

MOTIVATION:
Life's Ultimate Goals



What are your life goals? Why do you make the decisions you do? What motivates you? One of our goals is to help others answer life's most important questions. This ebook is for the honest inquirer who is willing to think and reason. Please read and let us know your thoughts at www.Embassyhouse.org

Introduction

The fundamental component of the decision making process is motivation. Motivation, in this context, is the basis upon which a choice is made. It is the underlying, not necessarily the expressed, reason for one's will making a decision. Motivation is not actually the cause of the decision, for one's will is the cause, but it provides the will with the direction for each decision. The motivation establishes the purpose for the entire decision making process. Its function is similar to a rudder on a ship. It is the objective behind the decision. It explains what is being sought to be accomplished by the will. One's will seeks the most efficient means of carrying out one's motivation.

Motivation is not necessarily one's expressed reason for making a decision to take certain action. It may not even be the objective that the individual believes is his motivation. For instance, one may marry for the expressed reason of "being in love," but in actuality he married in an attempt to gain security. Because it is usually painful to admit such a purpose, the person marrying for security may accept the belief that he married for "love." Motivation is the foundational purpose for making a decision, not the surface reason or the objective at any other level. What is the foundational purpose of seeking an education? Is it to obtain a better job? Is the better job to provide more income? What is the purpose of the income? This inquiry, if continued, would terminate at the foundational purpose (motivation) for the initial decision of seeking an education. This brief exercise gives one a glimpse of the potential complexity of the decision making process. Decisions are built upon decisions. The entire process, however, rests upon one's motivation.

Motivation can be described as one's ultimate goal. One's ultimate goal defines his purpose for living and making decisions. An ultimate goal is the goal one will seek to fulfill above all other goals. It is the foundational goal used to formulate every other goal one adopts. One's ultimate goal is that which, when all is said and done, an individual sought to accomplish with his life. It is the goal to which one devotes all of his time, energy and material possessions in an attempt to achieve it. It is the goal that will structure one's personality, decision making process, philosophy and physical activities. Every decision one makes will be made in the furtherance of his ultimate goal in life.

To further expand on the importance of motivation as one's ultimate goal, we need to view it in light of human organizations and institutions. If an individual is governed by his ultimate goal, then every human institution will be governed by the ultimate goal of those governing their institutions. In civil government, the controlling individuals' ultimate goals will establish the purpose of the government. In a democracy, the ultimate goals of a majority of the eligible voters (not just the active voters) will determine the government's immediate course. One's ultimate goal governs whether he even votes. In a family, the parents' ultimate

goal will set the direction for the family. Schools, businesses, churches, clubs, and charities are all governed by the ultimate goal of those in charge.

Choosing one's ultimate goal, therefore, is the most important and far reaching decision anyone ever makes. It is the most practical decision one ever makes for it governs every other decision. It is an interesting paradox, which will be explained later, that the only decision that one makes that is not governed by his ultimate goal is the choice of his ultimate goal. When considering the primary importance of this decision it is a wonder that so few choose to take the time to understand its significance. This too, is a direct result of motivation.

Ultimate Goals

The concept of life's ultimate goal is a critical one to the decision maker. If this concept governs each decision one makes, a thorough understanding of the concept and of possible ultimate goals is absolutely necessary for proper decisions. Each individual has adopted an ultimate goal; a purpose for his existence. Keep in mind, things with no perceived purpose are eventually discarded. The discouragement and despair one feels when he falsely believes he has no purpose can be crippling.

What are the possible alternative ultimate goals? Again, we are not speaking here of superficial, surface goals, or even an expressed goal for an activity. We are concerned with the ultimate "why." Why do we strive after the things we do? Or not? Why do we set the priorities we do? Why do we make the choices we do? Some possible ultimate goals may come to mind: Having a family, making money, being educated, becoming important, even survival. None of these, however, can legitimately qualify as an ultimate goal. For what purpose would the money be used? What is the underlying motivation for obtaining an education or for becoming important? Why does one have a family? Why does one choose to survive? Someone may present the underlying goal of security as the foundational goal of those already mentioned. Although security may be considered a first tier goal, it is not an ultimate goal. For what purpose does one choose security?

When one thoroughly examines human goals to determine what choices there are for an ultimate goal, if he is intellectually honest, he will find all human goals resolve themselves into just two ultimate possibilities. You are invited to honestly examine any human goal you can imagine and test the truth of this precept. Intellectual honesty, incidentally, is determined by one's choice of ultimate goal. A person can choose either: 1) to live for himself, regardless of the cost to others (this goal will be referred to as "self-gratification"); or 2) to live for the benefit of others, regardless of the cost to himself (this goal will be referred to as "benefiting

others”). One's ultimate goal for making money, having a family or being educated is either to gratify himself or to benefit others. One's decision with regard to security will be to further his own purposes or to benefit others. The choice of ultimate goal is based upon its perceived value. However, the perception may be incorrect.

One who lives for himself lives to gratify or fulfill his desires or wants, and his decisions are ultimately based on his self interest alone. On the other hand, one who lives to benefit others lives to do what is best for all regardless of how he feels, and the basis of his decisions is truth. Living for the benefit of others does not mean living to please others, and such a goal may not please others unless they have the same ultimate goal. Living for self-gratification entails living for one's wants and desires, being self-indulgent, and weighing the consequences and benefits to self when making decisions. One living for the benefit of others is mindful of the benefits and consequences to others while making decisions. His choice will be founded on the consideration of that which actually benefits all concerned, regardless of the cost to himself.

It is important at this juncture to distinguish between choosing to live for the benefit of others, that is deciding to live for the benefit of others, and just desiring to live for the benefit of others. One may desire to live for the benefit of others without ever actually making a decision to do so. One is only gratifying a desire whenever he is benevolent because he wants to be benevolent or because it “feels good” to be benevolent. One may want to convince himself that he is living for others ~ and many times does ~ to avoid feeling guilty about being selfish. This, too, is a form of self-gratification. The person who actually decides to live for the benefit of others will know the integrity of his decision when the time comes (and it always does) for such a goal to cost him dearly. At such a point the one only desiring to live for others continues his self-gratification and avoids the cost, while the truly benevolent person pays the price regardless of how dear.

These two possible ultimate goals are mutually exclusive. One cannot have both ultimate goals at the same time. He could not choose to gratify himself and benefit others regardless of the cost to himself simultaneously. He may shift goals and alternate between them; however, this behavior is unlikely because the longer he maintains one goal the more difficult it becomes to shift back to the other. Usually a perceived shift is nothing more than an attempt by a person to appear to act correctly to gratify his desire to be accepted or his desire to avoid feeling guilty ~ or both.

With regard to gratifying desires one may think in terms of “good” desires and “bad” desires. However, a desire by itself is neither good nor bad. The object of the desire may be right or wrong, but the desire is neutral. How often does one have the desire to do something

that he has no question is wrong? Even if this occurred only once, how could he be condemned for an involuntary desire? The critical point is what one does with the desire. Does he gratify it if he is able, or become frustrated if he is not able to gratify the desire? Or does he examine the object of the desire and determine with reason and evidence the best course of action? The first type of person is self-gratifying one, regardless of how “good” or “bad” the object of the desire is. The latter person is living for the good of others and makes the proper decision without regard to his desires or feelings. He may still end up doing that which he desires, not because of his desires, but because it is reasonable. A person may condemn himself for desires caused by outside influences (involuntary) which he resists. Another person may indulge in gratifying desires he believes to be “good” without any qualms. Sadly, neither one understands his life goal. This leads to frustration and despair.

Relationships with Others

One's ultimate goal can be determined by observing his relations and interactions with others. The casual observer may miss the ultimate goal, but the intellectually honest and careful observer will be able to determine quite accurately his own ultimate goal and that of each person with whom he has continuous or substantial contact.

The person living to benefit others will have a genuine concern for others, not just a desire to help them. He will be willing to help the less fortunate without recognition. In other words, he will not be calling attention to the deeds he has done or is doing. He will be careful to avoid being an obstacle to someone else's correct living. He will make an effort to be consistent in his actions and speech. He will forego an activity he might undertake if the activity appears to encourage self-gratification.

One living to benefit others will be seeking ways to most effectively and efficiently serve others. He will be willing to warn and protect others even at his own expense. He would seek power to benefit others and not for himself.

The person living for self-gratification will be concerned with using others for his own purposes. He will attempt to manipulate others to gain his own desires. Words become tools of manipulation rather than tools for communication. Because individuals usually desire the approval of others, they will act in the manner they perceive will best gain that approval. The self-gratifier may promote fund raising, not for the cause, but to appear benevolent to gain the approval or confidence of others. One may join a service club, not to serve, but to cultivate acquaintances to benefit his business. He may even join a church in an attempt to escape hell. One who lives for self will only “help” someone else if it will bring a reward to self, even if the

reward is only a good feeling. Further, he will pursue power to gratify his own desire for power or prestige, but not actually to serve others. Of course, one may desire to serve others and will become involved in various projects in an attempt to fulfill that desire.

One who lives for the benefit of others lives for his family and is loyal to his friends. He does not demand that his family serve him. For example, when he comes home from work, tired and wanting to relax, he looks for ways to serve his family and is genuinely interested in their needs. There may be some instances that he best serves his family by resting. One who lives for self-gratification expects his family and friends to serve him. He changes friends ~ and even wives ~ when they no longer fit into his plans. He is loyal to himself and no one else.

One living for others will be kind to his opposition even though he may have to hold them accountable for their actions. One in authority does not have to exhibit anger or even be angry when disciplining those under his authority. When living for others, one realizes this opposition comprises part of the “others” for whom he is living. Although he does not agree with them, he will seek to understand them. He will honestly examine their positions, willing to change his own if he is incorrect. He will respect others' opinions and will determine the basis of those opinions. This does not mean he will give into them if they are wrong.

One living for himself hates opposition. He dislikes anyone interfering with his own self-gratification. He may hide his hatred because of his desire to have the approval of others. Sooner or later, the pot will boil over ~ his anger will flow forth in an angry tirade, possibly over an insignificant matter. This anger may be directed at someone he perceives should be serving him. The self-gratifier will be intolerant of the opinions of those persons he does not think he needs (even God's opinions). He will only “respect” another's opinion if he perceives there is an advantage to him resulting from “respecting” it. He is usually not a very good listener unless he believes it is to his own benefit to listen. To an honest observer he will appear at best an inconsistent listener, listening intently to one person and not at all to the next. His consistency is actually his self purpose.

Political discussions will bring to the surface strong indications of one's ultimate goal. Observe whether one listens to others' opinions and whether they are tolerant and understanding, although they disagree with what is expressed. Watch for arguments based on feelings rather than on reason. The self-gratifier will attempt to dominate or escape, while the benevolent will seek to educate and be educated.

One living for others is able to accept criticism graciously because he is not seeking to maintain a self-serving self-image. He does not react to criticism based on feelings, even though the criticism may feel uncomfortable. He determines for the benefit of others, whether there is any truth in the criticism. If there is, he is willing to change, again for the benefit of

others. Because he is not maintaining a false, self-serving self-image he can admit mistakes and accept properly placed blame. This enhances his problem solving ability. If his mistake has injured others, he does his best to correct the situation.

One living for self will hate criticism because it interferes with his self-image. He must maintain an inflated self-image in order to justify living for self and expecting others to serve him. Criticism attacks this self-image so he uses any psychological defense necessary to avoid accepting it. He may react to the criticism bitterly as a means of defending his perceived trampled feelings. For the same reason, the self-gratifier rarely admits a mistake. He blames anyone but himself for his problems He does this because to admit a mistake would severely damage his self-image. This explains why clear evidence of a mistake is so shattering to the self-gratifier. He has convinced himself that he is something that he is not, and he cannot understand how he could make "such a mistake." This attitude also compounds problems rather than solving them. Many organizations run aground when those governing refuse to admit their mistakes, but rather try to hide them or blame someone else.

One living for others will find the courage to inform others of their accountability. He learns how to do this gently and with reason. This minimizes the expression of feelings, while maximizing the opportunity for others to make right decisions.

One living to gratify self seeks to eliminate accountability. He rebels against authority either blatantly or subtly, whenever he thinks he will benefit and the consequences are not too great. He promotes beliefs and theories that attempt to eliminate any accountability on his part for carrying out his own desires. His attempt to eliminate accountability is not to benefit others, but rather to free himself from his own accountability in order to avoid responsibility. The more others accept the proposition they can have "freedom" from accountability, the less likely they will be to hold the promoters of that freedom accountable. One's desire to be free from accountability further clouds perceptions in this area. If a self-gratifier is given authority over an educational system (and they have), albeit a school or a school district, the system itself promotes rebellion among teachers and students as the authority seeks to eliminate accountability for wrong decisions instead of teaching how to make right decisions. The system will become less and less manageable and more and more disruptive. This will increase the cost of the system because disorder is always more costly than order. Eventually, such a system will collapse from within unless held together by some type of force. If the authority behind the force is educated in the same system, it, too, will collapse from within.

Characteristics

A person's ultimate goal is revealed in his character. He exhibits either the characteristics of a self-gratifier or the characteristics of one living for the benefit of others. These characteristics grow more and more consistent the longer the person maintains his ultimate goal. A person living for himself may have a desire to live for others or may desire to appear to be living for such a purpose in order to gain something for himself. However, since he has not made a decision to live for the benefit of others, his actions over time will be inconsistent with such a goal and will bear out those characteristics consistent with self-gratification.

Examine the following characteristics and behavior and add your reasons as to why they fit one goal or the other. Keep in mind that when one makes a conscious decision to change goals, it will be some time before the characteristics of the former goal are outweighed by those of the new goal. In observing your own behavior and that of others, determine which characteristics are increasing and which are decreasing. This observation will provide solid evidence of the actual adopted goal.

A person living for the good of others is just in his decisions. He sets aside his self-interest in the outcome of each decision in order to make the decision that is beneficial to all concerned. He understands the importance of each person receiving the consequences of his or her decisions regardless of how he may feel about a situation. He does not make a decision based on his feelings, but upon the facts and circumstances applicable to each decision. At the same time, he will be merciful without violating justice. He seeks to relieve others of their sufferings when it is consistent with justice. However, in the interest of others' security and for the sake of orderliness, he does not allow his feelings of mercy or compassion to interfere with his reason. He realizes that one will not understand and appreciate mercy, or the granting of relief from the consequences of one's actions, unless he first recognizes and acknowledges his own accountability for the consequences he is receiving. Justice results when every decision receives the result it deserves. One living for others will not grant relief from consequences (unless the consequences are immediately life threatening) until the prospective recipient understands what he deserves, why he deserves it, and makes a decision not to continue the action which produces the consequences.

One living for himself is not just, although he may try to appear so, for he is always interested in the outcome of a decision and how it affects him personally, whether directly or indirectly. He uses evidence and circumstances to justify his feelings or desires rather than to determine the accuracy of his decision. He determines what he wants to do and then attempts to accept only the facts that support his desires. If he determines the outcome of a decision is not important to him personally, then his desire to appear just may prevail. If his desire to be

merciful or compassionate prevails, he attempts to be merciful. This attempt to be merciful is nothing more than simply gratifying a desire. He tries to relieve another of his suffering, not because the other is suffering, but because the suffering made him feel bad, compassionate or sympathetic. This explains why many appeals for funds are based upon feelings, e.g. picture of suffering to evoke feelings of compassion. The self-gratifier allows his feelings to interfere with justice and reason. He refuses to understand that attempted mercy without justice is not mercy at all, but accommodation. He does not wait to determine whether the recipient of the suffering has learned from his wrong decision. He will simply try to relieve him of the consequences. This leads to disorder, because the person who was relieved will begin to expect ~ even demand ~ that others relieve him from the consequences of wrong decisions. He seldom realizes that he must change his own decisions or he, as well as others, will continue to suffer.

Instead of being just, the one living for self is judgmental if he feels that someone has violated his sense of right and wrong. This may result in a conflict with his feelings of compassion. The strongest feeling then governs that person's decision. When judgmental, the self-gratifier criticizes and condemns. He offers no constructive help. He does not attempt to help the other person learn from the consequences of wrong decisions; he just condemns the decisions. This leads to resentment and a breakdown in communication. These feelings can become distorted so that compassion is directed toward the criminal and resentment toward the government that is attempting to maintain order.

One who is living to benefit others respects and obeys authority, realizing this promotes orderliness and that orderliness depends on such respect. He accepts just laws and rules even though they restrict him personally. If, after careful study, he determines a law or a rule to be unjust, he will appeal to the proper authority rather than rebel through disobedience. Again, this type of behavior promotes orderliness, while disobedience and rebellion promote disorder. Orderliness is necessary for security and enhances unity. Disorder increases insecurity and division. If the person with the goal of living for others, however, is "required" by his authority to take action he can prove incorrect, for the good of all, he will not compromise regardless of the cost to himself.

A person living for self-gratification only obeys authority when he thinks he will personally benefit or the consequences of his disobedience are greater than he desires to chance. He breaks rules with impunity if he does not discern any consequences to himself. He attempts to ignore apparent consequences from the activities he desires to do. This leads to his own personal lawlessness and lack of self-control. His example encourages others to disrespect and disobey authority, resulting in further lawlessness. His violation of laws and rules for his own self-gratification, if followed by others, leads to a breakdown in order. The

resulting disorder, unless corrected, causes the destruction of whatever institution is involved or leads to laws and rules more oppressive than those originally violated. As one can clearly understand, the greater the segment of any society living for self-gratification, the quicker the society is disrupted and destroyed to be eventually governed by repression.

One living for others has an uncompromised intellect because his intellect has not become a tool of self-gratification. He is intellectually honest. Honesty requires the willingness to seek the truth in all decisions and the willingness to submit to it when clearly found. One living for others seeks the truth in each decision in order to benefit all concerned. He realizes that truth is the only basis upon which he can truly benefit others. His intellect, when uncompromised by his own desires, is able to weigh decisions and evidence to determine consistencies and inconsistencies prior to making a decision.

This uncompromised intellect enhances one's ability to accurately evaluate facts and experiences in light of known truth. The importance of an accurate evaluation is clearly seen as necessary in making decisions that benefit all others. The importance of learning becomes clear. The importance of reading and accurately communicating is revealed. One living for others makes the decision to study and learn for the benefit of others. He realizes he can best help others through accurate study and learning. In the education area, this increases the student's "teachability". Once a child has made the decision to learn, an unprepared teacher may find it difficult to keep up with him.

One who lives for self-gratification has a subdued intellect. His intellect is a slave to his desires. Instead of using his intellect to discover truth and abide by it, he uses his intellect to justify his desires. He tries to "figure out" how to gratify his desires rather than determining the correct course of action. He will avoid evidence that refutes his desires. His evaluation of facts and experiences is intentionally biased in order to attempt to fulfill his desires. He refuses to listen to others who disagree with his wants and desires. He will even commit intellectual suicide, if necessary, to carry out his own gratification. That is, he refuses to think about a decision for fear that he will find reasons for not doing what he wants.

One living for self resists the truth and accepts, without thorough examination, beliefs ~ no matter how absurd ~ that will further his desires. He is amenable to relativism, the belief that there are no absolutes. That is, he is willing to compromise his intellect to the point of believing there are absolutely no absolutes. He will abandon antithesis thinking and never be sure of anything. A subdued and compromised intellect then adds to the person's confusion.

The self-gratifier is not motivated to study and learn unless it furthers his desires. His study habits become inconsistent if his desires fluctuate. If he does not feel like studying, he must have a stronger feeling for the results of his studying ~ or for the consequences of not

studying ~ or he will not study. Also, if he does not see a relationship between learning and his self-gratification, he will decide not to learn.

A person living for others is patient. Because he is living for others, he seeks to understand the actions of others. He waits for them to have the opportunity to understand concepts before holding them accountable for that understanding. He leads others by example instead of trying to push them. He reviews his own communication methods without first assuming the fault lies elsewhere. His patience is not a form of appeasing the self-gratification of others. When others have had the opportunity to learn, he holds them accountable for what they should have learned.

One who seeks his self-gratification is impatient with those who are not helping him achieve his own goals. He may not always show this impatience because he has a desire for approval, or perhaps, a desire to view himself as a patient, understanding person. He knows, however, that he is only willing to listen to others if it is required to avoid undesired results. He does not try to understand another's position before trying to change it. He is short with others with whom he is speaking unless he thinks he will benefit by appearing to be understanding. He only attempts to be patient or appear patient with those from whom he may gain something.

Consistency is another characteristic of the person who has decided to live for the benefit of others. His life becomes more stable over time. This stability is not to be confused with the drudgery of living one's life in a rut. This consistency results from decisions being made upon well reasoned absolute standards. As these standards are developed, refined and applied in one's life, clear priorities are forthcoming. These priorities are the foundation for many decisions. Since these standards are based upon truth and reason and not on changing desires, one's decisions and the results of the decisions will demonstrate a consistent and stable life.

When viewed over time, the life of the self-gratifier is a jumble of inconsistencies, unless there is one strong governing desire. Even the strongest of desires has a way of growing weaker to ultimately be replaced by another strong desire, often to the shock and dismay of the person or the family and friends of the person who had built his life upon that one compelling desire. We have all heard of the "upstanding" citizen running off with his secretary. However, when there is not one primary desire, one's life becomes a series of decisions based on inconsistent and conflicting desires. The results and consequences of these decisions cause other desires upon which to base more decisions. In some instances, one desire may govern until there is pressure to make a contrary decision. The pressure lowers the governing desires priority giving rise to other desires. It is often under pressure that people living for themselves most clearly see their inconsistencies.

These inconsistencies are often seen in moodiness ~ that change of attitude from one extreme to another. This occurs because the self-gratifier is excited about the expectations of being gratified, and if the expectation is not realized or is delayed, the excitement dissipates and the resulting bad feelings sour one's mood. One's outward actions then correspond to these moods, causing others to lose confidence in the moody person due to his apparent inconsistencies.

Further, one living for self changes his standards as his desires change. When his standards no longer match his desires, he finds it convenient to change his standards. This change of standards also results in instability.

One who is living for the benefit of others is manifestly trustworthy. His purpose in life is to benefit others. Therefore, if he has been entrusted with the life or property of another, he does his utmost to protect and maintain that life or property. A parent who has made the decision to live for the benefit of others makes the best decisions he can to protect his family regardless of the cost to himself. Others will come to realize the trustworthiness of the one living for them, thereby enhancing their security. This increases family security. On a wider scale, it increases the neighborhood's and community's security. The more reasonable the trust, the more security accrues to family, neighborhood and community.

One who lives for the fulfillment of his wants and desires is never completely trustworthy. His occupation or position may depend upon an appearance of trustworthiness, and not wanting to lose his position, he attempts to appear trustworthy. He, however, always weighs each decision to see how he may benefit from those who have entrusted their lives or property to him. His desire to benefit himself will eventually cloud his decision making. This is because he does not actually care for these peoples' lives or property for their benefit, but that he may profit from the relationship. Whenever he views it to his benefit to take advantage of others' trust, he does so if he thinks he can avoid the consequences.

One who is living for the benefit of others is a humble individual. This does not mean he does not act confidently or is weak. True humility is recognizing and admitting who and what we are to ourselves and to others. It is an accurate ~ not inflated or deflated ~ appraisal of abilities and talents as well as weaknesses. One living for others knows it is necessary to accurately understand who and what he really is in order to make correct decisions for others. He realizes that he had better know his strengths and weaknesses to avoid mistakes that would hurt others. He is also willing to help others make accurate decisions about him.

One who is living for himself and his own desires is prideful. This pride is not the boastful, arrogant type, although it may be manifested in such behavior, rather it is hiding who and what one is from himself and others. A self-gratifier must maintain a high self-image

regardless of the truth, so that he may justify living for self. One living for self must believe, though not always admit, that he is better than others and they exist to serve him. He may choose to fool others by acting down or injured just to play on their emotions. Again, this is a result of his view that others are to serve him. One hides his true self from others in hope of gaining from them. He hopes to gain their approval or material benefits for himself. Pride, in reality, is a form of deceit. It is a way of presenting self to one's self and to others in an inaccurate light to benefit self.

When one is prideful, his decisions are based on his inaccurate self-image. Since his self-image is inconsistent with reality, the decisions produce results that are inconsistent with the self-image because the results will be consistent with reality. This often leads to frustration and additional attempts to bolster self-image. The consequences then increase, and, unless the cycle is broken, the self-image will be distorted to the point of absurdity. Reality will not allow the continuous maintenance of this self-image, regardless of the efforts of the individual (or his psychologist) and the result is despair.

The person who is living for the benefit of others is gentle. This does not mean he is not firm, nor does it mean he does not hold others accountable for their actions when he has the authority to do so. Do not confuse gentleness with passiveness. The gentleness of the one living for others produces a peaceful and soothing manner and is devoid of emotional excitement or anger. The person living for others realizes that gentleness is necessary to prevent another's emotions from interfering with his reason. He is gentle to enhance communication for others. He does whatever is necessary to gain true gentleness in his life. Gentleness adds great strength to its possessor for the benefit of others.

On the other hand, the person living for self does not attempt to be gentle, unless, of course, he views this as means of advancing himself. Pressure, however, usually unmask those who attempt to practice gentleness for their own benefit. A person who seeks his own fulfillment may push and strive to attain it. He may have an aggressive ~ sometimes abrasive ~ manner. This only happens when he perceives he has the authority or right to maintain this mannerism, i.e., when he thinks he can get away with it without unwanted consequences. This tendency is often restrained by the desire not to receive the consequences of disapproval.

One who is living for others learns how to be calm under pressure. He is level headed. He realizes the necessity of remaining calm for others regardless of how hectic the circumstances. He does not seek to escape from pressure, but he does what is necessary to learn how to overcome it. One living for others is someone others can turn to for help in stressful situations. He is not caught up in the excitement of the moment. He learns how to overcome anxiety and the inner turmoil that distorts and reduces the ability to reason. He is

also willing to help others learn how to stay calm under any circumstances, again, not by escaping or coping, but by overcoming the stress.

Pressure and stress often reveal a person's self-motivation. He may stay calm by avoiding stressful situations. He copes through escaping. However, when faced with pressure and stress he cannot avoid, he comes apart at the seams ~ at least internally. He experiences inner turmoil and stress. He experiences ever increasing anxiety. He becomes excitable ~ because his reason points out to him, quite properly, that he cannot handle the situation. But his desires command him to continue. This conflict between feelings and reason, unless resolved truthfully, may result in turning to drugs, including alcohol, for escape.

A person who has decided to focus on what he can do for others, regardless of cost to self, finds himself rarely provoked or angry. This results from the individual's concentration on helping others and his lack of focus on injury to self. Most provocation occurs when there is interference with one's self-interest. One living for others is concerned about injuries and injustice affecting others, not himself. If someone injures him or attempts to injure him, he has already learned how to help the party that is attempting the injury. This leaves him calm and able to examine the circumstances rationally. Then he responds properly rather than reacting in anger.

One who is living to gratify his own desires is provoked when he perceives himself threatened with an injury, physically or otherwise. This may occur whether or not there is an actual threat. One's desires cloud his perception. When one is living by his feelings, a perceived threat, making him feel bad, may cause him to react without thinking. This is not to say that many people have not trained themselves to stifle their reactions to provocation because of their desire to appear unruffled; however, even these people, when they have a clear indication that they are not "getting their way," react in anger internally, even if there are no external signs. The threatened injury interrupts their pursuit of self gratification and this triggers the feelings necessary for the angry reaction.

One living for the good of others displays a very important attribute: he has the ability to rejoice in adverse circumstances. He realizes that his own adversity better prepares him to help others when they encounter adversity. He is able to visualize the benefits to others of his learning how to overcome adversity. His adversity improves his ability to meet the true needs of others. Also, through adversity, he realizes that nothing can interfere with his chosen life goal of living for others. This knowledge increases his courage to stand for what is right regardless of the adversity he faces.

The person who is living for self murmurs and complains whenever his goal of self-gratification is interrupted. He complains about anyone or anything appearing to interfere with

what he wants to do. He complains about his family, his job, or the government for not helping him achieve his own self-interest. Of course, he may never feel like doing anything but complain unless something really angers him. He then only persists in his actions until the anger subsides. When this happens, he attempts to conjure up feelings of anger to continue his action. Upon failing to do this, he goes back to complaining and murmuring.

Encouragement of right decisions by others is another characteristic of the person who has decided to live for the benefit of others. He encourages good and just decisions within his family and community. He helps those in authority to make sound and just decisions. He sets an example of making correct decisions regardless of the personal cost. He stands against self-interest and self-gratification with reason and evidence for his position. He seeks to teach others how to reason and examine evidence in order to make proper decisions. With gentleness, he exposes the destructiveness caused by decisions made on impulse, emotion, or feelings. He does right regardless of the odds he faces.

On the other hand, the person who has decided to live for self, by his very example, promotes self-gratification. He may even discourage good and right living, thinking that if he can prevent others from living with set standards, he can excuse his own life style. He is actually only interested in promoting himself. He plays on people's feelings and emotions rather than reasoning with them. This discourages reasoning through any issue. In his attempt to promote his own interests, he may demean others who are standing for what is verifiably correct. He may even scoff at those who live by well-reasoned convictions. He could use sensationalism rather than facts to make his point. If his self-gratification is perceived as threatened, he actively opposes the truth.

One who lives for others has an uplifting attitude. He has a refreshing sense of humor. For most people he is a joy to be around for he refuses to malign anyone. He looks for opportunities to encourage and commend right decisions while explaining rather than condemning the consequences of wrong decisions. He realizes that wrong decisions bring their own condemnation.

Those who have chosen to live for self, unless restrained by another desire, often have a bitter and sarcastic sense of humor. They continue to put others down to maintain their illusion of an exalted position that self-gratification demands. They delight in the calamities of others, even to the point of thinking injuries to others are humorous. They may be exciting to be around, but their excitement interferes with reason and is usually at the expense of someone else.

Results

A person's motivation produces certain results in his life and the lives of others. The longer he continues his choice of an ultimate goal, the more defined are the results. The following are some of the results of choosing either life goal.

The person living for others, regardless of cost to self, has a clearly defined life purpose. He is able to chart his life's course by his life's goal. He has a standard to apply to each decision and a reasonable basis for his decision making.

One living for himself seldom admits his life's goal is self-gratification, though this is changing in America. Acknowledging self-gratification as a life goal used to make most people feel bad, and they would have had a desire not to expose themselves to such self-evaluation. Usually one attempts to adopt one of his sub goals as his life goal. He does this without thinking through his perceived "life" goal. This causes confusion and difficulty in maintaining a steady life course. As desires change, the self-gratifier's perceived life goal appears to change. This leads to frustration and anxiety.

Those who have chosen to live for the benefit of others are satisfied with life and whatever circumstances they may face as long as they believe they are doing the best they can do for others. Satisfaction in this instance is synonymous with contentment, as compare with gratification which refers to fulfillment of a desire or feeling. Those living for others realize that any circumstance can be used for the benefit of others, and this realization fosters creativity. One determines the best way to use the resources he has to bring the greatest benefit to others. He determines proper methods for expanding his resources consistent with his life goal of living for others.

This satisfaction and contentment also results in hope for those living for the other's good. They realize that no matter what happens in their lives, no one can take away their life goal. No one can interfere with the achievement of their life's goal. No matter where they find themselves, they live for the benefit of others. This changes their perspective for living resulting in a steady enthusiasm and zest for life. They face life with courage and renewed strength.

Those who have chosen to live for themselves, regardless of the cost to others, are dissatisfied with life. They never reach all of their goals. They never fulfill all of their dreams. They never realize all of their expectations. They are dissatisfied because they find themselves doing things they do not want to do. They have to do things they do not feel like doing. Someone or something interferes with their self-gratification on a daily basis. They believe the lie that someday they will reach a point in life when they can do whatever they desire. Life

becomes a matter of “if” and “when” statements; “If only I could . . .”, “When I get a chance to . . .”, “If only I had a . . .”, “When I get some . . .” As life continues, self-gratifiers come face to face with their dissatisfaction. They realize that they will never be able to attain all of their life's desires. They try to modify their expectations to no avail. They try to escape from thinking about their predicament. Always lurking in the periphery of their lives, however, is the hopelessness of failing to fulfill their lives' ultimate goal. This hopelessness is based on reason and evidence, and they find they cannot explain their predicament. Yet, without an alternative, their hopelessness is too painful to admit. They continue to try to hide their conclusion from themselves and others, usually until it is too late to change goals.

One living for others is not jealous or envious of others, their material possessions, or their positions. He is happy to see others receive benefits in life. After all, that is his ultimate goal. He also realizes that what may appear to be a benefit may actually be a burden.

The self-gratifier, as a natural result of his life's goal, will be jealous and envious of others. Whenever he sees another attain something he wanted or thought he should have, he is bitter. He may not even have the desire until someone told him of this new attainment. Then the knowledge of its attainment triggers the desire, and, if it cannot be fulfilled, jealousy or envy result.

Those who have decided to live for the good of others find the ability to live a life free from fear of injury to self. They learn to overcome fear of either physical or emotional harm. They decide to do what is right regardless of the consequences. They have no fear or are able to conquer fear, if it arises, because they have already decided to live for others regardless of the cost. They learn to overcome anxiety, realizing that most anxiety is caused by a desire not to receive the consequences of our actions. They are free from the fear of what others think of them. They are free from their desire for approval. They present to others that which benefits the others and live with the consequences, whatever they may be.

Those seeking to live for their desires are plagued with fear and anxiety. They worry about their plans going awry. They worry about whether things will turn out the way they want them to turn out. They experience anxiety when speaking to groups for fear that some in the group will think badly of them. They fear embarrassment because that would injure their ever demanding self-image. They fear ridicule for the same reason. They fear the truth because it exposes their selfishness. They fear letting others know about their fears. Their fear of consequences is a guiding feeling unless they convince themselves that the benefits of some actions outweigh the consequences or they think they can avoid or remove the consequences.

Those who have chosen to live for self-gratification often become indifferent and apathetic. They may have been excited about life at one point and what they thought they

could achieve for themselves, but as they received the consequences of living for self, the excitement died. Now they may even feel guilty about not being involved with others, but even this thought does not have enough power to move them to action. These people are actually hiding in their apathy to avoid disappointments like those they have previously received because their previous involvement was based upon feelings. They do not want to be disappointed again, so they escape into indifference.

There is an absolute consequence that is experienced by those who continue in their choice of a life of self-seeking. The consequence is ever increasing misery. It includes ever increasing fear, dissatisfaction, hopelessness, and indifference, but there is more. It results from a need that is basic to man. It is a need based upon reason and evidence. All human beings old enough to reason to a conclusion are aware of this need, though they may not be able to articulate it. It is the need to recognize one's self as useful. Useful things have value. Man knows that useless things are discarded. Useless things are not needed and are probably in the way.

One who lives for himself, based on his feelings and seeking his own desires, is aware of his uselessness. Although he seldom focuses on it, because of the pain, he is aware of it. He is aware that he is only using others and is not useful to them. He attempts to hide this and convince himself otherwise, but the awareness of the reality of this truth is always there, lurking in the shadows of his mind. He even interferes with his reason to avoid this painful conclusion, but the awareness of this reality remains. He is aware of the many times he has known the right thing to do but still did what he desired, bringing misery to others as well as himself. The longer he lives, the more he tries to escape from the truth and his own circumstances, which gives him further proof of his own misery. Unless the cycle is broken by a decision to change life goals, the misery continues to increase.

In stark contrast, there is an absolute benefit for those who have chosen to live for the good of others and who continue in their choice. It cannot be attained by seeking it, however, because that would be self-gratification. The benefit is ever increasing joy. Joy from the knowledge that they are doing right, and the knowledge that in whatever circumstances they find themselves they can be useful. They realize their life goal is of utmost value and the result is joy. Although they experience this joy they do not focus upon the joy because their focus is on others. Because of their willingness to persevere in their life goal they ultimately find a greater joy than knowledge can impart.

It is an interesting paradox: The one who seeks joy and an escape from misery, receives the very misery he sought to escape, while the one who forsakes his own joy and is willing to endure misery for the good of others, receives the very joy he did not seek.

What is Your Life Goal?

In decision making your first responsibility must be to examine yourself. Ask, "What is my ultimate goal? Do I set aside my desires and feelings when making a decision? Or do I justify seeking to gratify my desires as some sort of „freedom'?" This examination if sincere, will be the most difficult one you will ever go through. It is easy to avoid the question, and most of the environment around you will pressure you into foregoing such an examination. Your distorted view of the consequences of such an examination, along with your distorted frame of reference, will add greatly to the difficulty of this examination.

Further, self-examination takes time, it is not a casual exercise. You must examine each aspect of your life. You must review your relationships with others, your own desires, your actions and your reasoning process, to name a few areas of introspection. The time factor involved works against a thorough self-examination. Your desires and feelings work against you. Some of the things you discover will make you feel bad. When you make decisions based upon your desires, you may have very many other things you desire to do other than subject yourself to the potentially painful realization of your own destructive tendencies and actions. It will be easy not to find the necessary time. However, delaying the examination only compounds the problem.

The following questions can help your examination. Honest answers may be difficult, but are worthwhile for what they reveal.

- Why do you exist?
- Why do you like or dislike life?
- Why do you treat your family the way you do?
- Why do you have the acquaintances you do?
- Why did you or do you like or dislike school?
- Why do you like or dislike work?
- What is your highest priority in life? Why?
- What are your five most important goals? Why?
- What do you dress like? Why?
- What are your interests? Why?
- What organization memberships do you hold? Why?
- What type of entertainment do you pursue? Why?
- How would you change your life? Why?
- How would you change your closest relation? Why?
- How would you change your family? Why?
- How would you change your home? Why?
- How would you change your community? Why?
- How would you change the educational system? Why?
- How would you change this country? Why?

Hopefully, you have gained some insight into yourself and your own motivation. There are, of course, more areas of inquiry, but these should give you a good place to begin.

Because of the natural tendency of human beings to excuse our own failings and excesses, it is necessary to ask others for their honest opinions with regard to your relationships with them. The difficulty here is that most people value “not hurting another's feelings” above honesty, so in most instances you will have to insist on an honest opinion. You will have to explain that you realize that making an honest appraisal of yourself will be painful. You still may not receive a forthright appraisal because many people's frames of reference will not accept the truthfulness of your willingness to undergo hurt feelings in order to make an accurate evaluation. You will need to find a true friend at this point in your examination ~ one who understands what you are going through and has the courage to help you even though it may cost him or her your friendship.

As you can well imagine by now, such a process is very humbling. People are going to wonder about you and your questions. You are going to hear things that will shatter your self-image, especially when you realize that they are true. The examination process itself is painful, but worse is the realization, if you have not previously realized it, that you have been a self-gratifier and you do not have the power to overcome your own natural tendencies. Realization of one's destructive tendencies is harsh, but more frustrating is the realization that our tendencies have enslaved us, and our frames of reference are so distorted as to perpetuate the slavery. In essence, within ourselves we do not have the power to set ourselves free from our own destruction. There are many points where we can give up along this difficult road to freedom from our slavery, but one of the greatest is accepting the humility it takes to admit we alone cannot handle the process. It is a step worth taking, for the alternative is certain destruction.

The Power to Overcome and Persevere

The next major step along this road to freedom from the slavery to our selfishness is to find the power to overcome your own tendency to live by your desires and feelings. In your search you should realize that only those living for others regardless of the cost to themselves, can help you find this power. This is not the power to escape from accountability or responsibility for your actions, but rather the power to accept accountability head on and meet each and every responsibility. Self-gratifiers will seldom encourage you in your search because your honesty will make them feel bad ~ something they wish to escape.

Once you have discovered the power to overcome your own natural tendencies and experience the true freedom from your slavery to desires and feelings, along with the peace of mind and lack of anxiety when doing what is right regardless of the pressure on you to do otherwise, you will have the tendency to tell others. This tendency must be tempered until you are consistently applying this power to overcome and your life is virtually anxiety free. Otherwise, your inconsistencies will discourage others from listening to you. Self-gratifiers will look intently for those inconsistencies in your life and use them in an attempt to avoid the truth. Many of those who have discovered the power to overcome have learned this lesson after much sorrow. Just because one has recognized his own self-gratifying nature, has sought and found the power to overcome it, and has decided to live for others, does not mean he is immediately at the point of consistently overcoming his natural tendencies. Even when he reaches the point of consistently overcoming one's desires and feelings, all his difficulties are not over, but he will have a consistent method of overcoming whatever difficulties he faces as they arise.

After you have made the decision to live for others, regardless of the cost to self, and have found the power to do so, you must learn to walk consistently. The most important, yet most difficult place to do so is in your immediate family. Family members know you and how you have previously behaved. They have built their relationships with you based on your past actions. Their reactions and responses to you have been formed in part by you. Their expectations and actions will make it difficult to change. But with the power to overcome, they will see a remarkable difference. What is good for your family, rather than what you want to do, will become your priority. You will not be provoked by their interruptions, but will be understanding of their difficulties.

You must keep in mind that you built your frame of reference or philosophy while living as a self-gratifier. You must realize that it must be substantially dismantled and restructured. Much of your belief system may have to be discarded or rearranged in a consistent manner. At this point you should seek a verifiable set of standards to utilize in the dismantling and restructuring process. You must find a consistent primary source of truth upon which you can depend to assist in this process. The source must exist for the good of others, be consistent within itself, and be consistent with all truth. If your primary source of help cannot meet these qualifications then keep seeking. Your diligent search will be rewarded. This unlearning and relearning is again humbling, but will greatly increase your understanding of others. It is an ongoing venture and one of increasing value.

Living for the good of others would be impossible under normal everyday circumstances using only human resources. How could we know everything necessary to make every decision for the benefit of others? How can we know what will benefit everyone

concerned with our decisions? How can we know everyone who would be affected by our decisions? With only human resources our decision-making process would be overwhelmed and paralyzed by the magnitude of what we would be attempting. But our Creator has made provision for us, contrary to most of our frames of reference, His primary motive has always been to live for and give Himself for others (love). Because He is omniscient he always knows what benefits all others all of the time. His frame of reference, however, being perfect reveals that He can only share himself with those having the same motivation or life goal. A grave problem has arisen because men have chosen from the beginning to live for themselves. In order for our Creator to maintain a totally consistent motive ~ which He always does ~ He has to have a method whereby we also can change our motivation and live for the good of others regardless of the cost to ourselves.

Because of His ultimate goal, which we can now realize is love, the cost of the method must be whatever was necessary to allow those, who are willing to love Him and others, to escape from their slavery to selfishness. God in His infinite wisdom determined that this cost of redemption would be the suffering and death of the Messiah. The Israelite Passover sacrifice was an early indication of this method of redeeming mankind. Those who were obedient were spared and those who were not perished.

All of us at some point in our lives decided to follow our own natural tendency and inclination to live for ourselves rather than for others. Because this usually occurs early in life and by small selfish decisions, we seldom can place the actual step across the line. But once the decision was made, we became trapped in our inclination to follow our desires and impulses, becoming frustrated when meeting interference. Because this motive leads to chaos and destruction, which is amply borne out by human history, its ultimate consequences cannot be tolerated by God, who recognizes the value of order. Because of God's motive, He cannot allow man to reach the point of total corruption, although it was close during Noah's lifetime. Again, because of His motive, it would be incumbent on God to eventually destroy anyone with a destructive motive or provide a way to escape the slavery of selfishness. Since our ultimate goal is a matter of choice, He leaves the decision up to us. Do we choose destruction or surrender to Him?

The method by which our Creator grants us the power to live for others can be viewed as a transaction of purchase. It should be obvious that a human being on his way to destruction while encouraging others to follow is not very valuable. Even when this value is multiplied by billions it does not become great. Anyone who had something of greater value should be able to purchase all he chose to purchase if it could be done in a manner consistent with justice. No mere human being, however, could make this purchase because we have devoted ourselves to destruction and have no means to bring about our own redemption (purchase out of slavery).

Nor can earthly resources be used because they are also devoted to destruction as we use them for our own selfish purposes. Even if we had something with enough value, without a change of motive on our part such a purchase would violate justice, because the purchase would not change the motive. Therefore, only Someone who possesses something more valuable than anything in the earthly realm and who has the proper motive can redeem mankind.

This is exactly what the Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture did. The value of the incarnate life of the Creator is unquestionably sufficient to purchase all of mankind. It would also be valuable to all the universe to witness the innocent sufferings of Christ as a demonstration of His love. Jesus Christ agreed to purchase every human being who is willing to change his life's goal, who recognizes his own destructiveness and inability to live such a goal on his own, and who will submit entirely and without reservation to His Lordship. Without meeting these three conditions, there can be no redemption, for God cannot be inconsistent with Himself. To keep anyone willing to meet these conditions from slipping back ~ that is, unless he decides to forego the way ~ Christ through His Spirit grants each person the power (grace) to continue in this decision, to live out the decision, to (gradually in most instances) understand the necessity of maintaining the decision and to help others make the decision. Each person, however, forever remains the Lord's purchased property. Although He adopts us as children, the Scripture speaks frequently of bond servants and similar terms in describing His disciples.

Scripture also speaks of dying to self and of being born again. This is symbolized in water baptism. When one decides to give up his ever destructive self-interest and begins to live for others, he has spiritually died and been resurrected (born again). The forsaken self-destructive motive was the death Adam died when he chose to follow his desires rather than obey his perfectly wise Creator. He wanted something that was actually not good for him and made the decision to die. It was not as though he was not clearly warned. Of course, he “only” had God's Word saying that his chosen course was wrong. Adam and Eve have been the only two human beings, other than Christ Himself, who did not have the inclination to be selfish (to sin). They did not have any inward pressure to be selfish until after they made their decisions. Once the decisions were made, the inclination toward selfishness became an inbred human trait (which we try to excuse at every opportunity). After approximately six thousand years of human existence, the trait has become stronger and more pronounced. As discussed earlier, it warps our thinking, our frames of reference, and our decision making. Thankfully, there is an escape.

The escape does not lie in “turning to Christ” or “inviting Christ into your heart” so you can escape punishment. That is purely a selfish decision that only encourages others to attempt to use Christ and his sufferings for their own purposes. Remember, Scripture says

many will say, Lord, Lord . . ." but He will say "I have never known you." No, the way of escape is by receiving God's power to repent of your selfishness, to decide to live for others regardless of the cost (the sum of the two greatest Commandments upon which all the law and the prophets are based. Matt 22:37-40 NASB). And by surrendering to the Lordship of the Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture (as opposed to someone's imaginary Jesus Christ).

This brings us to the much used and little understood term "saved." So many church people speak of being "saved," but when pressured for a definition come up short. One prevalent answer is "saved from hell." However, being saved from hell is only a by-product (a nice one granted) of being saved from our motive of self-gratification. All selfishness must die or ultimately be destroyed by a righteous God. This is the reason a loving God would create hell. When we decide to submit to Christ's purchase for the correct motive, we are saved from our selfishness. If we attempt to gain heaven for our own benefit by some "magic prayer" we remain in our selfish state continuing toward destruction. Tragically, much evangelism is based on "gaining heaven for self," not repenting of selfishness and surrendering to a living Christ.

Turning from our life goal of selfishness (repentance) and surrendering to Christ does not mean we have eliminated our old frames of reference, our corrupted philosophies. Overcoming our old belief system may be a slow and painful process. Much depends upon how old we are when we start and how warped our frames of reference are. The Lord's power (termed "grace" throughout Scripture) is sufficient to overcome any frame of reference and substitute His perfect frame of reference in its place. This is one of the primary purposes of the Bible. Our Creator, out of a heart of perfect love, has granted to us His frame of reference in written form, so that we will not panic when we realize the bankruptcy of our own.

Be careful here. Remember you have beliefs in your "old" frame of reference concerning the Bible. Men with selfish motives have been arguing for centuries about perceived inconsistencies in the Bible. This is quite natural, though quite wrong. What else could they see with their warped frames of reference? It also demonstrates the zenith of man's folly: Man's continuous attempts to destroy the only Book which shows that way to escape eternal destruction, which attempts, if successful, would assure that none of us would escape. It is only the amazing mercy of our Creator that has kept this inverted plan from succeeding. Man, because of his own motive, is consistently scrambling to bring about his own destruction.

In submitting to Christ's Lordship as revealed in the Scriptures (Bible), we must submit to His Word. This means reading, meditating on and obeying It daily (Psalm 1). "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32 NASB. For us to pick and choose what we read or what we obey would mean we are conforming God's Word to our frames of reference. For us to judge God's Word by our standards is a foolish form of arrogance, or perhaps, insanity. Who do we think we

are to make such judgments? This is not to say that we must unreasonably and blindly accept the Bible as God's Word. There is much evidence which authenticates the Bible as God's Word, if we will be intellectually honest in our appraisal of it (this will be the subject of another treatise). The actual problem is that God's Word is perfectly reasonable and we are not. Man looks for any excuse not to give up his perceived mastery over his own life. Again, such a perception is foolish and arrogant, leading as usual to destruction.

Read God's Word daily. Make this your number one priority. "But seek first His [God's] kingdom and His righteousness." Matt 6:33 NASB. Where do you seek? In His Word. Do not be concerned with the segments, as large as they may be, that you do not understand. There will be plenty that is clear and that you will understand if you are willing to obey Christ. Ask Him to work those areas into your life, and when He does ~ and He will ~ you can be assured that there will be more clarity and understanding. This in turn needs to be worked into your life as your old way of life is being eliminated. Ask God for His patience as you go through the process. There is no hurry, you now have forever for Christ to build His frame of reference in you. We cannot possibly understand an all-wise God unless He chooses to reveal His ways to us.

Once we understand our own bankrupt condition, we can only truly hope in the Lord. He is the only true source of hope anyway, hope being the expectation of good. From what source can man legitimately expect good? From mankind in its current state of destruction? From government when controlled by unregenerate men? From financial institutions? From "experts" whose advise is governed by their imperfect frames of reference? No, the only legitimate place from which to expect good is from the heart of a purely benevolent, perfectly wise, all powerful Person. We have taken His mercy and kindness so lightly, and yet He is still willing to forgive us if we will confess our true motives (rebellion), turn from them (repentance) and fully surrender to Him. But His mercy will not extend forever to those who refuse it. Ask for the grace to only hope in Him and He will grant your request for the good of all.

Where does faith fit into the picture? Faith is confidence in someone or something. Man has greatly misplaced his faith. Confidence is the willingness to act in conformity to what that someone or something dictates. The Bible says, "Cursed is the man who trusts [has faith] in mankind . . ." Jer. 17:5. This seems to make sense after we realize that mankind is on its way to destruction. The Bible also says, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord . . ." Jer. 17:7. Again, this is reasonable recognizing that the Lord, through His love and mercy, grants us a means of escaping from our own destruction. Should we have faith in man who is not perfectly wise, or in God who is? In man, who does not know what tomorrow holds, or in God, who holds tomorrow? In man who does not even have power over his own desires, or in God who has all power for good? Jesus Christ is the author and perfecter of faith in Him. Whatever faith

you have in Christ right now, you owe to Him. Thank Him for it and cry out for more. He will gladly give it to you.

Scripture says, “Now abide [dwell, rest and continue in] faith [confidence in God], hope [expectation of good from God], love [the decision to love God above all others and your neighbor as you naturally, in your former motive, loved yourself].” That is a commandment by your Creator that He will give you the power to accomplish. He will never leave you nor forsake you, and He will give you the power (grace) to continue to choose Him and His ways. Do not foolishly turn back to the way of destruction. Because of whom He is, He is worthy of your submission and obedience, not because you deserve Him, but because He deserves to have what He bought.

He is a great Master and He will discipline you so that you will learn His ways. Thank Him for the discipline, even though you do not “feel like it.” Remember, His motive is perfectly good. He loves us and we need discipline. His discipline process is the only method of throwing off the shackles of our frames of reference. And shackles they are. He is worthy of your allowing him to prepare you, no matter how painful the process, that you may love others with the love He provides and help them escape from their selfishness and love their Creator.

If you have decided to forsake your self-gratification and surrender to Christ, then God's blessings upon you and your household as you begin or continue the journey. If you have not, that is your decision and no one else's.

And to God be the glory.

Embassy House at Oceanside

If life can be described as an ocean we must cross without sinking (into despair), then we must find a vessel that is worthy enough to withstand the storms we will experience along the way. As crossing an ocean without a well-equipped, sturdy boat would be foolish, so crossing through life without a well-constructed B.O.A.T. would be foolish. That is, a well thought out and verifiable set of Beliefs, Opinions, Attitudes and Theology. Our very nature requires us to have an explanation of life, so we adopt beliefs by which we attempt to craft such an explanation. Our adopted beliefs then become our philosophy of life or the frame of reference by which we try to make sense of that which we encounter or expect to encounter throughout life. Everyone develops a B.O.A.T., but most do so without determining whether the "materials" utilized will actually withstand the tests of life. The greater the variance is between our philosophies of life and reality, the greater our inner tension.

Man was created to reason and deliberate before making decisions. This ability appears to be lost in the twenty first century. We at Embassy House echo the prophet's words, "Come let us reason together . . ." We seek to encourage others to learn to use reason and evidence to determine the truth in every area. We believe we can help individuals enhance their ability to recognize and follow the truth. We do not subscribe to the "leap of faith" beliefs so prevalent today. Truth is reasonable and can be substantiated by sufficient evidence to be considered proof. Faith should be based on facts, not feelings.

We believe that there is substantial, verifiable evidence that we have a personal Creator who has communicated to us through His word. It is our purpose and duty to teach intellectually honest individuals how to enter a true, life changing relationship with their Creator. In a life full of storms only verifiable beliefs will guide the believer through the storms with joy, peace and contentment. Beliefs without a solid foundation will collapse amid the storms, leaving one's life in shambles.

Come visit us at our website and comment on our blog or write to us at the address below. We look forward to being an assistance in your search for verifiable truth.

Embassy House at Oceanside

P.O. Box 861173 St Augustine, FL 32086

www.embassyhouse.org

www.yourlifegoals.org