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to
Peace

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13 Weeks to *Peace*

*Allowing Jesus to
Heal Your Heart
and Mind*

JENNIFER JILL SCHWIRZER



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Dedication

I dedicate this book to the people who walk through my door seeking for peace within. Your honesty and courage inspire me.

I wish to thank:

Michael Schwirzer for loving a nerd (me).

Pat Arrabito for being an unfailing friend and a counselor's counselor.

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My church family in Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, for a weekly dose of joy.

Jill Wilson for her generosity and motherly pride.

All the seminar attendees over the years who wanted this book to exist.

The illustrations in this book represent true stories.
The details have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

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Introduction

After twenty years of teaching on the subject of biblical inner healing, I'm just now writing this book. I'm passionate about the subject and have spoken at countless churches, retreats, schools, and conferences all over the world. Several years ago, I "made it official" by obtaining a master's degree in mental health, a state license, and a private practice in counseling.

What I've shared over the past twenty years is now packaged in this book for a three-month healing journey to be used either by an individual or a group. Ideally, it works like this: Read one chapter a week during your devotional time, complete all the assigned worksheets, and answer the thought questions at the end of the chapters. Then, after you have finished reading the book and gained a blessing, gather a group of people and form a small group. Have each group member obtain a copy of the book and work through the book again. Meet each week and use the discussion questions as the basis for sharing. You, being the "graduate" of the group, should facilitate. Then each "graduate" of your group should start a new group, and the wave of healing will continue until Jesus comes.

I believe if you do this, you'll see positive fruit. I'm not bragging about my book because the book conveys the truths of God's Word. True, it does so imperfectly. I'm admittedly a weak vessel. But He works through such things, doesn't He? Take this book and use it. Decades of my experience and, more important, an eternity of God's wisdom fill its pages.

Purpose Is Everything

Raul had always been uncannily close to perfect. In spite of his parents' divorce and a difficult childhood, he thrived academically, making his family proud when he attended Johns Hopkins University on a scholarship. He specialized in otolaryngology, with a concentration in facial reconstruction. A high achiever religiously as well, Raul trained as a lay pastor and planted a church. As far as the dazzled onlookers were concerned, this exemplary young man painted a picture of leadership, poise, and spirituality. Then, at the height of his professional success and youthful drive, he proceeded to have a breakdown that forced him into a medical leave from the hospital; he spent days languishing in his bed, and finally booked an appointment with me.

In spite of his acute condition, sessions with Raul unfolded almost effortlessly. At times, I felt like saying, "You know, I really should be paying *you*." We discovered that Raul questioned his life's purpose. Although the occasional burn victim or deviated septum gave him the chance to use his training altruistically, most of his patients were models and socialites striving for the perfect face. He hated that his skills fed the vanity and excesses of the rich. As we talked, Raul discovered his disdain for the narcissism of both the patients and the physicians he saw on a daily basis.

Then, in the midst of the rubble of his crumbling "perfect" career, a tiny seed of new purpose began to grow. Raul resolved to use his training in facial reconstruction in third-world countries. He laid plans for a nonprofit corporation that would airlift victims of facial trauma to his hospital, where he would perform their surgeries. He envisioned eventually relocating to a developing country; founding a charity called "Save Face"; and living out his life in the obscure places of the world, ministering to broken, marginalized

people. As these dreams and plans developed, Raul transitioned out of depression as naturally as one wakes from sleep.

Purpose is everything.

For a worksheet on finding your life's purpose, see "God's Plan Life Purpose" in the toolbox.

Any good theory of psychology must answer three questions:

1. What is our ideal state?
2. How have we deviated from it?
3. How are we brought back to the ideal?

These questions could be summarized in three words: (1) purpose, (2) problem, and (3) solution.

I'll address the first question, our purpose, in this chapter, and the second question, our problem, in the next. I'll spend the rest of the book exploring the glorious answer to the third. I want to dwell most heavily upon Jesus, our blessed Solution.

A sense of purpose can determine whether someone keeps his sanity or loses it. Friedrich Nietzsche said, "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how."¹ Embattled soldiers, outnumbered revolutionaries, and persecuted believers all testify that a firm purpose braces the human spirit against the odds. Conversely, purposelessness makes us into wet noodles. As the scent of a lost child on a path keeps rescue dogs on the trail, purpose motivates us and guides us through the tangled dark forest of life.

We function properly when we respect the Designer's specifications. If I use my husband's electric shaver to mow the lawn, it will soon break down. Using a blow-dryer as a bathtub toy will harm everyone involved and destroy the blow-dryer. Likewise, if we attempt to live at cross-purposes with our Creator, damage ensues. As we search for a specific life purpose, it then becomes essential to know the Designer's objective in bringing us into existence. What was God thinking when He fashioned Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from the rib of Adam? What were His plans? What were His dreams? In short, what is our *raison d'être*, humanity's God-given purpose in life?

In order to answer these questions, let's observe the historical context of planet Earth. Rewind to the eons of time before the creation of humankind. Lucifer, God's "anointed

cherub” who walked “on the holy mountain of God” fell into sin. Perhaps the word *fell*, with its descending motion, isn’t the best description of Lucifer’s sin—for his heart was “lifted up” (Ezekiel 28:14, 17). Selected phrases from his speech recorded in Isaiah 14 reveal a brooding megalomaniac: “I will ascend . . . I will exalt . . . I will also sit on the mount of the congregation . . . I will ascend . . . I will be like the Most High” (verses 13, 14). These words drip with narcissism. Lucifer wanted nothing less than God’s throne.

Obsessed with this unholy purpose, Lucifer propagandized heaven, projecting his own tyrannical character onto God through sophistry and political sleight of hand. He succeeded in seducing a sizable portion of heaven’s electorate. “There was war in heaven” (Revelation 12:7, NASB). John’s revelation features a dragon swiping a third of heaven’s stars to the earth, symbolizing this mass apostasy (see verses 3, 4). We don’t know how many years passed while this struggle wore on. We do know that planet Earth inherited the fallout in the form of this fallen angel, “called the Devil and Satan” (verse 9).

Imagine heaven, post Lucifer. The smoke of battle still hangs in the hallowed air. Buried deep in God’s heart is unspeakable pain and loss; yet He has no time to nurse the wounds, for the exigencies of war demand immediate action. He’s been accused of power mongering, of maintaining supremacy for its own sake. He knows that the very existence of the universe hangs on His governance, but even this can’t compel Him to use force to tame the political landscape. He must win back estranged and doubting hearts. Only the worship of love will do. Piecing together the pre-earth story, we see that God created humankind in response to this emergency, with a very important purpose in mind.

According to Genesis, the “book of beginnings,” which is the interpretive key for the rest of Scripture, God determined that He would create a uniquely Godlike order of beings. He would form the human race, stand back, and say, “Look at them, and you’ll see Me.” And so, “God created man in His own image . . . male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27). The word image is translated from the Hebrew *tselem* and means “a representative figure.”

This theme weaves itself throughout the Bible. For instance, Isaiah 43:6, 7 says, “Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by *My name, whom I created for My glory*” (emphasis added). Made in God’s image, called by His name, created for His glory—these are purpose statements. Image, glory, and name all allude to the more contemporary word *character*. The only hint of

the word *character* in the Bible is the Greek *charakter*, translated in Hebrews 1:3, “the express image of his person,” speaking of Jesus reflecting the character of God (KJV). But the *concept* of character, and specifically humanity’s call to reflect the character of God, saturates Scripture. God clearly created us to showcase, manifest, display, exhibit—to *reveal* His character; *character* is defined as “main or essential nature especially as strongly marked and serving to distinguish.”² The essence, or character, of a being pervades and permeates that being. It also defines that being. It is the inner life of that being, flowing out expressively through actions the way perfume flows from a rose. Ellen White wrote, “Thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character.”³

In his letter to Ephesus, Paul speaks of “the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:9, 10, NASB). Scrutinizing his words carefully, we notice that the wisdom of God is made known *through* the church *to* the powers in heaven. In other words, heaven learns from earthlings—church members, no less! Holy, perfect, heavenly angels are watching sinful, flawed humans for a knowledge of God’s love.

Try as we might, we can’t fool them. Character amounts to much more than mere outward actions. Character is “who you are in the dark.” The Lord said to the prophet Samuel, who was examining the sons of Jesse to anoint one to be the future king of Israel: “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). We could paraphrase this as “people see the actions, but God sees the character.”

When traveling in the South, I was bitten by chiggers. Being a Yankee, I’d never felt anything like those huge, hot, itchy bites. Someone told me to try peppermint essence, and praise Jesus, it worked. The incident made me think about how our character essence must be pressed out like peppermint essence. Only pressure could squeeze from those leaves the healing extract that soothed my itchy skin.

Character has been likened to a soup tureen carried on a waiter’s head, which spills out only when the waiter is tripped, or rats in the basement are only seen when the basement is entered suddenly. Self-conscious restraint for the purpose of human approval can drive us to act well, but the shocks, accidents, pressures, and pains of life reveal our characters. The word *hypocrisy*, from the Greek *hypokrisis* means “playacting.” Very clever

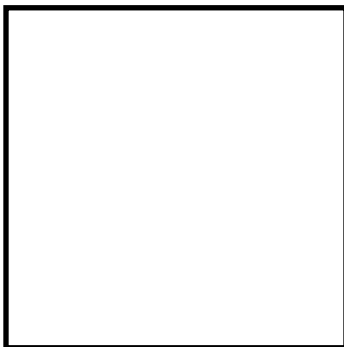
actors convince their audiences, but let the theater catch fire and the façades disappear. The inner life comes spilling out.

To a degree, we're all acting. As a teenager, I attended wilderness camps and spent many hours surviving rough conditions. On one particular trip the tent leaked. When it poured rain, several of us had to beg to be let into other people's tents! Cold, wet, hungry at times, portaging canoes, and carrying heavy backpacks, we strained every fiber of our bodies, returning to base camp exhausted. All our worst traits of character had long before spilled out. But this was a good thing. God desires authenticity. He wants us to know ourselves. When convinced of our depravity, we learn to depend upon Him.

Think about the loftiness of our purpose. If we were created to be like God in character, and if thoughts and feelings make up the moral character, then we're called to *think* like God and *feel* like God. Merely acting like God won't fulfill His purpose for us. We were created to have inner lives like the inner life of God! This is amazing! Perhaps "in His image" alludes to certain physical features. Perhaps our eyelashes, noses, and fingers are somehow more like God's than the inhabitants of other planets. But much more, our inner lives are uniquely fashioned in the shape of God's psyche, with the capacity for divine love, kindness, compassion, and all the qualities that comprise His goodness.

With this in mind, let's visualize the inner lives of human beings. We'll see which capacities God created in human beings, and see how those capacities find their highest use.

For more information on physical wellness, see "The Eight Doctors" in the toolbox.



First of all, we might draw a large square to represent the body, the "house we live in." Human nature is integrated, meaning that the parts interrelate and coordinate into the whole. The human mind exists in the context of a physical organ—the brain. The brain exists in the context of the body. Incidentally, this fact provides a compelling reason to care for our bodies: they house our characters, which are to reflect God's character.

A circle within the square represents the mind—the thoughts and feelings mentioned previously. The two bear an intimate relationship to one another (the

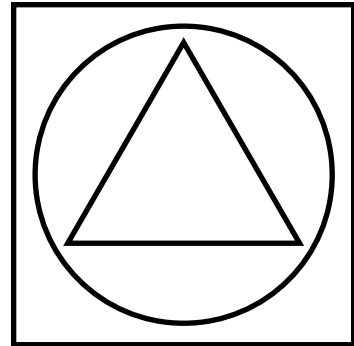
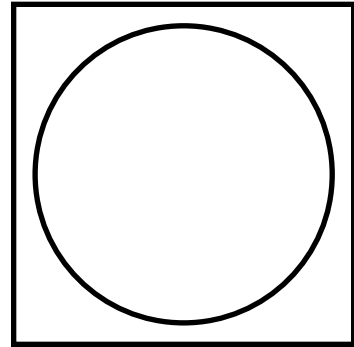
mind-body relationship is further developed later in this book). Here we find the imagination, drives, desires, appetites, passions, tastes, affections, and the complex range of emotions that we humans experience. This might be called the soul. The Greek word translated as “soul” is *psyche*, as in our word *psyche*. It simply means “the immaterial part of human beings.”

Finally, a triangle in the center of the circle represents something that places human beings in contradistinction to all other animals—the spirit, or the spiritual aspect of human nature.

The spirit is the part of us that connects with the supernatural. God created us with this unique capacity above other animals. The spiritual impacts the soul very intimately, for good or for evil. A connection with God will sanctify and purify thoughts and feelings. But the influences of “the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2) will taint the thoughts and emotions.

Unlike the mental or emotional aspect of human nature, the spiritual aspect can’t be accounted for in purely naturalistic terms. In other words, there’s more to the spirit than meets the eye—even the technically advanced “eye” of brain function imaging devices, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), magnetoencephalography (MEG), and electroencephalogram (EEG). This doesn’t mean that the human spirit has life apart from God—quite the opposite. It simply means that the spirit derives from a spiritual Being—God Himself—and *transcends* physical life.

The words *soul* and *spirit* each have multiple shades of nuanced, subtle meaning. Often these meanings overlap. Perhaps Hebrews 4:12 alludes to this when it speaks of the Word of God “piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow.” Soul and spirit, joints and marrow intertwine so closely that their untangling requires



For a study of mental illness versus demonic activity, see “Diseases or Devils?” in the toolbox.

something “sharper than any two-edged sword” (verse 12).⁴ So, even though the words *soul* and *spirit* are often used interchangeably, for the sake of simplicity, we’ll call the mental and emotional aspect of human nature (the circle) *soul* and the spiritual aspect (the triangle) *spirit*.

The spiritual aspect of human nature possesses four important capacities, or what are called governing powers or kingly powers. They are the (1) will, (2) reason, (3) faith, and (4) conscience. I’ll give a synopsis here and expand the ideas in later chapters.

Will resides at the center of the spirit. Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl rejoiced in the gift of free will with these words: “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”⁵ The ability to choose is our most secure and valuable gift. It is through this “door” of the will that Jesus offers to enter and transform our inmost lives. Specifically, through the axis of the will, God accesses all other kingly powers of reason, faith, and conscience,

For a more complete explanation of these subjects, see “Biblical Model of Human Nature” and “Spirit and Soul” in the toolbox.

enlightening and empowering them to mold to His own image. The will reigns as the king of the kingly powers.

Reason moves from cause to effect, enabling us to think sensibly, truthfully, logically, and soundly. Without reason, human beings quickly regress into infantile states, led by every whim and feeling. Reasoning, contemporarily called higher cognition, functions out of the forebrain, as do the other kingly powers.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy owes its success to the bolstering of reasoning powers. Learning to believe facts as opposed to irrational, automatic, and feeling-based thoughts, patients stabilize, sometimes to a remarkable degree. One client who had suffered a breakup with his girlfriend, cried out to me, “I’m worthless! No one will ever love me!” We were able to talk through that distorted belief and replace it with a more balanced view. He successfully transitioned out of that relationship and is thriving today, simply because he believed the truth rather than his feelings.

I wish to insert a disclaimer here: to exalt reason beyond its proper sphere, to feel that human reason is the final court of appeal on truth, is rationalism, not to mention the height of arrogance. We may stretch our reasoning powers to the breaking point, but

they still fall short of grasping the fullness of Truth. Human reason is finite and unable to encompass the infinite depth and riches of God, which are “unsearchable” (Romans 11:33).

But just like our physical muscles, we stretch the “muscles” of our reasoning powers to great benefit.

Faith takes over when reason fails. We may be able to grasp certain aspects of the great truths of the Bible, but, ultimately, they are beyond our ken. Then we must come crashing down at the altar of revelation, grasping by faith the things we don’t fully understand. A healthy religious experience balances faith and reason.

But even irreligious, nonreligious, and antireligious people have a God-given “measure of faith” (Romans 12:3). This faith is defined by the King James Version New Testament Greek Lexicon as “conviction of the truth of anything.”⁶ We all exercise faith in something; if not something true, then something false, because we are, by nature, believers. It’s as if God has put one-sided Velcro on our hearts.

Conscience works like a moral meter, the needle flailing when something is wrong and resting when all is well. Leo Tolstoy said, “The antagonism between life and the conscience may be removed in two ways: by a change of life or by a change of conscience.”⁷ Designed to motivate us to better choices, our conscience can throb with pain in protest of wrongdoing. A mistreated conscience can develop malfunctions, becoming hypoactive or hyperactive. It can grow numb or even seared if long resisted. It can go haywire with pangs of false guilt if not carefully guided by the Spirit and molded by the Word. But a rightly informed and enlivened conscience faithfully provides moral direction and boundaries.

In our original state, these kingly powers governed all other aspects of our being. The spiritual aspect of human nature governed thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. When Adam spied a luscious fruit, he actually *thought* about whether or not to eat it. Eve’s emotions aligned with reason and conscience. Passions, drives, desires, all submitted to principle. Human beings walked in dignity and elegance because God created us for self-mastery; for overflowing joy, peace, and fellowship; and for the high and holy purpose of showing the universe His true character of love.

What happened? We’re turned upside down now—our physical impulses, our automatic thoughts and feelings, our instincts, appetites, and drives dominate the

spiritual aspects of our being until the image of God drags in the dust. The next chapter explains the how and why of our backward, disordered state.

I remember a tense chat I had with my youngest daughter, who at about five years old, became angry and stalked off during dinner, planting herself on the couch with an ugly scowl. I walked over and began to speak softly to her, apologizing for the offense I'd caused. She stolidly refused to forgive. I began to speak of God's forgiveness, reminding her that Jesus had prayed, "Father forgive them."

"Do you think God forgave them?"

I asked.

"Yes!" she scowled.

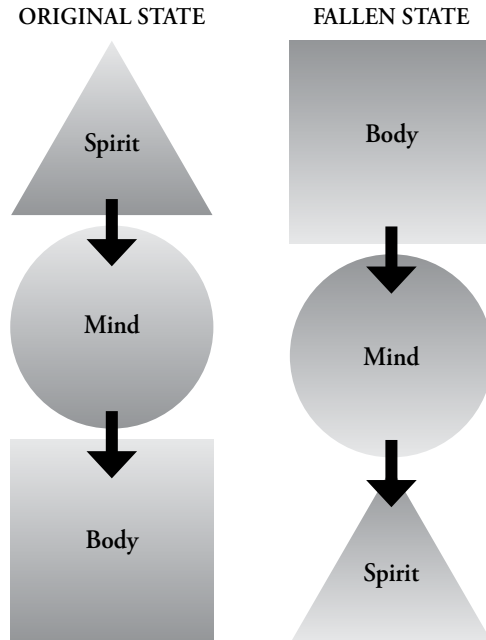
"Do you think God forgives me?"

"Yes!"

"Then why don't you forgive me?" I asked.

She leaned toward me, her blue eyes in spiteful slits, and hissed, "I'm not God!"

No, you're not God, I thought, but you're created in His image. You're created with the purpose of revealing Him. You've just temporarily lost sight of that fact.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was God's purpose in creating human beings?
2. How does an understanding of the controversy between Christ and Satan affect your view of yourself?
3. How does it affect my view of other people?

4. What do you think it was like for God to be accused of tyranny?
5. What are some of your own personal character issues?
6. In what ways are your thoughts and feelings in harmony with God's thoughts and feelings?
7. In what way are your thoughts and feelings out of harmony with God's thoughts and feelings?
8. In what ways has the upside-down state of humanity—living by emotion and physical drives rather than reason and conscience—affected your life?
9. How has God helped you learn to use your governing powers, and how has it improved your life?
10. What insights did you gain from completing the “God's Plan Life Purpose” worksheet?

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted in Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1959), 97; emphasis in original.

2. Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, s.v. “character,” accessed February 22, 2011, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/character>.

3. Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1977), 2:593.

4. The Greek for “sharper,” *tomoteros*, implies a decisive and exacting blow as opposed to repeated hacking. God has perfect aim!

5. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 86.

6. KJV New Testament Greek Lexicon, s.v. “pistis,” accessed February 22, 2011, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/pistis.html>.

7. Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, trans. Constance Garnett (Stilwell, Kans.: Digireads.com Publishing, 2005), 72.