

Chapter IV

Stress Control Through the Holy Spirit

Nowadays no one factor determines who gets sick and who does not. Whether we are talking about heart attacks, cancer, AIDS or diabetes, "co-factors" — not single causes — are responsible.

A key co-factor, now under intense research, is the way our minds influence our health. It is well known that the brain has the power to regulate all bodily functions. A mind stressed to the breaking point will disrupt the orderly working of our immune systems and the flow of regulating hormones, causing defense breakdowns and the onset of illness. Consequently, your ability to manage the day by day stresses of life is essential if you are to succeed and progress to the Abundant Life advocated by Jesus.

Ideally you should be calm, clear about what you're going to do, and able to maintain a certain objectivity about your life and work.

As Christ is "formed" in us we can choose to be made strong through his spirit's power in our inner being (Eph. 3:16). The Spirit's power gives certainty to the soul. You can search for truth, assurance, and reality

by systematically going through your thinking process to see if there are areas that could be made less stressful, thereby freeing up energy and optimism and peace of mind.

Peace of Mind

Jesus promised to leave his peace with us. Your ability to achieve and maintain peace of mind is a powerful indicator of how well you're developing the gifts of the spirit in your life. Peace of mind is the essential precondition for happiness and for getting lots of enjoyment out of your work and your personal life. A continuous disruption of your peace of mind is a sign of stress and negativity. It can result in mental instability if not breakdown.

So, one of the main challenges of life is to accept the fruits of the spirit as the unique attitude that sets you apart from people who continually operate through negative emotions.

Negative emotions are a main cause of unhappiness in life. They are robber emotions. They rob us of peace and happiness and enjoyment in our relationships. All stress, tension, and anxiety is ultimately manifested in negative emotions, which are expressed inwardly, making you sick or outwardly, making others sick.

A healthy personality is positive, optimistic, and cheerful. You can eliminate negative emotions from your life but you will need to understand their root causes, a process that requires self-control, a writing pad and a pen or pencil. The Holy Spirit will guide your hand as you search your heart and put down all causes of stress or negativity in your life. But, before you get to this, let's talk about the nature of stress.

The Nature of Stress

Stress is not contained in the events and circumstances of your life. Stress comes through the way you

respond to what happens to you. If you respond in a way that leads to stress, you've got stress. On the other hand you can choose to respond in a non-stressful way. The choice is yours.

The starting point of stress control is for you to accept 100% responsibility for your responses. On Monday, for example, you may get upset if stuck in traffic. On Wednesday you're stuck again but this time you're calm. Same person, two responses. It's up to you.

Medical science links about 60 - 70% of all illness to stress or emotional co-factors. This is caused by the inability of most people to manage their lives in a fast-paced, dynamic society. High stress is linked to heart disease, cancer, strokes, bowel problems, an over-active thyroid gland, skin disorders, migraine headaches, arthritis, and a variety of other illnesses.

Good Stress Versus Bad Stress

All stress, good or bad, is learned. No baby is born with stress. Good stress gives you energy, enthusiasm, and excitement about what you're doing.

Bad stress makes you tired, irritable, unhappy, and overwhelmed by your work, your relationships, and your circumstances.

The starting point to stress control is to accept 100% responsibility for your situation. The key to stress control is self-control. The Holy Spirit who leads you through Jesus into a close relationship with God, is in charge of your emotions. You can think, choose, and decide to gain control over your emotions if you will.

Next, we're going to survey the six major causes of stress. They are responsible for about 95 to 98% of all stress. As we go, make notes. Relate each area to your own circumstance. Learn to identify and deal with your sources of stress. Not only will you start to feel more positive, optimistic, and cheerful; you will feel a sense of confidence that you can deal with whatever is thrown at you because you've sought and received the power of the Holy Spirit to direct you.

Number 1 cause of stress — worry.

Jesus said, don't worry about tomorrow, it has its own crop of trouble. In spite of Jesus' advice, we do worry. Worry is the number one cause of stress.

Worry is a sustained form of fear caused by indecision.

Worry depresses the body's immune systems and makes you susceptible to all kinds of illness, from flu to cancer, with heart disease and other forms of sickness thrown in.

Eliminating worry therefore is the start of a healthy and balanced mental attitude.

Most worry is unnecessary. In one study, when people were asked what they worried about, the results were analyzed with the following conclusions:

- 40% of the things worried about never happened.
- 30% of the worrisome things were in the past and couldn't be changed.
- 22% of worry was over petty, unimportant matters.
- This left only 8 percent, of which 4 percent involved things which couldn't be changed.
- Thereby, only 4 things out of a hundred were worth worrying over in the first place.

So, worry is the way your mind grows a perceived problem until it's blown up into something much larger than it really is.

Jesus gave us the best prescription for worry: Live one day at a time.

Don't borrow from tomorrow's problems. Much worry comes from concern over future events, most of which don't happen.

Four Steps to Worry Control

On your thinking pad do this:

Step #1. Clearly define the worry situation in writing. The process of writing out the problem can often bring to mind an obvious solution.

Step #2. Determine the worst possible thing that could happen with this problem or situation. Usually you'll find that the worst possible outcome isn't that bad.

. Resolve to accept the worst thing, should it occur. Thereby, you have nothing left to worry about.

Step #4. Begin immediately to improve on the worst possible outcome. Don't let it happen, or, if it happens, reduce its consequences to the lowest possible level.

Remember this:

The only real antidote to worry is purposeful action.

The process of taking action drives the worry thoughts right out of your mind.

Number 2 cause of stress — no clear purpose in life.

Too few Christians have clear goals. And even those who do will find that their goals are an unrelated string of hollow victories if the larger meanings of life aren't examined. To be satisfying, our goals should reflect our having wrestled with the purpose of life. Thereby our goals will not be so small that they are easily met and soon forgotten.

Identity Versus Purpose

To find significance, two fundamental questions arise:

1. "Who am I."
2. "Why am I here."

The Christian can only find meaning and identity by understanding who he or she is in Christ. What counts is the relationship to God, not fame, not fortune, not earthly power.

God has a purpose for our lives — a mission, a des-

tiny — which is why we exist. It is the direction in which God wants us to be moving. Once you settle the issue of who you are, the next question is, "what does God want you to do with your life?"

The only purposes that will survive are ones linked to God. "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails," Proverbs 19:21.

Eternal Versus Earthly Purpose

The first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is: "what is the chief end of man?" paraphrased, and personalized, the question becomes, "why am I here?"

The answer is both simple and eloquent:

"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever," which includes you and me.

We can do this if we're willing to open our hearts and minds to our own particular form of communication with God. Without communication there is no relationship. Without relationship you can't reach even level one of purpose.

Level one — universal purpose.

In a sense we are all alike in that God has saved us through His grace (1 Timothy 1:9) to a life characterized by faith, love, obedience and service. This is our universal purpose.

Level two — major personal purpose.

Each of us is unique. A unique person receives a specific call to become somebody special when the call is from God. The final chapter of this book is devoted to helping you find your major personal purpose. Only by writing out your ideas and thoughts on the matter and considering what the Bible says, can your real sense of God's earthly purpose for your life move from the abstract to the real. It may be one of the most important

things you ever do.

Level three — other purposes.

Most life stresses arise when one or more of six areas of development begin falling apart or lagging behind:

1. Emotional Development — maturity.
2. Physical Development — the source of energy.
3. Spiritual Development — your relationship to God.
4. Financial Development — the making, use and investing of money.
5. Mental Development — the ability to think and to solve problems.
6. Relationship Development — all family, business, and professional goals become real when you can look beyond your needs to help others achieve their goals.

Goals and activities are how our actions become our purposes. Goals come from examining our lives. And a goal without action to achieve it is wishful thinking, a dream, a wish, a hope, but not a goal.

These third level purposes change over time, not quickly like goals, but over the longer horizon of life:

- Children grow up.
- Fathers and mothers grow older.
- Jobs change.
- We age.
- An illness strikes.

So, we need flexibility, hardiness, and a periodic review to see if we are growing in each area.

Number 3 major cause of stress — the incomplete action.

Each of us begins many projects throughout life. You have an urge within you to complete what you start. When you do not finish what you start, enormous stress is generated.

Procrastination is the most common cause and example of the incomplete action. Whenever you put off

the completion of an important task you develop headaches, insomnia, palpitations, negativity and blame.

The cause isn't time itself. You, me, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther, Billy Graham; we each have or had 168 hours to work with each week. Other factors are at play. If procrastination is a problem, perhaps its a strategic problem. Here's a suggested strategy to erase procrastination.

Step #1. Develop a clear understanding of God's purpose for your life.

Step #2. Live by Biblical priorities.

Step #3. Make and carry out plans that reflect God will for your life.

This way you will prevent a lot of trouble by being certain that what you give your time to has been decided after consultation with God, not before.

Thereby, the management of time becomes a strategically engineered progression:

- Finding your major purpose.
- Determining your priorities.
- Making plans.
- Setting goals.
- Acting on your goals so you move from purpose to time management to accomplishment.

Webster defines time as the "irreversible succession of events." Whether you're ready or not, time marches on. The irreversibility factor causes a sense of regret in many persons who've reached an age where their energies are gone. What they regret is what they did not do.

How, then, does the Christian avoid time-wasting activities? How can the Christian objectively avoid starting a business or activity that's outside God's will, as I did, losing major money and wasting years of energy? How can you and I avoid regret? Perhaps you'll agree

that the following is the usual process of decision making. Once we understand where we fall short, we can change to God's way.

The Five Steps of Poor Decision Making

Step #1. You and I tell God what we're going to do.

We've given a lot of thought to this thing and as it says in Proverbs 16:1, it is a "plan of the heart."

Step #2. The Lord responds.

The remainder of Proverbs 16:1 says, ". but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue."

When the world we've constructed starts collapsing around our heads, it dawns on us. We ran ahead of the Lord without his stamp of approval. "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails," Proverbs 19:21.

Step #3. We beg God to let us do it anyway.

All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord (Proverbs 16:2).

By this time we've got a lot invested:

- Time
- Money
- Emotion

So we plead our case. No one likes to fail. Still, there will likely be a great lesson ahead. The Lord may let us have our own way. He may not. If the brakes are put on our plans then and there, the issue is settled. Bail out. Walk away with the least damage possible.

Step #4. Finally, we humble ourselves and listen. Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed (Proverbs 16:3).

Now we've pleaded but God isn't persuaded to our point of view. Even when we've blown it, He will come to the rescue when we listen and wait patiently for him to act. There may be consequences to bear, but we are rescued by Him.

Step #5. God reveals what he is going to do.

The Lord works out everything for his own ends (Proverbs 16:4).

When we start something that seemingly ends in substantial loss, the consequences may bear the seed of another beginning that has the potential for God's direction.

The Best Time Management Strategy

Nothing wastes more time and money and disrupts relationships and creates damaging stress than the pursuit of our own independent will.

The most effective time management strategy is to eliminate the first three steps we just described. Thereby we make plans after listening for God's direction and approval, not before.

When we don't hear his voice, when the door doesn't open, where there is no strong feeling within, we should delay our plans and wait patiently for Him to act.

When a goal, plan, or idea begins to form, talk with the Lord. A made up mind is almost impossible to change. Then, when the word is go, stay with the task until it's 100% completed, giving us an immediate release of energy and self-esteem.

Number 4 major cause of stress — fear.

Each of us struggles with the emotion of fear.

- Fear of failure.
- Fear of rejection.
- Fear of sudden disaster.
- Fear of other people.

Fear and courage are opposites. Courage enables us to face tough times with confidence and resolution. Fear makes us avoid trying new things because we can't look any further than the potential hardship we face if things don't work out.

The Bible encourages us to not be afraid. Jesus said, "Fear not" on many occasions and 2 Timothy 1:7 says that God hasn't given us a spirit of fear but of:

- Power.
- Love.
- Self-discipline.

We are even told that the person who fears has not been made perfect in love (1 John 4:18). If we're encouraged to be fearless why do we fear so? It isn't an emotion we're born with. Babies fear only two things, falling and loud noises. All other fears are learned.

We learn fear as children. Our parents swoop us up, carrying us back from the edge of the road. They yell at us, "Don't do that", and so on, until we become wary of people, places and things. Our behavior becomes a cycle of fear.

The Cycle of Fear

When Jesus told Peter to come to him on the water, Peter did so until the force of wind hit him and he gave in to fear of the storm.

How many times have you started on a project — maybe a new job — with great faith, only to have a fierce storm lash you? You looked around and "saw the wind."

- The first step in the cycle of fear is reality. When Peter saw the wind, he became afraid and began sinking.
- The second step in the cycle of fear is our response.

Once fear seized Peter he began sinking. Our faith can keep us afloat but if our way of earning a living is threatened, we see that faith is not enough and we begin sinking in the swirling water of our problems.

But, we, like Peter, are not fools. When we begin to sink we have the presence of mind to call out, "Lord, save me."

- The third step in the cycle of fear is the return to the source of our faith.

Jesus didn't judge Peter. He didn't make him gulp a few mouthfuls of sea water. He didn't lecture him. He simply saved him.

- The fourth step in the cycle of fear is the rescue.

The wonderful news about the cycle of fear is this. No matter how deep we are mired up, when we return to Jesus, he will save us.

He doesn't promise to save a failing business. He doesn't promise to get a son off drugs. He doesn't promise to save your job. He does promise to save you.

No "once for all" cure exists, because fear is intimately mixed in with skepticism, caution, and study of a situation before jumping into it. So if fear is the disease and courage is the cure, the universal preventive is stronger medicine — faith.

Faith

Fear bubbles up from the uncertainty of the future. Faith is an attitude of *"being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see,"* (Hebrews 11:1). We don't need courage to face what we already know. The uncertainty of the future gives birth to doubts and fears, which are made more vivid and real if our past experiences have made truth of our fears.

If you don't know what you face, your fear may be a vague uneasiness, which, if chronic becomes chronic anxiety, which is a neurotic way of facing the world.

Faith in Christ as the rescuer is not the same as the faith which forms the basis of courage. Courage is built on studying the situation, drawing on past experiences from your memory and then reflecting on it. Study+ Experience + reflection = wisdom. So courage and wisdom must be linked or you will be like the fool who rushes in where angels fear to tread.

The broader your experiences, the greater your bank of memory, the more you have to reflect on; the wiser and more courageous will be your decisions and actions.

Six Steps to Overcoming Fear

Remember: we are promised relief from fear.

"No temptation (fear) 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 10:13

Step #1. Submit your circumstances to God. When you face your fear, the death of fear is certain.

Step #2. Study the situation. Ask help of knowledgeable, experienced persons. Do away with as much uncertainty as possible.

Step #3. Draw from your experiences as you remember them.

Step #4. Submit your attitude to God. Ask for confidence to face the situation.

Step #5. Wait for God to act.

Step #6. Act yourself.

Number five major cause of stress — anger.

Uncontrolled anger is a co-factor for much human unhappiness. It has been associated with heart attacks, strokes, ruptured blood vessels, migraine headaches, asthma and skin diseases of all sorts.

It ruins marriages and relationships; destroys the personalities of growing children, causes loss of jobs and disruption of careers, and results in more unhappiness in American life than we can count.

Anger depresses the immune system, making the

body susceptible to an entire range of illnesses. And the remarkable thing about anger is this:

Over 99% of the time nothing good comes from anger.

Occasionally you and I will become angry for a righteous reason but 99% of the time anger boils out because we're selfish and impatient. If you want to know whether anger is a problem for you, think about how you act at home behind closed doors. That's where you show one or more of the three main symptoms of anger:

1. Low flash point that erupts with slight irritations.
2. A loss of control when serious problems show themselves.
3. Grudge-holding for long periods of time.

The Root Causes of Anger

Anger stirs up our sinful nature, hampering our efforts to live by the spirit for one or more of the following seven reasons.

1. Someone violates your rights.
Everyone demands certain rights:
 - Private space.
 - Common courtesies.
 - Constitutional freedoms.
 - The right to earn a living.
 - The right to raise a family as we see fit.

And, when we feel that our rights are violated, we become angry. Yet, Proverbs 19:11 tells us: "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense."

2. You're disappointed with your station in life.

If your oyster doesn't contain the pearl, you have several choices:

- Accept your lot as from the Lord, if you've been faithful with your abilities.
- Consider whether your circumstances reflect

Proverbs 19:3, "man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord."

- If you've not developed your abilities fully, resolve right now to do so.
3. Your goals have been blocked

Achieving a realistic goal gives your self-esteem and energy an instant boost. Psalms 37:58 gives us a formula for setting goals and shows us how to respond if they're blocked:

"Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret — it leads only to evil."

If your goals are blocked: make corrections, walk away, make new goals, do whatever it takes to keep blocked goals from robbing you of peace of mind.

4. You respond too seriously to life's little irritations.
Potential irritations surround us. Ecclesiastes 7:9 urges us:

"Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools."

What more needs saying? Overlook irritations, don't major on minors.

5. You frequently feel misunderstood.

When your feelings get hurt, the person you're blaming isn't responsible for creating your anger; he or she only reveals it. If you often think that others don't understand you, don't appreciate your talents or potential, or aren't sensitive to your feelings, take a look at how you're responding, not at how you perceive others are behaving.

As Benjamin Franklin said, "anger is never without a reason, but seldom with a good one."

6. Your expectations are unrealistic.

You can expect a stranger to let you down. But when a Christian friend disappoints, you become very upset. Think about it, are your expectations too high? Have you built enough "slack" into what others are helping you get done, including your family and your friends?

Everyone stumbles and sometimes we fall, so we need to build some slack into the formula of our expectations.

"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 4:31-32

7. You are psychologically or pathologically ill.

Emotional illness sometimes shows itself as anger. When anger erupts in a person, causing him or her to physically hurt another family member or non-family friend or a stranger, professional help should be sought.

The Consequences of Anger

When we respond to problems with anger we run the risk of being foolish.

"A quick tempered man 11116 pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do it again."

Proverbs 19:19

And if we hate, we become prisoner to the one we hate as captured in the following, from None of These Diseases by Dr. S.I. McMillan,

"The moment that I start hating a man, I become his slave. I can't enjoy my work any more because he even controls my thoughts. My resentments produce too many stress hormones in my body and I become fatigued after only a few hours of work. The work I formerly enjoyed is now drudgery. Even vacations cease to give me pleasure. It may be a luxurious car that I drive along a lake fringed with autumnal beauty of maple, oak, and birch. As far as my experience of pleasure is concerned, I might as well be driving a wagon in mud and rain. The man I hate hounds me wherever I go, I can't escape his tyrannical grasp on my mind. When the waiter serves me a porterhouse steak with French fries, asparagus, crisp salad and strawberry shortcake smothered with ice cream, it might as well be stale bread and water. My teeth chew the food and I swallow it, but the man I hate will not permit me to enjoy it..."

"The man I hate may be many miles from my bedroom: but more cruel than any slave driver, he whips in thoughts into such a frenzy that my innerspring mattress becomes a rack of torture."

Alternatives to Anger

We usually become angry out of selfishness and impatience, rather than out of outrage because of injustice to others. Here are promises and advice from the Bible:

- Don't worry about what others might say about you. God promises to protect us from undeserved curses. "Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest," Proverbs 26:2.

- Overlook offenses. "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense," Proverbs 19:11.
- Avoid angry people. "[D]o not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared," Proverbs 22:24-25.
- Appease anger. "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger," Proverbs 15:1.

The next time you feel your blood about to boil, ask yourself, "Am I becoming angry for a selfish reason or because I'm impatient?"

If the answer is "yes", delay saying or doing anything.

Finally, go to those who've been hurt by your anger and ask their forgiveness. They may not respond immediately. That's all right. As you change, they will respond to the new you and you can see your home be transformed from a torture chamber to a place where everybody is relaxed and at ease.

Number 6 major cause of stress — denial.

Denial is a major source of stress, unhappiness and illness in America. We don't like to admit that some part of our life isn't going well so we deny it. After all we've come to expect simple streamlined solutions to perfectly packaged problems. "Three easy steps to a happy . ." or "Four foolproof ways to . ." Life is more complex and difficult than we care to admit. We didn't get the way we are overnight and we don't change quickly. Inevitably when we deny reality our health suffers. Over time what the mind denies and harbors becomes an illness expressed as:

- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Depression
- Digestive problems
- Angry outbursts
- Frantic activity

Denial occurs when some part of our life isn't working and we don't want to admit it for fear of embarrassment or loss of face. We may have to admit to ourselves or to someone else that we aren't the person they thought we were. Or, we may have to admit that we've changed our mind or we've made a mistake or we don't feel the way we once did. Or we may deny a serious illness or the threat of financial loss.

When a problem presents we have two choices:

- Confront it.
- Evade it.

Research studies show that persons who squarely confront their problems and difficulties are far more healthy than those who deny them, hoping they'll go away on their own. The more willing you are to honestly confront your difficulties and challenges, the healthier and happier you'll be. By continually facing your problems you become a stronger, more self-confident person. And you will build your inner strength to the point where you're unafraid of dealing with any unpleasant situation. Here's a list of famous last words. Men's last words often betray the denial they've engaged in and the priorities they've lived by.

- Seneca said, "All my life I have been seeking to climb out of my besetting sins and I cannot do it and I never will do it unless a hand is let down to draw me up."
- Sigmund Freud said, "The meager satisfaction that man can extract from reality, leaves him starving."

- W.C. Fields, a lifelong agnostic, was discovered reading a Bible on his deathbed, "I'm looking for a loophole," he explained.
- Napoleon said, "I marvel that whereas the ambitious dreams of myself and of Alexander and of Caesar should have vanished into thin air, a Judean peasant — Jesus — should be able to stretch his hands across the centuries and control the destinies of men and nations."

The Case for Daily Reality Checks

Christianity is the only religion that allows the sinner to confront the sin in his or her life and have it forgiven. When sin is denied, the consequences accumulate. The effect on health can be devastating. The Christian journey is a moment by moment, daily journey. Without daily effort we may stray because we deny that we have spiritual problems. Here are six steps to help you confront any situation.

Step #1. Prepare for life every day through Bible study and prayer.

Establish a daily routine of seeking God as an act of discipline and an expression of faith. Write down impressions, ideas and prayers. Keep a journal.

Step #2. Be prepared to deal with temptation.

God has promised a safety valve if we will choose it. When tempted, reject the thought and thank the Lord for victory over temptation.

Step #3. Be prepared to deal with sin.

When you become aware of a sin, confess it to the Lord and thank him for forgiving your sins — past, present and future — as promised in 1 John 1:8-9."If

we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

This is the essence of living in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Step #4. Claim power daily.

When Jesus controls our lives, the power of the Holy Spirit is at work in us. The Holy Spirit is given to all believers (see I Corinthians 3:16).

We deny ourselves the power when we resist Christ or otherwise sin. Even more, it is worth whatever price you have to pay to be able to live in a moment-by-moment, daily fellowship with God. The fruit of God's spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control — belong to the Christian who has yielded control of his life to the mind of Christ every moment. Living by the power of the Holy Spirit is that intense moment by moment love relationship with the living Christ.

Step #5. Witness daily.

Every Christian has the command and the power to tell others about Jesus, not 37% of us, each of us. If you don't have the desire to do this, why not? If you don't have the ability, seek training.

Step #6. When you're on the journey, be there.

Life is a complex struggle. Good and evil live side by side, they are enemies.

- Stand guard daily against letting the other side break down your walls of resistance.
- Focus on the good you see and hear.
- Testify about the changes in your life. Encourage others.
- Meet regularly for friendship, accountability, Bible study and prayer.
- Inspire courage by your example.
- Attend church where the Bible is believed.
- Form accountable relationships.
- Be a faithful steward.

- Stand against bigotry and racial prejudice.
- Increase your love for God and for people.

We often want God to increase our "pay" without putting forth any effort. To receive the higher wage, however, we need to take daily steps to know Him as He is.