



Will It DESTROY You
OR
Make You STRONGER?

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Also by
Fran Times-Mack

How To Be A Super Spiritual Diva
My Personal Prayer Book
Reversing the Negative Cycle
Slow Sips From Hot Cups
When My Soul Says Yes! A Journey through Prayer and Healing



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All done to the Glory of

GOD

In the precious name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior

Will It Destroy You or Make You Stronger?

By Fran Times-Mack for Sundie Morning Sistas

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IMPORTANT NOTE: We do not or will not attempt to address clinical depression and other mental illnesses from a clinical perspective. It is important to assess whether your condition should be attended by a mental health professional. Seeking the counsel of your pastor, minister, or spiritual leader, and finding a therapist in your local area might best suit your needs.

If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

1 Timothy 4:6 NKJV

Greetings

...in the precious name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I'm Fran Times-Mack, the founder and president of Sundie



Rev. Fran Times-Mack,
President and Founder, SMS

Morning Sistas. I started SMS ten years ago as a vehicle of outreach and encouragement to women who found themselves in overwhelming emotional distress. Whether it is a broken relationship, severe need, or physical pain, we know that healing comes by allowing the amazing transformative power of God's Word to saturate our minds and hearts. We wanted to share our knowledge and first hand experience of what God has done for us, and to remind you that what He has done for many of our members, He will also do for you!

Proverbs 4:7 tells us that *"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."* You must feed your mind, because it will eventually starve if you fail to nourish it with the right knowledge and information. The matchless Word of God is the *"right knowledge"*, and without an **"understanding"** of it, your emotional, mental, and spiritual growth may be severely hampered.

If you are a veteran in Christ who has been on this journey for a while, you may be experiencing a spiritual anomaly. It is a stage in your faith where nothing you have learned in the past is helping to propel you forward. Let's keep it real, after you reach a certain age you begin to recognize how truly precious time is. We wake up one morning and realize that our lives are not as we had hope they would be, and spending twenty years towards a new lifestyle redo just isn't going to cut it. That's one of the reasons why

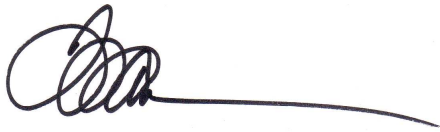
panic sets in. Have no worries, Sistas...God always has our backs, and He has given us everything we need to restore balance lick-a-dee split.

You have weathered quite a few storms, and probably have had your share of ups and downs, but there comes a time in every one's life where we are forced to wrestle a new gorilla. All of life gravitates towards the big ocean experience where we are forced to swim with the life preserver that we have constructed from our own spiritual efforts. That life preserver is the sum total of how we've used the gifts of our faith. If we begin to sink, it is because there is a hole in that preserver that must be plugged.

Hosea 4:6 informs us that a lack of knowledge will ultimately yield in destruction; therefore we must conclude that the right knowledge will very definitely lead us to success. Thankfully, it doesn't take twenty years to patch up and get to shore, but it does require a little time each day to soak in a few light bulb moments. The right knowledge and understanding is the only way to close the gap, and rattle our senses enough to pierce through the fog of our circumstances. Knowledge is very definitely power! Through it we can reverse the negative cycle, and create an environment for our healing and restoration.

Just as a flower needs the proper nutrients, water, and sunshine to grow, we need proper knowledge, understanding, love, and faith to grow spiritually. Faith comes by hearing—by digesting information in the innermost part of our beings. It is my hope that this book will feed your mind and nourish your soul in a way that is life changing. We pray also that it helps you to see that the only limitations in your life right now, are those imposed by a failure to live and understand the Word of God in its dynamic splendor.

God Bless you!



Reverend Fran A. Times-Mack, President, SMS

*"Know this....if you limit what God will do **for** you—you'll limit what He will do **in** you."*

Rev. Fran Times-Mack

Sundie Morning Sistas



Will It Destroy You OR Make You STRONGER?



Introduction

Sistas, you know that the enemy usually aims at our emotions, because for us this is generally an area where we haven't developed a whole lot of faith. It's an area where we sometimes trust God the least because we either don't believe that He can relate to our pain or we think it isn't high enough on His priority list; neither one of these assumptions could be further from the truth. Often we lack the spiritual maturity to discern and make the right choices. At times we get ourselves stuck in some pretty horrendous situations, and to make matters worse we make decisions that lead to more devastation and heartache. Then we cry "*Father, why!!!*" We either want God to change the situation or the person involved (*usually a man*) so that we don't have to endure the hurt anymore;

and when that doesn't happen on the double, we become depressed and down trodden.

Understand that God can step in at any point in our heartaches and pains and deliver us. He can wipe away the pain to such a degree that we would not even remember its cause or effect. When we are babies in Christ, God often does just that, but we can't expect to remain babies. We have to grow up to a place of resiliency where we stand unmovable, impenetrable, and steadfast.

As a believer I can attest to God's delivering power, but more importantly I can affirm that remaining in an infant stage of believing year after year is not God's intention for any Christian. He knows that we can only take the truth in small doses, so He allows us to feed off baby's milk when we're immature. He has every expectation though, that the milk will help us eventually digest the meat, and that the meat will strengthen our spiritual muscles and bones so that we eventually stand firm and anchored in Christ.

Philippians 4:2 NKJV

2 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Philippians 4:2 conveys a particular boldness by way of its sheer simplicity. Don't get shaken. Don't allow any situation to rattle your faith, just come to God with a heart open to His will and tell Him what you need.

Let's examine my translation for a moment, "...*come to God with a heart open to His will and tell Him what you need.*" There are two very important components to that statement. We must make absolutely sure that they don't slip by our understanding. The first component is "*come to God with a heart open to His will.*" The number of individuals who have tried to speculate what God's will entails are as vast and varied as the sand on the ocean. God's will leaves no room whatsoever for speculation. His Word is His will. 2 Peter 1:3 (NKJV) says that we have ALL things that pertain to life and Godliness through the knowledge of Him that has called us. The knowledge contained within the Word of God covers every facet of human existence. So if He didn't tell us what He wanted us to know in His Word, then I will venture to say that we don't need to know it.

If you and I lived ten thousand years, it still would not be enough time to glean all of the wisdom and knowledge contained within the scriptures. If studied and understood it would, however, provide us with what we need to build the kind of relationship with God that He desires to have with us. In order for this book or any other of spiritual significance to have any impact in your life there is something of which you must be positively clear. It is the fact that there's a spiritual place in the Lord that we can achieve in our lifetimes that will make us so unbelievably fulfilled and so overwhelmingly exuberant that when we get there—we are virtually unrecognizable to our old selves. This place is where the Lord has destined you to be, and if you don't believe this critical truth spiritual growth will never be the priority that it should, and if spiritual growth isn't your primary objective in life, your relationship with God will not be either.

Ephesians 4:22-24 NLT

22 throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. 23 Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. 24 You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness-righteous, holy, and true.

Change, promotion, and elevation ought to be Christian buzz words because without them we would remain in a perpetual state of spiritual infancy. Ephesians 4:22-24 tells us that we should be in the business of renewing our thoughts and attitudes to the point that we display a new nature—a nature that is born out of a new awareness of what we were created by God to be and do. We are to throw off our former way of viewing life as we would a coat that is soiled and worn beyond repair. This way we can make room in our closet for some new duds. Until we leave this earth we will forever engage this process of putting off the old and putting on something new. So the notion that each of us is here for a very distinct purpose, that we cannot fulfill it without spiritual attainment and that both have everything to do with our relationship with God must always be in the forefront of our minds and hearts. It is the platform by which we ready ourselves to make room for something more.

Will It Destroy You Or Make You Stronger?



CHAPTER 1 *Open Your Heart*

God's will is that you and I take on the nature of Jesus Christ by receiving salvation and becoming born again Christians. Romans 10:9 (KJV) tells us that we are saved if we #1) audibly confess that Jesus Christ is lord and #2) believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead. It goes on to tell us in verse 10 that this very act of believing in our hearts will give us right standing with God, and the act of confessing Jesus Christ with our mouths literally transfers us from death to life! This process by which you and I become saved or born again is one that leads to a spiritual transformation. We do not physically re-enter our biological mother's womb. The change occurs on the inside. Our faith goes up to our Heavenly Father and He sends down a very special gift from heaven. That very special gift is His seed, the Holy Spirit which will dwell inside of us. Now different religions in the Christian faith have varying beliefs about the when's and how's of this miraculous transformation, and of course one

believes they are more right than the other, but again this is where speculation enters the picture. For our purposes, we will stick strictly to what the word says in Romans 10:9, 10.

God supernaturally implants a spiritual seed in the deepest part of who we are when we confess Jesus Christ as the head of our lives and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead. Love, by way of our faith, is the substance that initiates this impregnation, and not just any ol' love will do. The love of Christ is the potion that causes the motion. You and I love

lots of folks, but our love doesn't cause them to experience a new birth transformation, although many of us would like to think that it does. The belief that God loved us so much that He would spare His only begotten son, now that's a powerful love. (John 3:16) That's the love that framed

the universe, and it is the love that we must believe in with our whole hearts in order that we might be saved.

After salvation, the things we use to do, think, and say must be filtered through the lens of God's Word, because again His Word contains His will and

purpose for our lives. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV) says that old things are passed away and all things become new. Doing as Romans 10:9,10 (KJV) says will signal the heavens and everything below it that life as we knew it has ended. It is the beginning of our spiritual journey through Christ on earth. If this process of confessing and believing can transfer us out of the belly of eternal death into the glorious light of eternal life through Jesus Christ, then surely this same process can take us from the depths of despair to the zenith of unspeakable joy in him as well. It all centers on the condition of our hearts when we approach the throne of God.

There are varying reasons, experiences, and circumstances that bring us to the point when we finally choose God's love, but in most cases we do so when we realize that our way of doing, thinking, and behaving has not



“Life is a mirror that reflects what we believe about ourselves. If that reflection is marred or skewed in any way, the Holy Spirit’s work is to move us towards healing, so that our reflection eventually matches our new spiritual reality.”

faired so well. We say “*Okay God, I’m ready to give up my way for Yours, because I believe that Your way will get me where I am supposed to be.*” Although we may not be conscious of it at the time, we understand that the journey of life is supposed to take us somewhere. We ultimately believe that God has destined that we be someplace and salvation holds the key to getting us there. Traveling to that “*someplace*” or destination will require a continual climb to higher heights in spiritual growth and development. As we progress on this Christian journey we are destined to give up those things which do not honor our relationship with God and our walk in Christ. At the same time we take on, put on, and walk in new qualities of Godliness which bring with them a new level of blessings and well-being. Again, our goal is to engage this process of confessing and believing through any adversity that comes our way, but we must do so with the understanding that a change in our hearts, a change in our thinking, behaviors, and attitudes is absolutely and unequivocally necessary.

Our confession and believing unto salvation sets the precedent. The same faith that sparked a miraculous rebirth within us must become the model by which our expectations and intentions are confidently held. And just as our hearts were opened to God to lead us in a new direction when we first confessed, our hearts must be also ready and open to learn something that will steer us on a clearer path in our spiritual journey. That is usually what our tribulations and obstacles are about. There are lessons that we need to learn, and we underestimate God’s commitment to ensure that we learn them. Those lessons are necessary for transporting us to the next level of growth and maturity. Often they are ones that shake our worlds a little bit, but we cannot allow them to cripple us with anxiety. Emotional hysteria is a sure indication that we are not manifesting faith—we are out of balance. Do you know that feeling you get in your insides when your world is topsy turvy, and life’s little hiccups are happening one right after the other. I equate it to the feeling you get when you are at the highest point on the rollercoaster and you are waiting there...just about to free fall.



This is what I mean by being “*out of balance*”. It occurs when life’s challenges exceeds one’s level of spiritual maturity to handle them; therefore the external will mirror the internal. Things become out of balance or out of control because we are.

We may spend a great deal of time combing the Word to find those *ah hah* verses that will open

up another dimension of prayer for us, but a new dimension in our spirituality is what's needed. Sometimes our truest self, the jewel of who we are, is hidden beneath layers of pain caused by years of spiritual neglect. We don't allow anyone in to help us get through those layers. We fail to realize that if we don't let anyone in to see our vulnerability and pain, then odds are that we won't allow the Holy Spirit to get at it either. Sure, many of us are private people, but privacy is altogether different than hiding, and we were never meant to hide out in our pain. Love never hides; it is out in the open with liberty and truth, not pain.

You see, we want to be loved; we crave it, but we don't want to have to give up something to acquire it. We want to hold on to our perceptions about how love feels, what it does, who it should come from, and what it should look like. The indwelling Holy Spirit wants to take us higher so that we are poised to handle the blessings we have yearned to receive. Our spirit says "*let yourself grow.*" Our hearts says "*gimme it RIGHT NOW!!!! growth can wait.*" The universe has no tolerance for ambivalence. God designed it to respond to what we give it, either negative or positive. So until our hearts and minds are on board with the spirit we will continue to nurture dysfunction and immaturity.

Life is a mirror that reflects what we believe about ourselves. If that reflection is marred or skewed in any way, the Holy Spirit's work is to move us towards healing, so that our reflection eventually matches our new spiritual reality. Our minds and hearts are often at cross-purposes with this process. Why? Because the spirit seeks to breach comfort zones and the mind seeks to protect them. Our propensity is to hold tightly to whatever makes us feel comfortable, no matter how hurtful it is.

Remember, God designed everything in the universe to be in perfect balance, including you. He did it so brilliantly in fact, that we have no cause to even give it considerable thought. Take for instance the growth process of a healthy human being. Our minds, organs, and extremities all grow in relationship to each other pretty smoothly. You don't see too many 8 year olds walking around with a left foot as large as a 200-pound man, and a right one as small as an infant. As long as it has an environment that is conducive to growth, every thing grows proportionately, according to God's design.

Our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual components are designed to work together to foster our spiritual growth and produce the kind of balance and harmony that God desires for every believer. Just as mankind has tampered with almost everything under the sun and disturbed the

universe's delicate balance, we also diddle-daddle with stuff we have no business messing with when it comes to the delicate balance of our own lives. Simply put, we allow what we do, think, and say to be completely contrary to what God tells us they ought to be.

There are hundreds of thousands of people who live way past the average lifespan, only to die as spiritual infants. And they have been in churches, fellowships, and religious institutions their whole lives. Spiritual growth is not a given; it is not an automatic occurrence. Eternal life is a choice; therefore spiritual development must be one as well. Even if we were born in an environment that is not optimum for our spiritual growth and maturity, as adults we are charged with the responsibility for creating and maintaining one. We must make decisions and choices that are conducive to furthering our spiritual development.

We cannot be the same people we were 10 years ago, 5 years ago, or 2 months ago. The word of God tells us that we ought always to be growing and abounding towards new spiritual heights. We have to let go of some old things and acquire some new things. You can't get new stuff if you don't make room for it. It is our responsibility to tidy up our space, and move the old stuff out. Negative behaviors, attitudes, and thoughts go against the very process of life. Trying to hold on to them prevents growth. Anything alive must grow. When it ceases to grow, it dies.

We may be shook, rattled, and rocked from top to bottom, but everything that is broken can be repaired when God is in the mix. He took care of that through Jesus Christ. He will assist us in every way, but He doesn't shove; He guides, and far too many of us either ignore or neglect His guidance. When that happens we have no other choice but to become stuck in neutral. That's an absolutely tragic way to live as a spiritual human being.

Creating an environment for furthering your spiritual development means that what you do, think, and say are in balance with the truth. Maintaining that environment or balance would mean that we can pinpoint with some degree of specificity the emotions, thoughts, and behaviors that cause us to become out of balance with our spiritual reality in Christ. We can't always do that, and that's why prayer is pivotal. Our inner "*secret places*" are called that for a reason. We don't always know what lurks beneath the consciousness of our souls, and we can't always identify where or how we've gotten off track, but our eyes will be enlightened by extending an invitation to the Holy Spirit and opening our hearts to the Father's will.

The state of being out of balance isn't exclusive to new believers; all of us experience it throughout our lives. There are times when things just go berserk and get buck wild ridiculous, even in the lives of veteran believers—especially in the lives of veteran believers. The devil gets hot on our trail and we think *“jimmadee crickets! Have I done something to offend the Father? Has He removed His awesome covering from my life?”* We then begin to unravel because we feel as though we can't get a leg up on the circumstances that seem to be worsening moment by moment. This, my friends, is what's known as the proverbial wake up call. It is a reminder that it is time to move up!

The emotional upheaval of desperation should prompt a desire for clarity and peace, but often it does just the opposite. When we are lonely, hurting, or afflicted in any way, we are usually so adamantly convinced of what we think we need that we really can't see anything else. And here's the big monkey wrench in all of this, we cannot STAND the wait. We want what we want when we want it. We want to get rid of the pain and discomfort pronto!

God's grace is sufficient unto us when we are emotionally distraught, but His plan provides life-changing deliverance that will dispel the darkness and take us to a new place in our Christian walk. The Holy Spirit that dwells within us is more perfect than anything that dwells in this earth. It is love in its purest form. It harbors no darkness, no ill-will or evil intent and it is supremely intelligent. It is a good and perfect gift from God that will not only lead, guide, and direct us through life; it will preserve our lives and help us to heal. In as much as we will allow, it will marry our consciousness with everything it has to give so that we become the very essence of God. Upon salvation, it doesn't instantaneously fill our minds with God's Word, heal all the wounds of our souls, or cause us to feel only emotions of joy, peace, and love in our hearts; although it is perfectly within its power to do so. Its purpose is to increase our consciousness so that we walk in these gifts as we put them on bit by bit. That's the journey and it really all boils down to our choice to grow in the spirit or to grow in something else.

Will It Destroy You Or Make You Stronger?



CHAPTER 2

It All Boils Down to Choices

What does it all boil down to? Your choice...you see your emotions and circumstances may cause you to feel powerless. Most of us do feel this way in the face of adversity, but we can't afford to indulge this victim mentality for too long. I'm going to flip the script on you by telling you that it is only when you are the most vulnerable that you are poised to become your most powerful self. All of creation conspires to bring you to the point where you make the choice to become better than you ever were or to acquiesce into business as usual.

God was not the author of your tribulation. He did not cause it to test your resolve or strength; He already knows everything there is to know about you. Your propensity for a particular behavior, the secrets you've kept locked away from prying eyes....God knows all of it. So why would He need to test something of which He already knows the outcome? He doesn't! He knew you would face the situation you are facing and He allowed it. He allowed it because the root of that pain would cause you to

make the same mistakes over and over again. He knew that continuing to remain in the shadow of spiritual immaturity would cause you to miss your blessing. And He knew that if you were ever going to muster the courage and spiritual strength to reach out and grab what is rightfully yours, you would have to pull back those layers and deal with the baggage underneath in a very real way.

Romans 8:28 KJV

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.

Pain, any type of adversity for that matter, is an important piece of the puzzle that should cause your prayer life to shift and be covered in a new level of faith. That level holds for you a better understanding of your purpose, so that you are convinced of God's plan and the vital role you play in it. It anchors Romans 8:28 in your mind and heart as you garner a new found confidence that God is most certainly working it out for your good, even through the circumstances of a broken heart or a broken body.

God's desire for mankind is undeniable. He wants us all to have a glorious life. Why then is it not a reality for so many of us? Most often it is because we want the gifts without acknowledging the giver, and we've failed to use the Word of God as a practical guide for success. Instead we live our lives on our own terms; only truly seeking God when our plan doesn't work out. Keeping our connection with God in tact must be our first priority. Why? Well it's not because God has a huge ego. It's because our connection to Him nurtures us. It gives us the essential vitamins for a magnificent life. Think about it—it's pretty absurd to think that a 70 or 80 year life span wraps up our entire existence. No! God wants us around a very, very, very long time, and He has brilliantly cultivated a plan to make sure that happens. His plan is the best, and it works.

The war exists in our minds and hearts, and that's where we will have to fight for not only our earthbound life, but our eternal life as well. It is God's will that you go as far in the things of the spirit as you possibly can, but He will not force it upon you. God wants us to grow to become fully mature spiritual beings, fit to live an eternity in His kingdom. He wants to guide us through the turns and twists of life so that every experience has the potential to lift us higher and higher. He didn't create robots. We have the

freedom to choose whether or not to love Him. If we choose to love Him, then we must also trust that His way of doing things is the best way to achieving the kind of life we desire. If you invent something—you'll probably know exactly what to do to keep your invention running smoothly. Well God created us, and He knows exactly what we must do to stay in a place of love and light, and that's what His plan is all about.

3 John 1:3 tells us that God wishes above all things that we prosper and are in good health. The problem is never God's inability or unwillingness to bless us. He made a more than abundant life available for every born again believer through His son, Jesus Christ, and it isn't His fault if we don't have one. The issues that cause our constant lack and stagnation sometimes arise out of our wrong choices. We choose to allow our wants and desires to consume our energies while we neglect our spiritual well-being.

It's common these days to say that we are waiting on a breakthrough of epic proportions, meanwhile others are tapping into the reservoir of blessings that come from knowing who they are, why they are here, and what they can become through Christ. God has already given us every thing we need; it's up to us to manifest it and use it to love and live bigger. It's only when we have a mustard seed of understanding of what it truly means to have God's love at work within that we will begin to see His plan unfold.

John 16:13 KJV

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

The "*Spirit of truth*" of which John 16:13 speaks is the Holy Spirit. Of course there's no greater truth than God's Word, but does this verse refer to God leading us to the bible on the top shelf or does it refer to the truth that is revealed when we know with crystal clarity who we are in the spirit. God wants us to know that He has handpicked us out to fit into His awesome plan for the universe. He intends us to be dynamic spiritual divas and dudes, ready to do battle, able to leap over the greatest adversities with a single bound, armed with the breastplate of purpose, and shielded by the armor of His Word.

God is intimately familiar with every detail of your life. You're not just a pawn in the universe's game. God has a distinct, specialized, and specific plan for your life. Ephesians 1:11 (KJV) says "*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*" What is God's will? His will is His word. And His word is His plan for our lives. This verse doesn't mean that God scripted every detail of your life and you're robotically programmed to follow it. It doesn't mean that everything that happens to you is some grand scheme that occurs whether you like it or not. That would leave you powerless to exercise faith, and it would defeat the whole purpose of trusting God. What it means is that God determined even before we were born that if we lived according to His will, our lives will be fulfilling, full of abundance, and thriving in purpose.

John 16:13 tells us very clearly that the indwelling Holy Spirit that is given to us at the time of our new birth will guide us into all truth. It knows when we are not honoring our relationship with God. It knows when we are out of balance, and those feelings of anxiety and distress befall us because we know it too. Our desires are important to God, but they cannot be the priority. Our relationship with Him must be the priority, and our choice to surrender those things that keep us from being our best is crucial. We must have a willingness to surrender our will for His-not because we are less than what we think we ought to be, but because we are more through Christ. Understand that going before the throne of God is a tremendous honor. It's a sacred trust that builds your relationship with Him and affirms your commitment to His will every time you do it. You are God's delight! He loves to fellowship with you, but you must understand the depth of what it costs and what it means for you to enjoy that privilege. Only when you do so can you truly "*come to God with a heart open to His will.*"



CHAPTER 3

Tell Him What You Need

Don't get it twisted; God knows what we need before we ask, so why do we need to. Well, going back to Romans 10:9, 10, when we first believed on Jesus Christ. God knew we would make the confession, but His knowing did not negate the necessity of us actually making the confession. We had to audibly formulate the words because words mean so much. Proverbs 18:21 (KJV) tells us that death and life are in the power of the tongue. Words represent our intent. When we first confessed—words conveyed our intent to switch our agenda for God's. We made a commitment and our entire walk in Christ is predicated on our diligence to it.

Salvation isn't a one-way street. Again, we aren't robots. We're spiritual beings having an earthly experience. We are children of God who have a purpose that is anchored in our commitment to fellowship and remain connected to Him through Jesus Christ. Christ is central to our relationship with God because he models for us how that relationship should look...what it should consist of. Jesus said in John 8:29 (KJV) that "...he that sent me is

with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” He had never experienced a consciousness that would cause him to do anything other than those things that pleased God. Imagine that! He was intimately connected to the Holy Father, to the point that it fueled his every thought, deed, and act. Everything about him was perfect. He had perfect blood, a sinless nature, and he enjoyed a perfect connection to God. Now we weren’t physically born that way, but after salvation we become that way. Salvation gives us the opportunity to renew, reprioritize, and redevelop. It gives us the clean slate that we so desperately need. This isn’t where our work ends, it’s where it begins. Will we make mistakes? Sure we will, but we have everything we need through the indwelling Holy Spirit to please God.

Our Heavenly Father created everything for our benefit, so that we could use it to build lives for ourselves and understand the creative power at our disposal. He wants us to know what we’re made of so that when we go before His throne we can do so with confidence in our union with Him through Jesus Christ. You see, if God desires a bona fide relationship of substance with us (which He does), then it means two things: #1) we must be pretty special, and #2) we must have the capacity to reciprocate something that is quite meaningful to God. Any relationship worth its salt is one of mutuality, where there’s an important and fulfilling exchange between two parties. Because of the commitment we have made to God through Jesus Christ, we are a vital part of the equation.

Critical truths are pieces of information that are extremely beneficial to your spiritual life. They remain a constant source of usefulness and either lay or add to your foundation of knowledge, upon which you will continue to build throughout your spiritual journey on earth. One critical truth is this, the Christ in us ensures that we have an enormous capacity to love, but it is up to us to define how we will use that love. If you use it rightly, the intimacy between you and the Holy Father will blossom.

When two individuals marry one another, their love grows as they communicate often, endure hardships together, and support each other through whatever obstacles come their way. If both are confident in the strength of each other’s love, and they are 100% certain that they have each other’s back no matter what, they will no doubt have a relationship that stands the test of time. These same elements are instrumental in helping us to build a beautiful relationship with God. The one difference is that sometimes in our human relationship there are times when one gives more

than the other, or perhaps one is required to sacrifice something he or she needs for the good of the relationship. There is never a time when God gives anything less than the best, we can't beat God's giving, and we are never required to give up anything that will benefit our spiritual well-being. And the humongous outrageously awesome thing about our relationship with God is that the more we become like Him—the closer we are to Him.

2 Chronicles 16:9 (NLT) says *"The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."* When you and I tell God what we need, we have to know that it isn't a dialogue that begins when we open our mouths, but our hearts as well. It is communication between two parties who have a relationship that is based on mutuality to some degree. God is a spirit, and we've got to take it up a few notches to communicate on His level. 2 Chronicles 16:9 (NLT) supplies us with an extremely useful piece of information about what we can expect from God when we ask for His full attention—He's gonna' examine our hearts. When He does, we don't get to say *"well so and so made me do it, that's why my heart is hard in that place."* We can't blame anyone for the choices we've made but ourselves. So if those choices do not equate to those made in honor of God's love, then we've got to get brutally honest before God and let Him know what's up. We have to own up to our baggage, and ask Him for His forgiveness.

After that, the ol' swap-a-roo is necessary. You see, the difficult experiences of our lives are like alarm clocks. They remind us that we're late for an appointment. Jesus is ever mindful of our limited years on this earth. He knows that if we are to hit our maximum stride before we leave here, we can't afford to lose stamina, momentum, or time. So he's constantly reminding us that the burdens we carry are too heavy to move up. We've got to pull them off, and exchange them for his yoke. For he said in Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT) *"...Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."* You can't grow up if you're weighted down, and nothing weighs you down more than sin and pain. We have to exchange our load for the light of the love of Christ.

Burdens...baggage, same thing. The point is that it keeps us from seeing what God wants us to see, hearing what He wants us to hear, and being who He wants us to be. The lessons of our spirit are often cloaked in

what we perceive as tribulations, troubles, adversity, obstacles, or just plain ol' anything that causes us pain, hurt, and discomfort. We have to rid ourselves of this baggage, and God not only wants us to know that we have the power to do it, but that we can do it by applying His love. The lessons will not destroy us. They will make us infinitely stronger than we ever thought we could be. We can stand steadfast, with a firm grip on our faith, knowing that the process of growing in the Lord will teach us oodles of things that are necessary for our particular spiritual journey. Will we be victorious? Abso-darn-lutely we will! The reward will be sweeter because God will do exceedingly abundantly above what we've asked, but be assured of this one thing, we must learn the lesson that God's way is the right way. And we must learn that critical truth to such a degree that it becomes a part of how we live and breathe.

So don't think that God examines your heart to put you on blast. Absolutely not! He examines it so that He can help you to be strengthened in those places that are not as strong as they need to be, but He can't do it without your permission. That's a critical truth that you must know. So when he combs the earth looking to show Himself strong and He happens to hear your call, you should know that He is going to pull over and give you His full attention. He is going to listen to what your mouth is saying and see if it measures up to what is in your heart. And if it does measure up and you have an earnest desire to have a relationship with Him, I guarantee you'll get infinitely more than what you bargained for. ✨

Scripture Reference

Below are scriptures used in the “Will It Destroy You or Make You Stronger?” E-book

Proverbs 4:7 (KJV) - Page 6

Hosea 4:6 (KJV) - Page 7

Philippians 4:2 (NKJV) – Page 9

2 Peter 1:3 (NKJV) – Page 9

Ephesians 4:22-24 NLT – Page 9

John 3:16 (KJV) – Page 12

2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV) – Page 12

Romans 10:9, 10 (KJV) – Page 12 & 21

Romans 8:28 (KJV) – Page 18

3 John 1:3 (KJV) – Page 19

John 16:13 (KJV) – Page 19

Ephesians 1:11 (KJV) – Page 20

Proverbs 18:21 (KJV) – Page 21

John 8:29 (KJV) – Page 21

2 Chronicles 16:9 (NLT) – Page 23

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT) – Page 23

The End