

STEVE MCVEY

THE
SECRET
OF
GRACE



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THE SECRET OF GRACE

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*To Gabriel Steven McVey,
whose recent entrance into this
world is a gift to all of us.*

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

THE SECRET OF NOT TRYING

 Opening His eyes, Jesus could see the early morning light beginning to filter in through the window of the small guest bedroom where He had spent the night. He could hear His friend already in the kitchen preparing breakfast. No doubt about it—the mother of all buffets was being prepared. Martha always put out a great spread of food. He loved being in the home of these two sisters and their brother. For a moment He wished He could take the day off and spend some time with them. *It would be nice, He thought, but the devil never takes a day off. And besides, My Father is counting on Me.*

Arising from the comfort of the bed, Jesus began to mentally organize His day. *What shall I do for My Father today?* He pondered. *I know that I'll preach a sermon this afternoon. That's one thing that will cause Father to really be happy with Me. As He washed His face with a wet cloth, He continued, There are many sick people in the area. I'll heal some of them. My Father would certainly be pleased with that. Maybe I'll even cast out some*

demons today. That's always a big ministry event. When He finished dressing, He thought, Maybe if all goes well, I can even find a funeral service and raise somebody from the dead. Yes. That's what I'll do. Father will be thrilled when He sees Me take on a ministry project like that. Those things should pretty much fill My day. Slipping on His sandals just before walking out of the bedroom to face the new day, He prayed, Help Me, Father, as I try my best to live for You today. Use what I do for You to bring glory to Yourself.

A Reality Check

What are your thoughts on that scenario describing how Jesus might have begun a new day? If it sounds pretty good to you, I implore you, don't put down this book until you have finished reading it. I assume you know I have described this imaginary scene with tongue in cheek. Nobody would imagine Jesus living His life in such a way. Jesus trying to score brownie points with His Father? There's no way.

Yet for many years, I started my day in a similar way. I arose each morning focusing on all the things I planned to do for God during the day. I believed that the reason God opened my eyes to Him was so I could serve Him, and I certainly tried my hardest to do that. I dedicated myself to living for Jesus.

I was diligent and sincere and often felt successful at it. With my Bible in one hand and my Day-Timer in the other, I went forward to make my mark for God in what I then saw as "this heathen world."

I was a local church pastor for over 20 years and I was serious about it. My life was dedicated to trying my best to serve Jesus Christ. My behavior wasn't always consistent, but my desire was. I wanted to live for Him and I tried my best to do the things I thought He wanted me to do.

Even when I didn't think I was doing a good job of it, I still wanted it. I believed everybody should try to do the things God wants them to do and that, as a pastor, it was my calling to tell

them how to do it. Every week I would preach sermons intended to motivate the congregation to try harder, by God's help, to do the right things.

I did notice, however, that no matter how hard I tried, I always had an underlying sense I had failed to successfully accomplish my own internal to-do list that I carried every day of my life. When I felt like my efforts were successful I felt gratified, but I wouldn't have called it satisfying because I always felt a need to do more. I kept trying to live up to what I thought God wanted but I never felt like I had succeeded.

Twenty-nine years after I had first begun to trust Christ, He showed me something that shocked me. I'm going to let you in on this secret, but I must first warn you to brace yourself, because it goes against the conventional wisdom of the whole religious world, including the beliefs of many Christians.

In fact, if you didn't have any problem with the first few paragraphs of this chapter, you had better have a tongue depressor ready before you read the next statement, because you may need it.

God Doesn't Want Us to Try to Serve Him

God neither wants nor needs us to do anything for Him. What a blow to human pride! I had spent my lifetime trying to do the things I thought He wanted me to do! But now He was showing me that my whole paradigm had been wrong? That revelation shook my religious foundation into a pile of rubble.

I had always heard it said that we are the only hands that God has, we are the only feet He has, and we are His only eyes, ears, and mouth. As I think about it now, that's a scary thought. Jesus said that, if necessary, the rocks could cry out praise to Him. God once used a donkey to deliver a message to a prophet. While it's true that the Bible teaches we are the body of Christ, we find ourselves in a precarious position if we suggest that God's eternal agenda hinges on the success of our efforts as human beings.

When looking at modern Christianity, a person could conclude that God must be a quadriplegic if we were to say that the mobility of His agenda depends on our successful efforts in serving Him.

The Bible says in Acts 17:25, “Nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things.” God simply doesn’t need us. If you believe otherwise, I encourage you to take an honest inventory of all your abilities and assets and then compare those to the omnipotence of the God who stood on the vast edge of nothingness and said, “Let there be!” and there was. Stop reading and think about that for a moment. Now—what was it you have that God needs?

If you are troubled by the news that God doesn’t need us, let me give you some news you will be glad to hear. The good news is that He *wants* us. He has set His love on us and has the desire to enjoy intimacy with us. I used to believe that the reason God wants us to know Him is so we can serve Him, but Jesus gave a different reason for God’s giving us eternal life.

In a prayer to His Father, He said, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3 KJV). Jesus said that the reason we have been given eternal life is so that we may *know* Him and His Father intimately.

Ron and Mary Beth sat in my office, both totally exasperated. “I don’t know what she wants,” he said. “I try to do everything I can to make her happy and nothing satisfies her.”

“Ron, I’ve told you the problem,” she answered softly.

“She says that she doesn’t feel I need and appreciate her,” he went on. “She knows I need her. I couldn’t run my business without her—and our home, well, that would be a mess without her,” Ron answered, looking to me for understanding.

“That’s just the problem,” she answered. Turning to me she said, “I’m nothing more than an administrative assistant to him

at work and a housekeeper at home. I don't have any doubt that he needs what I do, but he doesn't act like he needs *me*."

Mary Beth's problem illustrates well the misconception that many have about their relationship with God. They believe that their relationship with Him revolves around what they do for Him. They can't feel close to God because they think His primary interest is not in them, but in what they can do for Him. While Mary Beth may have been right about her husband, anybody who believes that her service to God is the basis of her relationship to Him is completely wrong. Our faith isn't about trying to serve Him effectively.

When we see our relationship to Him as being service-oriented, we will relate to Him as a divine Employer who scrutinizes our activity to make sure it is up to standard. Our focus will be on trying to improve our performance so we can successfully do the things we believe He requires.

This mindset reflects a legalistic view of what it means to be a Christian. It is a view that is completely erroneous. God doesn't want us to focus on trying to serve Him. The secret to living the life He wants us to know is to *stop trying* altogether. Our focus is to be Him, not our actions, looking through a self-judging lens to see how well we are or aren't doing.

Does this mean we are passive about activity? No, what it does mean is that we are to focus on Him with the confidence that our actions will be the natural overflow of the love relationship we have with Him. When we focus on trying to improve our performance, our whole "Christian lifestyle" becomes perfunctory and lifeless. When we are obsessed with Him, we don't have to try harder to do the right things. Our lifestyles literally become energized with divine life.

Jesus Never Tried to Do One Thing for God

I once read a church sign that declared, "Your life is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift to God." Nothing

could be further from the teaching of the Bible. If we could make something out of our lives, there would be no need for Christ to have given Himself to us or have taken up residence in us. It really stokes our pride to think that we can do something for God. Yet the truth is that we cannot. Only God can do something for Himself. In His infinite grace, He allows us to participate in what He is doing by expressing His life through us.

The secret of not trying revolves around trusting Him as our life source instead of depending on our own determination and ability. If we aren't operating in the faith mode as opposed to the self-effort mode, then all we do adds up to zero. The key to living the overflowing life God intends for us to know is to trust, not try. We need to stop trying and simply trust.

How did Jesus live in this world? Didn't He try to do great things for His Father? No, He did not. Jesus came to reveal His Father to the world, but He didn't accomplish that goal by a lifestyle of trying out of His own strength and ability. Jesus once had a conversation with Philip that clearly shows how He functioned as a man in this world. John 14:8-10 records it:

Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works."

Allow me to paraphrase and amplify that passage: Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, You sure talk a lot about Your Father. Why don't You just let us see Him and we will be satisfied?" Jesus answered him and said, "Philip, you don't have a clue, do you? Have I been with you this long and you still don't get it? If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father. Why are you asking Me to show you

the Father? Don't you know that My Father and I are in total union together? Philip, the words that you hear Me speak aren't My words. My Father is speaking those words through Me. As for the things you see Me do, it's not Me doing those things. It is My Father, who is inside Me, who does those works."

Jesus very clearly stated that He was not the source of His own words and works. In John 14:24, He said about His speech, "The word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me." It was the Father—who is one with Jesus—who animated Jesus' life. He didn't try to do anything for His Father. The Father Himself did it through the union He shared with His Son.

For centuries theologians have debated what is called the "kenosis theory" in an attempt to explain the relationship between the humanity and deity of Jesus. The word *kenosis* comes from the Greek verb *kenoo*, which means "to empty or divest." When Jesus came into this world, He willingly emptied Himself of divine prerogatives. While retaining 100 percent of His deity, He chose not to live as God, but as a man who depended completely on God the Father. It is true that He was still God while He was here on earth, but He functioned totally as a man. He wanted to make it perfectly clear that He was a man just like us.

If the earthly life of Jesus can be described in terms of His Godhood, it offers us little encouragement. We could simply look at Jesus' lifestyle and say, "Well, of course He lived like that. After all, He is God!" Again, I emphasize that it is crucial to understand that the human lifestyle of Jesus can't be explained on the basis of His deity.

Let me put it another way: Do you know how many miracles Jesus could have done if it hadn't been His Father within Him doing the works? Not one. He couldn't have done a thing, no matter how hard He tried. Jesus could only do what God the Father was doing *through* Him. Don't take my word for it. Listen to what Jesus Himself had to say about it: "Truly, truly, I say

to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner” (John 5:19).

Jesus said that He could do nothing. Only as the Father expressed His powerful life through the Son did anything happen. Jesus didn’t try to do one thing for God. Instead, He recognized the Father within Him, and God did everything Himself, through Jesus.

Jesus repeatedly asserted that His behavior didn’t flow from His own self-efforts. He did nothing independent of His Father—*nothing*. Consider His own words in the following examples taken from the gospel of John:

“I can do nothing on My own initiative” (John 5:30).

“My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me” (John 7:16).

“I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me” (John 8:28).

“I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me” (John 8:42).

“I did not speak on my own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak” (John 12:49).

Do you get the picture? Jesus lived as a normal man who was totally helpless apart from the divine enablement of His Father. He didn’t *try* to do things for God but chose at every moment to live in total dependence on His heavenly Father.

Twenty-One Centuries Later

If the man Jesus found it necessary, not to depend on His own attempts at trying to live for God, but rather to depend on the Father to be expressed through Him, what makes us think

that we can succeed in living the life God intends by *trying*? Before returning to His Father, Jesus made it clear to the disciples that they were to relate to Him in the same way He had related to the Father. In John 15, He used the metaphor of a vine and its branches to illustrate how believers were to live in the days to come. He said,

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in Him, he bears much fruit; for *apart from Me you can do nothing*” (verses 4-5).

The definitive issue in living as a follower of Christ today revolves around recognizing our dependence on Him. He asserts that there is nothing we can do *for* Him regardless of how hard we try. In the same way that the Father expressed His life through Jesus, we are to trust in Christ, allowing Him to express His life through us. We are simply to believe that our life is in Him, and depend on His life within us to cause us to be all that He has called us to be and to do all that he has purposed for us to do. Don't make this matter of abiding in Christ complicated; it simply means we recognize that we live in Him and He lives in us and then we choose to let Him do the living through us at every moment of our lives.

Jesus stated over and over again that nothing He did originated with Him. The source of His behavior was the life of the Father. He literally lived by the life of another Person. So it is to be in our lives today. Every action of our lives is to be animated by the life of the indwelling Christ. The key word is *trust*, not *try*.

The Word That Spoiled My Success in Living the Life He Intends

For 29 years one preposition spoiled my life. It kept me from enjoying my relationship with Christ and placed me under a

constant strain. I thought it was my duty to live *for* Jesus. I don't want to get hung up on semantics here, but the emphasis of the New Testament is not on living *for* Christ, but on being *in* Christ. An understanding of what it means to be *in* Christ will totally transform a person's lifestyle.

In my book *Grace Walk*, I describe in detail my own pilgrimage from a lifetime of legalistic trying to the place where I began to experience legitimate trusting in Christ and His ability to cause my behavior to be what He wants without my huffing and puffing to get it right by my own determination. The words *for* Christ and *in* Christ may represent two totally different systems of living. *Trying* is one of them. It is a life of legalism. *Trusting*—the life of grace—is the other.

For much of my life my idea of living *for* Jesus meant dedicating myself to doing the things He would want me to do. I read the Bible primarily to discover principles for living a godly lifestyle. I regularly committed myself to those principles. I sometimes told people that I lived by my convictions. It was my belief that if a person committed himself to obeying the Scriptures, God would bless him. That, however, is the perfect description of a legalistic lifestyle. It is an attempt to gain God's blessings and to make spiritual progress based on what we do. It is a description of a lifestyle burdened down by legalistic effort instead of lifted up by grace-filled energy.

There was a major problem I faced every time I seriously examined the Bible to see if I was measuring up to what I thought God expected of me. I always discovered other commands I wasn't yet fully obeying. Consequently, I never felt completely satisfied, because I always saw how far I still had to go before I would reach the place I thought I needed to be spiritually. I was committed to biblical principles and I sincerely wanted to live for Jesus. Those may sound like noble aspirations, yet in reality they are subtle deceptions. Christianity is not about doing things *for* Christ. It is about being *in* Him. Ironically, it is when we live

from that truth that we find our lifestyles conforming to what the Bible says about godly living.

Compliance Without Obedience

Authentic Christianity is not a call to live by principles or to try our best to live for Jesus. To build our lives around biblical principles sounds admirable, but it is a subtle form of legalism. Of course there are teachings in the New Testament about how we are to live. Yet these instructions are not religious challenges we are to try to follow. They are descriptions of the many ways Christ can live His life through us as we depend on Him. New Testament Christianity is not grounded in what we do, but in what He has already done.

The Bible teaches that the One who has begun the work in us will also be the One who completes it. Paul said, “Faithful is He who calls you, *and He will also bring it to pass*” (1 Thessalonians 5:24). The Bible is clear: Jesus will do it, not us.

There is indeed a blessing to be enjoyed as we obey the Lord, but simply doing what God says does not produce blessings. Sitting at my computer one day, I opened my e-mail to find a note from my friend Roger. “Steve, why can’t I find this great life the Bible talks about?” he asked. “As far as I know, I’m doing everything God says to do. I’ve given up the sins of my past, but I feel like I’m still wandering around in circles. Help me find the answer!”

Can you see where Roger’s problem was? He states the exact reason why he believed he should be enjoying an abundant life. “I’m doing everything God says to do. I’ve given up the sins of my past.” Roger was experiencing the results of *compliance*, not obedience. Simply doing what God says has never brought joy to anybody’s life. The source of joy is Jesus Himself, not mere compliance with the Bible’s commands.

Many people struggle with the question, “Why am I not fulfilled when I’m trying my best to do all the things I believe

God wants me to do?” It’s because they haven’t discovered the secret of not trying. God’s purpose is not that we should focus on doing the right things. Rather, He wants us to focus on Him. *Obedience happens when we trust Jesus within us to fulfill the desires of His Father through us.* As He does that, we will fulfill the commands of the Scriptures. On the other hand, when we simply do what the Bible instructs, that is not godly obedience. It is nothing more than *compliance*.

Sometimes we can comply with Bible commands in the same way that anybody can choose at any given moment to make the right choice instead of the wrong one. For instance, the Bible says not to steal. The fact is that anybody can live up to that standard, whether they are following Christ or not. However, just making the right choice is not obedience. That kind of choice is nothing more than empty compliance. Trying can accomplish that much. It takes no trust in Christ at all.

Why Can’t We Live the Christian Life?

What has commonly been called “the Christian life” is typically more cultural than Christ-centered. It is often a cheap counterfeit marked by trying to behave based on a biblical template instead of living in simple trust in Christ. Authentic Christian living is nothing less than an expression of divine life through mortal man. Many people struggle because they fail to understand God’s method, by which they may experience consistent success in living the life He designed for them. Why can’t they live that lifestyle? The bottom line is this: God never intended for them to live it. Only one Person has ever been able to live the Christ-life. That Person is Christ Jesus Himself.

All believers understand they did nothing to become Christians. They simply trusted Christ. Yet many believe they must now try hard to do the right things to become a good Christian. So for faith, they substitute a fight to do right. Then they wonder why it won’t work. The fact is, it will never work. It’s not

supposed to work! No matter how sincere they may be, how hard they may try, or how much they may ask for God's help, they will never be able to live the life God wants them to enjoy. It isn't hard for them to live it; it's impossible! If you haven't seen that yet, give it time and you will. However, I assume you may already suspect that to be the case.

For many years, I didn't know how to experience consistency in my spiritual journey because I didn't understand the whole story of salvation. I knew enough to believe I was going to heaven but not enough to enjoy heaven on earth. I understood mercy but not grace.

Meet Mercy and Grace

The power of the finished work of Jesus on the cross has permanently dealt with the issue of sin's penalty. As our substitute there, He took all our sin off us and onto Himself. When He said, "It is finished," those words gave complete assurance that the sin issue in your life has been forever settled. Sin exacts a penalty. It demands that a debt be paid. "The wages of sin is death," the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 3:23. Just as surely as poor eating and exercise habits bring the penalty of health problems, sin brings the penalty of death. It was that penalty that Jesus took on our behalf. It wasn't the Father who punished Jesus, but sin itself that brought that horrible penalty of death upon our Lord. (Our heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit were equally involved in our salvation. See 2 Corinthians 5:19 and Hebrews 9:14) Thankfully, through faith in Him we are now able to be forever free from the wages of sin.

In His wondrous mercy, our great God has taken it all upon and into Himself. Jesus never sinned, but He took our sin as His own and, consequently, paid the price by sacrificing Himself in our place. He didn't deserve to pay the price for sin although we did. His death is an expression of His mercy toward us.

Many years ago when I served as a local pastor in an Alabama

church, I was driving from Birmingham back to my church about an hour away. When I exited the interstate I didn't adjust my speed for the highway I entered. In a few moments I heard a siren and saw the flashing blue lights in my rearview mirror. Glancing down at my speedometer, I thought, *Oh, no! Now I've done it. I'm caught.*

The policeman walked up to my window and asked to see my driver's license. "Sir, do you know how fast you were going?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, I do," I answered, trying to look as "reverently" as I knew how.

"Would you please step out of the car and sit in the front seat of the squad car?" he asked in a matter-of-fact way.

I quickly walked back to his car and sat down in the front seat, cowering and hoping that none of my church members would drive by and see their pastor in the front seat of a police car. After showing me my recorded speed on his radar, the policeman reached for his ticket book. He opened it and took his pen out of his pocket. Just as he flipped to the right place, I said, "Officer?"

"Yes?" he responded.

"Will you give me mercy?" I asked. The policeman looked at me for a moment, looked down at his ticket book, and then looked back at me.

"Okay, I'll do it," he answered. "Slow down, and have a safe day."

That really happened! (Don't think that's how it always is with preachers. Another policeman who gave me a ticket said that of all people I should know better than to break the law.) Do you see what happened? I deserved the ticket, but the officer gave me a break. I didn't get what I deserved.

That's how the mercy of God is expressed toward us. We all deserve to pay the full penalty for sin. If we look at it on the basis of *deserving*, nothing else is even logical (see Romans 3:23). It

would certainly be fair that we be the ones to pay the price called for by sin. After all, we are the ones who sinned. Yet, knowing what sin would do to us and in advance of sin even rearing its ugly head in this world, our God chose to extend His mercy toward us by coming into this world and handling the matter Himself. He didn't do anything wrong—we did. However, the triune love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit compelled Him to act on our behalf by rescuing us from sin's penalty, taking it into Himself. That's mercy!

Yet there is another aspect of the gospel that many people don't understand. Let's go back to that policeman in Alabama. Some people said to me, "That guy really showed you grace, didn't he?" The answer to that question is no. He showed me no grace whatsoever, only mercy.

However, suppose that before I drove away from him, the policeman had said to me, "Wait just a minute. I'm not finished with you yet." Imagine if he then reaches into his pocket, pulls out his wallet, and hands me a \$100 bill. "I want you to have this," he says. "Have a great day." Now *that* would have been grace! (Sadly, that part of the story didn't happen.)

Mercy happens when we don't receive something we deserve, and grace is receiving something we don't deserve. God showed us mercy when He took our place, taking the punishment due from sin upon Himself even though we were the ones who had sinned. Then He went a step further and extended His grace to us, giving us divine life by taking up residence in us in the Person of His Spirit. Mercy is wonderful, but it wasn't the main thing in salvation's story. The main thing is that Christ has brought us into Himself, thus freeing us from having to try to live for God. We can simply trust Him for our salvation both in eternity and in our daily lifestyle. The secret of not trying is wonderful because we don't *need* to try. He has done it all on our behalf and will now live it out through us each day.

Why Does Jesus Live Inside Us?

Have you ever stopped to consider why Jesus has chosen to take up residence in you? He promised His disciples that after He left this earth physically, His Spirit would come and live inside them (see John 14:16-17). Why does the Spirit of Jesus live inside us? Consider some of the misunderstandings about the answer to that question:

1. *Jesus came into us so our sins can be forgiven.* It's not necessary for Jesus to live inside you for your sins to be forgiven. Could God have forgiven us without placing His life inside us? Yes, His mercy would have taken care of that without the grace of having Christ indwell us.
2. *He came into us so we can go to heaven.* Does Jesus live inside us so we can go to heaven when we die? Why would it be necessary for Him to live in us on this earth just for that reason? He could take us to heaven without placing His life within us.
3. *Jesus lives inside us so we will know how to live.* Is He inside us so we can know what to do in life? No, because if the issue revolved around living a particular way, the Bible gives us enough information to know it. We don't need Jesus living in us for that reason.

There is one simple reason why the Spirit of Jesus Christ lives inside you. It is so you can experience life in the Godhead and express His divine life. Jesus clearly said that He came so we might have *life* (see John 10:10). In Him, we have been made alive (see Ephesians 2:1-7). The fundamental characteristic of your life is that Jesus has given His life to you and desires to express it through you at every moment.

The secret to a life of grace has nothing to do with *me* trying to serve Jesus. It's not *me* living for Him. It's not *me* trying

to do the things I think God is instructing me to do. A life in grace is *Him!* This grace walk is nothing less than the Christ-life. It is New Testament Christianity, not the hybrid version that has so polluted authentic Christianity by insisting we must try to do things for Him. The pure faith of the early New Testament church is nothing less and nothing more than Christ *being* Christ in us and through us at every moment.

For 29 years of my journey in faith, I diligently tried to live for Jesus. Although I truly knew Him, law (religious rules) governed my life. What a wonderful discovery it was when I realized I couldn't live for Him and didn't need to try to live for Him. In fact, my trying to live for Him actually interfered with His purposes.

God doesn't need us to live for Him. He will live through us as we live in absolute dependence on Him at each moment. This is exactly what it means to embrace "the secret of not trying."



WALKING TOGETHER

Let's walk together with the Holy Spirit through this book. As God reveals truth to you, it will be helpful to participate with Him at each step where He works in your life. If the prayers at the end of each chapter express your heart, then affirm to God that they reflect your thoughts and desires. You will get more out of this book if you pause at the end of each chapter and interact with your heavenly Father.

Dear Father,

I have experienced a struggle in my life as I've tried to live for You. I see that at times I've focused more on my own behavior than I have on Jesus. I now understand that I'm not supposed to try to live for You, but instead I am to allow You to live Your life through me. Teach me how to experience obedience motivated by love instead of duty. I can't live the life You have designed for me

in my own power. Show me how You can live Your life through me. Right now, I give up my futile attempts at trying to live the right way. Instead, I trust You to live Your life through me in my daily lifestyle.



GROUP QUESTIONS

At the end of each chapter you will find discussion questions to help facilitate further learning and discussion. The truths of this book will be worked further into your life as you consider these questions.

1. Read Acts 17:25. What is your opinion of the idea that God doesn't need us to serve Him? What difference will it make in a person's perspective if he believes that God *needs* him as opposed to the idea that God *wants* him?
2. The "kenosis theory" suggests that Jesus emptied Himself of divine prerogatives. Explain the importance of the theory in view of John 5:19. What difference would it make if the lifestyle of Jesus had been sustained by His divine nature?
3. List five differences between living *for* Christ and living *in* Christ.
4. What is the difference between compliance and obedience?
5. Define *mercy* and *grace*. What is the difference between the two? What is the result of experiencing God's mercy? What is the result of experiencing His grace?
6. Read John 14:16-17. Why does the Spirit of Jesus (the Holy Spirit) live in you? How can trying to live for Jesus out of our own strength cause problems in life?
7. Describe "the secret of not trying." Why is this secret so important in living the life God intends for us to know and enjoy?