

S e l f   E x p o s e d



# Self Exposed

Uncovering Dynamics of the Spiritual Self

Clay A. Henry



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Throughout the book, the author avoids the single use of one gender category (i.e., masculine). Various combinations of pronouns—his or her, his and her, etc.—are all intended to include both genders without diminishing or enhancing the importance of either sex.





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## Preface: Where I'm Coming From

**A**FTER BEING GAINFULLY employed most of our married life, my wife and I decided to enter into retirement a few years ago. During this time we became somewhat contemplative, pondering our lives to this point. In doing so we attempted to assess any notable achievements and failures. We understand that it is not uncommon for most seniors to look back to former years and begin to ask questions such as, “If we could relive our lives, would we make other choices or do things differently?” So in our case, these thoughtful moments not only involved some of the more gigantic decisions all humankind has to make, but especially included certain matters pertaining to our Christian beliefs. It also seemed normal for us to compare our evaluation to the views of what we assumed other believers of a similar age group might have had.

According to several published studies, the average church-goer in our nation grew up in the Christian faith, attended Sunday school or confirmation, diminished in the church activities as a teenager and young adult, yet attended church sporadically throughout his or her adult life. There also exists a similar group of Christians who, for whatever reason(s), have all but neglected any church affiliation. Both groups generally think of themselves

as essentially no better or worse than others who also identify themselves as Christians. But the common threads that run in these individuals seem to be a lack of achievement in their spiritual lives with a less-than-complete degree of joyfulness, contentment, peacefulness, and lasting fulfillment. We recognize that all of these thoughts and emotions are meant to be realized by the attainable promises God made to all obedient followers of Jesus Christ.

We unabashedly admit that these same strands, that is, lacking spiritual achievement and completeness, also seem to be woven into our lives and we want to come to terms with them. So we particularly reflected on our past involvement in local churches during our earlier years. Throughout this thought-provoking process, we began to wonder whether we had been on the right track, or whether there was something to which we hadn't paid enough attention. It was such an issue to us that we fervently prayed to God for help and engaged in the reading of Scripture as we groped for answers to our predicament.

At that point my attention was directed to Matthew 16:24–25: “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.’”

Even though I've heard and read these perplexing verses in this parable several times in the past, they were hard to understand, so I thought, *This passage is too taxing for me; it just does not make any common sense. I'll skip over it and maybe I'll understand it someday.* As it turned out, my comprehension of these verses was in the making.

What occurred was the beginning of an unexpected disclosure of knowledge that both my wife and me should have previously gained and applied from our participation in church activities. These two verses in Matthew (and repeated in the other gospels) were spoken by Jesus to His disciples and to any of His would-be followers shortly before the end of His earthly life. Specifically, His utterances were a paradoxical instruction

that, in my opinion, contained at least four significant words: *self*, *deny*, *cross*, and *life*.

Jesus seemed to be speaking directly to us, and indeed saying, “Listen, Clay and Rose Marie, here is the necessary directive if you really want to be My followers. It will require a deliberate, well-thought-out choice for each of you. It’s an option, and entirely up to you to decide which of the two roads to take.”

In this last statement, we thought Jesus might be referring to His earlier teaching when He said, “The way is broad that leads to destruction,...and the way is narrow that leads to life” (Matthew 7:13–14). We were saying in effect to ourselves, “This sure sounds like we can’t journey on both roads or skip back and forth between the two.” It was only later that we discovered the roads were separate ways to follow Christ. Basically, our option centered on Christ’s way or on our way. We hadn’t realized the gravity of making a decision like this before: choosing a self-oriented approach or deciding to follow Jesus on His terms. If we chose Jesus’ way, we knew one of the implications was to trust in Him and the Holy Spirit for continual guidance during our journey of faith. Yes, this directive of our Lord and our obedient response to it could well be a missing link each of us should have addressed and acted upon many years ago.

As a result of this spiritual insight, with the approval and endorsement of my wife, I initiated a comprehensive study on this particular command of our Lord to deny self and carry a cross. Using different translations of the Bible, in addition to reading commentaries, the writings of several historic and contemporary Christian authors, and engaging in dialogue with fellow Christians as reference material, I wrote this book.

Surprisingly, another event occurred, almost in concert with the “newness” of rereading and gaining a better understanding of the passages in Matthew. We were invited to participate in a biblical-related process called the Journeymen that was presented as a means of understanding the significance and the application of spiritual growth in a Christian’s life. Again, because of our past activities in church, we were not totally

ignorant of this term. As we progressed in this study, we soon discovered that in practical terms, believers who deliberately choose to follow Christ should not consider maturing in their faith an option, but a responsibility and a privilege that is clearly based upon Holy Scripture.

Could it be that we were living a lackluster type of Christian life and not experiencing the joy commonly associated with obedience to God's Word? It could be that we were somewhat "out of tune" and perhaps like those early Christians to whom the writer of Hebrews said, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12). The term *milk* likely refers to rudiments of religion as known from Old Testament teaching. Historically, for Christians, milk may simply mean a kernel of basic knowledge, such as the doctrine of justification, requiring little or no more than merely faith in the sacrificial death of Christ as a means of salvation.

After all those years of church involvement, and now in our seventies, what basic doctrine of God did we not get? The answer to all of these questions seemed to be that our spiritual growth had somehow become stunted earlier in our Christian walk, and consequently we had not achieved the maturity and accompanying joy we should have gained well before this time in our lives. Not long afterward, we began to believe that practicing a more Christ-oriented life was the second of the two major missing links in our lives—the first being a determined resolve to follow Him.

Regarding spirituality, and particularly spiritual growth, I must stress at the outset that I am addressing this subject not because we see ourselves in any way as perfect examples of maturity, but because we accept as true, along with many other Christian authorities, that this is one of the most lacking elements in the contemporary church. Furthermore, we understand that the qualities of spiritual maturity define the lives of individuals, of the church, and of society as a whole.

We now recognize the need for these qualities to be experienced and expressed in the lives of every believer. To emphasize this need, I wondered if the New Testament should have a subtitle that highlights spiritual maturity. Maybe it could be named “The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Pathway to Spiritual Maturity.” This suggested heading is offered in respect to the Holy Bible and is given only to call attention to the importance of spiritual maturity in the lives of all true believers. As you will see in later chapters, the term *spiritual maturity* could be replaced with words such as *holiness*, *sanctification*, *servanthood*, or *discipleship*.

In addition to placing an emphasis on spiritual maturity, I will attempt to identify some “mathematical” relationships, correlations, between various terms as well as to illustrate graphically selected aspects of spiritual maturity. Yes, you read correctly. I believe one can discern certain features and levels of spiritual growth, perhaps similar to measuring growth of children. Physically, one measures parameters of growth, weight, and height as a function of age. Obviously, semiquantitative parameters will be used as indicators of spiritual growth, much like the scientific methodology used for assessing less tangible qualities in modern behavioral and psychological evaluations. If nothing more, I trust they will aid readers to estimate personally their own level of spiritual growth and thereby help establish a vision of attaining even higher levels of maturity, often referred to as Christlikeness.

In attempts to examine the extent of spiritual growth of believers, I would like to be able to estimate like and unlike traits of human nature, such as measuring amounts of light as a function of darkness or degrees of heat in the presence of cold. Take, for example, the traits of humility (submissiveness) and pride (excessive arrogance). Most of us know that humility and pride are widely defined as opposites and therefore can be viewed as inversely related. If both of these traits were somehow measured in a large group of people who had varying quantities of each, the hypothetical data would indicate an inverse relationship between the two terms as represented by the darker line depicted in figure P.1 below.

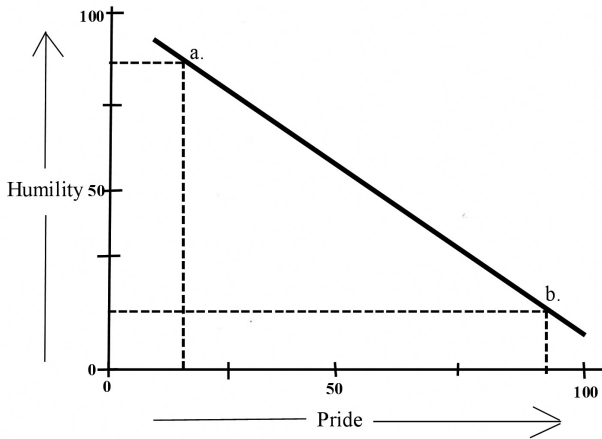


Figure P.1. An Inverse Relationship between Humility and Pride

Notice that at point *a* on the darker line, the humility of one individual is about 85 percent and pride is about 15 percent. Conversely, at point *b* in another person, humility is about 15 percent and pride is about 85 percent. If it was really possible to estimate these attributes, we could label a person's disposition as somewhat balanced between the two, or as predominantly humble or prideful. Obviously, the trait of humility would be an excellent indicator of spiritual growth in a Christian, whereas high levels of pride would not be expected from these results. Measurements of humility and pride would be unnecessary for Jesus, since He truthfully said, "I am gentle and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:29). We can confidently say that Christ is the only one whose humility value is 100 percent and pride assessment is zero percent.

The reader will find that I utilize several visual aids throughout this writing, such as figure P.1 above. I believe they are useful tools to help us better understand text or narration of speech, particularly when attempting to impart abstract ideas and concepts of spiritual matters.

Instead of trying to use numeral data as presented in the graphic above, another way to look at a person's spiritual growth is to view it in pictorial form. In 2 Peter 1:5–8 lists virtuous qualities or graces that will enhance the development of faith in believers: faith, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly love,



and love. However, the names of these virtues are not necessarily the illustration of spirituality I have in mind; instead I will use simple circles.

For example, we can visualize spiritual maturity in an individual by drawing seven concentric circles that have the same outside circumference. As seen in figure P.2, the inner circles progressively become larger with each addition of another quality. Beginning with faith and ending with love, we can see how the successive addition of each virtuous quality to the preceding one will enlarge the inner circle at the expense of the darker outer part of the circle.

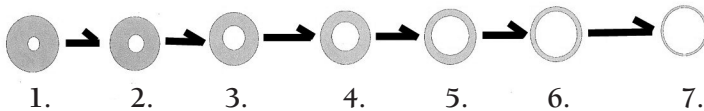


Figure P.2. Spiritual Development by Addition of Virtues

I readily admit that this example of viewing spiritual maturity in figure P.2 is limited in so far as it does not provide any information about the time it takes or the means of bringing about these qualities. However, the purpose of these accumulations of Christian values is known. Peter tells us that the outcome of increasing development of spirituality in the lives of believers is to render believers useful and fruitful “in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8).

The verse in which Jesus commands His followers to deny self and carry a cross contains the biblical truths relative to the concept of spiritual maturity in all believers. That is to say that what Jesus declared in these few words and the topic of spiritual growth are not mutually exclusive. As these directives are obeyed, I believe them to be linked together much like a master key that opens a door. When inserted into a previously unopened door of spiritual maturity, this proverbial key allows entry into a wonderment of new life, in which one admittedly experiences a measure of tension and discomfort along with increasing pleasures of joy, contentment, peace, and fulfillment. These latter qualities are the same elements many Christians apparently lack in their everyday lives.

To discern the qualities of self that promote or hinder spiritual maturity, we must look inside self. This need is somewhat illustrated in the photograph on the front cover of this book, which depicts a tree living above the ground with an illuminated mass of exposed roots deeply entrenched in the soil. The inherent composition and form of the earthly soil in which the normally unseen tree roots are embedded can represent the underlying nature of an inner self.

The inner self, like the makeup of soil, has a nature all its own that is spiritual and, like the living tree above ground, is rationally integrated in humankind's physical being. Biblically, we understand the origin of the internal self resulted from acts of disobedience to God. In some unknown manner, this nature is ancestral and able to propagate itself throughout history from generation to generation. When reading the Holy Bible, we find descriptive terms denoting this nature, terms such as selfish, prideful, evil, fleshly, darkened, defiled, and corrupt. Self, or at least a part of it, is generally characterized as a violation of moral laws and anything contrary to the character of a higher Being.

However, one does not require divine truths or any other religious writings to verify the existence of this often elusive unseen thing called self. It is self-exposing and self-evident throughout the world, apparent in all forms of the news media, and most of all from personal experiences of living in an imperfect world. Broken relationships, killings, wars, crimes, bigotry, and anger are only the beginning of thousands of examples that show us something is terribly wrong in the makeup of humankind.

Those who define humankind's nature as ungodly maintain that the outward sign of a person's wrongfulness is a direct reflection of his or her inner self—those elements that are counter to goodness. Therefore, the problem for those who seek righteousness for themselves and for others is twofold. First, how does one remove the wrongfulness of the inner self, and second, replace it with virtues of righteousness?

As a starting point, the answer to this all-important question can be derived by unpacking the title of this book, *Self Exposed: Uncovering Dynamics of the Spiritual Self*. In contrast to a static or

unchanging condition, the spiritual self is dynamic. Quite often, such a state is characterized as an interactive system, especially one involving competing or conflicting forces. In this sense, the title of this book implies powerful forces exist within the inner self which are at odds with the other and constantly in quest of domination and control. Once this active dynamic between these spiritual forces is consciously realized, we can better approach the answer to the question stated above by achieving two major objectives of this writing.

One intention is to reveal interfering features of the ungodly power and to emphasize the imperative need to remove these hindrances. The second is to call attention to the provision of salvation that, by the grace of God and the finished work of Christ on Calvary's cross, Christians can detach these obstructions. As this provision is acted upon by followers of Christ, these barriers are overcome with the simultaneous development of virtuous characteristics.

I have selected portions of Ephesians and Hebrews in the New Testament to help emphasize both purposes of disclosing and removing the obstacles to Christian spiritual growth. Hopefully, these Scriptures can relate the soil and a tree's roots to an exposed self, and also show that the powerful illuminating light of Christ can help remove hindrances to spiritual maturity. The writers of Ephesians and Hebrews urge their readers "not to participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even *expose* them" (Ephesians 5:11, emphasis added) and to "See to it that...no *root* of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15, emphasis added); "all things become visible when *exposed* by light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, awake sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will *shine* on you" (Ephesians 5:13–14, emphasis added).

When these passages in Ephesians and Hebrews are knitted together, they are to be directed toward professing believers who, unwittingly or unknowingly, are sleepers, clouded in spiritual darkness, slumbering in their false security, and more spiritually dead than alive. Within the context of these verses, dozing persons are

likely to continue to exhibit characteristics of immorality, impurity, and unfruitful deeds of darkness. They are told to awake and to arise, meaning that they need to be aware of their lostness and to come into the light of Jesus Christ. Everything is exposed by the light, illuminated by the light of the gospel. This good news tells us that Christ will enlighten the offspring of darkness to become children of light. These statements are in accord with all that is said elsewhere in the New Testament Scriptures, instructing reborn believers to grow spiritually and become set apart from the world.

“The Illumination of a Believer’s Self” (fig. P.3) seen below is also shown on the front cover of this book among the normally unseen roots and surrounding soil. It represents a person who has heard the wake-up call of the gospel, is illuminated by the true

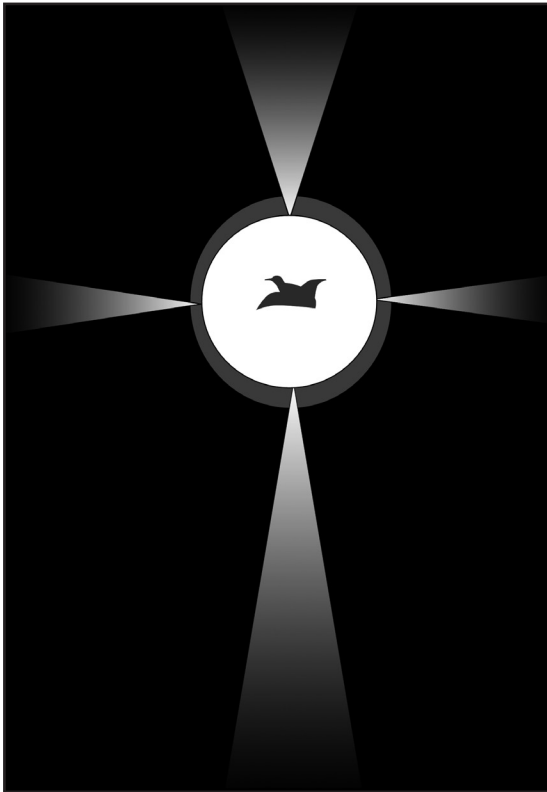


Figure P.3. The Illumination of a Believer’s Self

light of God, and has removed significant portions of darkened obstacles. This drawing will be used in a later chapter to signify children of light who are becoming spiritually mature and to show their Christlikeness in a darkened world. Lastly, figure P.3 may also portray how those in God's family are to live righteous lives as stated by Jesus in His famous Sermon on the Mount. "You are the light of the world....Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14, 16).

My wife and I genuinely trust that the words that follow are in accordance with the truths revealed in Holy Scripture and the orthodox doctrines of the Christian church. It is also our earnest hope that you will find this book to be a significant help in your quest for a life of Christ-centered discipleship, and thereby reap increasing earthly pleasure in your heaven-bound journey. Come along on a mutually shared walk of faith based on the good news of the gospel. We can almost guarantee it will be an excursion into some unusual places where few have traveled before.





# Acknowledgments

**M**Y SINCERE THANKS go to those who in many ways assisted me in the writing of this book. Without their useful suggestions, editing and encouragement, I'm sure that I would have jettisoned this endeavor long ago.

Above all, I want to identify two women in my life who have profoundly contributed to my maturation in the Christian faith. In memory of my maternal grandmother, the first is Annie G. Thomas. As a child and through my early manhood, in her tender Christlike manner, she was the angel who helped guide me in my spiritual journey. The second is my devoted wife, Rose Marie Henry, a most special lady. She is steadfast in her trust and love of the Lord, an outstanding optimist and very supportive of my undertakings.







## Chapter 1

# May I Help You...?

Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you.

—Isaiah 41:10

**M**AY I HELP you find something?” Think for a moment about how many times and under what circumstances you have heard this question. In most cases, the person asking this question perceived a need to assist another. The following story highlights this question and is about three men, identified as A, B, and C, who separately were shopping for the same advertised item in a large department store.

Before they came to the store these three men were dissatisfied with their lives. Each thought their spirits would be lifted if they possessed a certain item that was happily owned by a few of their acquaintances.

After arriving at the store, shopper A became frustrated as he wandered up and down aisles and couldn’t find the desired item. Then unexpectedly, from behind him, a clerk asked, “May I help you find something?” And after an exclamatory answer of “Yes, I’m really lost!” the customer identified the item and responded to the clerk’s “Follow me.” With his eyes firmly fixed on the clerk, he

trailed him to the shelf containing the desired item. He then discovered that there was not only one, but two items, each significantly differing in price. The reason for the great price differential was not immediately apparent to him. After the clerk explained reasons for the price difference and offered advice about which item might better suit his need, shopper A closely examined each of the two items, as to their construction, appearance, and durability. He then chose the most costly one, which had the greatest quality, thanked the clerk, paid the cashier, and left. Shopper A properly maintained and cherished his costly item with a great amount of joy, and it served him well during his entire lifetime. Moreover, several other individuals who saw the great satisfaction of customer A's purchase bought one for themselves.

Shopper B entered the store and he, too, was approached by a clerk who asked, "May I help you?" to which he quickly responded, "No, I am just looking around." After wandering aimlessly from aisle to aisle on several floors, he finally located the shelf containing the same two items sought by shopper A. After briefly listening to remarks offered by another clerk about the articles, he impolitely told him he did not need his help. Because the appearance of the two items was so similar, he finally chose the advertised item that was least expensive, paid for it, and left the store. B didn't care for this low-quality item, so it soon became useless, and B put it away with other discarded possessions in his attic.

The third man, C, also came to the department store looking for the advertised item, and a kind clerk asked him, "May I help you?" He abruptly and rudely said, "No, I don't need your help; I'll find it myself!" And indeed, this he did after meandering through the store. Shopper C listened for a short time to a store employee who described the two different items. He had serious misgivings about both of them, thinking that they were overpriced and would be of no use to him. He soon left with no intention to return.

This story illustrates five relevant points. The three men were lost in the department store (lostness), and an offer to help locate the item (guidance) was either accepted or rejected. After locating the items, a clerk provided pertinent information regarding the

quality and cost of each item. Based upon these facts, the customers were provided with suggestions as to how well the item might meet their present and future needs (assessment). It was then that each decided to make the purchase or not (action), and the resultant level of satisfaction (happiness) was noted.

Relating A's actions in this tale to Christianity rests initially on a person's state of darkness and awareness of his or her lostness. Living without purpose or direction in an ungodly world many times motivates one to wake up. It is then that God's great summons of help will lead a person to accept the offer of redemption. This acceptance can be considered as an affirmation to the invitation made by Jesus to follow Him and this response entitles the person to be identified as a Christian.

However, the decision for attaining salvation is far more than just accepting the message of the gospel. Additional choices have to be made, some of which prove to be very difficult. In all cases, believers must recognize the need for help apart from themselves if they want to be followers of Christ throughout their lives. Subsequent to the act of becoming a believer of the gospel message, the topic of following Christ is the major avenue of thought that readers will find in this book.

The negative responses for help by both Customers B and C provide insights into their inner beings. Each relied on his own ability to locate the item and demonstrated a high degree of self-assertion and self-defiance. Perhaps each of them actually preferred to be lost, stubbornly so, which would suggest an obstinate, know-it-all attitude. Although Customer B's decision to buy the item was based primarily on cost, his purchase soon resulted in putting aside the product.

What is the relation of the behavior of Customer B—who, by his purchase implied an acceptance of the gospel message—to his initial reluctance to accept help? Here, I envision some believers maintain their self-dependency in their Christian faith and consequently are hesitant to receive freely offered help in their journeys of faith. The explanation for this unwillingness could be spiritual blindness, shallow knowledge of church doctrine, or possession

of inaccurate preconceptions or inclinations about what it means to be a follower of Christ. Whatever the facts, the result was the same, namely, B gained little or no benefit from purchasing what he thought he wanted.

The New Testament book of Acts contains the account of the conversion and baptism of an Ethiopian to Christianity, aided by the preaching of apostle Philip (Acts 8:26–39). This narrative is especially engaging because it includes similarities to the tale of one of the department store shoppers. The five italicized terms below are selected features common to both stories.

The Ethiopian lacked understanding of the prophecy of Jesus in the Old Testament as he read Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:31). Philip was summoned by the Spirit to assist him (Acts 8:29) and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” (Acts 8:30). He responded by saying, “Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?” (Acts 8:31). The Ethiopian realized he was *lost*, as did one of the shoppers, and willingly accepted *guidance* from Philip, likewise offered by the store clerk.

Philip further expounded to him about the Messiah’s redemptive work as prophesied by Isaiah. Reminiscent of the appraisal of items in the store by the shoppers, this careful *assessment* of scriptural truths (Acts 8:32) resulted in the Ethiopian making a heartfelt decision, saying, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). He immediately *acted* upon this belief by choosing water baptism to signify his identification with Christ (v. 38). Lastly, like the happiness of one shopper in purchasing the item, the Ethiopian continued his journey, *rejoicing* (Acts 8:39).

Like the guidance offered by Philip and the clerk, the design of this and remaining chapters is to offer help to those who are nonbelievers and to those who are already in their Christian journey of faith. But, as most know, God is really the Great Helper. Throughout the entire Bible, our creator God has revealed Himself, among other divine characteristics, as loving and forgiving, and is viewed by many believers throughout the centuries as the great Giver and Helper. In the New American Standard Bible, God is recorded as saying to Isaiah, “I will help you” (Isaiah 41:10). Yes, as many can attest, indeed God is the great Helper!

But to receive help, as in the Ethiopian's case, one must first admit to being lost and willing to accept guidance. Also, there must be a helper or a guide who leads and shows the way to another, as Philip proved to be to the Ethiopian and as God proved to be for Isaiah.

You may think that as the author of this book I am using the question "May I help you?" to assist you in your spiritual journey. If so, frame this question around the sacred words of Jesus Christ as found in Matthew 16:24–25: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

Regarding this text in Matthew and an almost identical one recorded in Luke 9:23–24, let us look at Peter as an example of one who displayed a wide range of loyalties toward Jesus. To some extent, he is the one to whom most of us can relate. Peter, by the way, was probably one of Jesus' dearest friends. For three years he closely followed Jesus, listened to His teachings, and witnessed with excitement a variety of Jesus' miracles. Peter likely believed Jesus possessed divine powers and indeed was the expected Messiah who would restore Israel and save the people.

When Jesus began to tell him and the other disciples He would suffer, be rejected, and be killed, Peter forcefully rebuked Jesus, essentially saying "No, Lord!" to such a forecast. It was then that Jesus instructed Peter and the other disciples to deny themselves and take up their crosses; then Jesus related these two commands to the saving and losing of life (Matthew 16:21–25). Rejection, suffering, dying, and self-denial were the last things these disciples wanted to hear about from the lips of the long-awaited Messiah.

It's totally understandable that we, like Peter, would react in the same way. Many of us would say, "Shouldn't religious faith make us acceptable and deliver us from suffering? Don't we just want to imitate and worship a God who shields us from adversity and protects us from harm?" All this business of denying ourselves and thereby giving up individual rights goes against every grain of common sense. Then to top it off, we, too, are instructed by Jesus

to bear crosses! I have always been taught that Jesus is the one who died on a cross for our sins, and this one human act gave us salvation forever. Some might even say, “Yes, we understand Christ is our Savior, but what is this business of adding a title of ‘Lord’ to the name of Jesus Christ?” Yes, Peter’s objection to Christ’s words would likely be the same as ours, for we also possess a human nature with natural fondness of self-preservation and self-centeredness. Is there more to the gospel story than we have been told? And are there some things about ourselves that need to be exchanged, renovated, and transformed?

I maintain that there are clear scriptural answers to these and other related questions of which we may gain practical application by taking a closer look at the phrases *denying self*, *take up your cross*, *follow Me*, and sayings about saving and losing one’s life. I will consistently refer to these words of Christ as they are found in all four of the Gospels in the New Testament. These passages of Scripture have substantially helped many of us in our spiritual journeys, and like those who have experienced a sense of joyfulness, I want to share my enthusiasm with others.

The sole motivation for the following pages is similar to that of the helpful clerk who modestly offered help to the wandering customers. He helped both in locating the item and by explaining further details concerning its use. I am asking this same question: “May I Help You?” At the same time I am offering assistance in discovering that something or, as we shall soon see, Someone. Perhaps you are looking for more pleasurable experiences or hoping to discover greater satisfaction in your spiritual life. Admittedly, many people in our culture are seeking all kinds of happiness, finding it, and enjoying it for the moment. But, at the same time, scores of these pleasure seekers admit there must be something more to life.

It is to that something or that Someone that we are devoting our primary attention here. Author Rick Warren addressed this same issue in his recent book *The Purpose Driven Life*. Among other considerations, he strongly suggested that the desire of people for a sustained, long-lasting, satisfying life here on this planet involves seeking, finding, and pursuing the will of God.

If the premise stated in the preface is correct, there are many Christians who also seem to be lost and need help to discern the will of God and to make progress in their spiritual maturity. Could it be that these particular Christians, for whatever reasons, are negligent in seeking, finding, and pursuing God's will?

At least in part, could you be one of these Christians? If so, this book is for you, and I sincerely ask the question posed above: "May I help you find something?" I am sure you may have already sensed that the something I am referring to is life, a new life with eternal dimensions, as amply described by Jesus Christ, the inspired writers of the New Testament, and leading authorities of Christian theology.

I am quick to add the other part of the question: "May I help you find that special Someone?" That Someone is none other than Jesus Christ. However, please know that I do not necessarily try to exclusively address this question to a particular denomination or brand of faith. I believe numerous people, ranging from unbelievers to those who claim advanced spiritual maturity, can gain additional insight into the doctrinal truths of the Bible.

In the preface I told you where I'm coming from, and in this chapter I'm giving hints to where we're going. You may already know our destination, but if you're unsure, recall Customer A. Not only did he verbally acknowledge being lost, but he willingly followed the clerk and had to make additional choices, all of which resulted in a great amount of satisfaction for himself as well as others who witnessed his pleasure.

Similarly, when the Christian finds a solution to an initial problem of lostness, further assessments await. Specifically, the believer must be mindful of potential benefits and difficulties that would come into play during his remaining earthly life. One also should realize there are costs, sometimes excessive costs, and therefore, one must decide if the price is worth entering into a new life with an expectation of gratifying outcomes. These and additional considerations will be presented in later chapters.

My role in this book is merely offering to be a guide. As previously stated, we should realize that the real Guide is none other

than the Triune Godhead. I simply offer helpful advice for seeking, finding, and experiencing a meaningful and sanctified life here on earth. My intention is certainly not to dictate dogmatically a series of steps that lead to a magical state of euphoria, but to help escort you in your journey with Christ and thereby enable you to experience a more satisfying spiritual life.