

FOREWORD BY
DR. ROY MATHESON

***FREE
TO BE
ME***

***Experience the Freedom
of Uncovering Your
True Self in Christ***

Alfred C.W. Davis
With Diane Talbot-Schoenhoff

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Acknowledgments

This document is dedicated to the True Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth – without His grace it would not have been written. The content of this book is the fruit of 25 years of coming to know Jesus personally and learning about His healing power. There are numerous people along the way who have been instrumental in my growth and development, which has resulted in this document. The first is my wife Martha who has been a constant strength and whose faith and commitment made this work possible.

In the early 1990s, there was a group from Chartwell Baptist Church who helped Martha and me listen to the Holy Spirit to see in which direction I should be going. I had been in business for 28 years and was feeling unfulfilled. Included in this group were Roy Matheson, Connie and John Allardyce, Ross Macdonald and Norman Lea. Collectively, we heard the Holy Spirit leading me to counseling, teaching, pastoring, and shepherding.

With this input, I was led to study counseling under Dr. Brian Cunnington at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. In the second year of internship, under my supervisor at Chartwell Baptist Church, Peter Roebbelen, I started using the technique of having clients invite Jesus into their pain. I first saw this approach in Dr. Cunnington's class. We had watched a video by Dr. Tan from California showing how it was helpful to involve the Holy Spirit in the healing process.

I subsequently learned about inviting Jesus into memories, and the power of having lies re-interpreted with truth. In addition, I am grateful for the works of Neil Anderson, Leanne Payne, Ed Smith, Mark Virkler and Francis MacNutt, whose insights have greatly contributed to my understanding of the inner healing process.

I thank Sandra Ciemgalis, Randy Campbell, Stephanie Rogers, Mary Klein, Marta Durski, Andrew Lamme, Janet Goodhoofd and Jennifer Laviolette, my associates at the Chartwell Institute for Care and Counselling, for their support and input. I also thank Vern Isaak, Roy Matheson and all the members of the Chartwell deliverance ministry for allowing me to share in their work of setting captives free. I sincerely thank Diane Schoenhoff for her dedication to detail in the writing, editing and polishing of the material.

I sincerely thank Ron Shantz, the Director of Kerr Street Ministries, for inviting me to join their community and be part of their wonderful efforts to help the hurting. Ron's partnership has been an important encouragement in bringing this book to completion.

I also thank Terry and Melissa Bone for including me in their Blessings Ministry and for helping me to learn more about the importance of blessings in our lives.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my advisory team of Barrie Sprawson, Isabelle Van Lierop, Peter Stevens, Russ and Joan Browne, Ken Quiggan, Diane Schoenhoff, Ron Shantz and my wife, Martha, who have supported the goal of multiplying this knowledge of Christ-Centered Inner Healing.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will use the collective wisdom that has been gained from all of the above-mentioned people and for the authors who equip others in the ongoing work of healing and wholeness. All biblical quotations in the text were taken

from the New International Version of the Holy Bible, which was published by The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan (1978).

Foreword

We encounter hurting and wounded people wherever we go in the world. For some, the trauma is so great that it destroys any hope that wholeness can ever be experienced again. Our wounded self creates distorted thinking and a flight from the truth. We buy into the lies of the enemy – lies about ourselves, about God and about the world. To uncover these lies, to reject them and to embrace God's truth is all part of our healing journey.

In this book, Alf Davis provides us with a process whereby we can reject our distorted self and embrace our true self, as Christ intended it to be. I have had the opportunity of ministering and teaching with Alf in a variety of settings. Some of these have been close to home and others have been far away in places such as Indonesia and Colombia. I have seen people trained to use these principles so that they in turn can minister and bring freedom to others. If you are looking for freedom or want to help others who seek to be everything God intended them to be, I commend this book to you.

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INTRODUCTION

IS THIS AS GOOD AS IT GETS?

Have you ever asked yourself the question: *Is this as good as it gets?* If you have, you're not alone. As a counselor, I (Alf Davis) meet people everyday, including Christians, who ask themselves the same question. Most of the men and women I counsel are living defeated lives. They come because they're losing the battle over addiction, anger, anxiety, depression, fear, troubled marriages, unforgiveness and the list goes on. Their thoughts are plagued with lies, distortions, and negative messages from the past that warp the way they view themselves.

In some cases, the turmoil has been going on for as long as they can remember. Many of these individuals, inflicted with childhood wounds that run deep, often process life through a cloudy filter – one clogged with criticism and condemnation. Each day they look in the mirror, they can't seem to see their **true selves** through the fog of their hurt and pain. Many don't recognize who they truly are. Their thinking has become **distorted** and so too has their perception of reality.

I know what you're thinking at this point: *Sure I may have struggles, but I wouldn't go so far as to say "distortion". And even if that were true, how is reading yet another book going to make a difference in my life?*

What if we told you reading this book can make all the difference in the world. The only catch is that you may need to challenge yourself on the way you think about yourself, and how you see God and the world. This is no small task, but it's the only way this process will work. If you allow yourself to "*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*"¹, then, you will be able to grasp the "*glorious living*"² that God has planned for each of us.

ARE WE REALLY DISTORTED?

Recent findings from Statistics Canada state that as many Canadians suffer from emotional illnesses, such as depression, as from other leading chronic conditions, including heart disease and diabetes. In the United States, the National Institute of Mental Health reports the number of people diagnosed with anxiety disorders has doubled since the early eighties. Furthermore, the number of doctor's visits in which patients received medication for mental problems rose from 32.7 million to 45.6 million over the decade between 1985 and 1994. This is a startling statistic considering only one-third of all those afflicted will seek treatment.

In the foreword to Dr. Grant Mullen's new book, *Emotionally Free*, Dr. Neil T. Anderson says that our society is experiencing a "*blues epidemic in an age of anxiety.*"³ What's worse is that Mullen says that number is even higher among those in the Christian population: "*Perhaps the greatest shock to me as a young physician was that*

¹ Romans 12:2, NIV

² Ephesians 1:11, *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson p. 2126

³ *Emotionally Free* by Grant Mullen, p. 7

*so many Christians were in emotional pain. Their suffering seemed greater than those in 'the world,' since they would not admit that they were in pain and were too ashamed to go for help. Their 'religion,' which was intended to be a source of comfort and hope, had become a barrier that prevented them from being honest enough to get help, for fear of being condemned and shamed by fellow believers."*⁴

It is difficult to say conclusively that Christians are in greater emotional pain than those in the general population. Regardless, the reality is that it is quite possible to be a Christian and still be bound in sinful habits and attitudes, with dysfunctional relationships, deep personality scars, addictions and compulsions. Mullen says: "*When believers are so attached to their old thinking patterns and the sin that always accompanies them, they will remain infant Christians.*"⁵

Unfortunately, many Christians never lose their old ways of thinking, feeling and relating. Although they are believers, they remain stuck and are unable to have satisfying relationships, including their relationship with God.

KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE

Evangelist Billy Graham identified believers' vulnerability to distortion and emotional struggles decades ago in his book, *The Holy Spirit*. "*Many of the young people I meet are living defeated, disillusioned, and disappointed lives even after coming to Christ. They are walking after the flesh because they have not had proper teaching at this precise point. The old man, the old principle, the old force, is not yet dead or wholly renewed: it is still there. It fights every inch of the way against the new man, the new force that God made when we received Christ. Only as we yield and obey to the new principle in Christ do we win victory.*"⁶

Graham says many Christians today lack proper teaching about what it means to be a Christian or a *new man*. Without that understanding it is not surprising that victorious living seems so far out of reach for many.

While it's true that 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us: "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come,*"⁷ that doesn't mean we instantly change our old ways of thinking and relating to others.

Becoming a new creation is the work of the Holy Spirit. God's gracious gift of salvation does free us, but not from the requirement of faithful obedience to this *new principle* in Christ. So, to leave the *old man* behind and bring the *new man* in isn't automatic. God initiates the work and we are required to carry it to fruition by living a new life under a new Master. We can't abdicate that responsibility to God and falsely think we have no role to play in the renewing process.

In other words, although you became a *new person* when you accepted Christ, you still need to yield and obey the new thinking that Christ makes available to us in His word, such as, I am a forgiven child of God. When believers change their negative

⁴ *Emotionally Free* by Grant Mullen, p. 11

⁵ *Emotionally Free* by Grant Mullen, p. 17

⁶ *The Holy Spirit* by Billy Graham p. 104

⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV

thinking patterns, partner with Christ and “*take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ,*”⁸, then they are free to truly understand what it means to live the abundant life.

Just as a toddler doesn't automatically learn to walk after the first attempt, Christians have to learn to walk in freedom. Learning is a process – how to use our freedom in Christ under the lordship of a merciful God is grasped over time.

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

While emotional disorders appear to be a modern-day reality, wise King Solomon spoke of the bewildered and unsatisfied state of the human condition thousands of years ago in the ancient scriptures. “*What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest.*”⁹

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon describes the futility of life without God. Pleasure, toil, power, riches, overindulgence and success – all leave the soul empty and unsatisfied. God alone was meant to fill the void. He alone can bring healing and restoration to the Distorted Self and set you free to uncover your **True Self in Christ**.

John Eldredge in his book, *Wild at Heart*, sees the futility of striving to live a life without God and recognizes how it contributes to the creation of a Distorted Self. “*The whole false self, our ‘lifestyle’, is an elaborate defense against entering our wounded heart. It is a chosen blindness. Our false self stubbornly blinds each of us to the light and the truth of our own emptiness and hollowness.*”¹⁰

Recognizing that striving is a form of avoidance, we are challenged then to surrender ourselves to the One who created us, in order to discover our real selves, our **True Self in Christ**. He alone can give us salvation, purpose, comfort, wisdom, healing and the abundant life we are seeking.

Eldredge quotes C.S. Lewis in *Wild at Heart*, “*Until you have given yourself to him [Jesus] you will not have a real self.*” Eldredge continues, “*When the Bible tells us that Christ came to “redeem mankind” it offers a whole lot more than forgiveness. To simply forgive a broken man is like telling someone running a marathon, “It’s okay that you’ve broken your leg. I won’t hold it against you. Now finish the race.” That is cruel, to leave him disabled that way. No, there is much more to our redemption.*”¹¹

The answer is to place our Distorted Self before God: “*...fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it...God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.*”¹²

WHY THE DISTORTION?

There appears to be a growing soul-sickness in the world around us and in the church as well. While stress and pressures seem to come from an ever faster pace of

⁸ 2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV

⁹ Ecclesiastes 2:22-23, NIV

¹⁰ *Wild At Heart* by John Eldredge, p. 127

¹¹ *Wild At Heart* by John Eldredge, p. 128

¹² Romans 12:2. *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, p. 2054

life, much of the mental and emotional problems are based in a distorted image of God and of self. As Dr. Phil says in his book *Self Matters*, “*You. Like every other living person, get mixed and faulty messages from the world and from all your experiences in it. The result is a distortion of your personal truth. Failing to confront that ill-conceived personal truth is a crucial betrayal of you ,by you.*”¹³

In fact, it’s my understanding that the difficulties many people experience have everything to do with *distorted thinking*. That’s because the battleground takes place in the mind. When your negative view of life, of God and yourself war against the truth, tension is automatically created. Eventually the distorted thinking begins to define who you are and a *Distorted Self* is created.

MIND CONTROL

Mullen puts it this way: “*You see, the battle is actually for your thoughts and who will control them. As long as your old thinking pattern is unhealed and active, then your thoughts will be controlled and contaminated by your sinful and painful past.*”¹⁴

While Mullen, who is by profession a medical doctor, takes a holistic approach to treatment, this book will focus mainly on the need for spiritual and mental/emotional healing in the treatment of the *Distorted Self*. It’s important to point out that some individuals may also require medical treatment for healing to occur.

THE BELIEVER’S MIND

Without a doubt, the Bible is clear that the role of the mind in the life of the believer is key to living an abundant life. If that were not the case, Jesus would not have emphasized it in answering the Pharisee, an expert in the law, who tested him: “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul **and with all your mind**. This is the first and greatest commandment.*”¹⁵

Living the life God intends you to live requires you to engage your mind and your will. Transformation is an active process that takes a deliberate effort as you commit all your heart and mind.

*“Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*¹⁶

Yet the truth is, that no matter how much we want the abundant life, Jesus wants it more for us than we can imagine. “*I am come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*”¹⁷ We can take great comfort in knowing that God desires to help us move from captivity into freedom, “*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.*”¹⁸ God doesn’t want us to be prisoners of our old destructive thinking.

¹³ *Self Matters* by Phillip C. McGraw, Ph.D., p. 23

¹⁴ *Emotionally free* by Grant Mullen, p. 14

¹⁵ Matthew 22:37, NIV

¹⁶ Ephesians 4:21-24, NIV

¹⁷ John 10:10, NIV

¹⁸ Galatians 5:1, NIV

A HALF-BAKED CHRISTIAN

After receiving counseling, a former client of mine spoke powerfully of her transformation:

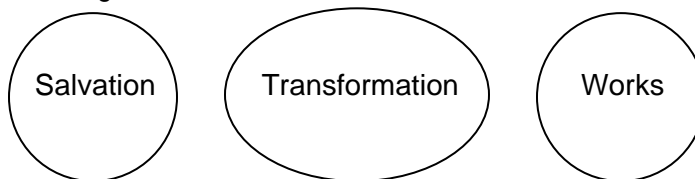
It's as if I was a 'half-baked Christian.' I became a Christian when I invited Jesus into my life nearly 12 years ago. The truth is it had been a battle ever since. In many ways my life got more difficult. After becoming a follower, I was under the impression that to be a good Christian meant going to Bible study, telling everyone about God and serving in the church. Being the over-achiever that I am, I just set out to get the job done. Nobody ever told me I was also supposed to invite Jesus into my heart and mind daily to help me do the work. I struggled with guilt messages about not doing enough and this left me frustrated. I was saved but not transformed. No wonder I was frustrated; I wasn't living victoriously. But then I learned the good news. What a relief! I used to think I had emotional problems. The truth is I had thinking problems that were undermining my emotions. Ever since I've been partnering with Jesus, who is the Truth, I've been doing much better. I am better equipped to renounce the lies and distortions that try to rob me of peace and joy. Sure, I have my moments, but now I'm experiencing daily renewal of my heart and mind. It has freed me to serve where I feel God is calling me, guilt-free, instead of doing it out of obligation. Now the Gospel makes sense. The good news is that I am free to be me, as God created me to be.

SAVED BUT NOT TRANSFORMED

This story is a witness to the power of Truth in transforming the life of the believer. Sadly, this woman's story of works and performance is common. Individuals accept Christ into their **hearts**, go to church and get busy serving. All the while, they neglect to consciously seek God for "*the renewing of the mind.*"¹⁹

After all, there's lots of work to be done in the building of God's kingdom. We recognize that "*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.*"²⁰ Of course I'm not suggesting for a second that serving isn't necessary. The book of James reminds us that faith without deeds is dead. I'm suggesting that in the Christian process there are three steps: salvation, transformation (sanctification) and works. Many Christians jump from salvation to works, bypassing the healing and transforming stage that empowers the works.

I'll ask him to get more info on it.



Salvation is the initial invitation of Christ into the person where healing of the heart occurs and forgiveness is received, along with the gift of eternal life. *(If you have not yet made that commitment, you can make that invitation today. Invite Jesus Christ into your heart, acknowledge that you are a sinner and He will forgive your sins and give you eternal life.)*

¹⁹ Romans 12:2, NIV

²⁰ Matthew 9:37, NIV

Transformation is about the healing of the mind and emotions, which is referred to as the restoring of the soul. Works are about serving others in love. Too often the Christian life has been conceived as: *Be saved and then go do good works.*

WAKING THE DEAD

John Eldredge summarizes the misconception of the Christian life this way in his book, *Waking the Dead*: “*This whole Christian thing is about trying not to sin. Going to church. Being nice.*”²¹ This approach focuses on rules and doing. What has been missed is that the healing and the transformation of the mind and emotions has not been addressed. And yet, Jesus clearly outlined his mission in Isaiah 61 and confirmed it in Luke: “*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.*”²²

How can a person serve others in love if he or she is still in captivity or bondage to his or her past? If the **True Self In Christ** has been lost in the tumult of life, and a *Distorted Self* has been developed, then restoration is needed before a person can be who he or she is designed to be.

²¹ *Waking The Dead* by John Eldredge, p. 80

²² Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:18, NIV

RESTORING THE SOUL

Psalm 23 refers transformation when it says, “*he restores my soul.*”²³ This second step of transformation is needed otherwise we tend to do good works in our own strength to earn love instead of being empowered by the truth of love to give selflessly.

Christ-centered inner healing, which is the approach I use in my counseling practice, addresses this second step in the Christian process. Jesus is invited into the mind to uncover the **True Self in Christ**. In the process, Jesus himself is the healer, Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals. “*For I am the Lord who heals you.*”²⁴ When asked, he comes to meet us in our brokenness and enter into the unhealed places of our hearts and minds.

I have seen His healing firsthand. When Jesus brings His truth to peoples’ minds, the distortion is clarified and peoples’ lives change for the better. When people expose the *lies* that *distort* and receive the *truth* that heals, they begin to uncover their **True Self in Christ** and are free to live the victorious life God promises.

Allow me to borrow a simple illustration from nature. In the process of becoming a butterfly, the caterpillar, hidden inside its cocoon, struggles to become transformed, to break free and fly. So it is with many Christians today who struggle to break free from the confines of their minds, where lies and distorted thoughts hold them captive.

When believers are exposed to the truth, it replaces the lies and breaks its power to oppress. Only then, can they break free and begin to live a transformed life where they experience true freedom and joy.

WHO CARES?

God does. Truly, if it were not for Jesus’ desire to heal the broken-hearted, many would remain troubled. The good news is God understands our plight, “*I will tear off your veils and save my people from your hands, and they will no longer fall prey to your power; then you will know that I am the Lord. Because you dishearten the righteous with your lies.*”²⁵

God recognizes the connection between lies that people believe and the Truth that heals a broken heart. He also knows how easy it is for us to become trapped by our negative thinking, “*A man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.*”²⁶

But, if we turn to him he is willing to help. “He will call upon me, and I will answer him.”²⁷ “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.”²⁸

WHERE IS GOD WHEN IT HURTS?

²³ Psalm 23:3, NIV

²⁴ Exodus 15:26, NIV

²⁵ Ezekiel 13:21, NIV

²⁶ 2 Peter 2:19, NIV

²⁷ Psalm 91:15, NIV

²⁸ Psalm 32:8, NIV

Remember that God wants to deliver you from the *old, dead life* and free you from the negative perceptions, distortions and lies you've been believing about who you think you are – the ones that hold you back from living life more abundantly.

Thankfully, God loves you too much to leave you the way you are. He wants to help you change. His desire is for His people to be transformed into the likeness of His Son Jesus Christ.

“But, whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”²⁹

LIVING A LIE

You cannot live in freedom, as long as you are living a lie. Take the story of the young couple on the verge of divorce. The husband's thinking and perceptions had become distorted by the childhood lie that he was stupid. Later when he was married, he perceived his wife's every request as a personal attack on his self worth. When he invited Jesus Christ into his memory, he heard the truth that he is a bright, competent person, which changed how he viewed himself.

In this case, neither the husband nor his wife realized how deeply the man's negative childhood thoughts were affecting their marriage. The couple is now living a more satisfying married life.

The process was effective because it dealt with the root issues where both cognitive and emotional transformation occurred. The key to the change was the **truth** of Jesus Christ. Not only was the source of the distortion identified, but the deeply-rooted pain accompanying it was also healed. The power of the lie was lost when he refused to believe it, when he replaced the lie with **truth**. And so he began to live a transformed life.

In other words, he couldn't be free of his anger and relate to his wife as long as he tried to protect himself from the lie that he was stupid.

As Eldredge says, “*You cannot love another person from a false self. You cannot love another while you are still hiding.*”³⁰

STEPS TO FREEDOM

The problem is that coming out of hiding isn't easy. We just have to think of Adam and Eve. What was the first thing they did once they recognized their sin in eating the forbidden fruit? They hid. It just seemed like the natural thing to do. Stepping into freedom takes courage and a lot of hard work, and healing is a process that takes time.

Yet, the Apostle Paul insists the only way to be free is to stay steadfast to the teaching in the Scriptures: “*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*”³¹

²⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:16-18, NIV

³⁰ *Waking The Dead* by John Eldredge, p. 88

In order to put our old life behind us, we need to make a conscious commitment daily to put on our new life in Christ, our new role. And to head in that new direction, we need to adopt the new way of thinking that only the Holy Spirit gives.

VIRUS PROTECTION PROGRAM

Think of the process from a modern-day perspective. Most households today are equipped with one or more personal computers. It is common practice to install an anti-virus program for your new computer. These filters regularly scan the hard drive for menacing viruses. Without such programs, computers run the risk of crashing. And so it is with believers, we need to be equipped with an anti-distortion program that rids our mind of negative unhealthy thinking that causes us to stumble. The Truth of Jesus, if applied daily to Christian living, is just the anti-distortion protection that we need.

Perhaps you're skeptical about all this. After all, installing an anti-distortion program for the Christian mind? Maybe you believe that inner healing for distortions and hurt may work for others but not for you. No doubt your situation is unique. Or you think there is nothing in your life that needs changing. After all, your perceptions are just fine. But what if change for the better is possible? Perhaps there are aspects of your life where a change of thinking and perception could help. Maybe your current thinking has obscured who you really are and is preventing you from knowing your **True Self in Christ**.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

In his book, *Self Matters*, Dr. Phil McGraw challenges the reader to get real. He urges them to get rid of doubt and distortion and to live an authentic life, "*Wouldn't it be tragic if a very different, vibrant you was buried under a pile of worldly to-do lists, and you were mindlessly accepting the world's expectancies? There is an authentic self within you.*"³²

Similarly, although from a distinctly Christian perspective, we've written this book to challenge your thinking and cause you to question whether you are truly living the victorious Christian life Jesus came to offer. You'll be asked to take an honest look at yourself and see whether your thoughts, perceptions and feelings line up with biblical teaching.

As you read on you'll witness for yourself how God transforms lives with Truth. In the following pages, we will explain the concept of the *Distorted Self*, how it is created and how it interferes with knowing your **True Self in Christ**. We will share stories of how others have invited Jesus into their minds and show how the Truth has set them free. You will find prayers that will help you initiate change, so that you can personally receive healing you never thought possible.

After reading this book, it is our desire that you too will know that a transformed life is possible. You will see that the byproduct of this process is clearer thinking, peace of mind and joy.

³¹ John 8:32, NIV

³² *Self Matters* by Phillip C. McGraw, Ph.D., p. 29

So let's explore together this concept of partnering with Jesus Christ to obtain inner healing. You will not only find that there is hope for change, but you will experience the transformation God promises.

Maybe your life isn't *as good as it gets* – perhaps it can be a whole lot better. What if it's no coincidence that you're reading this book right now. Could it be a divine appointment – an opportunity for God to teach you something about Himself and who you *really* are in Him? With the help of Jesus, it **is** possible to leave your **Distorted Self** behind and be free to uncover your true identity, as God sees you. After all, "*It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life.*"³³ "*So take your stand. Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.*"³⁴

You may be surprised to learn that you are "*fearfully and wonderfully made*"³⁵ and that your **True Self in Christ** is a whole lot better than you ever imagined.

³³ *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, p. 2122

³⁴ *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, p. 2121

³⁵ Psalm 139:14, NIV