

~Outline for Life~

Your Life—God’s Design

Part 2—Your Soul

*May your whole spirit, **soul** and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ¹ Thessalonians 5:23 NIV

The Essential Core Principles for Mental and Emotional Well-Being

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 NIV

- 1. You must embrace and practice daily the essential core principles for physical and spiritual well-being as outlined in Part 1 and Part 3.**
 - Your tripartite nature—Body, Soul, and Spirit
- 2. A healthy self-esteem, self-image, proper identity, and fully embracing who you truly are, are the foundations upon which mental and emotional well-being are built.**
 - Foundations of a healthy self-image
 - “This Is Who I Am” is an essential read on the Resources Page of my website, JeffHoracek.com
- 3. Refuse to let your past dictate the success of your future.**
- 4. You must win the wars waged in your mind each day by manifesting the Mind of Christ.**
- 5. How well you manage and cope with stress and change will determine how smoothly your life goes.**
 - Techniques and tips
- 6. Identify and acknowledge addictions, obsessions, and behavioral disorders and seek professional help and support groups to help manage or overcome them.**
- 7. Proactively build strong relationships with God, spouse, children, family, friends, and coworkers for mental and emotional growth, balance, and stability.**
 - Foundational characteristics of strong relationships

- Expressions of love
 - The unity of marriage
 - Parenting
 - Tips to strengthen the marriage relationship
- 8. Keeping priorities intact and maintaining healthy boundaries are necessary for long-term success and stability in life.**
- 9. Grief, loss, and being alone are all difficult but normal parts of every life. We cannot avoid them. We must understand them and work with and through them.**
- The grieving process
 - Being alone
 - Depression, anxiety, and panic disorder
 - Nutritional support: 5-HTP, tyrosine, GABA, SAM-e, liquid serotonin, and liquid *Neuro Links* drops
- 10. Enjoying your career and finding and fulfilling your life purpose brings satisfaction, meaning, and a sense of accomplishment to your life.**
- Discovering your life purpose
- 11. Age gracefully and finish your race strongly to complete your life journey.**
- Be proactive and prepare now
 - Last will and testament and a living will

Continue reading for the full discussion of each of these outline points. Also remember to access the referenced resources on the Resources Page of my website, JeffHoracek.com.

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The Essential Core Principles for Mental and Emotional Well-Being

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 NIV

- 1. You must embrace and practice daily the essential core principles for physical and spiritual well-being as outlined in Part 1 and Part 3.** Mental and emotional well-being are dependent upon a healthy body and a healthy spirit connected to the Lord. Every mental process, thought, emotion, and behavior are all dependent upon every neurotransmitter, hormone, chemical, and nutrient working together correctly and in balanced harmony—your physical nature. Likewise, your spiritual nature is that God-breathed essence within you that is invisible and intangible, which connects you directly to God and intertwines with His Spirit. Your spiritual nature connected with God is essential for knowing and living in His truth and guarding your mind from the deceptions of the world, which distort truth and reality. Your soul is comprised of your mind, emotions, character, personality, and everything inside you that perceives and responds to this physical world we live in and understands God. Or to say it another way:
 - **Your Body is physical—the external you—and interacts with the physical world.**
 - **Your Soul is invisible—the internal you—and interacts with both your physical body and your invisible spirit.**
 - **Your Spirit is invisible—the spiritual you—and interacts with the invisible spiritual realm.**

So your soul (simplified to mind) is the interface between your own body and the physical world we live in *and* the interface with your spirit nature, which is directly connected with God and the spiritual reality that also exists. That is why your mental and emotional state of well-being are so critical—this is your interface between both the physical and spiritual realities.

- 2. A healthy self-esteem, self-image, proper identity, and fully embracing who you truly are, are the foundations upon which mental and emotional well-being are built.** Knowing yourself, understanding yourself,

acknowledging yourself, respecting yourself, valuing yourself, believing in yourself, loving yourself, and being comfortable with and joyful in yourself are the hallmarks of a healthy self-image and self-esteem. It is not only valuing, acknowledging, respecting, and accepting self, but the natural extension of that to value, acknowledge, respect, and accept others as *they* are, equally so.

A **healthy self-image** begins early in life with trust in others and the ingraining of hope that all will be well; the development of your unique individuality and exercise of confident abilities and a secure self-will that you will survive well in this world; becoming initiative and assertive in positive ways to carry out successful purposes; and then to display competency in your ability to achieve goals. As we become older, our personal identity is further expanded with values, beliefs, goals, sexual roles, and the ability to be responsible, dedicated, committed, and accepting of others despite differences. It is then that we can become intimate with and fully love another in safe and caring relationships. As we approach middle age, we should experience some sense of success, usefulness, and accomplishment in this life with a care for creating positive change. We should ultimately end this life with self-integrity as a sense of coherence, wholeness, and completeness and accepting inevitable death without fear. Therefore, we see how our self-image and identity starts with a basic foundation and continues to expand and grow and change appropriately throughout our lives. This is the healthy way.

However, for many, this is not the case and the road to healthy self-image and self-esteem gets convoluted and distorted. This can be for many different reasons, but it is a frequent result of ill-equipped and distorted models of parenting or a distorted perception of that. The power of the spoken word is greatly misunderstood and underestimated, but words truly do speak life or speak death. Overcoming a negative and aberrant upbringing can seem insurmountable, but it can be overcome—and won. Occasionally, ill words are not meant to be malicious, even though that is the effect, but simply the user is poorly equipped to voice the positives, often due to their own poor self-image, distorted perceptions, or upbringing. Placing blame is never the cure, forgiveness is, and moving self in positive directions is the only true and lasting solution. Low self-esteem is often an underlying characteristic for the development of eating disorders, addictions, anxiety, depression, poor social skills and isolation, doing poorly in school, failed relationships, disappointing careers, and a host of other ills later in life. An understanding of the situation is critical, and with counseling, and realizing the truth and rewiring the negative thought processes, positive changes in self-esteem and self-image can be made.

Conversely, there can be the development of an ego-centric personality or *narcissism* from the same aberrant childhood environment or later environments. Instead of a withdrawn mode this is the total control and focus-on-self mode. A healthy self-esteem also displays a healthy humility and should never need to continually feed itself or feed off others. The ego-centric and narcissistic personalities are extremely draining, damaging, and dangerous to be around and unfortunately difficult to change since they rarely believe there to be a problem within themselves.

Obviously, a healthy self-image is at neither end of this spectrum, but is a positive balance, firmly grounded, fully aware of self and others as equals, knowing both its strengths and limitations, embracing self-value and self-worth and equally

so of others, with a willful and positive desire to do well at life. The mind is exorbitantly complicated, and each of us use different compensatory mechanisms to bring balance and harmony into our minds when there are perceived needs not met, imbalances, or disconnects within our mind or our social interactions. We can only hope to understand these idiosyncrasies and decidedly attempt to balance them or correct them in positive ways. Professional counseling can be of great assistance in this.

A Christian has a distinct advantage, since we as believers have been truly given a new lease on life. Who you are in Christ is not who you *think* you are, nor what parents or family or friends or the world *say* you are, but you are who Christ *declares* you to be—His most beloved child, secure forever in Him, accepted as His own, infinitely significant and valuable to Him and the kingdom of heaven. You are a new creation in Christ, and His alone—walk in that each day. There is no other truth.

An essential read and download can be found on my website, JeffHoracek.com, on the Resources Page, entitled, “**This Is Who I Am**,” an excerpt from my upcoming book, *Revive My Soul, O God*. This should be read frequently and ingrained into the deepest recesses and every aspect of your mind. You are who God says you are.

- 3. Refuse to let your past dictate the success of your future.** Positive events in your past may certainly be a springboard to future success but this is never guaranteed. In similar fashion, negative past events certainly create obstacles to be overcome but they need not necessarily be insurmountable. We will all have experienced some regrets, shame, guilt, sorrow, pain, failures, and for some of us, traumatic life events and abuse. You are exquisitely much more than the sum of all your experiences. Of most importance is how you have mentally and emotionally handled those experiences and events. We cannot erase them, but we can moderate their continued negative effects on our lives. We can try to understand them, try to find meaningful ways to use them in a positive or motivating way for our future benefit, or try to utilize them to help others find their better way.

Mentally coming to terms with our past and emotional healing take time. But we cannot stay in a state of blame, guilt, or shame as these will only serve to bind us to those past events and their power remains in control over us. We must strive to reach acceptance without any ill effects induced by the memory of those difficult life events. Unfortunately, life will certainly bring more obstacles and difficult life events our way. Honing our coping and adaptation skills now will greatly benefit us later in life. Being held captive in your past is a tragic thing. You are greater than your negative past—you have much of value to contribute, much needed services to provide, much needed wisdom to share, and much hope to spread to others. Your past is past—it does not define your present or your future. Freedom from your past is a wonderful thing.

Mistakes, setbacks, and failures are all a normal, if not an essential part of everyone’s life. They teach us, guide us, direct us, mold us, and shape us into appreciative human beings. Life isn’t about stagnating in the past—it’s loving today and living for tomorrow. Press on for your prize.

For more on **perceived failure**, please see my book, *Restore My Spirit, O God*, pages 363–367.

4. You must win the wars waged in your mind each day by manifesting the Mind of Christ. Everything that we have ever seen or heard or learned or experienced and how we have processed that—both positive and negative, correct and incorrect—becomes a part of our perceptions, memory, and thought processes, which produce our attitudes, beliefs, values, ideals, behaviors, character, personality, goals and aspirations, and create the unique mindset that we call self. The primary problem with each of us is all that negative and incorrect data that has been ingrained and incorporated into our mental state that our mind perceives as true and real, when in fact, it is not. We must scan, scrub clean, and delete the errors of our mind's hard drive and replace those errors with truth. Tragically, this is beyond our own ability to do so completely and effectively—we need the ***Mind of Christ***, “... we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor 10:5; 1 Cor 2:16 NIV). We can do some mental housecleaning on our own, but unless someone or something else points those errors and discrepancies out to us, and unless we accept and implement those corrections into our mental processes, those errors remain and our mind views them as factual.

Manifesting the mind of Christ means allowing the independent and perfect source of all truth to bring attention to mental errors, discrepancies, and inconsistencies and correcting, implementing, and ingraining true, real, and proper mental data and thought processes into our mind. This indispensable and powerful truth comes from the Written Word (the Bible) and the Living Word (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit within you who testifies to the truth of both. This process requires complete cooperation with the Holy Spirit as God never forces truth upon you—you must choose to accept it and believe it. The mind of Christ is seeing and understanding yourself and the world as God sees and knows it to be and acting according to the example that Jesus has set before us—thinking, saying, and doing as Christ Himself would do.

To win the battles for truth within your mind you must read and know God's Word and continually wash your mind clean with it to renew it, and discern the still small voice of the Holy Spirit among all the other voices of the world smothering you and be obedient to the Spirit's truth to change. This is a daily and lifelong process. But you can win this war within your mind—one battle at a time.

5. How well you manage and cope with stress and change will determine how smoothly your life goes. Stress can be sourced in the physical, mental, or emotional and it effects every aspect of us. Changes throughout life are inevitable and in fact, essential, and stress will accompany even the smallest of changes, whether favorable or difficult. Health problems, illnesses, deaths of loved ones, marriage, divorce, family, friends, moving, school, college, career, finances, time management, major purchases, travel, and even vacations—all of these and virtually every life event are potential sources of stress. Your body reacts significantly to stress by increased blood pressure, increased heart rate and respiration, decreased digestion, muscles tensed and ready for action—cortisol secreted by the adrenal glands automatically prepare your body for action and over time this inflicts a high toll on your physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Managing and coping with stress are skills we learn along the way and each of us reacts differently to stress and addresses it in differing ways. Stress will always be a part of life, so how we address it and manage it are paramount to our entire wellness. The **foundational keys** to healthy stress management are to acknowledge the stress and identify its source; acknowledge the fact that it creates undesirable reactions within you; identify ways in which you can minimize those untoward responses within you (deep breathing, prayer and meditation, quiet time, music, exercise); identify ways in which you may be able to modify or mitigate the level of stress being induced by the source (talking about it with the source, proactivity on your part, enhanced preparedness, positive negotiations or compromises); positively and concertedly refuse to allow the stress you are enduring to negatively effect your other relationships (open honesty and communication with loved ones); and finally, if the stress becomes too great to bear and relationships and other areas of your life are suffering, you must make a decision as to removing yourself from the source, if possible, or alternate options (change of employment, moving, minimize exposure, counseling). Here are a few other **tips to better help you manage stress**:

- Nothing is better than fresh air, sunshine, and exercise to help alleviate stress, depression, and frustrations. Spend as much time outside as you can.
- Focus your efforts on that which you have some control over and give everything else to God. Minimize worry by prayer and trust that God is in control.
- Always do your best in everything and let that be good enough. Have a peace that you are doing all you can.
- Realize that you cannot please everyone, nobody can, and be at peace with that.
- Only Christ is perfect—many mistakes will be made along the way—just try to learn from them, make better choices, and create positive change.
- Don't shy away from change—embrace it as a means for growth and opportunity.
- Failures are a part of every great life. Success is built upon prior failures. The only true failure is failure to dream.
- Don't be obsessed with comparing yourself to others. The journey for each of us is unique and God's plan is still unfolding. Take comfort in who you are and where you are in life. Character is more highly esteemed than possessions.
- The most powerful and eternal investment that you can make is in people.

6. Identify and acknowledge addictions, obsessions, and behavioral disorders and seek professional help and support groups to help manage or overcome them. Many of us will face or have loved ones that battle chemical dependencies and addictions from prescription drugs, illicit drugs, smoking, or alcohol. These dependencies may have a genetic or physiological disposition, which makes them nearly impossible to completely cure, so complete avoidance of the substance is the primary mode of treatment. The chemical and physiological effects of these substances can create severe physical and mental withdrawal symptoms. Medical and professional help and support groups are essential to win these battles.

There are also a whole host of behavioral obsessions that can plague us and compromise our wellness: food, money, spending, gambling, sex, pornography, hoarding—virtually anything that excessively occupies our mind or consumes our thoughts, that we try to hide from others, that may impair our relationships and normal daily performance at home or school or work, and that we refuse to acknowledge as a problem can be an obsessive behavioral issue. These too may need counseling and professional help and support. Acknowledging their presence and realizing they are a problem is the first step to healing and wellness.

We can also be challenged and overwhelmed by behavioral disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, obsessive-compulsive disorders, self-harm or self-injury disorders, and mental trauma induced posttraumatic stress disorder. Medical and professional help will often be necessary to effectively manage or overcome these disorders as well.

In many of these above issues there are underlying components which contribute to the development of these obsessions and disorders. Low self-esteem and distorted self-image; perceived unmet needs and desires; an inability or inappropriate ways of managing stress; and frustrations, setbacks, and difficult changes in life can all create an environment for poor choices and a life spiraling downward. There are no easy answers or solutions here. In addition to professional help, an understanding mind, compassionate heart, and lots of prayer are vital in surmounting these obstacles. Healing requires a rechanneling of the underlying thought patterns and triggers into healthy and positive thought patterns and behaviors. Practicing all the essential core principles above is critical for success.

- 7. Proactively build strong relationships with God, spouse, children, family, friends, and coworkers for mental and emotional growth, balance, and stability.** As social creatures, healthy relationships are crucial for our total well-being. Our primary relationship is with God first, and if that is not healthy and in order, every other relationship will suffer. God has given us a hierarchy in prioritizing our relationships—God first, spouse second, children third, family (parents and siblings) fourth, and all others after that. This too, if not adhered to, will create strife in our relationships. The marriage union is special and sacred to God; **“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh”** (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:5–6). You *leave* your parents to become united and *one* with your spouse and begin your own unique family unit together with God at the helm! Parents—your children are *not* yours to *keep*—you are only to love and support them. Children—do *not* get married until you are fully ready to *leave* your parents and become *one* with your spouse and start your unique family unit. We as parents and children often distort these intended relationships.

In healthy and strong relationships both parties should manifest certain **foundational characteristics**—a balance of power, with a willingness to yield; mutual respect, despite differences; trust, without worry; honesty, with open communication; individual expression (autonomy), with acceptance; safety, with appropriate boundaries; a comfortable ease and enjoyment together; common ground and ideals; and shared humor. Relationships require good listening skills, understanding the other’s viewpoints with compassion, and continual effort to nurture them successfully. The best relationships are a balance of giving and

receiving—a reciprocity. Surrounding yourself with positive people and solid relationships will greatly support mental and emotional wellness.

In addition to the key foundations, the marriage relationship requires commitment, dedication, the highest level of responsibility, and of course, a deep love with caring and intimacy. True love is not just an intense emotional feeling—it is a daily choice and giving of oneself freely to meet the needs of the other. Each of us has a tendency to express our love and a desire to receive love in differing ways. Knowing how both yourself and your spouse show and respond to love can be an advantage for a solid, loving relationship. Here are the basic **expressions of love**:

Physical intimacy and loving touch are obvious ways partners express and receive love, but this is just one important aspect of the love relationship. We also express and receive love through our *service to each other* through helpful tasks done on the other's behalf (like household chores or paying the bills). *Giving and receiving gifts* is another way to express and receive love. This may include the normal idea of presents, but also could be outings, vacations, small gifts like cards and flowers, and even the giving of oneself. Spending *time together* is especially important and includes doing activities together, conversations, being responsive to each other, and being available. Maybe the most powerful and most critical love expression is delivering continual *encouragement and affirmation*. Nothing is more uplifting than speaking life into your spouse through words of acknowledgment, appreciation, motivation, support, understanding, caring, compassion, honor, respect, trust, and deep love. Of course, the ideal marriage bond would possess all of these expressions reciprocated equally and abundantly, but oftentimes each of us will display and desire to receive these modes of love expression in differing proportions, and that is normal. Knowing your partner well and catering to those needs will go a long way in building a solid, loving relationship.

One key aspect that we've touched on is the uniting and becoming of oneness with our spouse. Ecclesiastes 4:12 states, **“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”** It is imperative that your marriage be *one* cord of *three* strands—you, your spouse, and God. This is the **marriage key** to strength and stability and is not easily disrupted or destroyed. Praying together, having devotions and reading the Bible together, worshiping together, and attending church together—having God at your center as your inseverable steel strand—will greatly increase your chances of lasting and loving together well.

Yet the strongest of relationships and the best of marriages may still flounder and fail. It is never one-sided and sometimes it is the healthy thing to do when all else has failed or gone awry. Divorce inflicts a huge mental, emotional, and physical toll on everyone involved. If it is inevitable, make the best of it, accept and own your part of it, and learn from it to choose more wisely and create positive change within yourself to be a much better partner in the next relationship. Grudges and bitterness will not benefit you. Forgiveness is your friend.

Parenting may be one of the most challenging of all relationships. A strong, healthy marriage is paramount, and if you're a single parent you are forced into the monumental task of playing both roles. Our parenting skills are often derived from our own childhood experiences (for good or for bad) and learned along the way. Children need to be nurtured and loved and each child responds differently as we do.

Understanding each child's uniqueness and adjusting our methodology accordingly is key to a well-ordered family unit. Each child learns differently also, and we must identify and maximize their learning experiences—through visual, auditory, or tactile means. As to discipline, the key is setting appropriate boundaries from the start, with full understanding and awareness on their part, with the follow-through of consequences as a loss of privileges if those set boundaries are breached. Repetitive yelling is rarely effective and only serves to exasperate self. Calmly stopping the current activity with enforced consequences is more effective and better remembered.

Here are a few additional **tips to strengthen the marriage relationship**:

- Strive to know your partner as well as you know yourself and tailor to their needs.
- Nurture fondness and admiration in positive ways to better each individual self.
- *Always* give honor and respect—especially around others—*never* criticize or say derogatory remarks about your partner in any social gathering.
- With every difficulty that comes, turn toward each other for support instead of turning away.
- Allow and encourage your partner to continually challenge you and influence you in positive ways and always be willing to yield and defer to the other.
- Refrain from using “you always, you never, or I told you so,” and words and actions to those effects.
- Solve all the problems that you are able and be willing to table (even indefinitely) those issues where no agreement can be reached and accept and honor that.
- Be open, honest, and concerted in your approach and dealings with finances, sexual intimacy, and all parenting methods and decisions.
- Create and nurture shared memories and shared meaning.
- True love and maturity will always manifest and express grace and forgiveness.
- Foster trust and commitment by never giving your spouse a reason to doubt or question your intentions. Dress appropriately, speak to others of the opposite sex appropriately without flirting, keep your eyes attentively on your partner, and never put yourself in potentially awkward, compromising, or misconstrued situations.
- Do not try to change your partner. Pray for God to change your partner if there are issues. Change yourself always first.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

1 Corinthians 13:4–8a [Just a reminder of what true love is.]

8. Keeping priorities intact and maintaining healthy boundaries are necessary for long-term success and stability in life. Our priorities in life should generally follow a similar hierarchy as our relationships—God, spouse, children, then career, church, and civic organizations and such. The most difficult

part is often trying to balance the occupation and career with spouse and our children. Getting through college and starting a career can place a high strain on relationships due to the stress and enormous time invested in achieving our career goals. Working successfully in a career and financial security are of great importance to one's well-being but so too our foundational relationships. A balance is essential, and sacrifices will have to be made. At minimum, set times must be set aside from career to have quality bonding time with spouse and family. The best of careers won't seem as illustrious if our health, marriage, and family are falling apart. Hard choices must be made, a deep understanding and good communication are critical, and priorities must be adhered to. A weekly date night can be a wonderful thing.

We must also keep appropriate boundaries with our sphere of influence. We must know our limitations and keep our commitments and responsibilities at tolerable levels. Exceeding healthy boundaries in our area of influence will inflict much stress and strife in our life. Likewise, we also need to cultivate our own unique individual growth. This is especially important in our marriage as each person needs to grow and develop a strong security and identity—each person becoming the best they can be—while at the same time coming together as one to be even stronger and better together. Ideally, the strengths of one partner will complement any weakness of the other to form that strong cord of unity. We must encourage our partner to grow and also be respectful of their boundaries and individual needs and goals.

- 9. Grief, loss, and being alone are all difficult but normal parts of every life. We cannot avoid them. We must understand them and work with and through them.** We typically identify grief with the loss of loved ones, but divorce, loss of job or change in career, loss of a pet, moving, chronic illnesses, or any major life change can create the overwhelming experience of grief. Just as we all display and respond differently to the expression of love, so too do we all differently respond to and manage our grief. There is no *right* way to grieve and there is no time frame in which we should attempt to complete the process. The event and the memory of it will never disappear, only the intensity and enormity of our mental and emotional responses to it will change and diminish over time. That time may be months or years depending on the circumstances and our unique individual response. There will also be *triggers*—words, objects, sights, sounds, smells, people, places, events—that bring forth the memory and overpowering emotional responses seemingly out of the blue. It is best if we just acknowledge the process and try not to suppress it—grieving is essential in coping with our losses and bringing some sense of peace and closure to the event.

Generally, there are certain identifiable stages or characteristics in a typical grieving process. Again, depending upon the circumstances and the individual response, not all of these will manifest nor occur specifically in this order. But a typical **grieving process** may be characterized by:

- Shock. The initial response may be a paralysis of mental and emotional function.
- Denial. Avoidance—physically, mentally, and emotionally of the event.
- Anger. Frustration and an outpouring of a whole host of emotions.
- Bargaining. Seeking a way out from the stress and strain of the event.

- Depression. Realizing the inevitable with an inability to remove the pain of the experience.
- Testing. Seeking realistic or alternative solutions to remedy the experience or situation.
- Acceptance. Finding your way to move forward from the experience with less profound emotional effects.

Unless you are a grief counselor, most of us do poorly in helping those who are grieving. We don't really know how to help, and we always seem to say the wrong things. When voicing empathy, just keep it simple with phrases such as; "I'm so sorry for your loss, I really don't know what to say, but I'm praying for you and for God to strengthen you and bring you His peace." Offer your assistance in meaningful ways and follow-through with an occasional phone call or text. Making yourself available and just being supportive without being judgmental or offering too many suggestions may be helpful and appreciated. Let the person grieve the way they need to grieve and for as long as they need to grieve. Just be there to give them hope.

Grief is all-consuming, overwhelming, and suffocating. Feelings of retreat and withdrawal from life and just fighting to keep your head above water without drowning each day are relentlessly faced by the griever. Only time can reduce the pain and only God can fill the empty void. Of primary importance when you are grieving is to try to manage taking care of yourself. Even the simplest of things, eating and sleeping, become monumental tasks. Acknowledge the pain and don't shy away from your roller-coaster of emotions—it's a necessary part of the healing process. Seek the support of strong and understanding friends who will support you without instructing you. Don't be afraid to ask for help and remember that you are not alone in grief—each of us will have to face it, and probably many times. As time passes and the event is less powerful, you may want to channel your experience into positive ways to help others—your story, needed changes, awareness, hope and strength for others—if you are available, God will use you.

Being alone without being lonely is a daunting challenge that many of us will have to face as well. This will never be easy but staying physically and mentally active can help. Being involved with other people or groups can be of great value. If you can keep working, do so, and find additional hobbies or learn new things; reading, writing, arts and crafts, and having pets can all help to utilize your alone time in meaningful ways. Being involved in church, civic, and community organizations can provide needed services and keep you active too. Being okay with being alone is a wonderful gift to possess.

A side note on **Depression, Anxiety, and Panic Disorder:**

Most of us will experience normal episodes of depression (or feeling depressed) due to losses and grieving and even alternating episodes of anxiety or panic attacks, which are really the opposite end of this spectrum of disorders. Generally, these expressions only last several months, but occasionally they can become more chronic and debilitating. Depression and anxiety can also have many underlying causes, most notably an imbalance of the excitatory and inhibitory neurotransmitters of the brain, hormonal imbalances, other nutrient deficiencies, and many other causes. Depression and anxiety are also common side effects of many prescription drugs,

alcohol, and even OTC antihistamines. If you have been experiencing depression for any extended period of time, especially without a logical cause, you should have your thyroid hormone levels checked as hypothyroidism is quite common, especially in females, and is a typical cause of depression.

There are a whole host of effective nutritional supplements that are safe, natural, and very effective for both depression and anxiety. Studies have shown many of these to be as effective and exceedingly safer, especially long-term, than prescription anti-depressants and anti-anxiety drugs. Remember, every drug is a foreign substance in your body potentially creating a myriad of side effects. Professional counseling can also be of great value in managing and overcoming anxiety and depression.

If you go to your family physician, the doctor will most assuredly prescribe an anti-depressant or anti-anxiety drug. I would strongly caution you about going down this road. Studies have also clearly shown that patients without drug treatment typically will eventually do well on their own, and those on drug treatment will find that their symptoms of depression and anxiety will be exacerbated in the long term. Furthermore, drug treatment will typically bring about *tolerance* to the drug at some point, inducing your doctor to write prescriptions for higher and higher dosages and adding additional drugs on top of that. This is Western medicine insanity at its finest. Physicians will only prescribe drugs and more drugs to treat each new symptom. They know nothing of nutritional supplements nor how to naturally balance your body chemistry and physiology to correct the underlying condition. If you have absolutely no alternative than a prescription anti-depressant or anti-anxiety drug, then make a concerted effort to utilize it for the least amount of time while attempting to convert to natural means of balance and stability.

Since we all have a unique chemistry and physiology it would be best to consult a nutritionist, nutritional consultant, or naturopathic physician (ND) for help in determining what might work best for you. This process can be complex, requires patience, and takes a certain amount of trial and error. Here are a few points and **nutritional supplements** to keep in mind that may help you:

- Serotonin and GABA are a couple primary neurotransmitters that have an inhibitory or peaceful, calming effect within the brain. Dopamine and norepinephrine are a couple primary neurotransmitters that have an excitatory or uplifting effect within the brain. We strive to allow the brain to produce these in a harmonious balance by supplying the necessary raw material nutrients.
- A healthy, balanced diet including all the essential vitamins, minerals, and fatty acids (oils) are key. Taking a multivitamin, multimineral supplement; additional B-complex vitamin supplement; adequate amounts of essential minerals including calcium, magnesium, zinc, selenium, and iodine; and fish oil with the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA are a good place to start.
- **5-HTP** (5-hydroxytryptophan) is the body's natural amino acid precursor (derived from the amino acid tryptophan) in making serotonin, which is further metabolized by the body to make melatonin. In studies on depressive disorders, 5-HTP was found to be nearly as effective as Prozac with no side effects.

- **L-Tyrosine** is incredibly important as it is the amino acid precursor to dopamine, norepinephrine, epinephrine, and also the thyroid hormone thyroxine. Essential for combating depression.
- **GABA** or gamma amino butyric acid is a calming amino acid neurotransmitter that primarily enters the brain from supplement forms through the enteric nervous system of the gut.
- **SAM-e** (S-Adenosylmethionine) is a metabolic cofactor essential in both the serotonin to melatonin metabolic pathway and the norepinephrine to epinephrine pathway and others. It has a stabilizing and balancing effect, but you may not want to take additional melatonin supplements to help you sleep if you are taking this as melatonin levels are increased by SAM-e. Too much melatonin can give you a groggy feeling the next day.
- **Liquid Serotonin Drops** are quickly absorbed sublingually applied drops that are great for calming anxiety, nervousness, and stress.
- **Neuro Links** (by the Pain and Stress Center) are also quickly absorbed sublingual drops containing serotonin, dopamine, and many additional neurotransmitter precursors. These drops are great if you need a balance boost throughout the day. (www.painstresscenter.com)

These are just some of the various options to help you manage your depression, anxiety, and reduce panic attacks. Nutrients are not drugs—they work safely, gently, naturally, and slowly—it may take weeks or more to notice significant improvements. Help your body and mind help itself—your healing is already within you.

10. **Enjoying your career and finding and fulfilling your life purpose brings satisfaction, meaning, and a sense of accomplishment to your life.**

Enjoying your job or your career and making a stable and sufficient income is a wonderful thing. Working in a positive environment is worth more than gold. Making a positive difference in people's lives will bring joy and satisfaction to your life. Your career may be your God-designed life purpose, but it need not be so.

God has a special plan and design for each of us to uniquely use our time, talents, abilities, spiritual gifts, and His resources to touch people's lives and make a positive difference for the kingdom of heaven. Discovering your true, life purpose and fulfilling your God-designed destiny is the key to having meaning and a full sense of accomplishment in your life. That will be the legacy that you will leave.

The best way to **discover your life purpose** is to pray and ask God for His wisdom and insight and to seek out your passion for people and His kingdom. If there is a particular activity that you are passionate about, which brings you joy in doing it, and helps other people and brings them closer to God, then that certainly may be your life purpose. Careers and jobs may change throughout your life, but your life purpose will probably not change much, although the methods you use may vary with each season of life.

Always be productive and always invest in your eternal bank account—people. Continue to always grow and expand your knowledge base and implement what you learn to help more people. Be wise with your finances and always strive to live within your means and borrow only what you must. Being in debt is a stranglehold of the enemy and it's very difficult to break free from this bondage.

For more information on finding and fulfilling your **life purpose**, please see my book, *Restore My Spirit, O God*, pages 459–472.

11. Age gracefully and finish your race strongly to complete your life journey.

Growing older will significantly affect our physical health, somewhat our mental and emotional health, but our spiritual health may actually become greater. How successfully we have managed to practice the core principles for well-being may greatly influence how we finish our race. We cannot stop the physical aging process, but we can take measures to stay fit and mentally sharp. It is imperative that we are proactive now—attempting to slow or stop the train of decline when we are already its passenger is futile. Staying as active as possible physically and mentally is the key to finishing your race well. Emotional stability must come from an inner peace and satisfaction in accomplishing all you were able to, within the parameters dealt by your life. Live profoundly now so you can look back and smile then.

Preparation for the finish line must begin now. You must set your life, especially finances and reparations, in order, including a will. The last thing you want is for lawyers and family to attempt to distribute possessions and your estate. Your general will must include a **living will**, or advance directive, or durable power of attorney for medical care, or a do not resuscitate order (DNR). You don't want family trying to make those decisions for you either. Be responsible with your life all the way through your exit. Put every essential in writing so family isn't left guessing where things are and what to do. Make all your wishes be fully known. You can easily put together your own **last will and testament** online.

Most of us would like to exit this earth quickly and painlessly, retaining full function and independence till the very end. Many of us, however, may live out our days in an assisted living facility, care center, or nursing home. Depending on our level of functionality and independence, this may be the best option. If we are severely disabled, terminally ill, have minimal or no mobility, or have minimal cognitive function, or severe pain, this then becomes an issue of quality of life. None of us want to live any extended time in any of those states. We do not get to choose when we enter this life and we don't get to choose when we exit. I can only speak for myself personally, but I wish we had additional options here in America. Western medicine and our culture prolong longevity beyond its intended and natural boundary. For me, under appropriate circumstances, an option to willingly choose euthanasia would be a viable and desirable alternative. The enormous stress, strain, and drain on other family members is astronomical. And so is the incredible financial outpouring and huge expenditure of resources from family and society both. To me, this makes no sense and is not the natural order of things. I do not know God's thoughts on this, I only have my own.

Live well. Be profound. Be strong. Be content. Finish without fear. You're going home.

These Essential Core Principles for Mental and Emotional Well-Being are the foundation for your mental and emotional wellness and wholeness, but they are just the springboard to your complete and total well-being. Your physical and spiritual wellness must also be addressed for God's plan of wholeness for you. It's Your Life, Your Soul—by God's Design. I'm praying for you.