

MISTAKEN **IDENTITY**

Taking the Gospel to Heart

MATT BRINKLEY

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Biography

Matt Brinkley's ministry experience spans over 37 years. He is a graduate of Covenant College (BS) and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (ADiv). He was the founder and director of the Fellowship of Christian Students (1979-1983) in Macon, GA, served as Director of Ministries for Reach Out Ministries in Atlanta, GA (1985-1986), and then served as student pastor in Montgomery, Alabama at Trinity Presbyterian Church. In 1991 he moved to Atlanta to serve as student pastor at Perimeter Church (PCA). Eleven years later, Matt's responsibilities there broadened to include leadership over the Nextgen Division, and oversight of all ministries related to children and youth. In 2006 he went on staff at The Vine Community Church (PCA) serving as the Nextgen director and the oversight of adult discipleship.

Matt is the founder and director of PACT Ministry which was incorporated in 1996 to serve and encourage youth pastors in their personal walk with God, family life, and strategic ministry.

He is an active certified coach and facilitator/trainer for RightPATH Resources impacting leaders in Fortune 500 companies as well as executives running medium and small businesses.

Today, Matt splits his time between PACT and his responsibilities at the church. He has a great heart for God, exudes an honest and refreshing demeanor, and loves being with, understanding, and ministering to people.

In addition to this book, he is an author who has written three books (*Stay the Course*, *FOUR* and *Dating by the Book*), along with five discipleship manuals. He is a sought-after speaker for retreats and conferences.

Matt and his wife Vickie have three grown children. Matt Jr. (31), Andrew (27) and Mary Beth (24), and one incredible grandbaby, Nathan.

Special Thanks

Walt Wooden for the timeless commitment to create the layout and cover for the book.

Lisa Goddard for the dedicated grammatical editing.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to the host of people that have invested untold hours over the years loving me, praying for me, being patient with me, challenging me, and living out dependence upon Christ in front of me. Thank you for the constant message to trust in Christ alone and helping me better understand what that means.



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Preface

You have just discovered a great book for either the individual reader or a small group. “Mistaken Identity” is sure to bless and deepen every believer’s faith! In a fresh and creative way, this book takes the Christian reader on an eye-opening and life giving journey to discover their incredible identity in Christ. It guides each believer along a pathway that exposes nagging idols and then leads them to triumph through the power found in Christ alone.

To do this the author utilizes three things: 1) The incredible transforming truth of God’s word; 2) A pathway of thinking that is practical and proven; 3) A real life storyline that the reader can identify with and apply. This journey is sure to be Christ-centered, enlightening, fruitful, and relationally rewarding.

This book is ideal for a small group experience. While the individual believer is encouraged to read this book, it is highly recommend that this study be done along with a small group who are willing to dive in together with a commitment to be prayerful, authentic, and expectant. Throughout the study there are very helpful questions to help the reader digest and apply the powerful life-giving principles shared.

The riches of Christ are indeed indescribable. Come discover and enjoy your rich inheritance in Christ as you journey through this exciting book.

May Christ bless each reader immeasurably beyond what they could ask or imagine throughout the journey!



Foreword: Christ alone Sanctifies!

This book demands a proper set-up. The foreword is intended to give the reader strong footing as they enter into what I pray will be an encounter with our great God and a life-changing experience. It is from the vantage point shared in the forward that I fasten my hope...Christ alone for salvation and sanctification. Of course the grip by which I hold Him tightens and loosens, but His grip on me never falters. As you will see in the following testimony, it took a while for me to grasp the power of the gospel related to daily spiritual growth (sanctification). Since that time, I continue to marvel and grow in my depth and understanding of just how comprehensive and supernaturally transforming is the work of Christ. For some the testimony will simply be a reminder of where they have already been. For others it might be incredible new hope and new Biblical insight to greater understanding of the power of the gospel. It was for me. It is with thankfulness and joy that I introduce myself to you in this testimony knowing one hope... Christ alone.

The Backdrop:

It was in 1972 at the age of 17 that I met Christ as my Lord and Savior. I can vividly remember His unbelievable work in my life. The new sense of peace, joy, and freedom was literally overwhelming. All I could think about was what I needed to do next to get more of it. And that is exactly what I did. I set out to live the Christian life.

Saved by Grace/ Sanctification by Works?

No doubt those around me meant well, but rather than nurture the state of dependence in Christ that brought salvation, the instruction I received to spiritually grow seemed geared to self-action. And that I was good at. As fervently as I had pursued self-gratification before turning my life over to Christ, I now pursued spiritual gratification. Rather than the “means of grace” (Bible study, prayer, scripture memory, worship) serving to lead me down a path-way of utter dependence in Christ, I made them steps and disciplines to further my position

with Christ. It is amazing how I am able to make everything about me. At first there was a sense of fulfillment. I was doing new things... and doing them better daily. But it wasn't long before I realized that something was very wrong. The things I wanted to do, I did not do... and the things I did not want to do, I did. But being persistent and determined... and knowing nothing different, I fought like a madman. Yes, I was a believer. I completely trusted Christ for everlasting life. When it came to spiritual growth, I was a madman like I was before I was a believer, but now simply on a religious chase with a new challenge and new goal... to live like the Christian that my Bible talked about.

Galatians 3:1- 5

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you. Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing, if it really was for nothing? Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you've heard?

Please don't misunderstand my initial motivation. I genuinely had every intention to live for Christ's glory... the problem was, I didn't understand how this was attained. So I just tried harder, but the harder I tried, the higher the bar seemed to rise. Seemingly as soon as I took several steps forward, I would take a giant step backward, erasing all progress. The goals seemed to grow more complex as I studied His word. What initially felt like outward actions that needed correction (which I seemed to be accomplishing) became deep inner motives that I knew I couldn't correct. I was a mess... and only getting worse. I was defeated, frustrated, guilty, and hopeless. The finish line had disappeared into the distance. I was at the end of myself. I knew that God was for real! I never doubted that. But something was wrong with me. Who would rescue me? Or was it just hopeless?

I was overwhelmed! I had no other answers! It took 12 years to get to this point. It was at this time that our great God used a well-positioned friend to speak into my life. As I unfolded my painful testimony of defeat and assurance that I had no new answers or ideas, God used my friend to share simple truth with great power. Secrets were being revealed... or at least it felt that way to me. I discovered that a lack of knowledge and spiritual exuberance had swiftly led me away from the true source of my hope. Rather than to remain (John 15) in Him in a position of utter dependence, I sought to live for Him in my own strength. After genuinely receiving the gift of salvation in a broken and contrite manner, I quickly began to depend upon my flesh effort to serve Him. Practically speaking, I had abandoned the restorative power of the cross. I quickly traded it in for something much more familiar... performance. The cross is intended to restore the privilege to commune and utterly depend upon the creator. I had resorted to my own strength. I found myself estimating my accessibility to God and His happiness with me based upon my level of performance. Nobody had to teach me this... it all came naturally. It was the old nature bullying me.

I found myself with no answers and in despair. I was more aware of my depravity than ever. Had I spiritually run ashore or was defeat leading me into a deeper understanding of His great work in my life?

The Promise of Sanctification:

Until that day when I met with my friend, I did not understand that brokenness leading to utter dependence in Christ alone was the healthy mindset that engaged the supernatural empowerment of Christ. The same grace that saved me was the same grace that would sanctify (spiritually grow) me. In other words, Christ alone would accomplish the sanctifying work in me.

I Thessalonians 5: 23 clearly states this...*“May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

There are two types of sanctification talked about in scripture. One is positional sanctification: (I Corinthians 1: 12) at salvation, through Christ, the believer is set apart by the Holy Spirit with ascribed (imputed) righteousness and life. The other is progressive sanctification: (I Thessalonians 5: 23) the continued promised work of Christ through the Holy Spirit in the believer which sets him apart for God in his experience. This sanctification brings daily spiritual transformation, eliminating sins and producing Christ’s fruit. Both are vital to the believer, but progressive sanctification is what I am referring to in this testimony. We must depend on Christ for our sanctification!

The question remains: If I completely trust Christ with my sanctification, what is my responsibility in the sanctification process? Colossians 2: 6 granted new perspective... *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him.”* According to this passage, if I could go back to my responsibility when I initially received Christ, I could find the answer to how to live for Him... or did it say “in Him.”

When I accepted Christ I was desperate. Another way to put it is broken. Really broken... spiritually dead. I had nothing to offer. Christ was completely responsible for my salvation (Eph. 2: 8, 9). Even the faith by which I responded came from him (Romans 10: 17). We see brokenness communicated all through scripture. It is the constant in God’s message to His people. (Isaiah 12: 2; Psalm 147:10-14; Psalm 5: 7; Proverbs 3: 5, 6)

According to Colossians 2: 6 I must stay in this state of brokenness to grow spiritually **(I Cor. 8: 6)**. The apostle Paul shares this imperative understanding of brokenness (weakness) throughout his writings, but particularly to the Church of Corinth. In II Corinthians 12: 9 he says... *“But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”* Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” Brokenness is the absolute assurance that our flesh has no capacity or compe-

tence to produce Godly results. (John 6: 62 – 64; Rom. 7: 18; Gal. 5: 19)

So who does? Only Christ! It was true at salvation and it remains true for sanctification. The believer's brokenness leads to dependence upon Christ alone. This is what broken people do. They depend! That is why it is integral to our faith. Broken people are dependent and dependent people cling. Christians cling to Christ who is their hope.

It is God's delight and passion to relate with His children. It is for God's glory that He demonstrates this love so thoroughly and extravagantly. Throughout John 15, as well as the whole Bible, God's message is a message of relationship. The centerpiece is Christ. The command is that Christ might dwell (abide) in our hearts. To abide is to take residence and relate.

Remaining in Him is to continue in a state of relationship and absolute trust in Christ... not only what he did to initially save you, but what he promises to do to sanctify you (Philippians 1: 6) God delights when we are in this position of absolute dependence... when our trust and faith is solely on Him. A Swiss theologian, Frederic Godet, defines this position of abiding as... "It is the continuous act by which the Christian lays aside all he might draw from his own wisdom, strength and merit, to desire all from Christ by the inward aspiration of faith."

So what do I do? Cling to Christ. Depend upon Him. Remember you are broken and needy. Sanctification is the process of realizing our insufficiency and Christ's sufficiency. We are responsible to remain in a state of brokenness and dependency upon Him. Even that is dependent upon Him. If you sense you have taken over, which we often do, invite Christ to bring you back to that place of need. Progressive sanctification is indeed a process. The believer's faith is in perpetual motion moving between Christ (brokenness, dependency, clinging to Christ) and self (pride, independence, clinging to the world). But God is faithful even when we are not. With His love and discipline, he continues to compel us throughout the sanctification process bringing us closer to dependence in Him alone (II Cor. 5: 14; Hebrew 12: 6). Just like my hope for salvation, my hope for sanctification is in Christ alone. Except for His great work, I realized I was completely helpless. What seemed like defeat for me simply led me back to where I began when I received Christ... dependent upon Him.

That day I cried out with a new prayer:

Father... Thank you for the work of Christ that gives me the privilege to be one with you and know you intimately. Lord, make that my primary motivation. Give me constant awareness of my inadequacy and faith to trust your sufficiency. May I live abundantly overflowing with your love and power! Because of the work of Christ, I come into your throne room just as I am. I confess that I am without means in my flesh to do any of this. But I know the work of Christ will deliver me. I can't do it... but you can! You indeed are faithful.



Introduction

“Spiritual victory”... now there’s an interesting concept. I think that most believers would say they desire it. The apostle Paul did. He said... *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.”* (II Tim. 4: 7 – 8) Paul clearly sensed spiritual victory in his life.

But what is spiritual victory? What did he mean to fight the fight, finish the race and keep the faith? In the American church culture we think of spiritual victory as living with a sense of harmony with God and in other primary relationships, with little spiritual warfare or major temptation, having our physical and emotional needs cared for (according to our definition of “cared for”), feeling productive, and experiencing no major crisis. This is a great definition of abundant blessings and there is certainly nothing wrong with seasons of life like this. However, I am afraid we confuse our blessings with spiritual victory. Is this what Paul was talking about when he exclaimed victory?

It is always important to read God’s word in context. Prior to Paul’s exclamation of spiritual victory he says in II Timothy 4: 6... *“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering,”* which means that his life is a sacrifice. Being poured out as a sacrifice certainly isn’t experiencing worldly comforts. To Paul, spiritual victory cannot mean simply having worldly comfort. Neither his life nor his words communicate that.

In Philippians 4: 12 – 13 he says... *“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”* Note that Paul makes no apology for having times of worldly comfort. I am quite sure he was thankful for those respites. But his definition of victory had nothing to do with circumstances. For him it was much deeper. Spiritual victory was about Christ Jesus, the source of victory. His message was centered on knowing Christ. It seems that intimacy and companionship with Christ Jesus was victory.

*“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the **author and perfecter** of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorned its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Hebrews 12:2

“⁷But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.” Philippians 3: 7 – 9

Imagine knowing that kind of intimacy with Christ. Imagine knowing that level of love, acceptance, power, and security found only in Him. Imagine the kind of confidence that Paul had... not one based upon circumstances at all, but built upon security and promise that came through his relationship with Christ. Imagine what life would look like if we experienced true love, peace, freedom, and significance. Imagine the impact through our lives if Christ was that real to us. Christ came to meet us at our deepest level of need. He came to “do life” with us. He came to love us. He came to set us free.

If you, like I, have mistaken spiritual victory with anything less than this, it is time for us to raise our sights... to recalibrate... to look at our compass with a different goal in mind. Jesus Christ is ready to escort us on this journey. This journey will take us far beyond what we currently experience. It will take the believer beyond mere worldly comfort and temporary peace of mind. It is promised and He who promises is always faithful. This journey is sure to be rich in ways unimagined!

“¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. ²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” Ephesians 3:19-21

³His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by His own glory and goodness. ⁴Through these He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” II Peter 1: 3, 4

The following is a lighthearted story to introduce the heart of this book.

Join me as we seek to Take the Gospel to Heart on the Pathway to Victory!

Gus The Goose

Gus met us at the door of the little cabin. His friendly and excited demeanor thrilled my children. Steve, the director of the camp where I was speaking, had instructed us to make ourselves at home in the quaint cabin and then meet him at the dining hall. We were not forewarned about the hospitality we would receive upon arrival. As I opened the squeaky door of the screened porch, Gus entered quickly as if to make sure everything was in order. He had obviously done this before. He quietly sat down on the porch as we moved our luggage inside. As my wife and I prepared to go to dinner, the children were sitting on the porch with Gus, completely preoccupied. There was something special about Gus that would entertain anyone. The family headed to the door of the cabin to go to dinner, and Gus quickly forced his way out the door in front of us without concern for his manners. He led us across the dirt driveway and the straw-covered ground and to the pavilion dining hall. Again, as soon as the door was opened, Gus rushed in. Steve saw us from across the dining hall and said, "I see you guys met Gus." Then he began to gently usher Gus back out the door, nudging him with his foot.

Gus was a Canadian goose. Months earlier, Steve's brother found two abandoned goose eggs and decided to incubate them. One egg hatched, and it was Gus. Birds identify with whatever life-form takes care of them upon arrival. As Gus pecked his way through the shell, there peering over the edge of the incubator were Steve and his family. As far as Gus was concerned, he was part of the new family and that is where he found his identity. He had no idea he was a goose.

Several days into the camp, after the middle school students became familiar with their surroundings, chasing Gus became an excellent outlet for entertainment. The first time I saw this, I was alerted by a desperate honking noise behind me. Turning that direction, five 12 and 13-year-old boys were antagonizing Gus by chasing and corralling him. Gus would run frantically with outstretched wings flapping fiercely in order to achieve maximum capacity goose-running speed. After cornering him, the students would back off, laughing hysterically, and leaving Gus dejected, defeated, and embarrassed.

That afternoon, I asked Steve why Gus put up with such antics. I wondered why he didn't spread those huge wings and take off flying above his enemies. Much to my amazement, I was informed that Gus did not fly. "You mean he is hurt and cannot fly?" I wondered. "No," Steve said. "You mean he doesn't know how to fly?" I asked. "Well, kind of," he said. "Well then, exactly what are you saying?" I queried again. "I mean, Gus not only doesn't know how to fly, he doesn't even know that he can fly," Steve stated. Gus was physically capable of soaring over his adversaries based on his God-given attributes, yet found himself completely beaten by his foes because of lack of knowledge. He was suffering with mistaken identity.

Gus would have been so much better off if he only knew he had the inherent ability to fly above his adversaries. As a result of our discussion, Steve decided to attempt to teach this adolescent goose more about his God-given identity. Change was not going to come easily for Gus. Although he wasn't living at full capacity in his life, he didn't know any better and had settled into mediocrity, accepting his plight. One afternoon when the students were in their small group sessions, Steve went out by the lake to find Gus. As was his custom, Gus immediately made himself at home right under Steve's feet. He reached down and gently picked Gus up in his arms. At a fast pace, due to Gus being quite irritated, Steve moved to the end of the dock where, without hesitation, he threw Gus as high as possible out over the lake. It wasn't a pretty sight. Clumsily flapping his wings, Gus came careening down to the water like a lame duck. As you would imagine, Gus was quite disgusted at the whole ordeal. He hastily paddled his way under the dock and to the shore. Gus didn't like the water either. Odd, huh! As he shook the water off his body, Steve quickly cornered him again. He picked him up with fully extended arms to avoid Gus' flailing efforts to snap at him, he once again carried Gus out on the dock and cast him out over the water. This time, much to my surprise, Gus flapped his wings several times, flew a few feet, and then gave up, crashing headfirst into the calm water. The process continued. On the fourth try, he flew 10 to 20 yards before executing a rough but safe landing. With Gus thoroughly perplexed, Steve ended the flying lesson for the day.

The next afternoon I was sitting at a picnic table near my cabin when I heard a familiar commotion ensue. As expected, the students were chasing Gus again. Gus immediately defaulted into his old techniques to avoid them at first. As usual, they were futile. God did not design a goose for sprinting. The students almost had Gus cornered near a large pine tree when he reversed direction tearing out through them, honking, and running full speed toward the water's edge. About twenty feet from the shore he began flapping his wings as God had created him to do. He slowly lifted off the ground right at the edge of the water and flew away from his adversaries some distance before landing near the water's edge of the lake. Gus had successfully made his first of many solo flights.

Gus was always physically capable of soaring over his adversaries based on his God-given attributes, yet found himself completely beaten by his foes because of lack of knowledge. In Christ the believer has been given everything necessary for life and godliness. He is redeemed to soar on wings like eagles! That is what this book is about... living in the full inheritance Christ has given you... for His glory!



Chapter 1

Ready to Jump!

On Memorial Day each year the swim club near my home would open the swimming pool for the summer. To celebrate the opening there would be an all-day party with games and food. The big event that day was always a game where buckets of coins were dumped into the pool for the children and teens to dive in and gather to keep. At the shallow end were pennies. As the pool grew deeper the coins grew more valuable. At the deep end of the pool there were silver dollars. In order to dive into the deep end of the pool you had to be a teenager as well as have enough experience to swim 15 feet down to collect the coins. Oh how I wished I was old enough and experienced enough to dive into the deep end of the pool. While I was dredging around for pennies, nickels and dimes, those in the deep end of the pool were pulling up dollars. They were experiencing a much richer reward.

It is my viewpoint that many Christians are fully aware that there is a spiritually deep end of the pool with great reward, but they find themselves trapped in the shallow end. They are experiencing far less than Biblically promised.

Christ desires a supernaturally empowered existence for His children. He says in John 10: 10b... *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* This fullness or abundance spoken of can be defined like this... knowing Christ intimately and experiencing a supernatural love, acceptance, power, and security found only in Him. This lifestyle is not only possible but promised. But let's be realistic. How many believers do you know that are living in supernatural abundance? Many are barely hanging in there? Their existence is little more than cyclically navigating the same old stuff; the same old chase; the same old empty results; the same old issues; the same old outcomes; the same old self. Do you find yourself living in this spin of despair? The results are paralyzing doubt and despair.

I want to introduce you to Will. He escaped the shallow end of the pool and began to experience the

supernatural transformation found at the deep end of the pool! He had a great family and a strong business mind. One day he entered a meeting with several work associates with the intent to solve a business issue. He was prepared to listen well and be open-minded. However, not long into the meeting the opposite took place. Feeling that one associate was questioning his perspective, he reacted with high levels of control basically shutting down the discussion and creating a negative atmosphere that left everyone involved frustrated. The team walked away further apart and further away from a decision. His dictatorial control deflated any team morale.

Will experienced this controlling reaction frequently and it was not limited to the workplace. When he was questioned it always seemed like a personal attack to him. How could he escape this spin of despair?

Ginny escaped the shallow end of the pool and began to experience the supernatural transformation found at the deep end of the pool!

Ginny was a thirty-four-year-old wife and mother of two. After a minor disagreement with her husband she fell to the floor in a tearful fit. Her loving family stood helplessly in the wake of this painful outburst. Every two or three weeks she would cascade into emotional distress plunging into angry outbursts. She felt out of control and full of shame. It felt like others, particularly her family, were purposely provoking her. She hated these episodes but couldn't seem to do anything about them. How could she escape this spin of despair?

Cory escaped the shallow end of the pool and began to experience supernatural transformation found at the deep end of the pool!

Cory was happily married and the father of one son. As he returned from an out-of-town engagement he found himself consumed by lustful thoughts. He was returning from a Christian conference where he was the keynote speaker, and you would think that there would be nothing further from his mind. Dwelling on mental pornography he began to adventure in his mind toward the idea of stopping at a roadside strip bar not far down the road. This was not something that he had done before, but any sane reasoning was overwhelmed by intense feelings of excitement and consideration. He pulled into the parking lot of the strip bar. Nervously and with his heart about to beat out of his chest he made his way into the night spot. The initial thrill immediately dissipated into overwhelming guilt. He hurriedly left the strip bar, distressed and aware that he had gone over the edge.

From a young age Cory struggled with internet pornography. At 19 he came into a relationship with Christ and was sure that this habit would be the first to go. There was a temporary reprieve but when it returned it came on fast and furious. He managed his issues through the hope that came from temporary sobriety and justification. His wife was totally clueless of his struggle.

This experience with the strip bar scared Cory. He found himself entangled in the secret world of pornography and was crossing over the line into behavior that was devastating his life and family. On the way home he was ashamed and afraid. No amount of justification

could quiet his concern. How could he escape this spin of despair?

This book is about how these people found victory. All of these stories have one thing in common. Each is real and all of them are sincere Christians. You may know them. You certainly know someone like them. Your story may be very similar to one of them. If not, one thing is for sure, you have your own story.

The other common denominators in each of these stories are pain and hope. For each there was a time, and sometimes a long time, where their situation seemed painful and hopeless. They stood helplessly in the shallow end of the pool wondering why they couldn't dive into the deep end. Things changed! Now they experience ever-increasing peace and victory. Their despair turned to brokenness, leading to a hope in Christ alone. God's promises are alive and the pathway to victory is clear. They each know Christ in a way that they never thought possible and experience His unconditional, indescribable love and blessings! Each of them identified and escaped the spin of despair and experienced supernatural transformation in their lives. They truly experienced "taking the gospel to heart." They were experiencing their new identity in Christ. The work of Christ on the cross promises this for His children.

Recently, following a sermon at our church, a man said to our pastor... "Hey, I get that I am a sinner, and I hear that I need to "trust Christ"... "trust the power of the Gospel," "take the gospel to heart." I just don't know how to do it on a daily basis" This man's comment is all too real. At least this gentleman had the guts to ask.

Without understanding how to apply the gospel daily and access its power on a moment-by-moment basis, the believer is left to his own methods to attempt to live for God. One result is moralistic effort that is a mere counterfeit that results in ultimate failure and misery. Another result is feeling that His promises are never quite accessible due to personal sin leading to guilt, shame, and despair. As a result many simply give up and accept spiritual mediocrity, which is really defeat. Ultimately the result is spiritual cynicism and hopelessness... whether communicated outwardly or not. What a sad state... sitting in the shallow end knowing that there is a deep end.

Does the name Dr. John S. Pemberton ring any bells? Maybe not, although his invention is a familiar household name making billions of dollars across the world. In 1866, this pharmacist by trade perfected what we know today as Coca-Cola. He died in 1869, only three years after his invention. He died a poor man without ever knowing the joy or financial benefits of his creation.

This story has a certain familiar ring to many Christians. After genuinely accepting Jesus Christ into their lives, many will go about their daily tasks without ever really knowing intimacy with Christ and enjoying the fruits of their relationship with Him.

Many believers are caught in the spin of despair and crying out to know how to apply the gospel to their daily lives. They starve for the Biblical promises of intimacy, identity, and influence... for the freedom, peace, and true satisfaction only found in Christ. That was their hope when they initially accepted Christ. The human heart cry, while sometimes

not clearly verbalized, can easily be heard. It can be seen through wild chases after worldly facades, mirages that will only evaporate right before our very eyes. It can be seen in the lives of believers who settle for far less than what God promises. This book is not about health and wealth but about the central truths in God's word and the supernatural blessings that are found in Christ alone. It is a book about how to genuinely experience the release of these promises. It is about how Will, Ginny, Cory and yes, you and me can experience the full riches of our great God.

This book is intended to help the believer overcome confusion and understand the power of the gospel and how it applies to their daily life. Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge." There is hope! There is even a guarantee of victory. The question is... How powerful is the good news? The work of Christ on the cross is powerful. He is truly our freedom fighter. That was his mission!

Luke 4: 18 – 21 describes His mission...

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Then He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him. "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Let's jump into the deep end of the pool!



Think about it!

1) Which of the following do you most identify with: Will, Ginny, or Cory and why?

2) John 10: 10b says... "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Do you believe most believers are experiencing Christ's abundance? Why or why not?