, wondering what tomorrow will bring. This may be the last night I can ever get to swim in self-pity because of my not being joined to my other half.

Tomorrow may bring the first day of a new life. Don't I deserve to be happy? Don't I deserve the girl that I would give anything to see her happy?

Whether she says yes or no, I'll still be relieved `cause at least I'll have asked her.

That's my philosophy with women. Be as good as you can to them without being bothersome. Let her know how you feel (honestly but not desperately). Then you'll never feel guilty for having treated them wrongly; you'll know you did your best until it was time to go on.

Then when you've left, they'll miss you and come back to you – hopefully.

You may have to repeat the process quite a few times, but it may work in the long run.

But most importantly, ask God for what you want. Why not enlist the power of the hands that can shake the earth and startle the moon? Why not depend on the hands that created you: the hands that have woven your brain together strand by strand and then let you think on your own, the hands that created your desire to love and have sex and to become one with another person? These are the hands that can touch you. This is the God that knows you better than you know yourself, the God that wants you to be satisfied more than you, yourself, desire to be so; so why not ask God for help?

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

(Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV version)

In fact, maybe a lot of the grief you're going through, now, may only be happening so as to force you, or at least convince you, to fall on your face before your maker.

Dear Lord, make my dreams come true.



## 4) Pockets of Eternity

"Did you see a lot of crap in Vietnam?" I asked.

He just walked away crying. He broke down into tears. We were talking calmly and then I asked that question. He was saying how the military is no good.

This man fought for our country and now is all freuqed up.

Everywhere I turn I see horror. Every time I get up on my emotional crutches and reach out and do something to try to make things better, some wise butt kicks one of my crutches out.

Is there no hope at all, no shortening of the days of torture? How long can you be miserable? How many terrible things can be piled up on you before you snap?

Well, I finally called her. I made up my mind to ask her to be my one and only forever.

She picked up the phone and said she'd call me right back.

She did, Hallelujah; she called back. To hear her sweet voice again was pure joy.

She proceeded to tell me that she and her ex-boyfriend were fighting.

"Why?" I thought to myself; but before I could let my mind wander and

dream up reasons like she told him that she only wants to be with me and will do anything to attain my hand in marriage, she told me, "I'm seeing someone."

Freuqing great...

...she doesn't see anyone (as far as I know) for about eight months, and the same freuqing day I call her up to see if I can ask her to marry me, she decides to tell me she's seeing someone. And to rub alcohol in an open wound she adds, "It's got potential."

What gorgeous freuqing timing – I should have guessed; nothing she ever does fits into my plan of events.

The only way to predict what she's going to do is to expect the opposite of what you think she's going to do, but even this doesn't work. Once you expect the opposite, she does what you originally expected.

It hit me hard, but didn't knock me down. I continued the conversation very politely, knowing in the back of my mind that next time I see her I would have to make my move.

I've waited too long. We've sat staring at each other for what seemed like pockets of eternity, but was really more like a good thirty seconds.

Our eyes transcend any words we speak or actions we make. They meet on the deepest level any two human eyes can meet, and she is the only one in the world my eyes have met in such a way.

I don't want to lose her. I honestly believe that she is the only woman that I'll ever love.

I've tried dating other girls, some of them gorgeous too. It can be a bit fun and a little of an ego-boost, but there's nothing there. I feel like I'm lying to these girls as I stare into their eyes. They can't dig as deeply as Beyonda's eyes can. Her eyes touch my very soul.

It's her eyes that have kept me on my unswerving mission for the last three and a half years. It's her eyes that call me home. I see a home in her eyes. I

honestly don't believe there is another girl in the world that will ever feel like home other than her.

I'm not desperate. At least I don't feel it now. There have been times when I've felt desperate in my attempts to win her affections, but now I feel somewhat confident. Probably `cause since the day I met her I've prayed my little heart out for her.

Sometimes I have so much faith in God that I look at life's setbacks and laugh, knowing God's only toying with me for my own benefit. Other times I don't see the long-term plan and feel like a dog wounded on the pavement beneath the summer's hot sun.

But I've never loved anything on this earth more than I love Beyonda.

I've spent hours weeping in prayer. I don't mean cumulative hours, then it would be more like days, but I mean hours at a time.

Weeping, not only because she wasn't mine, but more for her soul's happiness, more `cause I want to see her happy more than see anything in the world.

Even if she hates my guts, I still want to see her happy – and her child as well.

The trouble is my actions haven't always shown this attitude. You can get pretty freuqed up ideas on how to act towards the one you love. You see other men being selfish and jealous and demanding toward their women, and you figure that's the way to go.

Or you see someone being pussy-whipped, a wimp who will put up with any crap she throws at you just to keep her around.

I've gone through my share of both, but just when I've finally gotten to the point where I think I've found how to get along with her, it all blows up in my face.

If I'm close to God, we get along great. She may not realize that's the reason, but when I'm close to God I can be loving, understanding, patient,

confident and helpful; but when I'm not close to God I'm selfish, jealous, childish, insecure and worse.

Before I thought childishness was what she wanted. Maybe I thought she enjoyed a good fight, but now I know that was wrong.

Am I too late? Have I ruined any chance of us ever being happy together?

I know we could be extremely happy together. All I need is to know that she really loves me and it will all come so easily.

That's why I decided I wanted to marry her. If we were married and she said, "I'm tired, I want to go to bed," I'd know I'd see her in the morning and wouldn't get upset `cause I know she loves me and she's probably really tired.

As it stands now, I don't know for sure how she feels. So I could take the same situation to mean that obviously I'm not that important to her, so she can go freuq off – which is not good.

If we both expressed that we loved each other, it would be easy to deal with bad moods, hot tempers, even what seems to be flirting.

I almost feel like I can deal with her moods now, but only `cause I've been close to God.

I finally don't feel nervous with her either, maybe a little sometimes, but I'm not threatened by her bitchiness anymore. I can deal with it – even laugh at it. I've learned by dealing with my mother who can be bossy and bitchy herself.

Not that I want Beyonda to be bossy and bitchy, but I'll love her no matter how she acts.

I've put her through the true test of love. I've pictured her old, fat, bald, crippled, gray-haired, diseased and having no confidence or self-esteem – ugly and weak; and believe it or not, I still loved her. There is no other woman I've ever met that has passed this true love test of mine.

In fact, sometimes I wish she wasn't so beautiful so other men who didn't really care for her wouldn't always be sniffing around her fine butt.

So many times she's been inches away from my reach and yet I've neglected to touch her. She probably thinks I'm gay. We've been right there staring at each other alone with romantic music on the tape player, but there we stayed (frozen from attaining what we, or at least I, really wanted), a perfect moment stolen by demons that couldn't stand to see two people who really love each other come together.

But to blame it on demons instead of myself would be wrong. It's hard to finally attain what you've wanted for so long.

There have been times in the past when it seemed that she and I were growing closer and closer, but I got scared, even though I had been chasing after her for about three years up to that point. Once it was right in front of my face, once it was so close that I could taste the sweetness of her lips, I got sidetracked (sidetracked by my freedom and the pleasures of dating many women). But now I'm sure that I want her, more than I am sure that the world is round. I've never walked around the world and wound up in the same spot, but I have seen this woman under every light known to man and have gone through many situations of good and bad and finally am sure that I want to marry her. She's the only girl I could marry and still be free with. I'd get the best of everything.

She is the most wonderful woman I've ever met. She holds in her soul the essence of beauty. She is to me, honestly speaking, the most beautiful girl in the world; but surprisingly enough, her soul is more beautiful.

Her heart is what I want. To make love to her would be heaven. To know that she is mine for the rest of my life would be better than being able to screw the most beautiful women in the world at my slightest whim - which happens to be the case. I would even give my own life to see her happy; and I would never harm her even if she didn't want to see me again. Even if she tried to kill me, I'd find something cute in the way she was holding the gun.

Well, I've done it again. I've made a huge long speech that may get me nowhere. Tons of words jumbled together for what - where will they get me? Well, just for the hell of it... let me try one more time.

...

Words, words, they all suck. I can't find a single word to express what I want to.

Is there a lawyer of love that could take her to court and convince her to love me?

I give up.

My love falls to the floor before her and lets out a horrendous scream. A scream that says in the deepest way that these words can be said, and if they were really heard the way they were meant and understood to the fullest of their meaning, the world would stop on its axis, the trains would come to a halt, the babies would stop crying, the children would stop playing in the school yards and put down their kick balls and Frisbees, the actors on the soap operas would put down their scripts full of petty little arguments, the cats would stop licking themselves and look up, the dogs would pull their heads in from the windows of speeding cars so they could hear, the cockroaches would crawl out from under last night's dirty dishes, even at the risk of their own lives, and I would put down my pen and stop writing such stupid things, all to hear the words I say to her...

"I LOVE YOU."



## 5) Nnne

I'm exhausted. It took every last ounce of emotional energy I have to write all these things down and then think about them.



## 6) Loves Result

I don't think anything takes more out of you than putting yourself forth to people - reaching out. Especially when you're not used to doing it, you feel naked. I think it would be easier to storm the beaches of Iraq in battle than to bear your soul to the one you love, especially if you're not sure how they'll respond.

Over the last couple of days I reached out to people all around me more than I have in the last two months.

I gave so much that when I was finished I felt like I had nothing left to give, like my emotional gumball machine had ran out. But just when I had given out all I could, I started receiving. God gave me the strength and love to give so I could get in return.

I was scared, scared that what I wrote to Beyonda wasn't good enough. Like I could have written it better or I should have given her more of what I wrote, or that I should have taken a different approach altogether.

But I rested in the fact that I put it all in God's hands.

I said to God, "Don't let me do anything that you don't want me to and guide me in every step I take." I trusted him with it. Sometimes I still felt uneasy, but I know my life is in his hands. I did my part the best I could. I'm no genius who can use just the right words to persuade her to love me. I just told her how I felt to the best of my abilities and then left it up to God. I hope she sees my heart and not my vocabulary.

But she knows for sure that I love her. At least I hope she believes me.

I feel so naked after giving her what I wrote. It's so hard to be honest; or was I honest enough.

Maybe I should have kept it simpler. There's nothing harder.

I felt relieved after I gave her my words of love.

I rang her bell – she wasn't home, but after about one minute she drove up. She looked in so much pain. She said she wasn't in the mood for company and I said I only came by to give this portion of a book I'm writing [the "Pockets of Eternity" Chapter], and said it's about us. She said, "Oh good, I can't wait to read it; I'll go read it right now." Then she put her hand to her head. She started crying, and said she couldn't go ten minutes without crying. I hugged her and asked what's wrong. She said she'd talk about it later and she'd call me after the weekend. I said read it and take your time. I didn't want to pressure her. She was under enough pressure as it was. She looked at me with those sweet eyes again and I left. It pained me to see her in so much pain.

So I did my part. All I can do now is pray she sees through all those stupid words and sees that I love her and she loves me.

I'm very relieved to have given it to her, but still am very excited to hear what she'll say.

Over the last two days, as I said before, I really was trying to think of others more than myself. Instead of just talking to people about exactly what I want to talk about and ending the conversation when I didn't want to talk anymore, I listened to people.

I guess what turned it around was a visit to my mother. We were chatting and she started talking about something I didn't want to talk about, so I just shut down. She told me, "You do that too much. And if you do it to people in the outside world you're going to have problems because not everyone loves you and understands you like your friends and family; and to do it to us is bad because it's impolite and almost like a slap in the face."

So we talked about what was going on in my life and how I was feeling and we got closer.

Then almost everyone I ran into I got along with, which is strange for me.

I actually visited my grandmother. I was talking to my friends and listening too.

My roommate's little girl who usually avoids me was playing with me. I reached out to her and made her feel good by looking her in the eyes or smiling or complimenting her, or being understanding when she wanted to play more and I didn't (but I did anyway `cause I was thinking of her). The girl that once said, "I hate you," to me, now couldn't get enough of me. She'd pout if anyone suggested she stop playing with me. This hasn't happened to me for a long time, and it felt good.

I felt God was in on all these things. I cried for his help while I was in agony. He sent things my way that I needed to be sent, as well as him being with me himself.

Sometimes nothing in the outside world is sent my way, I just feel God's Spirit filling me with love. But he also uses people and things and songs and little girls to get his point across.

Point being: he loves me and doesn't really like to see me in pain; but sometimes pain is necessary in order to be able to appreciate true happiness and not take it for granted. Pain is also necessary to make me realize I need God and cry out for help.

Oh the poor soul who never gets anything taken away from him, `cause he may never learn to depend on God, and even may put God way out of his life and never learn how to properly deal with blessing.

So I say there is hope. There is a God. There is happiness. I don't even know if Beyonda will return my love, but I feel good now anyway. I feel strong, like I might even be able to be stable for a while: to be able to follow God more closely, to obey his way, to love others and to love God and put him first, to put my life in his hands, to share in the joy that Christ bought for me on the cross, to accept forgiveness, to accept love and give love.

My pain was not suffered in vain. I see it was necessary for me. If I hadn't gone so low, I never could be able to get so high.

I see my blessings as blessings, not as if I deserve them.

I see the people who love me as precious, not as annoyances.

I see the angry and understand for I was once there, and may be again.

But maybe it's time for God to bless me. I don't know. I feel like he already has, and I'm truly grateful. I thank him, and I'm not getting high on myself, as I would have in the past if things were going well, thinking of no one else but me or my happiness or my pain.

To follow Christ does work. It is not a false thing. It's the true way to happiness; and deep down, maybe very, very deep down, I believe we all want to be happy - and God agrees.



## 7) Letter

I just wanted to write to you and tell you how happy I was after you called me Wednesday.

The reason I, so quickly, apologized for the letter ["Pockets of Eternity"], and tried to make light of it, was only because I was scared to death that it might have scared you away from me.

I never wrote anything more honest than that letter. I meant every word of it.

I still feel the same way. Nothing will ever change how I feel about you. I will love you forever.

When you didn't call me Monday, I kind of let my mind run wild with lies.

I started to picture you throwing big parties and passing the letter around having a great laugh.

Well, I really didn't think you were doing that, but I was getting apprehensive.

Just as you had no idea I felt this way, I had no idea how you would respond.

When you called, I was caught off guard. I didn't think you were even going to call me at all. I thought that maybe the depth of my love for you might have pushed you away.

That's the reason I went to Connecticut (forgive my spelling) to mix my band's tape. So I could have some back up. Something to show you (to win you over) if the letter didn't do what I hoped it would do.

But as it turned out, you liked the letter. I was shocked. When you invited me over, I was too shocked to even think that I could cancel my session of mixing the tape in Connecticut (which I only was rushing to do because of you) and come over and talk about what I'd rather talk about more than anything in the world, us.

If you had asked me to cancel it, I would of in a heartbeat.

You are far more important to me than my music.

If you ever needed me and I said I was busy with a gig at the Worcester Centrum to open for the Rolling Stones, all you'd have to do is make it very clear to me that you really needed me and I would run to you and forget about the show.

Maybe you weren't upset at all with me for not being available on Wednesday, but I don't want you to think (that I think) things are just casual between us. To me, you really are the most important thing in the world. I just wasn't thinking straight when you called. I honestly was in a state of shock.

One of my biggest fears in life is the fear of disappointing you. I never want to disappoint you or Emma. If I could read your mind, I'd bend over backwards to make you happy – but I can't read your mind, so I'm bound to screw up sometime. Please tell me if I ever disappoint you, so I can try and to correct my mistakes and make you happy. That's all I really want is to see you really happy. `Cause if you're happy, I'm happy.

And speaking of happiness, last Wednesday was about the happiest day of my life. I was drunk with happiness. I drove to Connecticut thanking God from the bottom of my heart that there was a chance of you and me being together at last. I cried tears of sheer joy that after I bore my heart and soul to you and stood naked before you, that you did not push me away.

I can't express, in words, the depth of the happiness I felt. It's not the chasing of you that I enjoy, it's the hope that someday the chase will be over and I will catch you... the hope that we could be at peace and in love with each other.

If I knew I had all of your love and knew that you were dedicated to me and reassured me every day of this truth, even when I disappoint you or not act my best or act childish, selfish or depressed (that you would still make me sure that you love me and weren't going to leave me or shut

down on me and act like you don't want anything to do with me), then I would be the happiest, most productive man in the world.

To be sure (beyond a shadow of a doubt) that your love was always there, no matter what, would give me such peace of mind. You have the power to make me happy or miserable; I hope you choose the former.

I want to be close to you. I want to relate to you the way these letters show I feel in person. I don't want to be casual with you, and not express how much I love you as much as possible.

I want to be drunk with our love.

I care so much about you, Beyonda. I feel things I've never felt before. When I saw you last Friday and gave you the ["Pockets of Eternity"] letter, seeing you in such pain killed me. I was in pain `cause you were in pain. When I called you this Friday, and it seemed like you were having a bad day and trouble with your car, it really bothered me.

I want to be there for you, and have you there for me.

When I called you (earlier on) Friday morning at about 10:30, and you weren't there, I was really concerned that you were all right.

I never felt this much for anyone before.

I feel like a changed man over the course of the last week or so. I feel really strong and good - close to God, close to my friends and family. All my priorities are changing.

When before, all I wanted was fame and success, now I find myself wanting love more than anything (especially your love).

I dream of how sweet life would be with you as my wife. That's all I've been able to think about lately.

Please let me into your heart, I've been on the outside for so long. I'm going crazy waiting for your love.

So if you ever reach out to me, and I don't respond the way you'd like me too, just remember that if I knew how you wanted me to respond, I would respond the way to make you the happiest. Always remember that my love for you will never end, and you are the only one who could ever have my love in this way.

A lot of people have told me that true soul mate love only happens once in a lifetime, and that most people screw it up and end up never loving again the way they loved that one person.

I don't want that to happen to us, if you feel the way I do.

So let's get together and talk face to face; and please have patience with me. You're all that I want, and it's frightening to finally get what you've wanted for so long.

It may be difficult at first to transfer these written feelings into spoken words on the phone or in person or in actions, so just remember they are true feelings and will always be true, even if at first I have trouble showing them in person - which I hopefully won't.

Just give me time and patience and love; we can grow closer together - if you feel like I do, which I pray you do.

All my love forever,

Misop



## 8) Thawing of Deliverance

Whose hands would shake on such a night  
That precedes the cadence of delight  
Or introduce the sharpest knife  
"Brandished love recoiled"

I sit here calmly. I sit here with God. If all goes well tomorrow, I will see Beyonda and find out if she'll marry me. Things are looking on the upside. I brought her flowers last night with a note saying...

"Beyonda, I love you,  
Misop"

I figured enough had been said in my two letters, so I kept it simple.

I wonder what she's thinking. I wonder if she wants me as badly as I want her. God, I pray she's mine forever, starting tomorrow - or even tonight.

The Lord is good. My life has changed so much. God has taken over, only because I let him, and showed me what it's all about: what love really is and to treasure it, what mercy is and to give it, and in turn to receive it.

Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

(James 2:12-13, NIV Version)

Once you start to try to obey God and his commands, you begin to realize that they are the perfect outline for joy in life. Yes, for suffering too, but the joy outweighs the suffering.

This world really seems to fit the description of the end times...

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth—men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

(2 Timothy 3:1-9, NIV Version)

...or at least in America – though maybe all over, I haven't been around the world as of yet. I guess neither did Jesus travel around the world, but his words have the power to reach any man in the world who will hear him.

There are so many people who feel they have found the true meaning of life but have not. And there are so many who have found no meaning at all: No all encompassing purpose, no loving Father guiding even when things look terrible, no feeling that these are purposeful occurrences leading to the terrific, beautiful ending authored by God. The dogs of life – even worse than dogs, for dogs usually have love and shelter and food. This is more than a lot of us have at times (especially love).

When we feel unworthy of love, few efforts of kindness are taken as such. We transform a gesture of mercy into a patronizing pat on the head. Our pride snarls to scare such belittling behavior away.

To convince someone who feels loveless that they are loved is a mammoth task of patience and hardship. (Or it could be simple, but it takes the Spirit of God to be in me working before I can be of much use to others.)

To beat down the hardened doors that usually shelter the softest of hearts is a feat like no other feat accomplishable. You must put forth without expecting anything in return. You must see their wounds and cover them. No matter how angry you may get, you must never un-bandage them for the sake of revenge or frustration due to the fact that you get little in return for your efforts.

Though you can express to them why you and others are turned off by a particular fault that they may have which may not be as obvious to them. You can address the depth of the wounds and try to help to heal the wounds, even in a hard manner at times if necessary. But to expose their wounds maliciously is only adding to the problem – though it could help in an abstract way. But you don't want to be remembered as the evil catalyst that eventually led to good.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

(Ephesians 4:14-16, NIV version)



## **9) Consume Me Not, Oh Wretched Loneliness**

Dear Lord, please help me. I can't do it without you. I don't even know if I've shown enough faith in this matter with my, hopefully, wife to be. If I haven't, please, still have mercy on me. Please, Lord, bring her to me.

I don't want to fight for her anymore; I want to have her. I will fight if I have to, but please bring her to me with a heaven tied bow around her neck - a gift from God, a gift that I've wanted for so damn long. If you bring us together, Lord, than I feel that we would stay together.

I'm scared - not too scared, but enough. Should I not be? Does being nervous or anxious or scared mean I'm not being faithful, not trusting my God? If so, help me to trust you. I do trust you.

She said she'd call at midnight – really an hour from eleven.

God, what can I say? Intercede for me. Make me the way you want me to be; and if it be your will, Lord, for I know you can see better into the future than I can, please bring her to me – totally and unrestrictedly.

"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

(Matthew 7:9-11, NIV version)

May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the LORD grant all your requests.

(Psalms 20:4-5, NIV version)

Hear my cry. Hear my plea – I beg of you, dear Lord.

Give me strength, give me faith, and if it's your will, give me Beyonda.

(WEDNESDAY CONTINUED)

She hasn't called, and it's 12:35 now. She probably fell asleep. I don't blame her; she works so hard. I'm wondering why I've had to wait so long and work so hard for her. It's torture, the waiting for the final word. It's been over two and a half weeks since I gave her the first ["Pockets of Eternity"] letter, and my life has been on hold ever since.

I still feel good. I know God is in control. No matter what happens, it will happen under the guiding hand that wants my happiness more than I want it. He knows exactly what I need and need to go through in order to achieve the greatest of joy. It may be necessary for Beyonda to refuse me until she herself grows close to God.

There have been times in the past when I honestly thought it was over between us. It was tough, but I got through it because God is my shelter.

Here's a poem I wrote once when I thought it was over.

[I can't find the poem.]

I feel God's strength and love in me, and want more and more of it.

No matter which way it turns out, I know God is looking out for me. It seems like the right time to receive her, but my timetables are not always God's timetables.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

(Ecclesiastes 3:11, NIV version)

I still pray that it is time for her and I to be one.

With God's help or total command (I don't know which) I've been able to see my life turn around before my very eyes. Sin is an old scab that has been picked away until it's barely visible anymore. Love is flowing through me like water through the heavenly rivers of Jerusalem. The Lord has refined my mind into pure thoughts - not always, but much better than in the past.

I've made a huge effort to change my ways and seek the Lord...

Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

(Isaiah 55:6-7, NIV version)

...to love and trust him, to read his word and spend time in prayer. And he has blessed my efforts. The love I've given has come back to me tenfold. I

have much deeper relationships now. Because God came into my heart, I was able to feed on his Spirit instead of a black void. Feeding on this Spirit gave me the ability to reach out and love, when before I'd be too insecure and selfish to do so.

Now that I've reached out, in turn, I have been flooded with reciprocal love. Now I have more allies to draw on when I'm down because I was there for them when they were down.

The Lord is my comfort, my best friend, my God, my Savior, my confidant, my loving Father, my disciplining Father. He longs to gather all his children together like chicks...

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

(Matthew 23:37, NIV version)

...and have them live pure lives...

"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

(Matthew 5:48, NIV version)

...to live the lives that he instructs us to live because that's where the true happiness is.

Lord, break our wills and our egos and bring us to your feast of love where we dance like children – together in peace, under your loving guidance.

Lord, please bring her to me. It's the waiting that's driving me crazy. I've been patient. Please bring her to you and to me, for only if she's yours will she ever be completely mine.

Why would I be given such a longing for her in my heart if she were going to be denied me? Like when "for Adam no suitable helper was found" after he named all the animals, until God showed him woman and he said, "This is it!" (This is one paraphrased translation I have heard of – the NIV translation says the following.)

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called `woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

(Genesis 2:23-24, NIV version)

God said it is not good for the man to be alone.

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

(Genesis 2:18, NIV version)

So he gave man, woman – and gave woman, man. Well, I'm a man; she's a woman. What more do you need – love? We have tons of that, at least I do, and I pray so does she.

I don't deserve her. I don't deserve happiness. I deserve long, torturous nights rolling in my loneliness. That's what I've had all my life, along with a few magazines, maybe that's all I deserve.

Even if I don't deserve her, I pray God give her to me anyway (just for the fun of it). Why not? Why not see me leap for joy and ecstasy when so often in the past he's seen me dive into my dismal pit of self-loathing? I put my best foot forward. I tried to correct my sinful ways with Gods help. I tried to be close to God.

Being close to God is a privilege that I can't be grateful enough for. Without being near to God, I could never have had the balls or the courage to make my move on Beyonda; and I would never have been able to love her so unselfishly. I would never have been able to deal with rejection, so I never would have chanced it – to get it all.

God is.

I need to pray now.



## 10) The Depth of Moments

I wanted to end this writing with the simple words, ...

"She said yes."

But that would be a lie. She said no. She said get that idea out of your head. She called and said, "Don't be sending me flowers anymore, and I'll call you later."

I called back to see if she had received my second letter. She said she did and started to talk about us. I said I'd rather talk in person, but she said she "may not have time;" so we talked.

You may think my world had ended when she said no, but it didn't. I wasn't silent with remorse. I calmly restated how I felt. She said it didn't seem possible that I could feel this much love for her; she said it didn't seem realistic.

I told her that it was true, and that the only reason I could love her this deeply was because I knew God; and if I didn't, I'd probably still (what seemed like) love her, but in a much more selfish way.

I kind of guessed that she was either swept off of her feet or scared to death at this point, and scared she was.

I asked her if she was scared, and she said yes. She said, "I don't know how sane you are." I laughed, `cause I know I can come off like I'm crazy, and sometimes am crazy, but lately (as stated earlier) I feel saner and more stable than most of the world.

So her comments amused me.

She felt I was obsessed and it wasn't healthy. I said, "I'm not obsessed, I'm in love."

There's a fine line between true love and obsession. They both want deeply, but love stops at the line where obsession crosses.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

(1 Corinthians 13:4-7, NIV version)

Love would put down its own life for the other's happiness, while obsession would kill the person that doesn't return its feelings. Love would say I want you to be happy even if I'm not involved (while still stating its wishes to be so). Obsession would never let the object of their obsession be happy if it wasn't with them.

I told her that what I feel for her is true love, and I assured her that I would never, ever harm her. Even if she brought her new boyfriend over and rubbed it in my face, I told her I would never hurt her.

She said you always hurt the people you love. I said yeah, but I wouldn't do anything drastic, and that she never has to worry about that.

She said that's good to know.

I don't blame her for being so scared. Those were some heavy emotions I laid on her – all true, but still a lot to deal with. She said she still hopes we could be friends, and I agreed. I told her that my love for her is still true whether as friends or whatever; the love will always be there.

(Thursday continues)

I told her earlier in the conversation (we talked for about ten minutes), when asked why I feel this way and when did it start, that it started the day I met her. I told her I feel like (even though we're distant at times) we have the potential to be incredibly close to one another. I said that I never felt so much love for anyone before her – the type of love that I could spend my life with her and not loose love over the years when she's old and gray.

I told her I even bought her a diamond. She said I'm insane. I said, "I'm not insane, I'm in love."

At the end of the conversation, as she was saying she still wanted to be friends, after I reassured her that I'm not obsessed and would never harm her (reason being: I've been close to God, and as deep as my love is, because of God, I have the strength to walk away – I am strong), I said, "Would you like to see the diamond?" We laughed and she said, "Yes, if you still have it."

We ended on good terms and she said she'd call me next week.

So all in all, she turned me down. She strongly said, "Give up your obsession and get on with your life."

Then why do I feel so good right now? Why am I happy?

What the hell is going on? I should be down at the bar getting as drunk as the small change in my pockets would let me, and then rob some convenient store and get even more trashed. Then go into the Combat Zone and pick up two hookers, bang 'em all night, and then get pissed off at one of 'em and beat the crap out of her. Then commit homicide; and as a grand finale, shoot myself in the head with a shotgun with a note pinned to my chest reading, "Freuq You All!"

Or better yet, I should become hardened – arrogant and selfish. I'll attain power somehow, so everybody's got to kiss my butt. I'll get all the girls I want because of this power, and I'll abuse them till there's nothing left of their hearts and they're as miserable as I am, all for my sick twisted revenge against Beyonda.

Or why not just wear my broken heart on my sleeve for "all the world" to see, so I can have a self-pity party every day? Everyone I meet, I'll lift my sorry-drunken head, my eyes will meet theirs, and I'll spill my sad tale of unrequited love (oh what fun to feel so bad for myself). People will understand my lifelong depression and cater to it. I will grow the longest face in the history of mankind.

Or I'll submerge myself in a phony religion – or even in a true religion in a phony way. I'll follow it precisely – to a T. I'll be good to others, do all sorts of kind deeds (begrudgingly of course, or maybe so happily that I'll separate myself from myself and wear a plastic, phony smile for the rest of

my life). I'll be so good to people that I make them sick, and I'll praise the name of the God that I don't even believe in the power of.

But No, I've found the truth. I stood straight up and laughed in the face of my rejection from the person I love, as stated before, more than anyone in the world – the person I feel is the only woman I will ever love this deeply.

I'm cast away by her, condemned to be apart from her, condemned to go through life apart from my self-proclaimed soul mate – the woman I would give my life for, to see her happy. The gift I'd rather have than worldwide fame along with huge fortunes and power, I'd prefer her; but I am not allowed her. She is denied me.

My face is pressed close to the lips of many beautiful women on the train. They only merely interest me. She still has my heart. She does not want me.

But I say, "God is enough." I have every right to give up on life, but all I feel is strong and filled with God's love. I feel almost superhuman, like nothing could faze me.

God has shown himself to be true. He did not fail me.

I prayed for strength; he gave it to me. I prayed for faith; he gave it to me. I prayed for Beyonda; and he did not give her to me, but God is enough.

I run around like a madman, a crazed lunatic waking up the drunks on the park benches screaming in their ears, "God is enough!" I sit next to the insecure, saddened, middle-aged, divorced mothers of nineteen saying, "Life is good!"

"Trust God," I say.

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and

your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor." Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

(Isaiah 55:1-9, NIV version)

His plan may not fit in exactly with ours, but have faith.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

(Romans 8:28, NIV version)

God has shown me that he is enough. It sounds like a cop out to even say it, but I'm not faking it. I'm not convincing myself that I feel strong and have hope even though I really feel terrible.

My friend who works at a store asked me what I'm writing. I said I'd show him when I'm done. He said you'd be better off doing crack than writing. Maybe he's right. Maybe he's wrong.

It's later now. I no longer feel like waking up the drunks and yelling in their ears; they'd probably only tell me to shut up and fall back to sleep. The Middle-aged women would only tell me to mind my own business.

But I still feel strong, very strong (peaceful). A little saddened by the news, but not depressed.

I feel "a calm," a loss of ego - barely aware of all the egocentric things I used to be aware of.

The loss of ego is a good thing. Some would say I made a complete fool of myself, but I'd gladly risk looking like a fool than to let my life rush by me.

I feel alive. I did not sit back and let her slide from my hands; she openly ran. But hey, at least I know I tried and wasn't a pussy about it, like I can be sometimes.

I seized life; it told me to leave it alone. But I'm still glad I tried.

Now it's out in the open. Why go through life hiding how we feel?

It seems so odd these days to even show true love. It would be more acceptable to insult her and trash her house from time to time than to admit that you'd die for her happiness - what a fucked up world. It really is; I realize it now more than ever. We all deal with pain (and unreturned love) the wrong way - and our lives suffer because of it. We're all depraved.

I feel delivered from fear. God delivered me. Jesus Christ held my hand and babied me through my blackest fears till we stood strongly together.

I've lived a pretty fearless life for the past four years. I've stood in the face of death and laughed. I've put my life on the edge of a cliff and danced and teased the onlookers to push me over. I've seen my life pass before me several times, and compared to facing my love with my feelings, these were mere exercises; but I did it. Hallelujah, Praise God; I did it. I'm free now. I didn't hide in the shadows. I made my claim, was refused, and honorably and gracefully retreated. It's so freeing to know you did something instead of wondering your whole damn miserable life. Who knows what will happen? God knows. That's why I need not worry.

I feel like I'm from another planet. Everyone's insecurities and fears seem so plain to me, so obvious and so pointless. I see arrogance ... covering the soft, tender, sensitive hearts – all because it's easier to cut people off and be hard than to risk the hurt or the abuse.

With God's Spirit you can laugh at abuse, as if it's not even happening to you – as if you're watching it on a movie screen. You can be above the pain and fear of rejection, and live life to the fullest.

Well, I've re-read everything up to this point, and it sounds to me like the writings of a madman.

But if there's one thing I've learned, it's that truth often sounds crazier than a lie.



## 11) Burden of Truth

The insults of wisdom clang awkwardly against our indignant helmets of blissful ignorance.

The burden of truth is great, too great for the average man to bear. Who will take on the burdens of truth, as heavy as they are? Who will come forth and share in the sufferings and hardship of being a true disciple of Christ?

Oh Lord, I long to see the whole world come to you to share in your heavenly blessings; but we're all so set in our ways, so used to the way things are - too tired to change.

Dear Lord, may their road be softer than mine. If it "be your will," make it easier for them to come to you; or make them stronger so they will come after you at any risk, at any cost.

Why are we so turned off by God? Does God seem boring to you? Does purity have a dull ring to it?

Well, if it does, look at it this way: Have you ever been with a group of people (friends or family, people you really cared about and loved that were important to you) and felt strangely free and good (not insecure yet not arrogant, all of the people there feeling like they belong - no one unnecessarily ruling and no one awkwardly in the way) with understanding and love surrounding you so you felt secure and safe, wishing the moment would never end? Well, that's God, that's heaven, that's life. Love is what it's all about, and God is the author of love. And we all know true love (true, true love) is not something to sneeze at.

That's what endorsing God brings you, that kind of love - the ability to give it and receive it.

Think about it. Would you need a 12 pack a day if you were really loved? Would you really need to be so arrogant and callused if you were cradled

in the arms of true love? God offers his love to you – and the love of others also.

Behind her rough exterior, her harsh talk, her cold abrupt answers, her impatient walk, her angry looks, her subtle yet poignant insults, lies the sweetest little girl, longing to play on the swings with her Daddy – a little girl whose smile would cause a statue to break down and cry after seeing the pure sweetness and sincerity of this little girl's love. Her love could warm the frozen Tundra. What sweetness in her eyes.

The hardest exteriors of men and women can often hide the softest of hearts.

But in this world, more often than not, Daddy is a bum-crevasse and doesn't have a clue as to how to love his daughter – because he was depraved himself. So that sweet, innocent girl begins to close down, because Daddy or whoever shut her down when she reached out and just wanted to play. Maybe they even went so far as to abuse her or rape her. How freaking awful! Why must things like these happen? But it does happen.

But God steps in that father's place and lends a perfectly loving hand that may not be trusted at first. Why should she trust God? He calls himself the heavenly Father, and her father played a big part in screwing her up. But this Father is different. This Father longs to see her dance again like she danced as a child...

"I will ruin her vines and her fig trees, which she said were her pay from her lovers; I will make them a thicket, and wild animals will devour them. I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the

Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot," declares the LORD. "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. "In that day," declares the LORD, "you will call me `my husband'; you will no longer call me `my master.'"

(Hosea 2:12-16, NIV version)

"In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety. I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD."

(Hosea 2:18-20, NIV version)

...in the pure, boundless, unrestricted, unembarrassed, corny joy that she once danced with before she knew how to spell rejection or knew the horrors of abuse – before she knew sorrow.

Instead of coming to God she may take her deep resentment against her father (or some other male figure) out on the men in her life. Whether she

knows it consciously or not, it seems this often happens; and unless that man in her life is feeding on the power of God, he is in grave danger of having the life sucked out of him.

That sweet innocent girl is turned into a man-killer, and may mow quite a few down. She'll steal their balls and make them feel inadequate no matter how hard they try. And once she has his balls she'll get sick of him and leave him (because he now has no balls, and is rendered unattractive). The man may give up his manhood to keep her around, and she'll demand it by demanding her way or else so he'll...

But both are victims. Still God offers a way out of this tragic, painful ritual; he offers his Son. The only way to break the curse of sin is through Jesus Christ the Son of God. He poured out his blood on the cross, not for the fun of it, but so that we may lose the evil chains that hang from our every limb since the moment we leave our mother's womb, so that the weights of these chains are lost forever, and we break forth free and truly at peace.

Why do we have to go through Christ to get to God? Why did Christ have to go to the cross to get to us? I'm not entirely sure why; though I could think of a lot of good reasons. But as I said before, I've found that the truth often seems crazier than a lie.

"Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. For your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth. The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected," says your God. "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer.

(Isaiah 54:4-8, NIV version)



## 12) For Long Have Jets

When before, I couldn't get away from depression, now, I can't get away from strength. I've spent too many years feeling sorry for myself; now is a new beginning.



## 13) Hardened Hostage

Well, so much for that. My strength is leaving me. It's my own damn fault. I haven't been making any effort to spend time with God; I've just been hoping I could ride on the past few days, but it doesn't work for long.

I feel weakness and insecurity coyly stepping into my way of thinking (so coyly that I barely notice – but I realize my fault). I have to make an effort, every day, to know God and feed on his Spirit.

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth."

(Psalms 46:10, NIV version)

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will  
never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

(John 6:35, NIV version)

It's a daily thing. To come to God, I think, is a once in a lifetime thing. To  
come to God through Christ sets up (I think) a forever relationship - that  
even if you feel far away from where you once were, that God has still not  
left you.

But to feel the power of God in your everyday life is a day-to-day thing.

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry  
about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

(Matthew 6:34, NIV version)

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

(Luke 9:23, NIV version)

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

(Hebrews 3:12-13, NIV version)

Well, if weakness and insecurity make a strong claim on me, then I'll be forced to become hard and callused and uncaring again. I know there is a perfect mix between strength and sensitivity that exists, but to find it requires God – and it seems maybe experience too. I can't do it any other way.

It's hard to walk the line between the two. If you're caring, you're running the risk of that caring to be taken for weakness. If it is, you may be seen as vulnerable; and once some people see vulnerability, this opens the door for them to abuse or take advantage of you. So it's easier just to come off hard and aggressive and untouchable, that way no one will freuq with you.

If you do this, though people probably won't freuq with you, they probably won't be attracted to you either. Though some will, `cause they're either savior "wannabes" or they like the abuse `cause they're use to it from past family or relationship experiences (or they're hard and callused themselves, so they don't mind it).

Strength and callousness are two different things, though. If you don't have the strength to love, even with the possibility of rejection, then callousness is a natural alternative. Harshness can be a sign of weakness.

But who cares; there is no need for an equation here, is there?

Is being able to label behavioral patterns worth anything? I don't know.



## 14) The Pleadings of Obstruction

Caffeine lives are what we lead. Things move too fast to even recognize what they are. We impatiently fidget in the face of eternal love anticipating our favorite TV series. We step over the homeless to quicken our route to the video store. We can't stand to sit for five minutes and talk to the people who love us, but will spend hours preparing ourselves in the mirror for those who would trade our confidences and tell the devil our weaknesses in exchange for cheap whiskey.

The ones who love us best  
Are the ones we'll lay to rest  
And visit their graves on holidays at best

The ones who love us least  
Are the ones we'll die to please  
If it's any consolation, I don't begin to understand them

("Bastards Of Young" by Paul Westerberg, from The Replacements album  
"Tim")

Pleasure comes too easily. Distraction is all around us. The TV has no soul and sucks us into its way of life. We watch the plastic lives of the successful, portrayed with the stability of a caffeine-high, and long to imitate them.

We watch the TV shows with no meaning other than the purpose of distraction. We use them to distract us from pain instead of dealing with pain correctly; so in turn, the pain still manifests itself and turns up in all sorts of subtle (or unsubtle), frequed up, backwards places.

[Entertainment in the right amount is great, but why would you leave God out of it?]

We do not face our pain; we displace it. We drown it in alcohol. We answer it with sexual pleasure. We forget it with movies. We hide it beneath a busy work schedule.

"America, the Land of the Phony." Those who have achieved what seems like success are probably the most unfortunate. They've learned to separate themselves from themselves, from who they really are. They've suppressed that and have given into a phony world of false confidence where they have truly become king, but at the cost of their own souls.

They are the saddest creatures ever to walk the earth. They know honor. They know praise. They know glory, and thrive on it. They will rape you

for it. They will intimidate you to keep you in your subservient role to them.

Their response to heartache and rejection is the most tragic response there is. The weak and abused are far better off. They may not have overcome their oppressors, but at least they never became the oppressors themselves.

"I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion. To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power. By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth. I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full."

(Proverbs 8:12-21, NIV version)

But even the arrogant have hope. If they are lucky, their thrones will be taken away from them. They will go to sit down on them and fall backwards and hit the floor. Those whom this phony king has oppressed will see that their power has been stripped and will laugh with scorn and delight. These former masters of their surroundings will quickly become aware of the flesh that hangs from their bones, and their cheeks will soon relearn the once forgotten task of turning red from embarrassment.

They will realize that the control they once had was only an illusion painted by Satan to keep them from bowing in worship to the God that made them, to keep them from knowing that...

"The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. "For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's; upon them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. "It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. "He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."

(1 Samuel 2:6-10, NIV version)

...to keep them from heaven and keep them from love, to keep them from Christ, to keep them from God.

But they may still turn to God. In their destruction they may find their concrete hope. They'll trade their shell of arrogance for a glow of contentment. Instead of instilling fear in others to gain control, they will instill confidence and acceptance and love; but only if they finally bow to their maker and assume the role that they were constructed for.

They were not constructed to be God, not even gods of their own lives. They were constructed to depend on their maker, and go against the grain of the universe as long as they don't bow to this eternal truth.

The process in which God allows us to know him is through the belief in his Son, and the belief that his Son interceded for us and bore the penalty of our own sins on the cross and rose again from the dead – the personal affirmation that this is as truth for us, and accepting his way of forgiveness and redemption.

Jesus Christ came to this earth to redeem man to God, to restore the union that was broken in the Garden of Eden.

And the things that separated Adam and Eve from their maker are the same things that keep us from accepting the plan of salvation, the plan of forgiveness that God offers us today. We will not listen to God for we believe we know better. We do not obey God because God is silly and asks for silly things.

The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were

naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

(Genesis 2:25-3:24, NIV version)

Don't eat that fruit, God says; but we listen to the serpent (the devil – Revelation 12:9) that might try to deceive us with persuasions like the following: Why not eat that fruit; there's nothing wrong with it? God only tells you not to eat it because if you do, you'll become like God yourself. You don't need God to lead and guide you; you've gotten your own mind. You can control your own life. There is nothing above or greater than you. And even if there is, who cares? Do what you want.

So we eat the fruit, and sin. It's a sin because you've disobeyed a command of God. And once you've sinned, once you've tasted the sweetness of the forbidden fruit (no matter how innocently you were enticed, no matter how devious someone has been to persuade you to do so – if you knew God didn't want you to do it, but you did it anyway), you will now suffer the consequences. You may now find out what the direct result of disobeying God is: Separation from God.

Separation from God, the three most tragic words ever uttered. We don't realize the horror of these three words. Sometimes we don't even realize who God really is. He's so often spoken of as a distant, cold, impersonal, white bearded, boring burden that he is robbed of his true characteristics.

He created you. He created the people you love. He created the people who love you. He gave you the freedom to choose to seek God or choose not to seek him. He gave you the choice to obey him or not to obey him. He created your cat. He created your emotions. He knows what you feel and think. He knows what you need and desire.

God holds the patent on love, and love is all you want. If you want love, why don't you want God? He's hurt that you don't want his love. He's hurt that you won't give him his place in your life. He cries heavenly tears from his throne as he sees you running around in circles chasing your own tail while he screams at the top of his lungs through his prophets and apostles. He cries out through nature and through your life experience and people in your life. He leaps in the air and waves through the sacrifice of his only begotten Son, all to get your hardened heart to come to him. He bends over and reaches down, day after day, for your very soul.

"I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick; who sit among the graves and spend their nights keeping secret vigil; who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of unclean meat; who say, 'Keep away; don't come near me, for I am too sacred for you!' Such people are smoke in my nostrils, a fire that keeps burning all day."

(Isaiah 65:1-5, NIV version)

He longs to see you happy and made it impossible for you to be happy without him, so he could have the joy of seeing meekly you come to him. He wants you that badly; he loves you that much. So turn to him; tell him that you want him to be your God. Receive Christ into your heart.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

(John 11:25-27, NIV version)

Accept the work Christ has done on the cross for you as the erasing of your sins before God: so you may have that great void that separates you from God immediately closed, so you may finally connect (though you may not feel anything right then, but maybe you will; but even if you don't, if your prayer was sincere, then you are accepted and forgiven by God - he promises this), so the veil is torn down, so you may spend all eternity away from the pain and agony of being separated from God and from his kingdom of heaven - truly at peace, where love is, where people you love are, where God is.

These words are inadequate to show God to the fullest; so seek him...

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

(Jeremiah 29:11-14, NIV version)

And find out for your self what I can't adequately describe.

Read about Jesus, about God and about the Spirit in The Bible (Old and New Testaments). Pray, follow, obey, love and begin to travel on the toughest, truest, narrowest road there is to eternity and truth and love and God.

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

(Matthew 7:13-14, NIV version)

And especially pray; begin to talk to God as much as possible. It can be formal or informal, while you're on your knees or while you're doing the dishes.

Ask him to fill you with his Spirit and mean it, and you will wonder why you ever did drugs. Of course you may fall away and not depend on God and do drugs again sometime or commit some other sin, but God will never leave you. [Not to say doing drugs is always a sin, that's between you and God. But falling away from God's leading, I believe is almost always a sin.]

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 8:37-39, NIV version)

I feel strange after writing all this. I am in fear of what the world will think and say of me if I believe this way. The world is so light. I almost wish I could be light with it, and not know the deep meanings of things and the grave responsibilities of eternity the lie on our heads. To choose God or to choose not to choose God, it's all so heavy and so deep. But only in dealing with these heavy issues can true happiness come, and can the real meaning of joy be understood.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

(Psalms 23:5-6, NIV version)

It's so much to consider. It would be easier, in a way, to give into the pleasures of the world and never burden anyone with the questions of God and heaven and hell. I guess it must be done or else people I love might end up far away from God and happiness and their true selves. And things can be light too. There is laughter, but more so in heaven than in this life (and eternity is a lot longer than sixty-eight years).



## 15) Lifeless Jest

I feel worthless. After writing all those things, I feel drained and naked – but hey.

I've switched coffee shops to write in – so what.

C.C.R.'s on the radio and the coffee tastes evil, so I have a new outlook on life. I've promised myself only to write about sports from now on: sports and the rising tax on beer – which truly upsets me. There is no greater cause than to join with me in my fight to reduce this unlawful, outrageous tax and to uphold the honorable activities of sport.

The #3 breakfast is waiting for me, so...

I'm done and am off of my high horse and don't feel like preaching anymore.

I want to golf, to reduce my handicap. There is no better thing to do than golf, so golf. But do not slice, for there is no greater evil on this earth than to slice a tee shot. So be careful, and do not slice.

"The House of the Rising Sun" is on the radio. It's about a whorehouse I'm told. So you know what I'm thinking about.

I'm still drained even after my attempts at humor. I can't pretend I'm so close to God that everything is great all the time. I'm empty after putting out so much. I need to go to sleep and "start fresh" tomorrow. I've been drinking caffeine all night, so sleep will be tough – plus, I'm supposed to work at 9:30 AM and it's 6:25 AM now. So if I fall asleep, I won't get up. But that's not your problem, though I wish it were. I can't get out of this on a good note, so I won't even try – later.



## 16) To Help is to Hinder

As I thumb through my roommate's Playboy, I begin to feel guilty as I start to think how I would feel if the woman in the pictures was my wife and how robbed I would feel having her shared with the entire world (picturing her striking these poses for men who know nothing about her, care nothing for her, but still get the pleasure of seeing her in all her glory).

I don't know this girl in the pictures, so how could I care for her – other than in an abstract way? But she's somebody's wife or girlfriend, she's somebody's daughter; maybe she's somebody's mother, and I'm thinking of her only as a piece of meat to give me pleasure. I'm contributing to the businesses that allow her to reveal herself for money. Whether she's comfortable with this concept or not, I'm making it easy for her to make a living at selling pictures of herself to quench man's almost unquenchable lust.

She does a good job at it, but I only contribute to her doing things that might make her shallow. Not that she's shallow. She may be close to God and a deep individual, but chances are the "Porn Biz" is not a Christian organization [though I wish it were], and I'm only helping her stay in that world by looking at her pictures – but she's so damn gorgeous.

To lie to ourselves and lie to the world as Christians and say, or give off the impression, that we are now beyond holy and pure and perfect is not good – that sin is beyond us. It only feeds the unbeliever's cynical fire when we fall, which we very possibly will.

Now as believers in Christ we take on an even tougher battle.

For we now have two forces fighting back and forth inside us: the spiritual and the unspiritual. The physical does not go away. The old man and the new man, the sinner and the saved, wrapped up in one agonized body. For every time the sinner wins, the soul is grieved. And if the soul is winning, the sinner can try hard to break out – and can break out, over and over again.

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do–this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God–through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

(Romans 7:14-25, NIV version)

[But is looking sexually at a beautiful woman wrong – let's say, if you're not married? Who knows? Should the fact that we have sexual desires separate us from God? I don't think so; he invented them. There is peace in Christ.]



## 17) Abstract Justice

So what have I got? I have a cold apartment for two more days, I have no job, three pairs of pants (which I wear for two weeks at a time), and I have a burning glob of cheese in my toaster oven – which I just put out. So I can't complain; I have a lot.

To chasten the winds that drift you down  
To cure the force with force unsound  
To hold its neck and strangle justice  
To rape its corpse and neither shame or cuss this

The serial killer is among you. In fact it is you. You have the potential to kill. Just change a few circumstances in your life, and maybe change your parents, and you too may become as hideous as the men we watch on TV news trial footage and gasp in horror of.

Take away the mother that loves you and nurtures you, and replace her with an aggressive domineering bitch who never lets you feel good about

yourself and makes you feel inadequate and unloved, a woman that controls you and therefore emasculates you and leaves you a man with no balls - unable to relate to women in a natural way. All your attempts at relationships with the opposite sex are quickly thwarted, so you grow to resent these women and they come to represent your terrible mother.

But you could not be controlled by your mother if you didn't love her so much and long to be accepted by her. So you take out your aggressions on her representatives, her substitutes - innocent women.

Now you're a serial killer.

Once you open the door to sin (be it murder, alcoholic indulgence, adultery, sexual perversion or whatever) you only invite its power to control you to grow.

Once the thought of the aggression takes place, do not give into it. If everyone were convicted for thinking of violent acts, there would be no one left to secure the jails, for we all would be in prison. (Or maybe women would, because I don't think most women think as violently as men do.)

If life's misfortunes have piled up so heavily on you that murder has actually become a way to deal with your pain, stop. You're about to ruin yourself. Cry out to the Lord God Jehovah to take control and stop you from doing this.



## 18) The Bell

The bell will toll, and toll it will  
And belly up its soul until

Oneness loses half its charm  
And all the planets bruise your arms

They'll batter you and leave you calm  
Calm to hold your battered arms

The sheets will burn instead of cool  
The picture breathe and not stay still  
As banter wraps in of the pure  
And densely folds into no cure

My knee!



## 19) Two Shades of Blue

"I was freuqing dreaming and shooting freuqing Nigers," says my new roommate.

Obviously, I just moved to Southie. He was mugged by three blacks near Broadway Station about two weeks ago (he says), but he hated black people

long before. He wants to keep Southie white. He wants to keep Southie safe.

In Roxbury, where there are almost all black people living, if you have an enemy or you look like an easy target, your life is at stake. People will freuq with you for no reason, and kill you if you cross them (and cut or shoot you without a second thought). It can happen any day.

In Southie, this happens to a much less degree. People aren't as apt to freuq with you without reason. [Though, I've realized later, this in not always the case.] They even look out for you. There's a sense of respect. Fights break out all the time, and some of the toughest people around live here, but a fight is more likely to end with both parties alive in Southie than in Roxbury.

In Southie, where the people are mostly of Irish descent, there are a lot of murders. It's in the city; so sure, people will drink too much, get frustrated with their family or enemy, and murders occur [not that this is good].

But why is there so much more violence in Roxbury (the black area) than in Southie (the white area)?

A guy I used to work security with (who lived in Roxbury) explained it to me this way. He said black people don't (just listen and smile no matter what silly thing is being said to you, just act interested but not phony, and most importantly, look them calmly straight in the eye, and people should open up to you - but anyway, he said black people don't) naturally have as much pride as white people do. He says white people are just born with it and black people have to fight for it, and how they attain it is usually by becoming as dangerous as possible.

Their trophies are the people they've killed. Their medals are their scars. Their reward is the fear others have for them, and another way of looking at fear is respect - and if you're respected you have pride. [But pride, in the arrogant sense of the word, can be the root of the problem.]

The same is true for a lot of white people, but not as much I don't think. Probably `cause, sometimes, white people are generally more respected by

other white people. If you're white and another white person sees you walking by, he may not naturally assume you're a scumbag just because you're white [though he could]. If you look somewhat respectable, you might be respected. But if you're black, you're more apt to be assumed to be a scumbag, and the white person is more likely to treat the black person like he's subhuman – like he's an animal.

When you're treated subhuman or like an animal, whether because of your skin color, the length of your hair, your sex, your age, your beliefs, your clothes, your lack of cleanliness, your lack of intelligence, your attitude or for whatever reason, you'll probably react in one of three ways:

1) Accept your subhuman role and kiss your oppressor's butt – so he doesn't carry out his anger to the full extent on you.

2) Be above it; be Christ like. Look it straight in the eye and explain to it its silliness – or don't even explain it. Your respect comes from the knowledge that you are respected by God. Christ washed his disciples' feet. Christ, the Son of God (and God himself), bent over and washed the feet of his servants and said I've come to serve you. The maker of heaven and earth (we can talk about whether you believe Christ is God or not later) leaned over and washed their dirty feet, and said, "I no longer call you servants... I have called you friends..."

"You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

(John 15:14-15, NIV version)

So if you know you have respect from God, who cares what man thinks of you. Of course we all want respect from others, but unless you respect yourself, most other people won't respect you either - which brings us to the third response.

3) To act like twice the animal they treat you as. It's only natural. Why do white people wonder why these black people are the cities predominant muggers, murderers, and malice makers? Sometimes the only time black people are respected is by the fear they instill by acting like violent animals, like predators - by being dangerous. So, if you treat people like animals, don't be surprised if they act like animals. But if you're treated like an animal, don't lower yourself and let their treatment of you define you. Be above it. With God on your side, who can be against you?

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

(Romans 8:31-32, NIV version)



## 20) Loud

Well, a loudmouthed old acquaintance just walked in and broke my train of thought. He's the type of person who has to control the conversation to feel comfortable. The kind of person that makes half the people's day that he runs into with brash friendly comments and pisses off the other half that picks up on his condescending, controlling mind set. Deep down, he's a good guy - just a little insecure, so he has to overcompensate. It's fun to throw half insults back and forth with such a person for about one minute if you're in the mood; but after that sixtieth second, where do you go?



## 21) Snarling Leisure

Theirs are the feet that run to sneer

The silly boys who think they're marred  
Marred and loosed to fling their hate  
The easiest of prey is their mark



## 22) No one Knows

I hadn't been picked on in a long time, and these High School boys decided my time had come.

The four people hanging out on the corner had to say something about my hair. "Is that a boy or a girl?" they said as I was going into my house.

So I went back out after I clipped my nails in case I had to use my fists. I walked by them and looked them all in the eye. One kid said, "A whisker for your thoughts." He was real young; and I didn't know what he meant, so I didn't say anything to him. But I sized up my aggressors. They seemed like a million other punks that I grew up with, of which I had been one of. So I knew where they were coming from, and I knew they were little threat to me. All four of them might have been able to kick my butt, but I even doubt that. Of course it's easier to say that now that it's over, but they were too young to be much of a threat.

So when I walked back after making a phone call, one of them said, "Didn't you just walk by?" I said, "I went to make a phone call," and then we all started talking. They knew I wasn't afraid of them and I knew they were just young punks hanging out, so we got along all right. I told them about the spray paint we found on our door, `cause I assumed they might have done it, but they didn't admit to it.

We chatted serenely and formally for a few minutes. I asked, "How old you guys were?" They said seventeen to eighteen.

I said, "You're old enough to drink at fourteen around here."

He agreed and said, "I've been screwing girls since I was twelve," as he turned to the two quiet girls standing on the steps. They just turned away.

I really didn't envy this kid. He'll probably be washed up at age twenty-two. The best part of his life will have been used up. He invests little to nothing in his future. He just wants to be tough, get drunk and get laid,

which will do him well in High School. He'll be riding high on life in his youthful glory days of being a bum-crevasse to anyone he wants to, being respected by his peers `cause he's in the upper class of the party boys and he's got a good left hook; but after High School, his future don't look too bright - but I hope I'm wrong.

I was a lot like him once in some respects. Once, being tough was the most important thing in the world. Actually, at the time it didn't seem that important to me, but it just came naturally. I was naturally a bully and a bum-crevasse and a scrapper. I'd mess with people for no good reason. I'd kick people with my big mountain boots for the fun of it. Most of it was in fun to me. I'd play fight so much with the other tough kids that when I asked anyone to fight I knew they'd say no.

If someone said, "Yeah, I'll fight you," I'd be stunned.

That's a good way to deal with aggression: Stand right up to it. Look it in the eye and confront it (and pray); and know that if you call on God he will be there. You may still get beat up; I don't know, probably not. You'll probably win in the short or long run, or both. If you turn away with the aggression unchallenged, it may only spur them on to hassle you more and not do you much good - though I don't know if outward aggression is the right manner to deal with it, `cause then you're just playing their game.

Jesus said, "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." But he also tore up the synagogue in a fit of rage because people were using the temple as a marketplace. He didn't calmly walk from table to table gently suggesting to everyone that they kindly use the temple properly, and if they didn't agree, shake their hands and say I understand your position. He went nuts, and flipped their tables over. When questioned by the Pharisees and Sadducees about certain things, he knew their hearts and knew the evils that lurked behind their questions and he went for their throats. Right in front of everyone, he'd call them whitewashed tombs. He was straightforward: aggressive to those who needed to be dealt with aggressively, and merciful to those who were worthy of his mercy.

Jesus talked a lot about the Spirit, and I feel the Spirit is the key to successful living, good decision making, and in dealing with life's pain. The Spirit of God is the key; it can take the place of any addiction you have. It can relieve you of your fear. It can empower you to love, which is the key to receiving love.

God gives us more than just a rulebook along with our wretched flesh that's inclined to seek anything that will relieve us from pain and give us pleasure, however temporary it may be, or to battle our natural inclination to be arrogant power mongers. Whether it's world power or family power, our arrogance is easily unmasked from the White House to our own house. To battle the inclination towards sin and living our lives apart from God that we all have, he does not just list the things that we shouldn't do and should do – a cold written word of judgment and that's it.

He gives us something else, something that the unbeliever may have difficulty understanding, and the wise man may explain away the powers that believers "think" they experience.

God gives us the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

(Luke 3:16, NIV version)

Jesus said something like: After I leave here, the Father will send the Holy Spirit to look after you.

"If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

(Luke 11:13, NIV version)

"When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."

(Luke 12:11-12, NIV version)

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

(John 14:23, NIV version)

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

(John 14:26, NIV version)

"But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned."

(John 16:7-11, NIV version)

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

(Acts 2:1-4, NIV version)

The Spirit is what we receive when we come to truly believe in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord and the only Son of God. When you receive the Spirit, in a very real sense you're born again.

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

(John 3:3, NIV version)

If you come to God through Jesus, you may not feel a thing (or maybe you will feel more than you ever have), but if you are sincere, you have received the Holy Spirit (I believe) and also your name is written in the book of life as your assurance of eternal life through Christ.

That Spirit of God that now dwells in you is the reason why you see people who once were hardened criminals with seedy eyes, now having the clearest eyes around. A person full of hate and anger, without going through six years of intensive therapy, without having done anything but laying their miserable lives in God's hands, now full of love, compassion and understanding.

A wild animal turned into a Christ like person. This can't happen from just an idea, not true reform. People can fake a lot of things, but time usually weeds the truth out.

To change this drastically in a matter of months or days or hours or even minutes, has to be the work of God.

The work of the Spirit of God breaking down all the barriers that kept that man or woman from their true selves and from their heavenly Father.

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## 23) The Union of Strife

What do you tell your thirteen-year-old son when he tells you he has visions of stabbing his mother to death? My friend's son told him this.

Why do so many marriages end in divorce? Probably the main reason is people don't truly believe in God and his word and his power.

The man hears that the man is the man, the leader of the household – all very biblical (I'm sure lots of women would hate to know).

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

(Ephesians 5:22-24, NIV version)

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

(1 Peter 3:1-6, NIV version)

So man hears this, and of course he distorts it. Instead of the leader, he becomes the raving domineering, controlling, unreasonable, insulting dictator. The woman may at first be attracted to his air of arrogance or his, what seems like, strength; but later she finds out that what once attracted her to him is the same thing (once seen in its full-blown state) that now repulses her.

Man gets the idea that he should be in control and carries that to extremes.

But Scripture also says...

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a

radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

(Ephesians 5:25-33, NIV version)

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

(1 Peter 3:7, NIV version)

So the man abuses his leadership role (as many leaders will) and treats his wife, and maybe his children too, like dirt. Instead of leading, he'll demand their every attention and throw fits of rage when he doesn't get it. The slightest fault is seen in his wife and quickly described and insulted.

He goes out and drinks all night to come home and make everyone miserable. If his wife wants something and asks him for it, before he even

considers his wife's position and desires, he considers himself only and tries to control her and keep her on his leash. He may even threaten her with violence or death to keep her in line, or he may try to unreasonably control her in a reasonable manner. He'll calmly rationalize away his wife's reason for wanting something, when he doesn't even consider her – though he says he does.

After a while, the wife realizes that she's getting nowhere with you and finally says, "Freuq off, you arrogant putz," and his false kingdom is ruined. Then he wonders why she is not obeying him anymore.

His phony ideas of what being a man is ruined everything, or maybe just his selfishness did it; but either way the wife says, "To hell with you," and begins to take some or all of the control by simply saying good-bye – by pure leaving power.

If the husband wants respect from his wife and family, he has to earn it, not force it. If he forces it, he probably will get it out of fear. Respect through fear alone is bound to run out. Respect through love and strength is the kind that will last.

If the husband wants his wife to act like a caring woman, he must love her and care for her. If he wants her to be a bitch, or leave him, or live a timid existence in fear of him, then the arrogant bum-crevasse approach will do it.

It all comes back to God, as do most or all problems with human beings.

Most men don't have the capacity to love another so deeply that they'd do anything to see them happy or put another first in their decision making or to love and understand in the face of hardship, to even give their own lives for their wife's, because they aren't drawing on the love that God can place in them. They aren't drinking from the wells that could make them strong enough to lead and love, but not control through evil forces. So, in turn, the woman will not give into such horrid leadership, and so will fight you at every step or leave you.

So they miss out on a way that God provides for a happy family; and everyone suffers: the husband, the wife, and, of course, the children.

It's amazing how "God with us" can change you; it's indescribable.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"-which means, "God with us."

(Matthew 1:22-23, NIV version)

Well, anyway, about this woman that figures out that all men are evil and takes control, watch out for her. Whether she learned this false truth at a young age from her father, or from a previous relationship, she may become the dreaded yet adored "man-killer."

She is in no mood to give up any of her personal control to a man. She'll probably always have men around though (maybe `cause she's insecure and needs all these men's affections to make her feel worth while, or maybe to try to destroy and take out her wrath against the evil race - men), but she may steal your balls right away from you and then not be attracted to you `cause you have no balls anymore. You can't win (unless you have God's patience and strength). If you stand up to her and put your foot down and don't let her have her way every time, she just says, "Freuq you, I do what I want," and leaves. If you give into her and turn into a wimp (and let her have her way all the time), she gets sick of you `cause you're less the man

you were when she met you and so she leaves also. You must have God's patience and strength and love to deal with her.

She doesn't need to be such a bitch though; she needs God.

If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

(1 Timothy 6:3-7, NIV version)

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

(1 Timothy 6:11-12, NIV version)

She needs God to help her to stop resenting these stupid men and choose one that would love her and treat her like a hero, not her slave. If she wants a man, she should treat him like a man and not threaten him with her leaving power, or by making him feel jealous or inadequate - and vice versa. Should the man make his wife, or his woman, feel insecure in the relationship for no good reason? If he wants a woman, he should treat her like a woman.

She should nurture him and love him, instead of ruining both your lives with petty arguments and demand her way all the time so he ends up feeling like less than a man. Pick a man who loves you deeply and will put you before his own life. If you make such a man feel like a man, or even a hero (and in control), than you've made yourself a man and a hero who will truly love you and will try to see to it that you are happy. For he needs your love and support to become his best, and in turn (if all goes according to the text) will treat you like gold and not try to unreasonably control you, but rather look out for your benefit as you look out for his. It's better than being each other's worst enemies and spending your whole lives getting nothing done other than the work of tangling up relationships. Surely there are greater goals to obtain.

Few things go by the text and it's all not so simple, but God has all the answers and can weed out all of your personal details and provide the best answer for you. He describes for us how to live in his word, but we think it's unrealistic. We're so used to the world's way (in love, in marriage or in anything). We copy those who are not in touch with God; and even if we hear the way of God, it seems impossible to live up to. Which it is, it is impossible to follow God - like Jesus says about the rich man...

"Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

(Matthew 19:24, NIV version)

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

(Matthew 19:25-26, NIV version)

So following God's law and way of life is impossible if all you have is the law, but if God is real and God is alive and you believe and have faith, then he can work in you so you can do the impossible.

When once you thought it impossible to go a day without a drink, now you find no need for it. When once you hated almost everyone you met, and even your loved ones irritated you to the point of sheer revulsion, now, with God, you find you love even the filthy bums lying in the gutter, and cry tears of joy when you see your loved ones. You now see only the love behind all the annoying things they do, and correct them gently.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

(Galatians 6:1, NIV version)

This can't happen by just a concept or an old religious idea. This can happen because of a living God whose power is unending and love is unstoppable.

It's amazing what God can do for you. I almost don't want to talk about it `cause it sounds like bragging, but it's really not, for I know it's God's work in me. Anyway, I feel strong and full of love. I have more friends, because when before insecurity and lack of ability to love got in the way, now people are more important to me. People notice the difference from when you're talking to them to get it over with and to be polite, and when you're talking to them `cause you like or love them.

But enough talk for me. It's time to talk, or listen, to God from whence my long awaited and much appreciated strength and love comes from.

Even now, God knocks on your soul and asks you to let him in.

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

(Revelation 3:20, NIV version)

He only knocks because he loves you, and doesn't want to be robbed any longer by you denying him to know you.



## 24) Hands Clasped Too Tightly

I don't think there is a time before this time, ever, when circumstances have been worse. I'm technically homeless - not really, I do have a roof over my head, but it's not my place.

I can't seem to hold a job recently. They go as quickly as they come. I was working a good security job for a couple of weeks, about a month and a half ago, but unfortunately I was injured on the job and couldn't walk well enough to continue my appointed rounds. I screwed up my knee by walking into a low strung cable while eating nachos and fell over, slamming my knee into the hard brick ground.

No one saw it happen, so I'm sure all my fellow employees think I staged the incident as to receive Workers Compensation. I have not received Workers Compensation. I offered to go back to work with less strenuous rounds, but my employers did not seem willing to cooperate, not even returning my phone calls; so that's the end of that.

Then about two weeks ago I landed a mover's job. I worked for a week with a bad knee. It was such good money that I ignored the pain of my knee and the damage I was doing to it. I worked hard twelve-hour days, moving up to sixteen thousand pounds of home furniture and knickknacks. One day we worked fourteen hours, and I didn't even get to eat because I was broke. It was great though. I think so much that I need to use my body and do something physical to balance my self out. All I did was pick up heavy boxes and bring them to the truck. I thought I finally was gonna get my piece of "American Pie" and make some money and get out of debt and

have some left over so I don't have to sell my amp or my guitar or borrow money to get by; but unfortunately I was hired at the end of the month when a lot of the moving business takes place, and so after the first of the month there was no more work for me. I was left with a bad knee (which cuts out a lot of jobs for me, unless I want to continue damaging my knee) and no job.

Because of these circumstances, I was forced to sell my amp - my 4X12 Marshall with vintage 25 watt Celestians to be specific. I never plugged it in till the day I sold it, and it sounded so good, I wished the guy who was looking at it had tried to bargain with me so I could say I'll think about it and give you a call back later. That way I could change my mind and keep the cab without feeling like a bum-crevasse for making him come fifty miles to find I've backed down on my original offer. He didn't want to bargain and took my cab. I needed the money.

I wish my knee would heal so I could join the Marine Reserves. I need a break like that to get my life in gear. [I realized later, it wasn't quite the break I expected.] I need to be a grunt for a while, and then come back, hopefully, and work hard at my music and writing or whatever God leads me to do. It would be great to do it, and get out of debt at the same time from the money I'd make and couldn't spend till I got out.

So my knee is holding me back. I feel like I'm living the life of a senior citizen at age twenty-two. I walk with a cane and have no job. I lived in a senior citizen building for more than ten years, so I might as well give up and join them. I sit at coffee shops as much as an elderly person. I do a lot of writing there. There's just enough distraction around to keep me going; whereas if I'm in a room alone, I get bored too quickly and put the pen down - though lately, I've been able to write in a house alone.

The woman I love wants nothing to do with my love. She has her own life and doesn't want me to be a big part of it.

I've spent years working on music, and now my band is barely playing together. The prospects of making a living at it are dim. So I don't get to spend as much time on it as I'd like.

If my knee heals and I do go to the Marines, there's a good possibility that a war will break out; and who knows, I could be killed at age twenty-two or twenty-three: never to see any significant payback for my work in life, or for my suffering, never to have made love to the woman I love from the depth of my soul, never having to have children, never having success, climbing up the steep, treacherous hill of life in hope of being able to run gleefully down the other side, only to be ambushed once I hit the top of the hill.

For some strange reason, while my friends are dying around me, and the world gets more sick and merciless and dangerous and colder every day, I feel "a calmness," "a peace."

At another time, under such circumstances, I would have given up. I would have given in to this world's way of playing the game. This world or life would have beaten me into submission, beaten me into acting as detrimentally and negatively as the forces that dragged me to this point. I would take out my childhood (or adulthood) anger on all who cross my path. I would return my unreturned love with bitterness and possibly violence. I would submit to the rules of oppression that oppressed me, and carry out my outrage of these rules by obeying them in even greater detail.

I wouldn't care whom I hurt, as long as I'm amused. I'd lead people on as if I care about them, knowing full well I really don't. I'd use them selfishly for my benefit. And once I've drained them till they're of no use to me, I'll drop them like a knife at a murder scene.

Though, I'd probably be so screwed up that I couldn't even get someone interested in me enough so I could use that person. So I'd probably have even shallower relations with women, like one night long, and get heavy into excessive sexual pleasure and pornography. Also, I'd surely start to drink heavy, and maybe pick up a new habit like cocaine or heroine.

I'd nourish my anger with thoughts of why God was doing all these terrible things to me, and display my anger to all. Not even small dogs and little children would be pardoned my unforgiving anger, as I yell at them on my way to the liquor store.

That's what happens to a lot of people, and has happened to me in the past. We become beat by the evil ordinances that rule our world, that have been at work for so long that it only seems natural to join them. If your father was aggressive towards you in an unreasonable manner, instead of rising above it and living a better way, we imitate it and return it on our own children - consciously or subconsciously.

If you've been abused to the point where you don't care about yourself, why not abuse those around you?

If your ex-girlfriend freuqed you up, freuq up the next girl you're with. If anything goes wrong, run like a little child to the nearest thing that will help you forget your pain, as if it were your mother's arms. Even if that thing will hurt you, or somebody else, it doesn't matter; all that matters is your relief.

Our mothers are our alcohol  
Our fathers are our dreams  
Our children are our sorrows  
Our wives... our magazines

Play this world's game. Join hands in the circle and spit at the person across from you, as well as on yourself. Become an arrogant, selfish, uncaring bum-crevasse that will only look out for his or her self (whether in an aggressive manner or in a subdued manner). No one looked out for you, why should you act any different? Have children and relationships, and

screw them up twice as bad as your parents, or people around you, screwed you up.

We forfeit what God had planned for us by trusting ourselves more than trusting God. We have no patience. We cannot face adversity without self-destructing (whether we realize we're destroying ourselves or think we're happy). We don't depend on God or on his Spirit to give us strength and patience to deal with unpleasant circumstances, or on his power to control our future and our ultimate destiny. If we did, we wouldn't be so frequed up.

If we really believe that God is all-powerful, why do we give into the world's way of doing things, and laugh at God's way? We never even give God a fair chance to work in our lives. We don't even ask for his help. (Maybe we're afraid of the coldness it seems to offer, in the falseness by which a relationship with God is portrayed through movies or by people.)

God may put seemingly unbeatable circumstances around you only to show you his strength, and to see you turn to him. If you did, you may be amazed at what God can really do.

An ancient idea can't help you, but God knows he's alive and wants you to find this out also.

He may put or permit an army of two thousand machine-gun totting madmen to surround you on all sides while you are alone and have just woken up so your head is reeling as you lose your sight in a morning daze. All you have as a weapon is an old toothpick, softened by your gums from sucking on it, held limply by your five broken fingers. Your shoes have been tied together as a prank from a friend, ignorant to your future predicament.

All this, so that he could see you turn to him and ask for his help. If you do ask for help, you will have the advantage. If you believe God, and have faith in him...

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

(Romans 8:31-35, NIV version)

...you will find out what David found out when he fought Goliath the giant.

"All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands." As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

(1 Samuel 17:47-49, NIV version)

You will see what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego saw when they were thrown into a fire and came out unburned.

He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

(Daniel 3:25, NIV version)

You will understand why the armies of Israel fought against unbeatable odds and won.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land."

(Joshua 8:1, NIV version)

You will know why Jesus Christ accepted the task of torture and death on a cross; for on the third day he rose again, and conquered death itself.

In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: `The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'"

(Luke 24:5-7, NIV version)

Why do we give in so easily when we have a God to call on that is so powerful and strong? But God's time is not always our time.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

(Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, NIV version)

So patience, faith, trust... et cetera, is so important. Even if things look so terrible that life is barely worth living, draw on his Spirit for strength and patience. Trust that:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

(Romans 8:28, NIV version)

Wait on God's answer while you do everything in your power to help yourself, if the circumstances call for your participation, and trust in him.

The strange thing is, even under all the seemingly bad things presently happening in my life, I feel strong and good, though I'd love to see things go my way a bit, but all in due time if it's God's will. Hardship may be good for me for a while.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

(James 1:2-4, NIV version)

Pain is character building. The angels even want to look into these things concerning God's grace and mercy.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

(1 Peter 1:10-12, NIV version)

If I never knew pain, I couldn't say for sure that God is greater than it.

Though it is tough sometimes, I must admit. It's hard for my human eyes (even as fervently as I write about these things) to always trust in God's way. I'm scared that God's way may be different from what I really, truly want - that I may have a fear of penguins, and God will lead me to be a missionary in Antarctica to paint the penguins all white, so they look pure.

Deep down, I really believe that God wants for me what I truly would want for myself if I could see everything into the ends of eternity, and knew all the secrets of life that are presently hidden from me. I believe they are hidden for a reason, so that I trust in the person of God through Jesus Christ without knowing the reasons for everything and exactly where I will end up (even in the face of the world seeming to be against me - and him). So he knows I truly believe in him and where he'll lead me, without a game

plan or a blue print. So he knows (and I know) I have true faith, and that I love him.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

(1 Peter 1:6-7, NIV version)

Just like a soldier who trusts his commanding officer and gets killed – no, just kidding. Your commanding officer may or may not be trustworthy. That's for you to decide whether to follow or not; but I believe God is trustworthy. So I will follow, or try to, even if everything doesn't always make perfect sense to my little mind. This is because I've met God through Scripture, through people who know God, and through personal experience. I have grown to see that he is true and trustworthy and will not let me down, even if it seems that way circumstantially.



## **25) Gore to Meet with Angels' Feet**

The earth was born in seven days  
How many days to trace its maze?  
The burning hearts reply in gore:

"The ransomed bride will weep no more  
Her eyes will see and not go blind  
Her eyes will plead and surely find  
Where here meets there and up meets down  
There is no speck to stain her gown  
There is no word to cause her fall  
Nor break her stride  
Her name is called"

Their battered bodies lie in ruins  
Their shameless lives left still  
For the angry children of the world to mock and scorn them  
The martyrs' deaths were left without mourning  
No king to write their handsome names on the shore of walls  
But their names were in the book of life  
And thus they knew that when their foes  
Had placed their bitter knives  
Deep into their hearts  
To pierce their very souls  
Their souls would not die  
Their souls could not die  
For they were not born of flesh and blood  
They soared like gulls above the seven plagues  
That lavished down on these holy grounds

"These grounds were defiled by stubborn darts  
To reach their goals, they whipped their hearts  
And taught them to be still  
To gain as much as the world could provide  
'The glory years of suicide!'

They waved their arms up in the air  
They ruled the earth with violent stares  
Lies and truth were mixed together  
The liar's teeth, their ankles fetter  
They threw their souls away like lint  
They threw their souls away like trash  
They saw no need to cultivate  
The seed of the word of God  
And learn of the Spirit's power  
They threw away their very souls  
As if their souls were trash"

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## 26) Toys

The empty days of savagery  
Are destined soon to fail

Eternity is laughed away  
Forever has gone stale

"Live today and die this way  
Your earthly dreams set sail

Amass your plastic toys and grin  
Accumulate your power"



## 27) Every Day

Every day is a new day, and every day I have to seek God. Can I just come to God and that's it, never having to seek him again? I have to continue every day to drink from the water of life and eat the bread of life that is Christ Jesus (and feed on the Spirit). When I do this I am not left with the normal void of agony that I would usually carry with me into all facets of my life.

But I don't feel like writing anymore.

I'm at a fast-food restaurant, and am now finished with my sandwich. I'm in the rich, intellectual section of the city, Coolidge Corner, where people use their minds to distance themselves from reality. Though, many would argue that I distance myself from reality by my belief in the so-called Spirit of God, of course understandingly patting me on the head with the words, "If it works for you, then that's great," which is understanding of them to say. So why don't I return such empathetic and compassionate sentiments? Because if I said anything to the contrary of what Jesus said...

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

(John 14:6-7, NIV version)

"I and the Father are one."

(John 10:30, NIV version)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

(John 3:16-21, NIV version)

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had

provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

(Hebrews 1:3, NIV version)

...I feel I would only be misleading people. If the Scriptures did not say...

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

(Hebrews 9:27-28, NIV version)

...then my beliefs and their beliefs would not be a pressing matter, only a matter of amusing conversation of cultural differences and of varying philosophies of living life.

I sit here alone at the restaurant, thinking that I have found the secrets of life and have been blessed with the greatest gift known to man: The knowledge of the living God and a relationship, even a friendship, with this God. I feel that I have found the cure-all to all problems and for all people, as silly as it sounds. Dear Lord, forgive me if I do not shout from the hills about this wonderful peace I've found.

Peace? Before, I didn't want peace. I would have thrown it away for two tickets to a ball game, or for free beers at a strip joint, but now I want and have peace, and I see so few around me who have peace also. I see many with docile resignation, sitting quietly and waiting for their lives to end, without the courage or the energy to even live before they die. Fear has their epitaph etched in cold marble for them, "I just went along, didn't bother anyone, saw a few movies, ate a few hamburgers and died - sorry."

What are the biggest problems we have, the biggest obstacles that inhibit us? I think a few of the biggest are fear, selfishness and lack of love.

If fears were taken away from us, think of what doors would be open that are now closed. Think of all the girls (or boys) that have walked by unspoken to that might have ended up a good relationship. Fear, fear of rejection: Think of all the things unsaid to the ones you love, as they slip further and further away from you.

Stubbornness and pride court fear in the dark.

A "noble" statesman, persuading the masses with his speeches, may truly be a fearful child tapping in on others fear and hate.

But what about just plain, "I'm a pussy," fear. It's horrible to live in fear, and many do. Many don't leave their houses for fear of what's outside.



## 28) Lust

If I had to pick my favorite addiction, I would have to say it's women – not true love, though love can be an addiction, but more so lust. Lust is like a drug in that it gives you a... – well, I don't wanna get into it, but it's there, waiting for me to bow to its pleasures and rely on it for my satisfaction, my relief, instead of God. But I know that there is no temptation known to man that God does not provide a way out.

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

(1 Corinthians 10:12-13, NIV version)

If you look for it, and pray for it, your escape will come. You will not be tempted beyond your power to resist; God promises this. Many will say, "There was no way out, I had no choice, I had to do it," but they only considered the immediate pleasure ahead of them and welcomed, if not invited, their temptation to encompass them. They chose to bow to it, to rely on something other than God that goes against God's will or law to deal with their empty void – or to just enjoy the pleasure of whatever it is that tempts them.

Just as I leave the restaurant, after writing about having found the secrets of life, I soon find myself looking at the "Porn" section in the nearest video store – my heart aflutter at the glorious sights I see of the woman's body, only seconds after I scream from the hills of God's power. How is this? Am I a liar, is this okay, or am I in constant battle between the fleshly minded and the spiritually minded self? (And the winner depends on my ability to

let God win or let the flesh win.) [But should we really beat ourselves up for having God given sexual desires? Sexual pleasure, experienced in his will, is God's blessing on us.]

This train I'm on speeds incredibly loudly as if to destruction – but it did stop.



## 29) The Weakness of Guessing

We only seem to inhibit ourselves. We, or at least I, sometimes have the tendency to act towards others in the way we think that they perceive us, instead of acting the way we want to act – or the way we would want them to act towards us. If I thought that you really didn't want to see me, and I happen to run into you, I might act antagonistic and wise as if to combat your supposed ill feelings of me. I'd do this to get a sense of being in control, though, in reality you may actually like me and have no ill feelings of me. I second-guessed you and was so insecure that I had to cover myself by acting a certain way – a certain defensive way.

So I only inhibit our relationship by my insecurity and defensiveness. What I should do is act towards you the way I really want to act towards you, or the way I would want you to act towards me.

This is no new psychological concept, but only the restating of the words we may all have heard spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ.

"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

(Matthew 7:12, NIV version)

This applies to both parties: the second-guessing defensive one, and the misunderstood, second-guessed, unfairly treated one. Both should rise above the other's treatment and treat the other as if they were themselves.

Rarely does even one of the two parties take this stand. If only one of them did this, it may well eventually lead the other to act the same way.

But again, you, or at least I, need God in order to have the strength (the release from the fear of rejection) and the love (the ability to even care about the other person) before we can treat anyone in this manner.

This doesn't necessarily mean always being nice either. Sometimes it would be more helpful to someone to be stern than friendly – but only if it was done to ultimately benefit the person. It depends on the situation.

Instead of treating someone we like as a close friend, we might treat him or her as an enemy or a cold acquaintance. Instead of treating the woman we love as a princess, we might treat her like a wart faced bar hag – `cause that's how her last boyfriend treated her... and she still loves him. So you figure I'll treat her like dirt and she'll love it – and she may love you for it, `cause it's what she's used to. We all have a soft spot for what we're used to, even if what we're used to is agony. But why not be different and do things God's way for a change, instead of trusting the soap operas or the movies? If you do love her, why not treat her like you love her – what an insane

freuqing concept – even if she acts like a bitch? If you do, instead of going down to her level, you might bring her up to yours. Not that you're any better, just that you tried this weirdo God-love thing first.



### 30) Cornered Belligerence

I can't write. I feel like I've been climbing a never-ending thorn bush ladder. My hands are scarred; my feet are bleeding; yet I still climb – because the alternative is far worse than my temporary hardship. I could compromise a little every day: bend a little and give a little, not be so idealistic, pick the easy things that God asks of me and forget the rest.

"God is great, but this is the real world you're living in, kid." It's been told to me a thousand times, and these are probably the second saddest words ever uttered – the first saddest, "Separation from God," the second saddest, "Sure, I believe, but I'll do things my way."

I watch a television interview, and a famous actor is asked, "How do you deal with your movies, where your actions in the movies go against your personal beliefs?" He was stumped. A tear swelled in his millions of women adored eyes. He mumbled something, but you could tell he was thrown off guard and hurt by the situation caused by the question.

I liked this guy, and still do. From the interview he seemed like a nice guy. I felt bad for him, for he may have gained worldly success at the expense of compromising what he truly believed in. I'm not judging, because I have done and probably will do the same thing again – compromise. Take the ball away from God because he didn't shoot it when I thought it was time

to shoot (like Stevie Wonder taking the ball away from Larry Bird) and so find my own way.

Every time you compromise yourself and your beliefs, you get shallower and shallower and more and more phony, until you finally end up a normal American. One person's compromise will make him poor, while another person's compromise will make him rich, but still one is no better than the other.

It's amazing how people will actually run away from you if you talk about these things, like being true to God and not compromising yourself – or just God in general. It's as fearful to some as a bloody knife waved in anger.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

(Hebrews 4:12-13, NIV version)

I approached two people (one might call them bums, but I'll call them people – street people) out stemming (asking for money) at the Store 24. One of the guys, Jack, I had spoken to a few days earlier. He was facing a possible six months in Walpole Prison and had been thrown out by his wife for hitting her, and so was now plastered (drunk). Though, he did have a secret hideaway where he could sleep.

I left you in your angry dreams  
Never to...  
Never to...

I was talking to Jack, and this other fellow approached me from the nearby stairway – his name was Eddie. He was a relatively young guy, compared to the older street guys I usually see, about thirty-five to forty, and was missing a few teeth. He warmed up to me pretty quickly, though almost angrily. He invaded my space, which didn't bother me too much, and asked me in a rhetorical manner, "Do you know what the problem is?" These probably weren't his exact words, but I don't think he'll sue me for misrepresentation (nor even remember what he said himself). I thought he was gonna get deep on me [though actually, he may have], but he answered his own question by talking about the lack of street cleaning and said the prisoners should do it. He also said, which is kind of deep, that people like me, Jack and himself, should be the politicians.

All three of us kept talking for a while longer, and I figured I'd try the empty void filled by alcohol instead of God spiel. Eddie truly got scared. He said, "Wait a minute; what's going on here?" After getting his money from Jack, he walked quickly away. He couldn't bear to hear it, but I know what he feels like.

I remember a good friend trying to talk to me about my drinking too much and getting into fights, and not being close to God anymore or even trying to deal with God the way I had used to – not to mention my being selfish, childish, impatient, rude, uncaring, callused, unforgiving, devoid of understanding and arrogant. He had been watching me destroy myself and felt he had to bring it up, for my own sake – but I didn't want to hear it. I knew full well I was a self-absorbed jerk (though maybe I didn't fully understand the repercussions) and also that I was miserable, but at the same time was enjoying it. That enjoyment was more real to me, at the time, than the relationship I had once had with God (or with anyone else).

I was enjoying my misery and wanted to get the most out of it.

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."

(Luke 15:11-24, NIV version)

I felt I had a right to be miserable because of unfair circumstances, and so I felt I had a right to be angry. So I enjoyed my anger. Even though in one

way it was destroying me, in another way, I loved every second of it. There's a look you get when you're so angry at the world that you don't care whether you live or die, and that look isn't always an angry one. Sometimes it is, but sometimes it's more of a fearless, freuq it-all, even comical look. When you're teetering on the edge and your emotions are a whirlwind, there is a certain look you get. I've seen it in myself, and I've seen it in many close friends from time to time.

So in a sick way, I was enjoying this situation and had grown use to it. So I didn't want to hear anything that would make me feel like I was screwing up. I was in denial. I felt that I deserved, and could not help, the way I was.

So I shut the conversation down before it was even fully brought up, same as Eddie did. He didn't want anything to get in the way of his enjoying his bottle, so he ran. In a way, it was a good sign. Just like someone who is so far away from their own self that when you look at them, you almost feel that they're not even there. A break through is when they can't look you in the eye for too long anymore because their heart has finally been loosed enough to feel something, and it was so awkward that they just had to turn away. My friend, who once was a salesman, told me, "The ones who immediately turn you down and say 'no!' are usually the easiest sale." I know we're not talking about replacement windows, but this kind of applies. If someone shuts you down immediately, than obviously there's something that you brought up that bothers that person and makes him or her feel uncomfortable. If God makes them feel uncomfortable, than they probably have something inside them that tells them God might be true, but they are presently in denial of that thought, or they are enjoying their own way so much that the thought of change is horrifying. [But how much better is it if they immediately accept your words wholeheartedly.]



## 31) Morals

"It goes against my morals to rip off people in homes; it's the businesses that I'll con into giving me their money." This was my potential boss' pep talk.



## 32) Coyest of Infirmities

I called Beyonda – for the second time in a long while. She was busy and blew me off both times. It didn't seem to bother me either time. Of course I'd rather she screamed in ecstasy when I called, but she didn't. I hope she still doesn't believe that I'm obsessed with her. I still love her, but can let her go free to do whatever she wants to do also. She doesn't hold my future; though at times, in the past, I treated our relationship as if it was my only hope for a future. Not now, God holds my future. If we're to be together then great, if not, then hey, that's the way it is.

I started seeing this other girl. She's really a sweet girl. I really don't see us going anywhere together, though. She'll be moving away to a far away land soon, and all I want to do is go to Paris Island for the Marines, but I figure I'll give it a shot with her. At worst I'll gain a friend if it doesn't work out between us. I also can't see myself ever loving anyone the way I love Beyonda, and I hope I wouldn't drag anyone into a long term relationship with me if I still really loved someone else more. So I'll play it by ear and see where it goes. Anyway, I love female companionship – just to hang out

with them. I don't want to run from a relationship before I even give it a chance. Who knows what will happen? I sure don't.

Deep down, I know I still want Beyonda. She said she still wants to be friends, and so do I. I care about her so much that to see her happy, with or without me, would be a dream come true.

I feel so damn strong. I don't know what the heck happened to me (well, I do know: God's strength). Before, if she blew me off, I'd get pissed off and it would wreck my whole day. If she mentioned she has company, or I heard a male voice in the background, when before I would have gone into a rage of childish anger or a deep depression, now it doesn't seem to faze me. I can't control her; she can do whatever she wants. I now trust in God, not in our potential relationship or my abilities to change things between us for the better.

I feel released from the hold she once had on me, not that she even tried to gain a hold on me in the past (though maybe she did). It's just that I put so much responsibility for my happiness on her shoulders that I was emotionally swayed by the swing of our relationship. If it was going well, I'd be happy; if it was going bad, I'd be sad. My total mood would depend on us, on how we were relating together.

Being this, the case, I'd try too hard to manipulate and control the situation between us to be a good one. Whenever I tried too hard and trusted my own calculations on how to act as to get her to react a certain way, instead of (yeah, using my mind, but more) just letting things happen and trusting God...

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.

(Proverbs 3:5-7, NIV version)

...things would always get screwed up. I was so busy trying to figure out what kind of man she wanted, and trying to become that man, that I forgot to be myself. She could probably sense that I was putting too much weight on the relationship and depending on her for too much – depending on her to fill my empty void, the same way a drunk may depend on whiskey, or a businessman on money and power. Her love was my addiction; I wanted her love to fill that empty void in me. This is totally unfair to ask. I was asking her to fill the space that only God could completely and steadfastly fill. People read the Bible and hear about, "sins of idolatry,"...

And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments."

(Exodus 20:1-6, NIV version)

...and think to their selves, "I don't worship a brass statue of a horse with a head of an eagle and a baby's arm for a tail, so I don't commit idolatry." But any time we put something (or someone) else in the place of God, whether

it be money, drugs, your work, your car, your woman or your man, food, knitting, anger, your dick or your pussy, your beauty, the beauty of your house, your love for music, anything before God, we commit idolatry - and I was, in a sense, doing this.

How can anyone (even your mate) take on such responsibility for your stability and happiness? There's so much want needing to be met by the other person that it's frightening. You shouldn't lay that much need on someone; it's unfair. It's also impossible to ever entirely meet your needs, because your mate isn't as big as God. Though some will love this, to be your drug, to be needed; but normally, they'll run from you.

You both need to be depending on God for your happiness, and to meet both your needs. This way, every little thing won't swing the relationship up and down, over and over, with little arguments eating up both your lives.

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.

(Philippians 2:14-16, NIV version)

If you come to a relationship strong from God's strength, it's so much easier to be yourself and to express yourself and your love freely, because you're not as afraid of rejection as you were before. Your whole world won't collapse if she (or he) doesn't respond the way you want her to (or if they

won't see you tonight). Your self-worth isn't based on the responses of the opposite sex or in anyone. You're Free!

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

(John 8:31-32, NIV version)

Only when you're free can you truly love your mate the way God had intended for you to love them.

Now, I feel free. Knowing the one who controls my destiny is perfect and loves me relieves truckloads of fear. When fear is killed, freedom is born. God is the only thing I have ever found that can truly take away fear. False confidence and acting strong and aggressive can work for a while, but it only goes so far until it collapses into a cloud of destruction and brings forth even greater insecurities and fears than before.

I love Beyonda; I truly love her from the bottom of my heart. She could put my love to the test and put on two hundred pounds, shave off her beautiful blonde hair, lose her personality to a grave depression, develop a hideous skin disease, lose all her teeth and never be able to have sex again due to a medical disorder. The whole world could hate her guts and run from her hideousness, but I would still love her and take her gladly to the church altar to be my wife.

She is not my addiction anymore. She no longer has the power to make me happy or make me miserable (like I said in the letter that I wrote to her), God does. But I still love her, freely I do.

If she wanted to be friends, than I could be her friend without getting obsessed. Now is the best time ever for us to truly be friends. Before there was too much unsaid, too much inside that I wasn't expressing, so it came out in strange ways. Now that I'm not so wrapped up in her, I can relax and be myself. If she relaxes and knows I'm not crazed and obsessed with her, and doesn't play head games, it makes it easier and more comfortable for me (and between us). Then we could finally become friends (at a deeper level than we are at). All this unexpressed bullcrap and fear have gotten in the way for too long. Now that I don't need her so desperately, we can finally get to know each other, if we're both honest with each other.

The funny thing is that when you feel you've changed for the better, and you act towards most people in a new and better way, and you run into people that are more used to the way you used to be, and you also are more used to the way that the relationship used to be when you were a bit of a different person, you tend to automatically relate the way you used to relate (or are used to relating) with those persons from the past - but this can change.



### **33) Better Than Back**

This may sound strange, but I could describe my spiritual situation, today, by comparing it to drinking a glass of vitamin C filled orange juice while feeling the onset of a cold coming on.

I've been so close to God and have been trying so hard to obey him that I feel God's power combating my natural tendency to get depressed or angry, or to sin when circumstances aren't going my way - and the good is

winning. I feel myself getting stronger and stronger each day as I try to follow him instead of my sinful desires. It becomes easier, though sometimes harder, but more so easier.

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### 34) Royal Pond

My pond of rain is for your will  
Thou think of all and all is done

My hand is weak, my brow is warm  
The longing streaks in quiet storms

A laughing heart of sturdy steel  
A laughing

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### 35) Morons

Why are some Christians such morons? Why are they so damn annoying that they make your skin crawl? Why do so many seem like brainwashed, misfit cartoon characters – phony, mindless, smiling pinheads or closed minded stuffed shirts? They're either so nice to you that you feel like smacking them and their posed compassion, or they're yelling like deranged madmen at you `cause you're wearing evil make-up and consort in bars with the devil's own lot, regular people.

The unbelievers say, "Who would want to go to heaven and hang out with such pathetic, plastic, socially inept, sideshows anyway?"

The believers say, "We are not of this world, and this is why the world does not accept us."

This may be true, `cause true believers only remind the unbelievers of the possibility that they're running down the wrong road.

"Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets."

(Luke 6:22-23, NIV version)

Who wants to hang out with someone with such a burdensome, but really life giving, message: That you must follow Christ and believe in him as the only Begotten Son of God, and follow after him when the way he goes, goes directly against most of our docile, contented, comfortable, selfish ways.

That's not always the only reason some Christians aren't accepted by some people. A lot of Christians really are morons; or at least some have the wrong (or a confused) idea about what being a Christian is about.

When I first started to follow Christ in the... (I was a moron, and I still am today - not finished yet).



### **36) Fate Hath No Folly**

God is good. I could have survived if she hated my guts, but it was nice to know that we're still friends - Beyonda and me that is. It's a relief to be on good terms with someone you really care about. Maybe it's some type of payback for having been making an effort to be on good terms with those who really care about me -...

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

(Matthew 5:7, NIV version)

...with those, who in the past, I would have taken for granted and overlooked and not have made any effort towards in the relationship.

It was kind of Beyonda to open up a little bit and put me at ease. Plus, I didn't need her, as in an addiction type way, so it frees up our communications. I told her this, and how strong I felt, and how amazed I was that I wasn't depressed over what happened between us. She said that's good.

There are times of life that are good. To follow Christ is not always an uphill battle with the advantage of good hiking boots representing God. God, being just support in a never-ending struggle. Although that alone (God's support, strength, love... et cetera in the face of conflict) is in itself worth believing in God for, there is more than just support that you receive. I know that my heavenly Father determines the outcome of all my small battles and my great ones. Although he does discipline me and is hard on me at times (so that I learn to depend more on his foresight than on mine), he is not over burdensome. He does not whip me long after I've learned my lesson just to get his kicks. He is not an abusive father.

My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

(Proverbs 3:11-12, NIV version)

If he did not discipline me and teach me his way of living (no matter what suffering is involved), then I would be robbed of being the man he wants me to be, as well of the joy that comes as a result of doing things God's way. God set up the rules, and the effects of obeying or not obeying are the effects that he invokes; so to obey is wise, the rewards are great.

But God does have mercy when mercy's needed.

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

(Matthew 11:25-30, NIV version)

There is rest from the fight. There are tears of joy that come – true joy, and the uninhibited, thunderous laughter of victory. God controls the battle no matter how treacherous the enemy is or how long you've been fighting a seemingly never-ending battle. God knows just the time to trip the enemy up as you rush in to victory. In small or great battles, he knows exactly which ones you are to win, and which ones you are to lose, to bring you to the place that he wants you to be. (But you must play your part by letting yourself be led by the Spirit and by trusting and obeying God.) This is truly the place that you would want to be if you were as all knowing as God; but you're not, so that's why you must trust in the Lord.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

(Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV version)

This is what the LORD says: "Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded," declares the LORD. "They will return from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your future," declares the LORD. "Your children will return to their own land. I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: 'You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the LORD my God. After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.' Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him," declares the LORD. "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take. Return, O Virgin Israel, return to your towns. How long will you wander, O unfaithful daughter? The LORD will create a new thing on earth—a woman will surround a man."

(Jeremiah 31:16-22, NIV version)

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### 37) Balance

Sometimes it's good not to think so much. I'm tired of thinking, I just feel like enjoying how good I feel; but if I do nothing but enjoy myself, than I'll get nothing done. So I've gotten to, with God's help, force myself to, at least, have a good balance between work and pleasure.

If all I do is work, I'll get burnt out and collapse and not get to work anymore. If my only endeavor is pleasure, than no work will be done and I'll feel bad for being so lazy. So somewhere in the middle I must land - a hard day's work and a healthy dose of relaxation and enjoyment. It's not that work is not enjoyable, it is (or can be); but it can be tiresome.



### 38) One Man

A man or woman completely dependent on God is what God wants. A person who needs no other outside forces for his satisfaction, one who is not swayed greatly by circumstances or emotionally bankrupt after hardship has hit him (or her). Neither is he one who is annoyingly gleeful in a bothersome way when events veer in his favor.

A stable man or woman, because their stability is their faith, their faith is in their God, and their God does not falter. Their God does not play unnecessary head games, nor engage them in petty disputes over nothing.

Their God is the "A to Z," the "Alpha and the Omega." He is, "I AM," he says.

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: `I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, `The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation."

(Exodus 3:14-15, NIV version)

He is not a God that will betray you to gain favor with someone else; he's God. He has no one to impress by doing such things.

The one who is totally dependent on God and relies not on drink, nor mate, nor money, nor power, more than God (to bring him happiness), this is a powerful man or woman of God. This is one who obeys God and is not separated so distantly by sin.

The same man may fall away, but when this man is in this state of reliance with faith and obedience in action, this is a powerful man (or woman).

He's the most open to letting the Spirit of God work through him. His mere presence changes the whole tone of any gathering. He is truly the salt of the earth.

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be

thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

(Matthew 5:13-16, NIV version)

As I was waiting for a train one day, I saw a funny man. He was dancing and talking the words after the recorded music sung them. They were Christian songs. He'd tap his microphone to the beat and do the silliest dance I've ever seen, and repeat some of the most cliché corny lyrics I've ever heard. I had to laugh. I wasn't laughing at him, like the others seemed to be doing. As silly as he was, I felt he was sincere and he made me feel so good that I had to laugh out loud, out of, I don't know what, relief I guess (or maybe joy).

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

(James 5:16-20, NIV version)

This was his sermon in a second theme, after the music climaxed to a corny, choral high note. I thought to myself: He speaks the truth. The things that one person can do if he is truly feeding on the Spirit of God are great. Such a man is relinquished from his ego, maybe not one hundred percent, but maybe so. He is not tied down by the things that tie most of us down. Whether he is respected by man or not is of little or no consequence to him.

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

(Matthew 10:28, NIV version)

He may, nonetheless, be respected by many because of the honesty and integrity that he manifests in his being, but he is interested in what God thinks of him more so than his peers, young girls, or the rich. He's not corrupted by his selfishness. He knows his heavenly Father will provide for him more than he could possibly dream of having, so he need not scrounge desperately - like a filthy rat, pushing away anything or anyone that gets in the way of his union with his maggot infested meal. Such a man or woman of God doesn't have to scrounge.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

(Matthew 6:25-34, NIV version)

Such a man need not worry; nor does such a man need to manipulate all that is around him in order to have things "go his way." He need not sweat over every last detail that he has planned, or ordered to be carried out, in a worrisome manner to see his plan succeed.

Such are the actions of a faithless man.

Oh, the lives he could change, or should I say, the lives God could change through him.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

(Matthew 10:29-31, NIV version)



### **39) Redundancy of Will**

So what do you do when the circumstances around you aren't going well, and you don't feel the strength of God in you either? That's when you go crazy, or at least that's when you give in to the world's way of dealing with life regardless of God's way - though, you may still go to a church gathering and pet God on the head once in a while.

While, there must be another way - maybe sheer patience, faith without feeling. When you don't feel that God is with you, and you don't feel the power and love of his Spirit in you, this is when it's the most difficult to follow him and his way.

"Why don't I feel his Spirit when I am a true believer in Christ and have already been spiritually reborn?" is a good question.

Maybe it's sin. Sin, I feel, encompasses a lot more than most people think. Many will say, "I'm a good person, I don't hurt anybody and I donated a large portion of my income to the church this year," but that doesn't necessarily please God in itself.

But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

(1 Samuel 15:22-23, NIV version)

We commit idolatry (putting anything before God) when we drift away and forget to include him in our lives, when we don't pray and talk to him and ask his help and guidance, when we neglect to be thankful for his goodness and mercy. For in these actions of neglect, we're revealing our dependence on things other than God, and also reveal our arrogance by thinking that we can get by without God's help.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:6-7, NIV version)

When we forget God, that unearthly spiritual high is slowly (or quickly) grounded and tied back down to the wretched, dreadful, depressing earth.

When you kept God dear to you and near to you, you had such strength that the whole world could laugh at you in scorn and spit at you angrily as you walked down Main Street in your home town, and you would not be ruffled. You'd smile confidently in the face of rejection and hardship. You were so strong because you were doing the best thing you could possibly be doing for successful, fulfilling living: depending entirely on God for your self-worth, for your safety, for your food, for everything.

You were an island of fortitude. "How could someone have such confidence and even love in the face of such bad circumstances?" they all asked themselves of you. You needed no one for your approval; you were approved by God; ... a son of God.

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

(Galatians 3:26-28, NIV version)

You were so strong that eventually these people that had spit on you took notice of your unearthly, astounding behavior. They saw your unshakable confidence and began to admire you. If you believed so much in yourself, they figured there must be something good and likable in you, so they made efforts to know you.

Soon you became well accepted by most or all around you. Their eyes changed from hostile slits to honoring, open circles of attentiveness. Every word you uttered was well accepted in the way you wanted it to be accepted. Your jokes fell into a bed of laughter. Your reprimands were taken to heart and listened intently to. All, who were around you, looked up to you. You found a beautiful girl and a successful, lucrative career. God snatched you from the gutter seconds before the street cleaner came roaring by to sweep you into a memory.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

(1 Corinthians 1:27-29, NIV version)

Things were going so well that (well, anyone can guess what happened quite easily) you forgot about God, even after God had allowed you to be lifted high. He showed you his power. You felt so good (due to all the wonderful things surrounding you), you felt so secure in yourself (how could you not, everyone told you how wonderful you were on an hourly basis), you felt so lofty, so in control, that you (maybe without even realizing it) forgot about God and the reason that you have all that you have. You think you've committed no sin, but you've forgotten about the sin of idolatry. You've also forgotten what Jesus said.

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: `Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'"

(Mark 12:29-30 [Deuteronomy 6:4-5], NIV version)

You used God. You used him till you had enough earthly things to fill your sinful heart that you switched sides somewhere along the road. The temptations were too great; the women were too beautiful; the power was so sweet. You felt such control that you no longer felt it necessary to fulfill the role that you were created for: to give glory to God and fellowship with him.

"Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, `Give them up!' and to the south, `Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

(Isaiah 43:4-7, NIV version)

He just wanted to hang out with you, to have your respect and love and to give you his respect and love. He wanted to guide you in the right direction, but you had enough love and respect from all the people around you. They'd even worship you if it didn't look so funny bowing to you and all. You forgot that God created even their love for you. In fact, you personally felt so omnipotent that you knocked God off the throne of your life. You (though you probably won't admit it), in a sick and twisted way that is common to most if not all people (at one time or another), wanted yourself on God's throne; you wanted to be God. You didn't run out and tell everyone you're God or even think that you created the world, but you did take back from God the things that he wants to be in charge of. You did forget to include him.

God doesn't want you out of malicious intent, but he does want you. He does want his rightful place. After all, he made you. Even if you feel smarter and more powerful than a self-distanced God, you're only fooling yourself and making Satan's mistake.

It is said that Satan was God's number one angel. So wonderful was he that it went to his head. He eventually deemed himself (more praiseworthy and) independent of his maker, so he broke off – and it is thought that a third of the angels followed him, now called demons.

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.

(Revelation 12:3-4, NIV version)

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

(Revelation 12:7-9, NIV version)

I fret to even use the devil, demons and angels as examples to help illustrate my point because of all the pre imposed conclusions immediately drawn when such fantastic images are used, but I did anyway.

So, the one that's lifted up by God to success is still in danger (maybe even more so than before) of falling away, of backsliding. You'd be better off being knocked back down to the gutter again and start over. Better to suffer a little now than to die in the grotesque indulgence of your own perverted God-robbing stance while reveling in self-defeating arrogance. I've done it, I know; and I thank God that I was put back in my place. I really prefer it here. Life is good and heaven awaits me when I have my priorities straight and God is God. I wouldn't consciously trade the joy of his way for all the power in the world (but I might in a state of insanity, though I pray I never do again).

Jesus was offered the world...

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to

him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: `Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

(Matthew 4:8-10 [Deuteronomy 6:13], NIV version)

...but he was no dummy, for he also said:

"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

(Mark 8:36-37, NIV version)

But I got away from my original topic: not feeling God's power and facing hardship.

Then again, maybe I didn't.

On second thought, maybe I did.



## 40) "Stifling," I Thought

It seems to me that we're all just standing around, picking our roles and playing our parts, not being true to our real selves, playing a dismal, boring game of selfishness while practicing our acting skills that have been practiced for so long that you'd mistake them for natural (to help us fit in), waiting for someone to tear off their mask and say, "What the freuq are we doing!"

We've all been playing the same game for so long that if you chose a higher way, there would be very few to meet you up there - you might become foreign to the others so you don't risk it.

A lot of people may think the same way (feel themselves and a lot of people around them are phony), but few actually have the courage or the self-perception (or the whatever) to go against the norm - to be real, true to their selves, true to God, to be honest.



## 41) Levity of Being

Could it be that I take things too seriously? While I know I do exaggerate (and also generalize) things sometimes to express the point more emphatically. Also, to keep from saying things like, "All (well, maybe not all) are running (not in a literal sense, but in more of an escapism metaphor) to (which is as bad as from) the worst (well, there could be a place worse, but it is pretty bad) house (not as in white picket fence, but more like a

quintessential commune)." I'd never be able to finish one sentence if I took into account all possible exceptions to the point I was trying to make.

Only after the matters of the spiritual are truly dealt with, does true levity of being, lightheartedness, occur.

Jesus was depicted and prophesied as a man of many hardships.

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant

will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

(Isaiah 53, NIV version)

(It is worthy to take note that the last passage quoted, Isaiah 53, was written hundreds or thousands of years before the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that these words outline the events and circumstances of his life and the reason for his coming, depicted in the gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, with absolute accuracy.) (How could these words not have been breathed by God?)

By his dealing with this world with an honest, though seemingly grave at times, approach, and by staying true to the course his Father set before him, he knows true joy. He chose freely to walk in obedience and not to join in the overindulgence of false merriment. Because of his doing things his Father's way instead of taking the easy way out, we now have, through his work on the cross, a way of forgiveness of sins, a way of wiping away forever the sins of our life (as far away as the east is from the west)...

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed

like the eagle's. The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children—with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul.

(Psalms 103 [Of David.], NIV version)

...a way to eternal life.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me

that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

(John 14:1-7, NIV version)

The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left. The new wine dries up and the vine withers; all the merrymakers groan. The gaiety of the tambourines is stilled, the noise of the revelers has stopped, the joyful harp is silent. No longer do they drink wine with a song; the beer is bitter to its drinkers. The ruined city lies desolate; the entrance to every house is barred. In the streets they cry out for wine; all joy turns to gloom, all gaiety is banished from the earth. The city is left in ruins, its gate is battered to pieces. So will it be on the earth and among the nations, as when an olive tree is beaten, or as when gleanings are left after the grape harvest.

(Isaiah 24:4-13, NIV version)

You women who are so complacent, rise up and listen to me; you daughters who feel secure, hear what I have to say! In little more than a year you who feel secure will tremble; the grape harvest will fail, and the harvest of fruit will not come. Tremble, you complacent women; shudder, you daughters who feel secure! Strip off your clothes, put sackcloth around your waists. Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vines and for the land of my people, a land overgrown with thorns and briers—yes, mourn for all houses of merriment and for this city of revelry. The fortress will be abandoned, the noisy city deserted; citadel and watchtower will become a wasteland forever, the delight of donkeys, a pasture for flocks, till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. Though hail flattens the forest and the city is leveled completely, how blessed you will be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free.

(Isaiah 32:9-20, NIV version)



## **42) In Absence of Honor**

If you want to help, help, but don't be so damn annoying about it.

Some people get such a feeling of self-wonderfulness as they reach out in a fake fatherly (or motherly), overly compassionate manner. So phony, it makes you wonder why they're even helping: to fulfill their self-visualized caring image of themselves, or to actually help.

Though some may open up to such an approach, it bugs the hell out of me; and I have been guilty of the same counterfeit imaging of love.

Posed compassion: What good is compassion if you are belittling your target of irritating warmth in the process? What is love without respect? It may still be love, but if it is, it's certainly not as strong (though maybe it isn't even love). Why would you bother to pretend to be acting in a loving way if you can't see your victim of false care as a human being instead of a pathetic creature, or a mindless, helpless child? If someone is acting like a child, if you treat that person as an annoyance or a sideshow of amusement (and so devoid of respect), this won't help to do anything but drive that person away from you and keep him or her a child. A spoiled brat will remain a spoiled brat, for their actions may only be practiced as to antagonize your lack of love and respect for them. A twisted dance of unmet needs, that you only prolong; for behind their petty stands and childish taunting is a silent, disguised pleading for love and respect. But you're too smart to bend in anyway whatsoever to temper-tantrums or irrational behavior, and refuse to show them any love. You only see the surface and ignore the roots. This will only make them resent you, show you nothing but a cold shoulder or false, begrudging appreciation, and continue on in their destructive behavior.

"Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."

(John 7:24, NIV version)

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

(Galatians 6:1, NIV version)

If someone is a bit screwed up and can't relate well to others, the answer to that person has most frequently been to treat them as an outcast. If for some reason you are forced to be in contact with such a person (as in a blood tie, or a job orientated relationship), our answer has been to treat them like a pet.

Do not only love the unloved, but also show respect to the un-respected, to those downcast souls whose feet are not firmly placed, to those whom the world regards as worthless and whose only purpose is considered to provide others with something to talk about and laugh at. Are they not just as much a part of creation as you are? Dare you mock God's handiwork and mercilessly scorn their very existence, or even worse, smile in loathing and patronize the confused, keeping them stagnant? Respect them, and they may feel worthy of respect and thus respect themselves. Who knows, they may be raised up, with God's help, and someday lord over you?

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man,

"Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

(Mark 10:46-52, NIV version)



### **43) River**

God, give me strength. I need to listen to people more and bend to their needs or moods instead of always imposing mine on them – or at least feel them out and meet them on common ground.

Selfishness is ugly, and it drives many away. We all talk to ourselves, throwing words out of our mouths at what might as well be a wall in front of us – though it really is a person. There is no union, no sense of fellowship, no feeling of two spiritual beings meeting on a deeper level and weighing each other's presence as if in gold.

There's also the other side: of overdoing it, of over intensifying and therefore destroying the good, peaceful, underlying with love, relaxed, unified situations.

Love is very evident if it is real. It need not be forced down each other's throats. Love is as obvious as hate. You may even glow.

When God's love runs through your veins, your aura will almost always give you away immediately - without even thanking someone eighteen times for giving you change for a dollar to prove your loving Christ like demeanor (seventeen is plenty).

When you're open to the Spirit of God through obedience and selflessness and prayer, God's love and power flow through you like a river flows to the gulf. Confident and strong, the river needs no multicolored lights or florescent signs explaining how powerfully the river flows. All you have to do is come across the river's path to feel the calm, yet powerful, undercurrent flowing freely into the mouth of the gulf to realize its might.



#### **44) The Lusts of Pieces**

I'm burdened to write, yet burdened by what I've written. I pray to God that he leads me to stop writing if all I'm doing is turning people off to him. If God likes what I'm writing and he wants me to continue, even if it does offend people because of the true message of the gospel, than I hope I will write anyway. If all I'm doing is painting a bad picture (only bad because of me), and God is not pleased, I pray he stops me.

I honestly would love to see people around me have peace and eternal life (as well as myself). If I could best serve this purpose by shutting up and doing dishes, and God leads me to do so, I pray I shut up and wash.

I feel so inadequate to speak of the things of God. I feel myself the worst of all examples of a faithful believer - people even tell me this (that I don't seem to be dedicated). I sometimes, when trying to express my faith, come

off close-minded and uncaring. I also have been guilty of being a bad listener, and of not trying hard enough to understand where others are coming from. I'm a poor witness, and many times my actions have been far from holy (and may well be again).

I would tear these pages up and throw them into the Charles River if it were best. What do I care? I want to be happy and am convinced that God through Christ is the answer. As annoying as my way of writing the message is, I still believe it's true, but will only write it if I feel God wants me to – or at least doesn't stop me, and it helps some people around me (the ones I care about, and even those that I personally don't have the capacity to care for) to know the peace of God.

If God made everything, than he can eventually put all the pieces together so everything fits: so there is no odd man out, no need for jealousy, no downcast soul nor defensive arrogance, so everyone has a place and is perfectly content with that place and not secretly lusting after another's place.

It took me a long time to get to the point where I no longer want everything and everyone to worship me – me above the rest, me in command. I don't want that now; it would only end up in my ruin. I only want my piece, my share. I resign. Christ is the king, not me. I'm through trying to fight my way to widespread approval. My old desires have slowly and oh so painfully fallen away; but now that I stand released of the awful, repulsive (no matter how well disguised) sores of self-heightening, I dance like a child. A drunken child of God, drunk with the Spirit of truth, drunk with inner peace not even explainable if I dedicated three thousand pages to its revealing.

I long to see those I love know the love of God, as corny as it sounds. So that they may be happy too; and in the process only make me happier to see those so dear to me being so happy. Those I love, able, now, to relate and have fellowship with me at the deepest, most gratifying level, as well as the small byproduct of eternal life together, with God and man finally joined in complete fellowship with one another.

The painful void of emptiness we carry with us that we only can manage, on our own, to slightly dilute or lessen its torture by filling it with fleshly pleasures or false gods (such as people we give the responsibility of God hood to), only to find that such things, after brief relief, rip the void even farther apart once leaned upon, finally eradicated, sealed up forever, gone.

There is such a time made possible by the blood and resurrection of our Lord Christ Jesus.

Christ silenced the ominous gong of foreboding that rings forth the horrifying reality of our own unrighteousness and tendency to disobey God. Our infatuation with sin is self evident in all who walk this planet. For there is not one man or woman (other than Christ Jesus himself) to ever conquer life free and unscathed by sin and guiltless of disobeying God.

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

(Romans 3:10-12 [Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20], NIV version)

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his

justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

(Romans 3:22-26, NIV version)

Christ has conquered sin. The only begotten Son of God came down from the right hand of his Father in heaven and took on an earthly body, a God-man if you like. He took on our struggles and our hardships.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

(Hebrews 4:15-16, NIV version)

He did not stay behind the scenes laughing at our stupidity and inability to obey the word of God. He saw that we couldn't obey the word of God. He saw that it was impossible for man to obey perfectly, every letter of the law, and to have fellowship and union with their heavenly Father in this sinful state of disobedience; this was impossible. In fact, I believe God set it up this way, so that man depends on Christ as his Savior and as his only means to eternal life, and not on his own works.

Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

(Romans 3:27-28, NIV version)

Man was separated from God by his sin since the Garden of Eden; and God is a holy God, he cannot fellowship with sin between you and him. Something had to be done. Man could never muster enough power to obey God and never to sin; and God, being perfect and righteous, could not help being distant from us in our sinful state. There was a huge canyon of emptiness that kept man from his maker – that kept the potter from his clay. Was there no man who could stand before God? A veil was drawn closed on the Inner chambers where Jehovah dwelt.

The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover."

(Leviticus 16:2, NIV version)

God is righteous, but also loving. He longed to see his children, whom he created, know and fellowship with him, and to know the joy he intended for them.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

(Romans 5:8, NIV version)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 6:23, NIV version)

So God sent his only begotten Son to end this horrid separation that sin had caused between God and man.

Jesus lived a perfect life. He did not falter; he did not stray. He is the unblemished Lamb of God. He lived a sinless life.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

(2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV version)

He was the only one capable of bearing the sins of the world on his shoulders. The sacrifices of the Old Testament days were done for forgiveness of sins but were only temporary. God, through his Son, provided a final, once and for all, sin sacrifice.

And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

(Hebrews 10:10, NIV version)

Christ came and suffered torture and disgrace.

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face.

(John 19:1-3, NIV version)

They spit on the Son of God.

They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.

(Matthew 27:30, NIV version)

Christ knew what terrible treatment he would face; the Scriptures of the Old Testament prophesied it. His entire life's course was predicted and fulfilled to the letter, hundreds to thousands of years later.

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again."

(Luke 18:31-33, NIV version)

He knew what suffering and rejection he was to face, but this did not stop him. His mission was you; his goal was your soul. His aim was to provide a way that you may be released and forgiven of your sins. He saw the crowds laughing at him, mocking him, and he thought of you. He could have turned back before he was captured and crucified, but he walked steadily

towards Jerusalem. Jesus, the very Son of God, in fact God himself, bore the penalty of your sins so you won't have to.

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.

(1 Timothy 2:3-6, NIV version)

So the veil of sin that separated God from man could be ripped in two, so they may be with one another, to hang out together, to have fellowship. He did this for you.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

(John 3:16, NIV version)

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

(Romans 10:8-9 [Deuteronomy 30:14], NIV version)

I've heard it was customary of these times to be nailed through the palms of the hands to the crucifix.

He wore a mock crown of thorns on his head, placed there to make fun of him.

They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said.

(Matthew 27:28-29, NIV version)

They called out in black sarcasm.

There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

(Luke 23:38, NIV version)

He was quoted as saying the following.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

(Luke 23:34, NIV version)

He hung there from the cross until darkness overtook the land.

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining.

(Luke 23:44-45, NIV version)

At that instant, the veil in the temple, separating the outer chambers from the innermost chamber (the Holy of Holies, where the Lord God Jehovah himself appeared) was ripped in two.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

(Luke 23:45-46, NIV version)

"Separation from God" could now be changed to "Fellowship with God." Death was conquered. Everlasting life was now obtainable through the blood of Christ. Through his sacrifice on the cross, forgiveness of sins (once and for all) was made possible. For in three days he rose from the dead, victorious over the death that sin had caused.



## **45) Street Corner Kids**

The street corner kids were dancing. They seemed free and happy for a brief moment of time as a white car pulled up and blared a Rap song, "Oh, boy, I love you so - never, ever, ever gonna let you go." They all danced.

I went to a blues jam at a club in Boston. Everyone got along; no one tried to rule or unnecessarily dominate the show. We were all so humble and accepting of one another: no arrogance, no selfishness (or at least none that I could see in extreme measures). Everyone had their place and didn't lust after anyone else's place. Everyone had a great time.

I feel that that street corner and that bar were both better representations of what heaven is like than a lot of churches are. Some churches are very exclusive and extremely un-open to new people who don't act precisely the way they do. People grow up in different backgrounds and act very dissimilar, but the church, in general, often seems only able to open its arms to those who act as cliques and sheltered as they do. There is little acceptance of different behavior.

A lot of churches hide themselves from the world. They develop a subculture of society as un-accepting of foreigners (those who don't fit into their world as they see it) as the Ku Klux Klan or the Neo-Nazi movement. They'll preach till they're blue in the face that God loves us all and will talk freely of the evils of prejudice, but what about behavioral prejudice? What about those who believe in Christ but have come from different backgrounds and therefore express their faith, and act, in different ways than the clique would normally expect? Much of the church may not physically close its doors on these people, but it certainly has little idea at all on how to relate to them.

Exclusiveness is a form of selfishness. Some churches are so content with their happy little group of believers (or pretenders, I don't know which) that they don't want their stagnant little family to be altered in any way. I have heard of, and have experienced, greater horror stories and tales of prejudicial rejection about churches than I have about clubs, bars, or parties. That's a crying shame, when the bars act more like the kingdom of heaven than many churches will.

Christ was not exclusive in the same manner. He did not hide himself in a safe little environment of sheltered, wide-eyed, grimacing, contented with themselves people. He hung out with sinners. He had the company of prostitutes, adulterers, and, worst of all, tax collectors. He did not go and kiss the butt of the religious leaders, like the Pharisees or the Sadducees. In fact these so-called religious leaders were his greatest targets of disdain.

He saw their evil hearts wrapped up in holy clothing. He saw that the reason they were involved with religion, or God, was to extract honor for themselves from the people and not for God.

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

(Matthew 6:5-6, NIV version)

Christ came for those who don't believe themselves holy and pure enough to receive the kingdom of heaven on their own merits of goodness.

"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

(Matthew 7:22-23, NIV version)

God requires of you the humbleness in word and spirit to accept what Christ has done on the cross for you as your only chance of salvation, not on your own measly good works.

David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

(Romans 4:6-8 [Psalms 32:1-2], NIV version)

He wants us to admit that we're unworthy and rely on him. That's how God set it up; so Christ, then, can make you worthy by the power of what he did for you on the cross. This way, God gets the glory, not you. Then in turn God glorifies you, for doing it his way and trusting him and not seeking after the glory for yourself.

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

(Luke 14:11, NIV version)

"And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

(Acts 2:21 [Joel 2:32], NIV version)

God made it impossible for you to go to heaven on your own merits. You need to rely on God through Christ's sacrifice on the cross for your salvation.

God wants more than just correct behavior; he wants a reliance on him. He wants your heart, your love, to know you personally. Is this so much to ask, that you do nothing but believe in him and love him? You're required no good works, no pure past or future record. After you seek him and find him and come to him (with yourself), God will take you in any sinful condition that you may be in, and through the leading and power of the Holy Spirit, guide you, however slowly or quickly it may be, into living your life the way he wants you to. If and how quickly this happens depends on your openness to him and his Spirit, your submission to his will and his guiding hand, and your determination to obey, but to come to him requires nothing on your part but a true belief in Christ as the Son of God. Make a request for the forgiveness of your sins. Pray that he comes into your heart and takes over your life. That's it. You don't have to give up prostitution or arrogance or selfishness first and then come to God; come to God and he will give you the strength and the power and the love to change your habits if he wants them to be changed. For only after you have God's Spirit working in you, is when all things are possible. Your old addictions, you'll soon laugh at as you wonder what made you so dependent on such silly things, or what forces made you so angry that you reacted to everyone in such a bitter, selfish way.

Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

(John 6:28-29, NIV version)



## 46) The Validity of the Unseen

Well, it seems not all bars or clubs are a good representation of the kingdom of God. After leaving the blues jam and writing the above, and feeling very good, I ventured on over to a strip joint where my roommate works as a bartender. The club was closed when I arrived at quarter past two, but the doorman let me in anyway as I mentioned my roommate's name and my intentions of driving him home.

I sat down next to the stool that the doorman was now occupying; and after a while, we started talking. The conversation somehow turned to Jesus; and my roommate, Jimmy, soon instigated an all-out, free-for-all, Christianity and God hood debate. Jimmy likes to get people going. He'll say a few baited words to lead you on as to amuse him, and then just sit back and enjoy, with enormous laughter, the antics that follow.

As I was talking to Lester the doorman, or, "Lester the molester," as Jimmy calls him, about God and whatnot, Jimmy yelled out to the manager of the club something like, "What's your opinion of this Adam and Eve thing we were discussing?" He gave his opinion, and summed it up as a fable and didn't believe in God anyway. Well, this opened up the gate for the entire staff to offer their two cents on the topic.

The manager reiterated that all life traces back to an African woman ("Some Niger," were his exact words). Then the sweeper (who is black, but claims not to be black – and also claims that the rest of the Caucasians, or Griffins, as he calls them, still left at the club were not actually white) offered his opinions. I knew then that I was no match for the intrinsic wisdom and insight that he possessed and would not attempt to refute any abstract or practical theological concept that he subsequently put forth. Who could

argue with such logic? What could I say? He was right. No longer when applying for a job will I check white anymore; I'll cross it out and scratch in, "Darker than white, but lighter than beige with little, light, brown speckles randomly dispersed." But anyway, I soon found out that his comments about God were as thought provoking as his revolutionary views on race classification – but this did not end the conversation. [I'm only being sarcastic about his views, like I thought he was being – maybe he really had something.] The manager and the police officer on duty somehow found their way to where I was standing, and we, with Jimmy's encouragement, went deeper into the subject. The manager said something like, "I am a god that walks among men." He later challenged this callused God that would let disease and death and evil run so rampant in the world, to fight him in a three round bout. Three rounds were all he wanted, and even challenged God to kill him on the spot.

The manager said all these things in great levity, but there was an underlying disdain for the false picture of God that seemed to be painted on his mind. The police officer generally chuckled with amusement at whatever the manager said. If the manager was the officer's meal ticket, or at least important for the officer to get free drinks, I would not have been surprised. If the manager fell to his knees and prayed in thankfulness for the blessing of his very life, I believe the cop would have joined him, or at least have acted as if he respected the manager's decision to do so. Unfortunately, the cop had placed his open will in the hands of hardened disbelief.

We talked, though at points it seemed like argued, for quite a while longer. The manager came up with a few tough questions such as: "Do you believe that Jonah was actually in the belly of a whale?" (Though actually, I think the Scripture says, "a great fish," and not specifically a whale.) He said this was impossible since the width of a whale's throat was much less than the width of a human body, and therefore could not accept such a large morsel. Since I had been so irresponsible and neglected to measure the width of a whale's throat when I last had the chance to, I was forced to accept his figures, and thus, renounce all my beliefs on the spot. I had overlooked this one simple mathematical impossibility all this time; and now I apologize

for having taken up any of your time on these matters and will end my hapless, hopeless seeking of the kingdom of God. Bye, Bye.

Well, I've reconsidered, and I am a believer again. But if such trick questions, though I believe worth addressing (and I'm sure I could find a lot of the answers to in this lifetime, and the others in the next), were all answered, the answers could still not convince a self-hardened heart to turn to God. Such questions as: "Is God so great that he can make a rock so big that even he can't pick it up?" or "If God made man, then who made God?" or "Why is there pain in the world?" or "What did the serpent represent in the Garden of Eden?" or "Did Jesus really rise again from death, or was he drugged and fell asleep for a while?" or "Where do dinosaurs fit in?" may all be worth asking and finding the answers to. Though some of these questions are asked out of sincerity and may show an honest confusion and a longing to know the truth, a lot of the time such questions are asked out of a guilty conscience defending its ways – or not even guilt, but just a disinterest in honestly searching for the truth for they're set and happy in their ways. Like a rat, happy in a garbage barrel, unknowing and uninterested in venturing to see whether there is more to life than just garbage. The garbage is real to them, and is in their eyes the most fulfilling life possible.

A lot who will ask such questions will have studied the bible far more intently than many a Christian. They've read the same passages that I might have read that have caused me to break down in tears over, and they'll dismiss them as sentimental malarkey. They'll refute these words as propaganda used by governments to keep people in line and act orderly. They'll patronize these verses as just well-written, very poetic literature, and nothing more. I've handed over portions of the Scripture that have changed my whole focus of life and caused me to fall deeper in love with my Savior, Christ Jesus, only to see someone hand it back appearing unmoved whatsoever by these same words; but I think I know why.

"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

(Jeremiah 29:13, NIV version)

The key is to seek God openly and honestly with all your heart, not with a closed mind and after already having decided in your heart that Christ is a farce and you are now studying it to prove its silliness. Though I've heard this approach led C.S. Lewis to God. I was told that he set out to disprove the validity of the gospel; but it seems he was open enough to admit if he saw the facts veer in Christ's favor, as he eventually became a leader of the Christian faith. But many will not even make an effort to seek the truth. They hear some oversimplified criticism of Christianity and hold onto it dearly, as if it's their justification for their disbelief. They don't seek with all their hearts because they know they don't want to believe, even if it were true. Why? It might change them; it might ask them to lead less selfish lives – but only if they knew the other side.

The side that doesn't need to be selfish, as their Father provides for them and keeps them in much better care than they could possibly keep for themselves. They'd rather bang their heads against the wall and fight their way out of their cells than seek God and find he holds the keys to open the cell so you can walk calmly out into freedom. Instead we want to fight viciously, openly vicious or viciously hidden, for what we want and for what we think will bring us satisfaction. We only find, once we've reached our goals, that they've not brought us true fulfillment. So the manager seemed unwilling to hear or see.

"This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: `You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears,

and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them."

(Matthew 13:13-15 [Isaiah 6:9-10], NIV version)

The Scriptures and the story of the gospel, of Christ's redemption of sinners...

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

(1 Timothy 1:15-16, NIV version)

...seemed foolish (or nonsense) to him.

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

(1 Corinthians 1:20-21, NIV version)

And, I admit, it might sound a bit far-fetched to me, also, had I not been blessed with the key ingredient to understanding such unbelievable, fairy tale like stories: the Holy Spirit.

There it is again. "What the heck is this Holy Spirit stuff about anyway?" you might ask. "If you want to disillusion yourself into believing that God lives in you and convicts you of what is truth and what is not truth, and somehow guides you in your life and fills you with love, than go ahead you narrow minded, gullible, corn ball with snow cones for brains - I'll visit you in the psycho ward and sign your straight jacket." But I truly believe that God is in me and with me.

After what seemed (and maybe was) like a futile discussion with the manager and the cop and the sweeper and the doorman and the instigator, I was a bit disheartened by the sight of the same selfishness and wanting to play God that had once so venomously kept me from the truth. The sight of the same stubbornness that laughed gleefully with me as I skipped down the road to my own destruction, now, seemed childish and ugly to me. I asked my other roommate, an older Irish man with a heavy brogue who had once lived out on the streets and had no teeth to speak of, why he believed in God. It's Amazing where wisdom will sometimes crawl out of. Out of the most unlikely sources have come some of the most profound, sheer unarguable statements of truth that I have ever heard. His answer was, "I don't wanna be alone." He said he knows someone's with him and that God has gotten him out of a lot of trouble. He also said that he talks to God every day and doesn't feel alone.

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

(Luke 17:20-21, NIV version)

If my roommate, Marty, had run into someone with all sorts of contrived questions and supposed facts disproving the validity of the word of God, he would not have been fazed in the least. He'd say, "It's what I believe." All of the arguments in the world could not argue with the fact that when he became a believer, he felt God was with him and no longer alone. He also felt that God had answered his prayers and guided him loyally through his life.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

(1 Corinthians 1:27-31 [Jeremiah 9:24], NIV version)

All the facts in the world may not necessarily lead you to God; it's a childlike openness that unveils the greatest truth known to man.

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

(Mark 10:13-16, NIV version)

Not a childlike blindness or an accepting of things that you truly and honestly don't believe, but more of an openness to the possibility that there might be something previously unknown to you, like the Holy Spirit, that convicts us of truth (and that this Spirit of God might be the key to unveiling life's mysteries).

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."

(John 14:15-20, NIV version)

My toothless companion continued to say that a lot of people (like in Hollywood or like Elvis or like the manager at the strip joint) want to play God, but these people usually end up very lonely. He said that the reason they so often commit suicide and kill themselves, in spite of experiencing what seems like great worldly success, is that after thinking themselves to be God for so long, they wake up one morning and realize they're not.



### **47) Foray My Child, Betray this Thought**

There are few things worse than a person having an emotional stronghold on you. Being under the control or manipulation of another person is a form of hell on earth; and to be the manipulator and to willingly use another for your own gain or amusement of having such power is not good either.

They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.

(2 Timothy 3:6-7, NIV version)

As a wide eyed, innocent child you are very vulnerable to being controlled or emotionally swayed by your parents or by anyone you admire or fear. At any age, such control is often leased out to various people who know how to manipulate others and who don't fully understand (or even worse, do understand) the dark, evil game that they play.

In a way they again play God, but a better illustration would be that they play Satan. For Satan is the one who wants to be God, but can't. He may extract worship from many of his knowing or unknowing followers, but those who do worship him are not benefited in the same way that God would benefit them. It's a distortion to worship Satan and also a distortion for you to keep an emotional stronghold (or in a sense, a worshipping attitude) over another weak-willed individual. You should take whatever steps possible to release such a person from your domination. It's not healthy for either of you.

Manipulation rights are often freely signed over more than extracted. If you are under someone else's control (in an emotional or situational way) you should take steps to release yourself or to let God release you. The only one you should be controlled by is God, for God is the only one worthy of your will. He will bring you to the place that you want to be (or would want to be if you knew what you wanted and could see all things). He will bring you true joy, fulfillment, and also freedom.

The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD  
lack no good thing.

(Psalms 34:10, NIV version)

God is not a loudmouthed, unrighteous, arrogant monster that seeks to control your life just to use you and throw you away after you've served your purpose. He wants "a closeness" with you, a dependence on him, as he guides you to perfection. Why would you let yourself be controlled by anyone who is incapable of dealing properly with the power that you give them?

To break the chains that they have willingly or unwillingly clasped around your emotional limbs is much easier said than done. Changing these painfully engraved patterns of a relationship can be very difficult, but well worth the effort.

Why should your self-worth be dependent on how anyone other than God thinks of you? If you build your life around another person's opinion of you, you may be living under a structurally unsound house of existence.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

(Matthew 7:24-27, NIV version)

If you learn to depend completely on God, these chains can be loosed. For before when you would do anything against your will just to please someone, keep them around, or save you from their wrath, now you can boldly stand up for truth and self dignity. God holds your destiny. If that person who once dominated you is to remain in your life, God can allow for it to be so; and if not, it might only be to your benefit. You have nothing to fear.

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## 48) Bore to Salt

You held the hand of innocence  
And broke not its tender strains  
You saw the chance to rob its youth  
And passed it gently by  
You did not fix the light of truth  
To shine beyond its eyes  
You held its love inside your heart  
And kissed it not good-bye

There, there is the place where my eyes grew dim  
Where my walk was slowed and soul was trimmed  
My feet sank low in the sands of trust  
Along the shore where love meets dust

But who could fill such open eyes  
That look into the sky and wonder?  
Who could hold such tender hands  
And not abrade the skin?



## 49) Barter of Fools

There are tons of nice people, but people you can depend on are rare. It seems that the more of an attractive personality or appearance a person has the less reliable and trustworthy they are – but not always. Attractive people have so many doors opened for them that it's hard for them not to enter many of them – doing so while knowing full well that they don't have any intentions of ever returning the favor, or have any special feelings for the helpful party, while pretending that they do.

It's so easy to con, but to trade in someone's trust or affection for personal gain is foolish. The con only ends up conning himself, as the things of real value are passed over for an easier ride.

My toothless roommate, who speaks with such wisdom and verbally affirms his affections often to those who love him, also has the wonderful quality of ripping you off and then lying to you. Straight faced, eye-to-eye, he'll tell you the most elaborate story thinkable to deny the truth of what really happened, and so lessons himself in my eyes for forty bucks and a drunken stupor. Though, I've done worse.

But it's so fun to con. It feels good to be able to fool people, or to accept things not out of friendship, but out of the thrill of feeling superior or of using someone, or just for the thrill of the thing (the extracted gratuity) itself.

Then again, it feels terrible. It feels like you lose bits of yourself. It's not worth it. It doesn't feel right; but to many it may feel natural – maybe

because they haven't truly tasted the things of God yet. Maybe they haven't known anything of value to compare the joys of deception and manipulation to. Maybe they have no desire to find out if there is a better way; or maybe they have experienced God, but have somehow slipped away and have chosen the things of the world instead.

Many will trade love for something of much less value; but this may be because, in their present state, they don't have the ability to enjoy and cherish the love that is offered them (let alone return it). Maybe that state is away from God. Then again, many say they love and claim no allegiance to God, but does their love have the characteristics that Paul the apostle listed?

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8, NIV version)

Or does their so-called love revolve around their own selfish wants and needs?

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## 50) Holy Veneer

If you're a nice person for the wrong reasons, you're probably worse than a bum-crevasse; at least a bum-crevasse is honest. Some people act holy and nice and good natured and polite just to enjoy the glory they receive for being like that. They do their works of goodness for all to see. They pray aloud with long, tear jerking prayers. They love the praise they receive from all those around them.

His warm smile makes the women melt and the men admire and look up to him. "What a nice guy (or gal)," they all say to themselves as they walk through the doors being held for them.

There's nothing wrong with treating people nicely, but to act a certain way as to bring praise on your self from men is dangerous.

"Be careful not to do your `acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

(Matthew 6:1-4, NIV version)

I fell victim to this way of acting in the past and may again in the future. I loved being thought of as good and nice and would leap across tables to pick up someone's dropped pencil. Not because I really wanted to help, but because I wanted a certain reaction. I wanted to be honored and thought of in a certain way. I think this is as bad (or worse) as when I would do something foolish or rude or mean for attention or for a certain reaction. It's really the same thing, just more covered up.

If I'm to love, then love I will. But I hope not to love in a phony way as to bring glory to myself.

Many enjoy the church life, not particularly because they love God, but more so because they enjoy the way of life that many churches offer. It best serves their selfish wants and desires, and it gives them a feeling of superiority.



## 51) Volley of Ignorance

People seem to have very little understanding for those they don't understand. We seem all too quick to judge and look down upon others when the only help we have to offer is a cold snarl and the words, "Just pull yourself together."

No one comes from the same background or circumstances. No two people have the exact same ability to deal with misfortune (or fortune, for that matter). We all think we know exactly what someone else's problem is, and could sum up, completely, their ailments and faults for them over breakfast

with such brilliant, compassionate advice as, "All he needs is a good, swift kick in the butt," or such in-depth, analytical, benign, deductions of behavioral patterns as, "What a jerk he is."

We only see the surface. If what another has experienced (and therefore has been led to a different state of being) is foreign from what we've experienced, we rarely take this into account. If we do, we only do so falsely, as in, "I didn't have it easy and I got through all right," not even considering whether it was actually the same circumstances at all, and also neglecting to realize that people have different emotional anatomies and tolerances for pain and hardship.

"Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."

(John 7:24, NIV version)

Such fore mentioned callused advice is more often given out of a superiority complex and the desire to hear one's own self talk, than out of truly wanting to steer a lost soul in the right direction. Sure, sometimes, hard words to another will help wake them up and do them some good, but to judge so thoughtlessly and as quickly as your knee jerks in reaction to a doctor's knee jerking device is usually futile – or even detrimental. We need to genuinely consider all aspects of a situation in greater detail, and also examine our own motives before we offer our opinions so abruptly and with such self-righteousness.

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

(Matthew 7:1-2, NIV version)

Fear not, all you outcasts of the organized church and unjustly judged hooligans and rebels; God is not as devoid of compassion or as thoughtless. God is the only perfect judge.

Sam and Jill both took the same test and Sam scored a 95, while Jill scored a 50. The human teacher looked at their papers and deduced that Sam would receive an "A" mark, and Jill would receive an "F" (for fail) mark. What else could the teacher do? He had no tool to measure the brain capability of each of the two students, nor had he the insight to understand each of their pasts and how this has effected the development of their brains and their ability to study. This teacher is not even positive if one or the other has cheated. He only has so much information to go by and judges accordingly; but God has all the information to judge perfectly.

We're not all given the same abilities or circumstances, and God takes this into account.

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have

gained five more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

(Matthew 25:14-30, NIV version)

God can see what humans can't, so rest assured that that mean minister who used to yell at you in Sunday school will not be your judge. Also, don't hold a grudge against God just because this screwed up minister yelled at you. Rest assured that God knows your difficulties and is merciful and understanding. He also offers his power to overcome even the most severe circumstances. Just ask for his help.

It seems things have come full circle. When Jesus came to this earth as a lowly carpenter slash savior, his main adversaries were the religious leaders of the day. Jesus admonished the self-righteous and justified the sinner who realized his need for forgiveness.

When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and `sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: `I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

(Matthew 9:11-13 [Hosea 6:6], NIV version)

Those who were self-content and thought they were right with God were way off the mark. Their self-righteousness and pride gave them away. Humility was only a concept unpracticed (or falsely practiced and coyly imitated). Jesus called them "whitewashed tombs" and "brood of vipers,"...

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like

whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers! "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

(Matthew 23:23-39, NIV version)

...while accepting with open arms: prostitutes, commoners, tax collectors... etcetera (those who loved Jesus and knew they needed him and his forgiveness).

While talking to the chief priests and the elders of the people, the following has been quoted.

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him."

(Matthew 21:31-32, NIV version)

In fact, the religious leaders even accused Jesus himself of hanging out with the wrong crowd and of being a drunkard and a glutton.

"To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'" But wisdom is proved right by her actions."

(Matthew 11:16-19, NIV version)

Now today, things seem to have come back to the way they used to be. Much of the so-called church, that is supposed to be built around the cornerstone of Christ Jesus, has decided to ignore his teachings and mimic those of the selfish religious leaders of Christ's day instead. How could this be? How could the supposed followers of Christ praise Christ's name with such conviction and yet ignore his teaching?

"If you love me, you will obey what I command."

(John 14:15, NIV version)

In fact, many will preach Christ's teachings, but turn around and ignore them (knowingly or unknowingly). Either way, it reveals a distance in their selves from the Spirit of God.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

(Matthew 7:21-23, NIV version)

This is a general painting, on my part, of some of the so-called church. I can't say precisely who is way off and who is on target because I'm unequipped to judge correctly. That's God's job (and I, myself, am aware of my own ability to be way off the mark). But I can rely on the Spirit's power of discernment and the word of God.

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

(1 John 4:1, NIV version)



## 52) Pink Grenades

Heaven's gates are stormed within  
Pink grenades with female pins  
The wholesome stores have signed their wills  
Gouged their eyes and spanked their pills

Who are you to lie to me, and I to float in water?  
Who are they to boil the sea, and taste the tails of otters?



## 53) Enlightened Darkness?

So, which is better: to try too hard to be liked by everyone, rub niceness in their faces and risk being looked upon as phony or wishy-washy; or to display all your natural reactions no matter how impolite, impatient, sinful or selfish they may be and so try too hard to be honest? Well, maybe Solomon has the answer.

In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness. Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise—why destroy yourself? Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool—why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all [extremes].

(Ecclesiastes 7:15-18, NIV version)

As I watch an [Alice Cooper Trashes the World](#) video, I think to myself, as he commands thousands of adoring fans with his arrogant snarls and touches them with tender moments of insanity, "What honesty he has." In a way I admire his honesty. His lyrics touch on touchy subjects such as: necrophilia, women abuse, insanity and murder. It seems he's not commending such behavior nor condemning it, but rather commenting (as an actor in a play) on a theme.

I no longer write specifically about Alice Cooper for I don't know all the facts surrounding his life's experience, philosophies and point of view, nor do I even know him. I've never met him so I can't judge him or claim that the previous or following remarks have anything to do with him. They may or they may not; I don't know. I'm just talking about a general outlook on life that many seem to have, and I have had in the past.

Some would say, "By merely presenting such antics, he's commending them," and maybe he is, but the mere mention of such topics (with sometimes the addition of an answer) is all over the Scriptures. Such things exist and deserve to be dealt with. For example, listen to the harsh language God uses to illustrate his intense displeasure with an adulterous and promiscuous nation.

"Yet she became more and more promiscuous as she recalled the days of her youth, when she was a prostitute in Egypt. There she lusted after her lovers, whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose emission was like that of horses. So you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when in Egypt your bosom was caressed and your young breasts fondled. Therefore, Oholibah, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will stir up your lovers against you, those you turned away from in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side—the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, the men of Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them, handsome young men, all of them governors and commanders, chariot officers and men of high rank, all mounted on horses. They will come against you with weapons, chariots and wagons and with a throng of people; they will take up positions against you on every side with large and small shields and with helmets. I will turn you over to them for punishment, and they will punish you according to their standards."

(Ezekiel 23:19-24, NIV version)

"They will deal with you in hatred and take away everything you have worked for. They will leave you naked and bare, and the shame of your prostitution will be exposed. Your lewdness and promiscuity have brought this upon you, because you lusted after the nations and defiled yourself with their idols."

(Ezekiel 23:29-30, NIV version)

To merely relish in dark and evil things for their own enjoyment may show honesty with one's earthly nature, but also dishonesty with one's spiritual nature.

We may all have violent feelings and selfish, lustful, sinful desires; but to fertilize these thoughts, help them grow and let them engulf our lives, to bathe in the honesty of our own depravity without wanting or looking for an even deeper truth, may feel, in a sense, freeing for a moment, but will not lead you to the best place you could be. It's an extreme, an acknowledging of our own sinful state and relishing in it.

One who thinks such ways and acts such ways may be very persuasive and will draw many to their side. They reveal man's fleshly nature and natural selfish desires. They may try to make others feel that such desires are natural and wrongfully suppressed by God.

Honesty is often suppressed by the so-called church, but not by God. God realizes our inbred sinful desires; he acknowledges them, but also provides a way in which victory can be had over them. How? The answer is the blood of Christ and the Holy Spirit.



## 54) Gray

But what is sin, and what isn't, may be a very large, undefined, gray area. Not all things are black and white, though some are. Once the church, or anyone, starts defining the gray areas of what's right and wrong, I think they sometimes make the same mistake the Pharisees made in their day.

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law had tons of rules. Every gray area or unclear situation was made "clear" by man; and to disagree with their clarifications of such gray areas would be considered (it seems in some cases beyond a thought of the matter) wrong.

Again, the church often chooses to mimic Jesus' adversaries rather than Jesus himself, or his disciples and apostles. Today we have (in many churches) a clearly defined list describing what certain actions, which are not specifically defined in Scripture, should be treated as.

Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them."

(Luke 11:46, NIV version)

We need to depend on the Holy Spirit to convince each of us individually what color gray should be turned into or not turned into.

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God." So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Let

us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

(Romans 14 [Isaiah 45:23], NIV version)



## 55) Pointless Ritual

A pointless ritual: to even try to find a job in this freuqing economy. For those who are sick of me writing about how strong I feel by the Spirit's power, you may soon have good news. I feel anger having its way with me again. It seems there's a conspiracy: everyone has gotten together and decided that I am never to win.

The best thing I could do is lie on the floor (or my bed) and cry for help and comfort from my God; I know he would hear me. Instead, I have purchased a bottle of Sambuca, after an angry, frustrated walk to the liquor store, hoping all the way that someone would say something discourteous to me so I could explode.

But before you sing dirges and put on sackcloth for my account, I'll stop complaining. I was going to say I'm sick of writing, but I'm afraid you'd rise from your seat and applaud in agreement.

While things aren't so bad, God seems a little further away from me than before. This is only my fault, I realize. I have given into sin and have not leaned heavily on God for help to deliver me from my dreary circumstances. I also realize that to go down the road of anger, lust, booze and depression is futile, and have already decided in the course of writing this not to indulge myself farther on this or any road that God has not built – but I will finish my Sambuca, it's only 50 milliliters.

I see that I know very little and have much to learn. The more that I think I know, the less I really know. I also see that I could use a break.

When I get miserable and angry, I'm better off away from people (though people do respect you when you're angry). I'd rather have respect than false sympathy or fake hellos, but respect deemed from anger is more so fear not respect – so God, help me.



## 56) Majestic Overtones

Scripture (the Bible – Old and New Testaments) never seems to exhaust its treasures of knowledge, wisdom and inspiration. The more that I make the effort to stay close to God (which can take very little effort at all, equal to that of making a friend feel welcome) and do not give into my bent towards disobeying God (therefore sin), the more Scripture seems to open up to me

- showing me unfathomable truths, so clear and applicable to my life that it is frightening, as if God is speaking directly to me.

I believe God uses the Scriptures to speak to us individually, as well as by using newspaper, radio, baby drool, soap scum or whatever he chooses. There may be a divine message behind much more than what we are willing to see. Being open to God is the key to reading the signs he places around us (and maybe the deciding factor in whether these signs, to aid us, are even placed at all), as the Holy Spirit interprets these every day or extraordinary occurrences into road signs of his plan for our lives.

But anyway, one chapter really hit me the other day.

I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. He has walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains. Even when I call out or cry for help, he shuts out my prayer. He has barred my way with blocks of stone; he has made my paths crooked. Like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in hiding, he dragged me from the path and mangled me and left me without help. He drew his bow and made me the target for his arrows. He pierced my heart with arrows from his quiver. I became the laughingstock of all my people; they mock me in song all day long. He has filled me with bitter herbs and sated me with gall. He has broken my teeth with gravel; he has trampled me in the dust. I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD." I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is

your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust—there may yet be hope. Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men. To crush underfoot all prisoners in the land, to deny a man his rights before the Most High, to deprive a man of justice—would not the Lord see such things? Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come? Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins? Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD. Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven, and say: "We have sinned and rebelled and you have not forgiven. You have covered yourself with anger and pursued us; you have slain without pity. You have covered yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can get through. You have made us scum and refuse among the nations. All our enemies have opened their mouths wide against us. We have suffered terror and pitfalls, ruin and destruction." Streams of tears flow from my eyes because my people are destroyed. My eyes will flow unceasingly, without relief, until the LORD looks down from heaven and sees. What I see brings grief to my soul because of all the women of my city. Those who were my enemies without cause hunted me like a bird. They tried to end my life in a pit and threw stones at me; the waters closed over my head, and I thought I was about to be cut off. I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit. You heard my plea: "Do not close your ears to my cry for relief." You came near when I called you, and you said, "Do not fear." O Lord, you took up my case; you redeemed my life. You have seen, O LORD, the wrong done to me. Uphold my cause! You have seen the depth of their vengeance, all their plots against me. O LORD, you have heard their insults, all their plots against me—what

my enemies whisper and mutter against me all day long. Look at them! Sitting or standing, they mock me in their songs. Pay them back what they deserve, O LORD, for what their hands have done. Put a veil over their hearts, and may your curse be on them! Pursue them in anger and destroy them from under the heavens of the LORD.

(Lamentations 3, NIV version)

The ability to rub our faces in the dust and wait quietly for the Lord to come and free us from our present dismal situation is as rare as the commonness of our inclination to explode into fits of childish rage, to submit to depression, or to fill our senses with fleshly pleasures. To sit still and have patience for God's emancipation goes directly against many, if not all, of our seemingly natural reactions to adversity. To watch our lives almost as an observer of where God leads us, almost as an actor in a movie, knowing our fate has been decided and written by someone we trust – doing this not in a resigned pacifistic manner, but rather in a trusting one.

To resist exploding with anger if a particular door is slammed shut in our face and walk to the next door. To try again at the last door or find a back door to the same place, but all the while looking at every good or (seemingly) bad turn as a point on a connect-the dots picture that God has drawn to perfection.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

(Ephesians 4:30-32, NIV version)

To walk in wonder of where God will lead you and not already have your mind set on exactly where you're going or how you'll get there (though you should always make your desires known to God).

"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

(Matthew 7:9-11, NIV version)

Have the openness to follow his guidance when there is a discrepancy between your two wills – though if you are close to his Spirit, there should be little trouble here, you'll be as one. This is all sometimes difficult, but well worth doing.

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4:4-6, NIV version)

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## 57) Seedy Whites

I am not a circled vow  
I am here to save your bows  
In the chest of seedy whites  
I'll comb the steps that bend to night  
And see you

Rubbish!  
All my words are rubbish!  
I fall on my hands and blame the curb  
I leap in vain at all that's cured  
I am ashamed and proud of it!

It's frightening to realize  
How much our deeds affect our lives

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## 58) Abandoned Wants

Life is tasteless apart from God. I could have the most seemingly successful, happy life, but inside be miserable. I'd prefer outside circumstance to be terrible and be close to God on the inside, as to having outside things be great while on the inside I feel like I'm dying.

It's so easy to lose touch with God that it is frightening to consider; but God tells me, flat out, when I am drifting away. For as I drift away, he becomes farther and farther away from me; and I feel the separation. I begin, again, to be bombarded by the worries of this life – so much as to miss the point of life.

If I had not been so fortunate as to experience the true joy of a life in harmony and oneness with the Lord, I would most likely be far less aware of the difference between being caught up in the world and caught up in the kingdom of heaven. I would have nothing to compare my pointless life too, so I might not even venture to consider the emptiness of it. The emptiness might feel natural, and there would still be moments of joy (or what seems like joy, but maybe only an imitation). These moments (when experienced apart from God) seem more like rich candy that makes your stomach turn as opposed to a three-course meal (when close to God). It is better to be alone and close to God than to be with many people and away from God.

Apart from God, you can't enjoy people to the fullest anyway; but close to God, you can enjoy people to the fullest. Close to God there are no worries, insecurities, there is no defensiveness, selfishness or arrogance; while apart from God we are knocked to the floor in agony by a friendly insult, or even by a compliment that doesn't blanket our entire image of ourselves.

You can only go so long on the high of what others think of you, or your own grandiose image of yourself. It runs out like a drunkard's merriment. He closes his eyes and feels the room spinning, as his joy was magnified, so now his sorrow. The effects of his shallowness slap him in the face as he realizes the lack of depth that has been achieved with those he cares about,

or could care about someday. He climbed a tree of joy that was rooted in pudding. Inevitably, the higher he climbed, the lower it sank to the ground.

Second best is not an option. To settle for less than what the Spirit leads you towards is to settle for a paper napkin instead of a sponge to wash dishes with. The napkin will push the water around for a second or two, but soon it will fall apart into bedraggled pieces of mush.

As my thoughts turn to God, so my spirit is uplifted. As I appeal in prayer for a bit of color in my colorless world, soon I see the gray flowers turn bright pink. The honest eyes of the children, so honest as to scare my eyes away, now turned to sparkling pools of wonder and acceptance.

True success in life, real fulfillment, can occur in fifteen minutes - as I fall on the floor (symbolically or literally) and pray for forgiveness for all my evil ways. Even if the world doesn't recognize my evil ways, the Holy Spirit convinces me of my rebelliousness.

I don't want to dwell on shallow planes anymore. It's like walking on a cold, soggy marshland. Apart from God, life sucks. I could rule the world, be loved by millions, marry my pick of thousands, accomplish great feats and be adored for my wisdom by all the world, but if my soul did not rub against the Spirit of God I would still be as empty as a barren gymnasium on a winter's day - filled only with broken memories of a losing High School basketball season.



## 59) Position

I am no longer only a musician or a security guard or an engineer or a writer or a dishwasher, now I am a worker for God. I am a servant of God who manifests his position in many different ways.

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## **60) As Death's Pure Justice Breathes Life**

The more I live, the more I realize I have to die. For, once I die to myself, then I truly live. I must kill myself, hang myself on a cross and beat down my selfishness, put a gun to my head and let God live through me with the least resistance to his Spirit.

If I live for myself, then I will surely die. So it is better to die first and then live - die to myself and live for God.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

(Romans 6:5-7, NIV version)

My childish wants and desires haunt me. The spoiled brat that demands his mother to pretend the spaghetti wrapped around a fork is a helicopter or else to scream and kick his feet in a unilateral tantrum must be silenced. This child must go. This child may pop his angry, attention demanding head into my life till the day I die, but I must resolve to myself that I am a new man and my life is no longer my life. For if I try to save my life, I will lose it; and if I give my life away, I will save it.

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"

(Luke 9:23-25, NIV version)

"The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."

(John 12:25-26, NIV version)

It's a matter of trust. Whom do you trust - yourself? Can you manipulate your surroundings so well that you feel secure in this?

Oh, the dangers of getting your way, of being created beautifully or of having any earthly power that has fallen on your lap; these are incredibly dangerous predicaments. You may forfeit life for death! You may pass by joy for a cheap imitation!

Whom do you trust? Whom or what do you rely on? Do you trust God to bring you your daily bread and to provide for your needs, or do you scrape for every piece of bread you have? Do you fight your way; do you demand your way? Is your whole life consumed by nothing more than your own whimsical desires? Are you unable to indulge in love completely, as you are too busy making what you think you want to happen, happen – running frantically after your self prescribed brand of happiness, only to find (hopefully before it's too late) that you're running in the exact opposite direction of the road that truly leads to fulfillment?

On such a sprinter, life's joy lies in one more goal away, and then again one more, and then one more – never completely satisfied, there's always some mysterious thing missing. Like our childhood visions of utter and complete, ecstatic joy that is to be shoveled on us by all the presents that we will receive on Christmas Day. After all the wrappers have been torn into, and all the secrets are disclosed, we realize that our expectations have far outweighed reality.

Is there such a plan where reality far outweighs our expectations?

However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"-but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

(1 Corinthians 2:9-10 [Isaiah 64:4], NIV version)

Yes.



## 61) Vacant Intimacy

If where I live is indeed a microcosm of the entire world, then surely there is little hope. The world is collapsing, self-destructing. For every great accomplishment modern man has achieved, there are ten thousand shattered lives to match it.

Only the strong survive, while the weak are pushed lower. So we are forced to suppress our weakness, and also our vulnerability (therefore, openness to love), to survive. We are turned to stone. It's either that or to be trampled under foot by the soldiers of distress and hatred.

"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."

(Matthew 24:12-13, NIV version)

We're forced to match hate with hate, arrogance with arrogance, selfishness with selfishness, ignorance with ignorance, and inflicted pain with induced pain. We seldom tap into the resources that would allow us to fight hate with love, arrogance with humility, selfishness with generosity, ignorance with knowledge, and pain with forgiveness and mercy.

Our souls are like distant relatives that are awkward to spend time with. We barely recognize their existence. We recognize our flesh, our wants, our reproductive organs, which need to be recognized correctly; but we do not recognize or acknowledge the very core of who we are. Our souls are strangers. If they called us on the telephone, we would quickly think of an excuse to end the conversation as soon as possible. "I've got to do the laundry," we'd abruptly say. (We've gotten our laundry to do, no time for a silly soul, no time to satisfy our soul's need to be at one with its maker.)

We feed our faces, we feed our children, we feed our cats, some even feed their noses; but we seldom feed our souls. So they wither away due to malnutrition. We don't even know our souls are there anymore.



## 62) Red War

War has come as come it would  
The choirs of peace will sing no more  
Their hopeful tongues have been silenced

The sons and daughters lay stake their blood

The children of foreign lands are amassed against the leader of  
indignation

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### 63) Lament

The strength of our own souls are spent  
On shadows of our fear's lament

We lie in siege by hesitance  
We live and breathe beneath its stench

The lovers' hands grow cool to touch  
As they stare at dreams that cost too much  
For them to dare to grasp them

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### 64) The Courtship of Fear

Who is fear to tame your love?  
Who is fear to dampen your outrage?  
To what species of fear have you given  
the power of your will unto?

Pay tribute, in this manner  
To none other than the Lord of Hosts

Fear should be yours if your feet do not tread  
On the path that he has laid before you  
But if your journey is his journey  
Why do you fear?



## 65) Decisions of Fools

What is a man? Is a man defined by whether he chooses to fight or not to fight? Is a man one who goes to war, or is he one who stays home and chooses not to? I believe the answer is not found in any answer to either question, but rather in one's own determination to do what one truly feels is right, regardless of any consequence and in the face of any adverse circumstances.

One may be led to war, while another is convinced that aggression is not the answer; and both may follow their hearts. But it is the one who, deep down, feels it is his responsibility to serve in a war (though he may not want to), and is adequately fit to do so effectively and has no greater

responsibilities to attend to, and still refrains from doing so that bends to a spirit of compromise and bargains with his values. He risks bringing on himself, and his soul, the weight of cowardliness and the gnawing of the rats of regret.

His mind may scurry with the velocity of a computer printout machine to defend his decision if confronted. So well oiled are his defensive mechanisms and justification pinwheels that sometimes even he is convinced of his own lies, and that his arguments are valid. Yet even if his own mind is persuaded to believe such self-made excuses, I do not think his being can escape the consequences (unless he comes to terms with his fear and becomes honest with his former dishonesty - there is complete forgiveness).

But if you have not God, then by all means fear. Fear not only for your life, but also for your soul.

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

(Matthew 10:28, NIV version)

If you have not God, nor a belief in him or of an afterlife, than there may be little reason for you to do what you feel is right and honorable anyway. Life is more a matter of self-preservation and of an amassing of things, acquaintances or accomplishments, that give you pleasure, security or honor, to bring your self to the highest position possible (or maybe to the safest, depending on your personality and what you want). If one feels that

life on earth is all there is, why would they risk the only life they have, even if they felt it a just cause, and that the just cause was just enough to constitute the shedding of blood and the casualty of human life?

However, there are many brave men, or seemingly brave men, that claim no allegiance to God. "Warriors of hell," they boast. But what good is bravery if it is married to stupidity or to evil?

There is also the case of a man who supports a war (or anything) that he feels is unjust, only because of his fear of certain people's opinion of him if he decides to refrain from serving the cause. He also commits compromise.

But to the one who has God through Christ, and is convinced by the Spirit of the course that he must follow: Soar on the wings of grace and fight with the power of love. Your destiny is not thrown to the hands of jackals, and your life is not ebbled by the decisions of fools (even if this seems to be). Nothing can touch you, which is not permitted by your heavenly Father to do so.

A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.

(Psalms 91:7-10, NIV version)

"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and

honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

(Psalms 91:14-16, NIV version)



## 66) Weary Lifts

Their withered eyes peak from beneath the freezing snow  
Should I not look mine eyes with such a pitiful glance?

Their age has rendered them helpless and needy  
Is not my arm worthy as any to aid them in stature?

Their open palms lay claim to my scraps  
The tassels of my remnants  
Can I not even spare them these?

Their hearts lie barren  
Encased by stone walls  
And the ripping torrents of passed fortunes

Am I so righteous as to forget  
The emptiness of sin's regret?

Am I so pure that I reject  
To join them in their soul's lament  
And tell them of forgiveness?

To lose myself in others' plight  
Is to find myself amidst the night



## 67) The Question Considered

"I live for this," my superintendent friend said to me as he looked through his toolbox for a screwdriver for me to borrow. "Live for what, screwdrivers?" I asked. He didn't bother to answer my silly response, but continued his helpful search to aid me. He didn't have to answer; he lives to help others. He does not consider it a nuisance when someone asks something of him, but rather an opportunity. To the question, "Can you help me?" his automatic response is, "Yes," when mine so often is, "No," or, "Yes, but I've got to do this and this first; can you ask someone else, and if I have to I'll help you tomorrow?"

Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow"-when you now have it with you.

(Proverbs 3:27-28, NIV version)

"Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

(Matthew 5:42, NIV version)

We miss the core, yes the girth, of living when we consider our own little life's events so high on our list of priorities that it is beyond our capacity to help the needy. Is not to help a reason for living, then should not living be a reason to help? Yes, none other than the fact that you live is reason enough for you to help those who need you - out of thankfulness for your very life. You did nothing to gain life; it is merely a gift. Should one who receives such a gift laugh in scorn when the giver of the gift asks something of the bearer of the gift? It might be true that sometimes, in severe circumstances, it is almost impossible to give - as we're so confused and hurting ourselves. We may need to seek help for ourselves before we have the ability and privilege to help others. To help yourself, or to let God help you, may be the greatest thing that you could do for others and those who love you. For soon you will be able to be a positive factor in their lives, instead of someone whom they love, but are constantly concerned about - and also eventually be able to help others yourself.

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the

plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

(Matthew 7:3-5, NIV version)

The giver asks of you to help those in need, as if those in need were the giver of life, the giver of your life.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison

and you did not look after me.' They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

(Matthew 25:31-46, NIV version)

We are to look at every opportunity to help others as an opportunity to help Christ, as if that needy person is Christ in disguise, not a pesky annoyance to be dealt with abruptly. Should not our schedules be made to include unscheduled opportunities for good? Is this not the believer's task? For his words are empty words if not backed by a spirit of action, a spirit of helpfulness. A loud chatterbox of words, though capable of leading to the redemption of men's souls, made a mockery of and zapped of its full power by a lack of adherence to its own words - revealed by a lack of action, a lack of good works.

"No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."

(Luke 6:43-45, NIV version)

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

(James 2:14-17, NIV version)



## 68) Agonies of Discontent

We expect so much, and appreciate so little. We swim in the agonies of our discontent. The self magnifies its misfortunes and concentrates all of its energy on these. There is no pain like our own pain, but when a missed bus is given more emotional energy than is given to the suffering of the forgotten homeless, or even to the real distress of a true friend, we're probably exaggerating our own problems too much.

But what is more natural than to focus our selves on ourselves. To suggest fault in this seems almost strange. To be selfless seems like more of a theoretical concept to be admired than something that is possible to achieve. To strive for selflessness sounds strange, for if you don't look out for yourself, who will? We all have to brush our own teeth, nobody else will do it for us; but sometimes we look out for ourselves too much and forget about others.

If we feel that no one looked out for us, we often feel no obligation to look out for others. We feel that everything we have, we have attained for ourselves, even at the hindrance of others, so there is little feeling of a need to give to anyone. Sometimes we have more than we think we do, and sometimes we could give a freuq. If we're in such emotional distress that we can barely get out of bed, or deal with life without the pleasures of revenge or hurting, how can we help others? But God has the power to change this.

Look at the benefits of selflessness, first without even considering that God smiles on such behavior, and then while considering that he does.

To be selfless is to be without ego; and to be without ego is to be confident – for there is no high or exaggerated image of one's self to be knocked down. There is nothing that can be stripped from you, for you have cultivated the essence of who you are rather than a self-imposed image constructed and maintained by beams as strong as straws and having windows as clear as haze.



## 69) Softening of Blows

Is there no justice?

Is there no mercy for one such as I?

Is there no softening of blows dealt by life's un-pardoning bat?

I lie in service to my wants unmet

So much as to seek solace in my disobedience

In my sin  
And then am distanced from my Lord  
And stand alone  
With my wants, my sins, and my guilt

Lord, restore me  
Forgive me of my sins!  
My sins of desperation, and my sins of escape  
My sins of rebelliousness, and those of neglect  
Give me patience to wait for your saving grace  
And not turn from you in disgust  
Only seconds before your hour of salvation

I am not worthy of you  
But please look upon me with mercy and then favor

Help me, O Lord!



## 70) Sin

Possibly the reason that the Christian church, in general, has been unable to adequately deal with and provide a viable option to a life married with sin may be due to its unwillingness to deal honestly with its own bent towards sin, and also to deal compassionately and without judgment of the sins of others.



## 71) Thought

Should our every thought be of our own wants and desires, our own dreaming and nothing else?



## 72) Shy

I often shy away from writing about love for it's more comfortable to skirt the issue or to only slightly brush on it. But is not love the reason for living, is not to love and to be loved the greatest goals?



## 73) Torture

Lock me in the torture chamber of your love  
I will sink with you to the most ugly corners of your soul  
and smile

"Is that all?" I'll say

I'll hold hands with your anger  
And blow kisses at your stubbornness  
You can show me the knife that you had planned to kill me with  
And show me the bed where you slept with the football team

for \$2.50 a piece  
I will not turn away and hide my face from you in disgust  
I will thank you for your honesty  
My love is not stopped  
For I see you in me

Let us ride in the car of death together  
If we must  
Let your hand reach to kill us both  
The car will swerve, but not my love

Your ugliness is not ugly to me  
Your venom is not deadly  
I long to see you see yourself as beautiful  
And long to see you free  
I will go with you anywhere  
My love it will not leave

I do not want your pain  
But will take it if I must  
I'll go with you insane  
To one day gain your trust

For love is eternal  
And life has to die  
But my love will not die



## 74) Benign Contrite

As I read the sound of my own words, I shutter to think of their emptiness, their callousness and harshness. I am not moved; I'm shattered, shattered by my own inability to describe what I want to describe, relay what I want to relay. I have so much to say, but no way to say it.

I am in agony at the site of people's distress, which shows progress for me. For it wasn't long ago that I hadn't the ability to feel compassion or agony for what someone else was going through - all I could feel for was myself, and that feeling wasn't a good one. But by some miracle or operation, some seed of caring has been implanted in me. Not to say I couldn't completely squelch it tomorrow, or I haven't partially covered it today, but it seems to have been planted and has grown recently.

The souls of our children are at stake, as we whittle our effectiveness to help them away. The angels and the demons may fight endlessly and tirelessly over the fate of our loved ones, while we idly fumble through our futile daily tasks and hurry to our appointments of meaninglessness. Our children are dying before our eyes, and we have not a word to console them, nor a tissue to dry their tears. How could we help our children if the reason they're so frequed up is greatly our own fault? To reach out and try to heal would mean having to come to terms with what ails them; and this would mean admitting fault. Who could be so honest as to admit: The reason my child is lost is because of something that I did?

So you will always see that same unresolved, fake, half-happy smile on your child's face. Unresolved, because there is something underneath left smoldering, something felt but not always spoken, something eating away at your child that they may not even be aware of, every time they see you. All because of you, the parent, because of your inability to admit fault and seek forgiveness.

No wonder we're all so selfish and arrogant, look at how we're brought up. The family is a big joke, and the laugh is on the children. We have to fend for ourselves. There is no understanding hand of guidance, but rather cold aloofness or posed congeniality. The father is an endangered species. Has anyone grown up with a father actually living in the house? Please, call in. Oh, you have; was he an alcoholic or a wife beater, or maybe a child molester? For these seem to be the only ones who stick around for over five years. If your father did leave, was he thrown out or did he have rambling on his mind? Freuq the children! They're all pains in the butt anyway. They're just the latest link in the snowballing cycle of depravity, of which the parents were the previous victims. So whom do you blame?

We think we've come so freuqing far with relationships between man and woman (husband and wife - yeah right), but we've only gone, not backwards but rather, to new heights of futile behavior. Women are no longer women, but rather drill sergeants, nagging endlessly at every innocent error in judgment that their man makes. She thinks of him more as a stupid dog than anything else, and treats him accordingly.

It's less strenuous to endure military training than it is to endure a road trip to the next state with your girl. "Why did you go that way?" "I told you we should of gone left." "Pull over." "Do this." "Do that." "Don't touch me." "You're so stupid." These are the affirmations that many of today's men are left with. Respect is reserved for those we fear, not for those we love. But what is love without respect? Politeness, thankfulness, graciousness and charm are lavished on those we have yet conquered, or those we can get something from. To those who have already pledged their eternal love to us, why bother being nice to these pitiful creatures? They're claimed territory, chartered ground. They're annoying mutts who hold their love in their drooling mouths. Don't they realize that no one wants what they know they can have?

Compassion is a lost art form; understanding is a buried treasure. Patience has been withdrawn from the dictionary due to lack of use. Love is a misused word; mutual abuse is a better description.

Control, control, control, we're all so worried about who's in control. We've all got to have the last word; the last punch must be ours. Like little children who have so little real, in-depth confidence that we have to rip it out for ourselves by winning petty disputes and demanding our way on the silliest, most minute points. As if, if we didn't get our way, the world would end and World War III would ensue, when really the dispute is over which restaurant to pull into and eat.

Some women don't want to be equal, but rather to be boss, and are extremely annoyed if their sovereign law that has been uttered is disobeyed. The wrath that is incurred on that poor dog that disobeys is surely worse than the wrath of Godzilla with a hangover, woken up too early to film a scene. Her horns come up and appear on her head; smoke gushes out of her ears. Her eyes glare with intense fury as she pronounces condemnation and then judgment on your insubordinate crimes of disobedience.

After you have been convicted on all counts against her (the judge and jury), then comes your sentencing, which is usually very severe as to ensure that next time she will get her way without any ifs, ands, or butts about it. If

you're lucky, you'll only serve time under her domination, which could be a life sentence if you let it be; but if you've really pissed her off, you'll get the death penalty. You may not die, but you'll be dead to her – written off and forgotten forever.

Of course if you love her, this will make you feel terrible and you'll wonder if maybe you did do something terribly wrong and make desperate attempts to win her back. (Now you're exactly where she wants you, you groveling mutt!)

The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way. "Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment. "Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!" But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of the grave.

(Proverbs 9:13-18, NIV version)

A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.

(Proverbs 12:4, NIV version)

Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife.

(Proverbs 21:19, NIV version)

A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day; restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand.

(Proverbs 27:15-16, NIV version)

A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

(Proverbs 31:10-12, NIV version)

She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land. She makes linen

garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

(Proverbs 31:20-31, NIV version)

There's nothing wrong with a woman having strength or confidence, there is nothing wrong with a woman who wants fair treatment, but why can't these traits be manifest in a calm (dare I say, even, quiet – sometimes) spirit, rather than in an impatient rage? Why is "leaving power" more practiced than "staying power?" Why is forgiveness so far out of reach? Why is perfection required in an imperfect and unbalanced bond? This seems impossible to achieve.

Why can't these women with such incredible strength transform this strength as to strengthen their men as well as keeping, even increasing, their own strength? It is possible. Why can't they breathe life into their walking dead men instead of sucking out what's left of their dwindling existence? Women have this power. To hurt or to heal is their choice, to destroy or to create, to make their man feel like a woman or make him feel like a man, a servant or a hero. [This sentence in no way indicates that women are servants and men are heroes; it's just what flew out of my mouth.]

A man is not necessarily born with confidence or strength, but rather acquires it through outside (or inside, therefore spiritual) circumstances. If

you treat your man with respect, he may come to respect himself. If you give him love, he may love himself someday. If you give him understanding and patience, he may come to understand himself and have patience with others.

Instead of honing in on your man's insecurities like a laser guided missile, and exploiting them until he's left a failure or a broken spirited, defeated, lifeless wimp (or a callused man, made a foreigner to his own emotions), why not fill his insecurities with loving assurance and see him transform into someone that even you can respect?

I'm not suggesting that the woman becomes a mindless adoration machine, hysterically praising her man's slightest passing of gas, nor that she becomes an excess of flesh without opinion, only speaking when spoken to, and that she kisses her man's butt in a pathetic, spineless manner, but rather that she loves and respects him.

But the men are often the reason that women are the way they are. Men can often be either: a spineless, wishy-washy, uncourageous, devoid of confidence, incapable of leadership, whimpering, lazy loser, or they're a phony silhouette of masculine repose. Actors, so unsure and worried about their own masculinity (and sexuality) that they (having not the inner strength and confidence to risk looking sensitive, therefore less manly or even feminine - they think, but if done right makes them look even more masculine) overdo their leader, strong, hardened roles and become, not men, but rather dolls, modeling their false bravado and performing as many manly-maneuvers (things that phony, macho men will do, like fight over nothing, yell at a cat, or walk like a robot) as the day will allow them to perform.

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## 75) The Endeavors of Pain

Why is there pain in the world? How can God let a two-year-old baby be run over by a truck? How can this so-called God permit disease and famine to starve our children? How can he create such people who are so inclined to go on murder sprees as if on fishing trips? How could he create a world where it is possible for a father to force sexual relations on his daughter, or even his son? Can he not put an end to filth and injustice?

Why, then, is a seemingly good man struck down with cancer, while a seemingly wicked man permitted to flourish and have a long and prosperous life? How, then, could two countries play cards with their children's lives as the stakes, and continue into war as if to prove their own courage and manhood? What do the players care; they're only the players, not the ante? How could this be permitted?

Why does he even give us life when the life we come into is so full of agony and heartache and torture? Why doesn't God make damn sure that when we're born, we're born into stable families that love us? Instead, we're thrust into the supervision of madmen and witches.

If love is so impossible to attain, why did God create us with such a need for it – like putting cows in the desert where there is no grass to graze, or bearing fish in the air with a string tied to their tails (to dangle only inches away from their heart's desire, water)? Is this not how love is portrayed to us, a tease of all that we are craving for, only to make us want all the more what is so impossible to attain?

"Love, a dream not even worth dreaming, for that dream only seems to crush us."

Is this what you had in mind, God? Is this your perfect plan: To beat us silly, to mangle us beyond recognition, to play with our lives as an angry

child plays god of the ants, feeding them ice cream and then crushing them at random?

A merciless God, you say, one that is not worthy of your favor, let alone your love and worship; a callused dictator, fiendishly dreaming up ways to trip you up, is this your opinion?

If you are to criticize God, then surely you have an alternative to his thoughtless, uncaring ways. Then let us consider what would happen if you were God.

You do not possess the power that God does, but you do possess power – minute in comparison, but enough to examine your qualifications for the job of God.

Does your love blanket perfectly and unquestionably amongst all those whose love extends to you? Are all those who love you returned with love – even greater portions, tenfold maybe? I do not ask yet if you love your enemies, but only if your love is returned to all who love you. I ask again as to provoke deeper consideration of the question. Do you love every single person that loves you or has attempted to love you, or does your love go towards only those that you feel serve you best?

Does your love casually pass by the unattractive and beat relentlessly on the door of the beautiful? If others despise one who loves you, do you not restrain your love from one such outcast – as to save your favor with those whose love that you would prefer?

Is power and position and money truly disdain and considered rubbish in your eyes when compared with the value of hearts and the love of men's souls?

If you are so compassionate and loving, as to never inflict pain, then how can you keep the order when a discrepancy or a violation of peace has occurred? If you cannot keep the order, then how can you stop the pain that

results from disorder and lack of adherence to the laws created to maintain the peace and order?

If you are now willing to distribute discipline to those under your supervision and rule, what measuring device will you use to measure out your wrath as to ensure peace? How are you sure that the measure you use is precisely the measure needed to bring about justice and is not an unfair or sadistic punishment? Or is your measure too light, and your authority is laughed at as to promote future disturbances of the peace that you so boastfully claim the ability to parent?

Now if some under your domination agree with your measure, and some feel that your measure was too severe, if some feel that no measure was necessary at all, and some feel that your measure was too light, to which group of individuals, so privileged to be under your command, do you bend or adhere to: To those who agree with you, as to maintain their allegiance, or to those who oppose you, as to gain their future approval? Do you bend to those who love you, or do you give ear to those whom you love? Do you consider their influence and power, or do you consider their number?

Do you not consider any of them, or do you consider all of them and have a personal one-on-one, heart-to-heart talk with every single person in your kingdom, and hold their hands and explain in extreme detail your every reasoning, your every thought and justification for every move that you've ever made?

We want God to sit down with us and show us everything and all the reasons behind all the mysteries. For some mysterious reason, God leaves many things a mystery.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we

shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

(1 Corinthians 13:11-12, NIV version)

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

(Isaiah 55:8-9, NIV version)

The LORD said to Job: "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!" Then Job answered the LORD: "I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer—twice, but I will say no more." Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm: "Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his? Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor, and clothe yourself in honor and majesty. Unleash the fury of your wrath, look at every proud man and bring him low, look at every proud man and humble him, crush the wicked where they stand. Bury them all in the dust together; shroud their faces in the grave. Then I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you."

(Job 40:1-14, NIV version)

"Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope? Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? Will he keep begging you for mercy? Will he speak to you with gentle words? Will he make an agreement with you for you to take him as your slave for life? Can you make a pet of him like a bird or put him on a leash for your girls? Will traders barter for him? Will they divide him up among the merchants? Can you fill his hide with harpoons or his head with fishing spears? If you lay a hand on him, you will remember the struggle and never do it again! Any hope of subduing him is false; the mere sight of him is overpowering. No one is fierce enough to rouse him. Who then is able to stand against me? Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me."

(Job 41:1-11, NIV version)

Then Job replied to the LORD: "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. [You asked,] 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. [You said,] 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

(Job 42:1-6, NIV version)

How can we even pretend to possess more mercy than the creator of mercy himself? How can we feel that justice is more adequately distributed from our hands than from God's? Can we see more clearly than the one who sees what is done in the dark and behind closed doors, yes, even the on goings of our hearts and minds? Yet we entertain the thought that our judgment would be wiser. Have we the knowledge to even attempt to second-guess God? Is there something we know that is hidden from him?

What percentage of all the information in the world that there is to know do you feel you know? Is it 10 percent or 1 percent, or closer to .00001 percent and not being totally sure of half of that .00001 percent?

Now consider all the information not just in the world but in spiritual planes as well, and to the outer reaches of the universe. Now make your judgment again. If you choose not to judge, then you make the right judgment.

Use your judgment to judge that you trust in the Lord and trust in his judgment, and then judge no further.

Do not close your mind but open it; open it enough to realize that it does not open wide enough to take in everything. And when your mind is uncertain, then follow your heart. If the facts are unclear, then consult your soul. If the figures add up to emptiness, and your calculations pile up to refuse and hollow nothings, then ask the Lord for his love, and to convince your soul what your mind could not be convinced of.

I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

(1 Corinthians 2:3-5, NIV version)

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

(1 Corinthians 1:21, NIV version)

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

(Matthew 7:7-8, NIV version)

"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

(Revelation 3:19-20, NIV version)

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

(John 3:17-18, NIV version)

Ask God to forgive your sins and take you in.

You're a hopeless refugee of life, longing for life, true life. You've stumbled like a drunk to many doors searching for the answer to life.

You've knocked on the door of power and were eventually permitted to enter. You rose to the top and were respected and honored. This was okay while it lasted, but you had not yet been given the gift of love, so your rule became secretly hated. Those you so ordered around in such an unloving manner soon banned against you and knocked you off of your throne.

It seems that the man with razor sharp tongue  
Grows in strength and in power  
The people offended may soon ban as one  
His reign will quickly turn sour

So you stumbled over to the door of not love, but what seemed like love.  
You fell into a religion that blanketed everything with a blanket of  
acceptance.

Everything is beautiful, and all are one  
One is beautiful, and all is everything  
Everything is one, and so on and so on

Love was posed but not practiced. Love was imitated, and peace was love's  
theme.

There were no harsh rules  
Nor judgments incurred  
Tranquil and passive  
And truth a white blur

This white blur, you found, encompassed contradictions: If this is my truth,  
and that is your truth, and one refutes the other, than what is truth? Do we  
all have our own separate universes where each of our chosen truths is  
observed?

Confusion set in your brain. "Maybe truth isn't so simple," you thought to yourself. Until you got so frustrated in trying to solve what is truth that you decided that it is a futile exercise to even bother.

So you knocked on the door of ignorance: the door of thoughtless unspiritual life, a door of existence but not of living... a door of vague being but not one of defined and tangible presence, a mellifluous drifting towards unclear goals.

Until you realized that you are not an animal... that you cannot live only on: food, shelter, clothing, sex and money alone...

Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

(Deuteronomy 8:2-3, NIV version)

...that you may be married but not in love, that you may be in a crowded shopping mall but still alone, that you may be living but a better description would be dying – slowly, every day, till your life grinds to an uneventful conclusion. That conclusion is: That in all your life, you never learned to live, but only did what came easiest to you.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

(John 10:10, NIV Version)

But by some miracle, and by some great work of God, you stumbled to the door of God.

You weren't sure if you wanted to knock or not at first, you wondered if God would steal your personality and rob you of your fun. You later learned that you were not completely yourself, and your personality was only accepted with love and thus it flourished under these conditions, and your fun was only increased tenfold.

You wondered if you would be turned into some kind of a freak, like all the weirdo believers you had met before. Later, you found out that not all who say they believe actually believe, and also that you and God are you and God and you do not have to mimic the behavior of others who link themselves to God. There may be many believers whom you do admire, while others, you are embarrassed by their presence - but you have to decide what is more important to you.

Are you embarrassed of your maker, of the one who loves you to the depth of your soul?

"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

(Luke 9:26, NIV version)

Are you so worried what others think of you that you would turn your head and close your eyes and block your ears to truth and love? Is the kingdom of heaven such a meaningless place that you would pass it up for those who care nothing for you and their opinion of you? If anyone loves you, truly loves you, their love is not shed so easily – and for those whose love is, then their love was weak or false. Better to understand the true character of those who surround you as soon as possible.

Again I shudder to think of the emptiness of my words. I fall so short in words of what I feel.

All these words and all your uncertainties, all your questions and all your doubts may be moments from being dealt with.

For if I did not put stake in the Spirit of God and the love that is given from his bosom, then I would rest my case on other points – like the fulfillment of prophecy, or the wonder of nature and the complexities that could not have happened by chance.

If I did not believe that a man must be spiritually reborn through Christ and the Spirit of God...

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

(John 3:3, NIV version)

...then I would make greater effort to emphasize the discrepancies between all other religions, or belief systems, and the one I speak of.

If God is not alive, then my argument is dead.

For if you earnestly and honestly ask nothingness to come into your heart and lead your life in the position of God, if you accept the air as your savior and ask the mist to cover your sins and to bring you forgiveness, if you ask emptiness to fill you with love and a black void to heal you from hate and anger, if you beg with tears of longing to a painting or a religious concept for the gift of everlasting life, to be with God and with loved ones in paradise, to finally know true satisfaction and to save you from the fires of hell, if you scream a horrendous scream and beat on the door and call out for love and meaning and truth and an answer to this tormented and torturous life to an impersonal white blob that has not the capacity to know and love you personally, even as a friend, even closer than your closest friend...

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

(John 15:15, NIV version)

...I don't think it would do you much good.

If it could, then I might try to fool you into believing some other way.

But the truth is...

HE IS.

If you believe, believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, and lay claim to the blood that he shed for you on the cross as the only way to cover your sins and obtain forgiveness, lay claim to this work that he did for you as your salvation and means of being granted eternal life and happiness, and ask God to fill you with his Spirit...

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

(John 5:24, NIV version)

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

(John 6:35, NIV version)

"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

(John 6:40, NIV version)

Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

(John 12:35-36, NIV version)

Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

(Mark 5:36, NIV version)

...then you will finally understand what all this gibberish is all about.

If you take a step in faith and seek him and ask God through Christ to enter the door of your heart and soul and fill you with love...

...then we can laugh together at all my stupid words.



## 76) Save

Again I say, what is love without respect? If you say you love someone, but you look down on them, is this not love but rather pity?

If you say you love your husband and yet treat him like a dog, will he not grow to resent you?

If your wife asks something of you and without even thinking or considering her point of view you shut her down coldly and impolitely, will she not harbor resentment?

If you pat your child on the head and praise him in front of others, yet treat him as if he weren't even there, as if the child were a goldfish in a tank, incapable of communicating, will not the child run away to resist being smothered and neglected? He's kind of like a cat running from an aggressive, adoring bear that wants to sit on him out of love.

Why would you smother in a neglectful manner what you say you love, even if it annoys the hell out of them? [But if they like being smothered, that's a different story.]

Why do we consider what irritates others only as childish mumblings to be ignored, while what we see as annoying is a greater matter? Even if the exasperation of someone else seems silly to us, we neglect to realize that we would be bothered in a similar manner if the same blood curdling affections were hurled on ourselves.

Love builds, it doesn't bind; love heals, it doesn't tease annoyingly; love preserves, it doesn't cut down; love carefully constructs and supports, it doesn't look for holes to capitalize on.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

(1 Corinthians 13:1-10, NIV version)

Should love be always imposing or aggressive, or shouldn't it sometimes seek common ground on which to grow together?

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## 77) Wants and Desires

Does God care? Are your needs and wants considered by him as only selfish, childlike desires to be ignored?

Does the Lord not care if you want to be a fireman or a fisherman, a beautician or a bouncer?

Is his desire for you only to see you do what he wants you to do without any attention paid to your wants?

Does he go so far as to force us to do what we don't want to do and not to do what we do want to do?

Are sacrifice and sufferings his only offering to us?

Is his path a long tedious path of giving up everything and stifling our natural indwelt longings, one of convincing our selves every day that we really don't want those things that our heart cries out for?

Does he drown our personal wishes and block out any prayer that asks for an individual need to be met?

Does he not want to hear about whom you love and whom you want to marry?

Are your prayers for a child to him but the pathetic whimpering of an undisciplined disciple?

Are we not to want? Are our wills shriveled up and thrown away when we come to the service of the Almighty?

Is denial our inheritance; is prolonged torture our only expectation?

Shall we sing dirges, and celebrate loneliness?

Shall we withdraw from living and walk quietly down the dark corridors of separation, quietly and mournfully walking to our graves - and tip motionlessly into an even greater abyss, falling into a cold afterlife of boring, stagnant existence, prolonged and dragged out to the ends of eternity?

NO!

If God asks anything of you, it's only because he wants to give it back to you one hundredfold (or that what he asks is truly for your benefit).

He wants to increase your joy, not diminish it.

He wants to free you, not enslave you.

He wants your leaping love, and not your begrudging resignation.

He does not desire to see your face robbed of all expression, and to see your wants as unmet as a broken winged bird's desire to fly.

He does not take pleasure in your hardships.

He does not laugh hardily at your shattered innocence, nor poke fun at your broken heart.

"Oh, that's too bad you little cry baby, you didn't have a chance with her anyway," he does not taunt us at the sight of love unmet.

Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my sighing. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray. In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation. You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell.

(Psalms 5:1-4, NIV version)

If God created you, then he also created your inner desires and will eventually fulfill them if you do trust in him and do things his way.

If you were made to love, will he not provide a way in which you may drink of the cup of love till you're drunk with it?

If he made you to be attracted to the opposite sex, will he not hear your prayers of joining?

If he gave you your desire to lie with the one you love, to have sex, and share in this most intimate closeness known to man, will he not provide a way in which this can be enjoyed to the fullest?

Satan may want you to believe that sex is something that God is ashamed of and doesn't want his creation to experience. What could be further from the truth?

Some will say that in the Garden of Eden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, strictly off limits for Adam and Eve to eat from, represented having sex.

Dare I say that it was not the desire for sex that caused the fall of man, but rather man's disobedience and stubbornness in believing that maybe man knows better than God.

God said: Don't. The serpent said: It's to your benefit to do it. Eve said: Duh, okay. Adam said: Sure, I'll try it. And they all suffered the consequences – and we are still suffering the consequences.

God created sex and your desire to have it. He longs to see you enjoy it. God is not embarrassed and red-faced by men and women wrestling in unity. He applauds in agreement and is glad to see you enjoy this gift that he has created and given to you.

Sex is so much in harmony with God's plan that he uses marriage and sex as an illustration of his love for us. Maybe it is to emphasize the intimacy that he desires with us.

So as man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh, so it is with God and man. He also called the church his bride.

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

(Genesis 2:24, NIV version)

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: `Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

(Revelation 19:6-9, NIV version)

God even gives us tips on how to enjoy sex to the fullest. Such tips, though, are often ignored – no, not ignored, but mocked.

Heaps of laughter is shoveled on those tips or rules till they are buried. We are afraid to even mention these tips or regulations for fear of being ridiculed.

"For better or for worse, till death do us part," and to not commit adultery we agree before God. We take a freuqing oath and then piss on the wedding documents.

What good is our word? It is as meaningless as an infant's burping and belching. It is as stable and trustworthy as that of a fly's obedience. Who can predict where the fly will go next? Who can call to it and trust it will come?

Marriage is a game we like to play. We'll play house until we don't want to anymore. We'll toast our broken vows and smile in self-satisfaction. We'll just say, "He (or she) didn't please me anymore." Even his (or her) next

victim of shortsighted affection will grin a knowing grin, as if to say, "That's great, now destroy me."

It's just like a salmon infatuated with his own death, which likes himself as much as an ice sculpture likes the jungle, or a deer fancies a shotgun. (I know they die to breed or something, but you get the idea.)

Do we hate ourselves so much that we look for misfortune, that we consider sorrow our only friend? Are self-destruction and outward destruction our only pastime?

What are we trying to attain? Do we feel that the more lives we destroy, the more points we'll gain to raise the score high enough to enter into the great torture chamber in the sky?

Do we strive after disaster and pestilence so much that we desire an afterlife where even sharper stripes of pain are lashed on our backs, a place where we are rewarded with being made that much more skillful in inflicting wounds on others?



## 78) Children of Derision

Laughing, laughing, laughing, all I hear is incessant mindless laughing, laughing, laughing. What the freuq is so funny? I wish someone would tell me what the freuq is so funny. Is life that beautiful or are we so far from reality that we grin, our stupid lives, away - or am I just a gloomy bum-crevasse?

The desire to hurt, the desire for revenge, is great – especially towards those you love that have hurt you. They are our targets. To get them back we will get pregnant; we will destroy our rooms; we will run away; we will slit our wrists; we will become a disgrace. To get them back we will kill, as if to kill them. We will throw our lives away for no other reason than to exasperate someone whom we love who has hurt us.

We will find new people to take out our anger and hurt on, and hurt them. We feel that by hurting someone else for what a former loved one (or presently, a hated one) has done to us, that we are justified in this action – that this is fair play.

We seek and destroy; for we were destroyed and could not care less about ourselves, let alone others. Broken hearts have become our food; to shatter them is our form of recreation. All because we're all little babies with unmet needs and unresolved anger, and no matter how hard we try to rise above it, we fail.

God, save us from the fate of revenge. Save us from ourselves. Forgive us and give us the strength to forgive others. For if we don't forgive and release them from our eternal wrath, we will still be slaves to them. We think we are freeing ourselves by offending our loved ones who have hurt us, or their representatives in the form of other people, but we are only enslaving ourselves to them and to anger.

Break these chains and free us. Take these scared children into your arms and heal us, for we have found no other healing. We have nurtured our anger until it has become bigger than ourselves, so big that it encompasses us.

We strike out as if in striking we are healed; and maybe the striking feels good, so good, but it does not free us if it controls us. Stalwart behavior and courage can be useful; but let not anger and revenge rob us of what we're deserving and designed for (and from our greatest potential).

If love and hate stood up eye-to-eye, hate could be melted by the pain. Dear God, let us not let anger take away from the joy that you had intended for us. Help us forgive others and forgive ourselves, for without forgiveness we will always be children – angry, mean, hurting children.

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The time has come to stop playing games. The time has come to reckon with your aggressor. There are no days left to throw away – every one is precious. Tomorrow may be eternity, and to waste one could be to waste the other. Do not dance with what persuades you; do not flirt with your destruction. Come on over to the other side and sit with me. I feel happier than the richest, most honored men on earth, and I have nothing. Imagine if I had something; I'd probably explode with joy. I feel as steady as the passing of days, while the enemy shoots arrows at me all day long. Imagine if his fury was silenced; I'd become peace itself. And I know both will come to pass.

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So what are you: A believer in Christ? And what am I: A believer in Christ? So what are we: Believers in Christ? Yes, we are believers in Christ. Then what is our law: The word of God? Yes, our law is the word of God. What is the word of God? How do we know what the word of God is: The Holy Spirit? Yes, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. And how do we interpret the word: The Holy Spirit? Yes, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth and the word

of God. How do we receive the Holy Spirit: By believing in Christ? Yes, we receive the Holy Spirit by believing in Christ.

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She'll freuq with you  
Just to bring you down  
She'll bring you down  
Just to freuq with you

Women don't want to marry men anymore; they want to marry control. They want control as their lifelong companion. But control can't very well love you back or listen to you when you need an ear to bend. Nor can you hold control in your arms and feel its warm embrace. Is control so dear to us that we will run from love for fear of losing control? [What if God in control is better than you in control?]

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Is not the mind the passageway to the soul? Are not our thoughts our lives? If we feed our minds with the word of God and are constantly in prayer, a constant state of communication with our Lord, if our ambitions are the

souls of loved ones and all those around us, will not these actions benefit our souls?

So, the mind or our thoughts – what we concentrate and meditate on – may define the state of our souls.

If our minds or our thoughts put up a blockage against heaven with all sorts of evil or complacent thoughts, how can God break through this barrier and feed our souls with his loving, comforting Spirit?

If our thoughts are full of unrighteous lust and anger, arrogance and maniacal plans, then we, in passing, kiss a cross on the way to an errand of deceit, how can God contend with this?

God is not a whore. He does not give himself away to those who only pretend their affections towards him.

Are not our thoughts the necessary prelude to God's comforting that allows him and invites him by our own freewill to enter the passageway to our soul and fill us?

Once our souls are filled with the Spirit of God, then our bodies are enabled to obey God's commands, to restrain us from sin and empower us to do good works.

When the Holy Spirit is at work in our bodies (the temple of the Holy Spirit), who we are becomes obvious, as obvious as the brightness of the sun. No longer do we have to ask ourselves, "Who should I be?" "What am I?" or, "Who do I want to act like?" For the Spirit can make this plain. No longer do we have to worry about whom we've offended, or if we acted a different way, we might have gone over better. For if we are truly living in the Spirit, correct behavior can become automatic (though there may be stages of spiritual growth to go through, and there can always be mistakes made along the path). Even if you are not accepted there is still no need for an intense reevaluation of personality, for you know you're living in the Spirit and are confident of whom you are. Even if who you might be is something someone else doesn't like, you are strong in yourself and will

accept them if they accept you and even accept them if they don't; but you do not need to bend to them and how you think they think you should be.

We no longer need to drastically change our entire personalities after every movie we see, as we imitate each new actor that overtakes the screen with a vengeance. Christ is our number one movie star and no one else.

He is our example. We will never become Christ and we are not to be pawns, but if we strive to achieve his outlook on life and to imitate his actions, it will lead us to the greatest place that our individual personalities could possibly end up. We will then all still end up individuals and with differences, but only interesting differences and not disunifying differences.

We will all end up ourselves and unique, but our natural selves combined with the striving to be Christ like, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will result in the greatest potential that we could possibly attain, fulfilled. And with the Spirit, this, yes even this, becomes possible.

But staying close to the Spirit of God is sometimes difficult. To rely on the Spirit, when the world offers so many options and alternatives to rely on, is the difficult part. But nothing is so sweet, as the Lord.

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*T.O.I.*



# End of Book

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Throngs of Iniquity

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Throngs of Iniquity: A picturesque, philosophical word path that converges with and depicts the author's life, as he sees it, through agitated, dismal, longing, hopeful, etc., etc., eyes. It's a story of pain and hope, as God perseveres in his tenacity to hold on to the hearts of those to whom he won't let go. / Misop Baynun

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