

How to

Thrive

in Christ



by Kelly R. Baker

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God's Design Is for Us to Thrive In Christ

This ministry is all about how to thrive in Christ. I see now that it's God's design for us to thrive in Him. But I didn't always see it this way.

I grew up a pastor's kid. Often pastors' kids are stereotyped as ones who fall into drugs, cigarettes, premarital sex, or alcohol abuse. I may have never touched those things, but my heart was still not following God.

Many who saw me grow up could probably see how selfish I was, yet I was considered a good kid. I knew this, and used it as an excuse to justify my lack of passion for God. Romans 3:12 (NLT) says, "No one does good, not a single one."

But I was good.

Or at least I thought I was.

I had a form of godliness, while denying the power (2 Timothy 3:5). But **one day God delivered me** from crippling mindsets and opened my eyes to the truth of His love.

After that beautiful day, I saw Him work changes in me over and over again.

Although I grew up in the church, everything I learned was filtered through the view that God was an angry God expecting me to shape up or be shipped out. I had to start from the beginning with building a real relationship with Him.

I started to spend time with my Creator, and **experienced His love** in ways that were completely unknown to me before.

I discovered this happened mostly when I was setting time aside each day to just be with the Lord. It was amazing. I saw true spiritual maturity taking place in my heart, and it thrilled my days.

I was beginning to thrive in Christ!



Disturbed, Saddened, and Scared

As I grew, though, I was dismayed to see some Christians stagnant, or even completely stuck all too often. They seemed uninterested in the concept of growing intentionally in God. It seemed like they could care less about letting God change them into His image.

It saddened me to see Christians that have accepted Jesus years and years ago, but they aren't maturing in Christ. (It still does.)

This puzzled me immensely.

Jesus said, “You therefore must be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48 ESV)

I used to be a perfectionist. I read that verse and thought, I have to be perfect, which scared me. I knew I could never be perfect. *What now?*

It wasn't until I started studying the Bible that I learned that the word *perfect* there means *spiritually mature*. Relief! We don't have to be entirely faultless!

Then I wondered if other Christians lived under the pressure that they had to be perfect, too? Did they feel it hopeless and give up, thinking the Christian life is way too hard?

My Heart Yearns

After I understood the above verse, I started studying other verses that talk about spiritual growth. I found out that it's an ongoing process:

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. Philippians 1:6 NLT

We all have a general purpose while we're on the earth:

- Grow spiritually
- Work in the Kingdom (in this we also have specific callings)



Jesus' life reflected this same general purpose. He:

- Grew spiritually from a young age (see Luke 2:45-52) and spent time with the Father to sustain His earthly ministry (Luke 6:12)
- Came to earth in human form to bust this world wide open with His love

3 Reasons Spiritual Growth Is Needed

Why should we care about growing more spiritual mature? Yeah, I get it, that it's not always fun. But it's necessary:

1. God wants it (John 17:17). Yup, **sanctification is a thing**.
2. The world will see Jesus in us—know we are His disciples—by our love one for another (John 13:35). Love is a fruit, and fruit takes time to develop from a seed to a ripened state. Maybe it's self-explanatory, but the more we look like Jesus, the more the world will see Him. And don't we want them to see Jesus and His gift of salvation?
3. If we never grew spiritually, we wouldn't know the truth that makes us free (John 8:32). And when we're **entangled in sin ourselves**, we won't be able to help others find freedom.

For all these reasons, God is transforming us a little at a time to look more like Him:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18 NASB

My Heart Yearns

If all Jesus' followers could understand that spiritual growth is needed, see that it's a grace-filled process, and thrive in the Father's love—I'd dance for joy!

I want to see Christians consistently strong and growing. I want to see Believers walking in freedom and faith with signs following. I want to see Jesus followers obey and worship Him with complete abandonment.

I have experienced these things. I have tasted and seen that God is good, and I want to share the food! Yes, my friend. God's design for us is to thrive in Christ.

Will you join me?

What It Means to Thrive in Christ

My favorite passage of Scripture, and the one the blog is based on is Psalm 1:1-3. I think it best describes how we thrive in Christ. To thrive means to grow well or vigorously. We are going to dive in and explore that.

In the first Psalm, the righteous are illustrated by the simile of a tree both fruitful and flourishing. When our roots are planted deep into the soil of God's Word, and we are positioned to be nourished by Him, we will not wither but thrive. I love that!

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. Psalm 1:1-3 ESV

A tree requires healthy components and specific atmospheric conditions to thrive. In the same way, we need a healthy spirit and soul. Additionally, we need to position ourselves in a safe environment, continually take in the "nutrients" (truths) of the Word, and submit to the Gardener's pruning to grow into spiritual maturity.

What This eBook Will Cover

Have you ever wondered if you ever stop growing in your walk with God? Whether or not we stop growing is probably debatable, but we will stop thriving (growing without hindrance) when we are stagnant. What I mean by stagnant is feeling stuck in our walk with God. Sometimes we are stagnant, stuck, whatever, because we create our own problems. Some examples that cause spiritual stagnancy are apathy toward the God, continuing in secret sin, not dealing with hurt, or being distrustful of God. However, growing in Christ isn't all painful purging. That's only one aspect of it. The greatness of God is unsearchable (Psalm 145:3); knowing Him more and investing in the knowledge of God is quite fulfilling.

I don't think we need to be obsessed with growing itself, although intentional growth is wise. We need to enjoy the love of our Savior and receive whatever He has in store for us each day. I had to experience a lot and learn a lot of lessons before I came to the realization that it is God who is doing the growing in me—I only yield (Philippians 2:13). Taking that attitude makes living this Christian life a true joy!



The topic of thriving in Christ is large, but I will be transparent with layers of my past while I attempt to share many of the truths I learned over the years.

In this eBook, we will answer questions like:

- How we live victoriously?
- What causes us to wither?
- Does it matter how we view ourselves, God, and others?
- What is the progression to thriving?
- How do we bear fruit?

7 Characteristics of Spiritual Growth

How can we define spiritual growth? Let's allow the Word of God to speak for itself. The following are characteristics of someone who is growing spiritually:

1) Desires it

Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:2-3 ESV

2) Grows in grace

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:18 ESV

3) Grows in knowledge

Again, 2 Peter 3:18.

4) Practices discernment, distinguishing good from evil

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Hebrews 5:12-14 ESV

5) Stays in the house of God

The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God. Psalm 92:12-13 ESV



6) bears fruit (even in old age)

They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green. Psalm 92:14 ESV

7) Isn't unstable but speaks truth in love

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, Ephesians 4:13-15 ESV

There are probably more characteristics of spiritual maturity, but I am gleaning from verses that speak of it directly. That being said, we can expand on the topic of growing spiritually and that's the reason for this eBook!

*When our roots are planted deep into
the soil of God's Word, and we are
positioned to be nourished by Him, we
will not wither but thrive.*



The Actions of a Thriving Disciple of Christ

I love how the truth of the Bible can be applied to our lives today. When we break down the truth of Psalm 1:1-3, we can deduce what a thriving disciple of Christ does and doesn't do.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. Psalm 1:1-3 ESV

What a Thriving Disciple of Christ Doesn't Do

A thriving disciple of Christ won't heed a voice that doesn't line up with the Word of God. Those who reject the knowledge of the truth will scoff when they hear it and do their own thing. Since they have no standard for living, they will continue in a lifestyle of sin. Essentially, they reject God's love and do not receive eternal life.

When we, as disciples, reject time in the Word, we become spiritually dry. When a tree doesn't receive the moisture it needs, its leaf will wither and fall from the tree. At that point, the leaf is detached from its life source. No bueno. Bye-bye leaf. RIP leaf.

What a Thriving Disciple of Christ Does

A thriving disciple of Christ delights in the Word. How does the delight happen? The shift comes when we increase our appetite for the Word of God by making a habit of seeking Him daily.

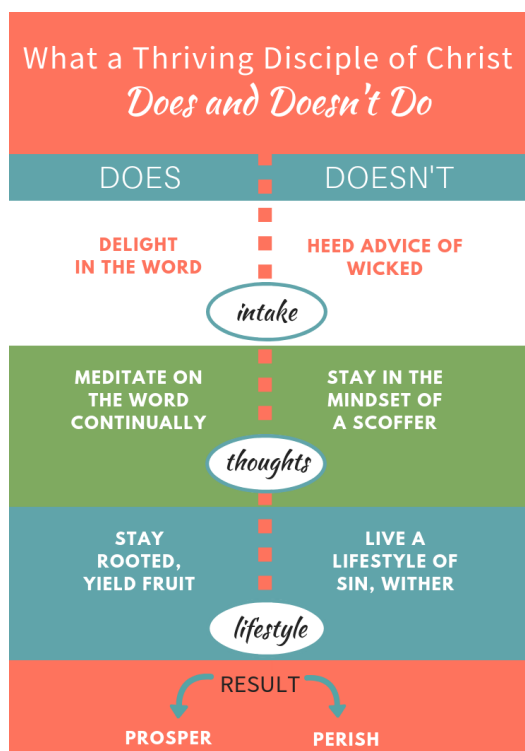
The tree described in the first psalm is rooted by water, positioned to continually take in nutrients. Similarly, a thriving disciple of Christ stays rooted by Living Water, being positioned to continually take in the nutrients of the Word and Spirit in passionate pursuit of Him. When the winds of adversity blow, our roots grow deeper and stronger in faith.

Verse two says that we will meditate on His Word day and night. Meditation outside of Christianity has a goal of emptying the mind to obtain peace. However, in Christian meditation, the goal is to fill the mind with the Word to obtain spiritual growth. Meditating on and memorizing the Word gives us revelation and then imparts life.



Intake, Thought Life, and Lifestyle

The actions described in the sections above are based on the intake, **thought life**, and lifestyle of those who are and aren't walking with Christ. Our intake becomes what we dwell on; what we dwell on becomes what we do. What are the results of each? Very simply, the righteous prosper (Psalm 1:3) and the wicked perish (Psalm 1:6). See the chart below:



What if I See Myself in Both?

Sometimes our habits reflect the life of those who have rejected Christ. In that case, this is where grace comes into the picture.

There's a balance with grace. On one hand, we don't need to continue in sin, justifying it with a grace card. On the other hand, grace needs to be applied to us and everyone who is sinning. Have mercy; we don't need to judge people and throw them under the bus because of their sin—everyone is at a different place in their walk with God. Instead, we are to grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18).

This kind of growing in grace is like walking through our garden and plucking out the weeds or identifying and treating any diseases destroying our plants. We must be intentional with seeking out the health of our "tree" to thrive.

And if we find something that shouldn't be there or the Holy Spirit brings it to our attention, then pruning is required.

So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Matthew 7:17-18 ESV

Now don't go running from the Gardener's pruning scissors! If we only focus on the painful aspect of pruning, then we will miss the good part of it. The good part about pruning is the season of fruitfulness that follows.



The Disciple's Fruit

Fruit is so good isn't it? So sweet, juicy, and delicious. Mmmm. Except it's not for us. Sorry. A tree doesn't seek fruit, it produces fruit. Therefore, the fruit is not for us; it's for others.

If we feel like we aren't receiving what we need, then we look at what a tree needs: the sun, the water, the nutrients from the soil. Those elements are what causes the tree to grow, so we need to go back to our Source.

Can We Grow Ourselves?

Can a tree grow itself? No, and we can't grow ourselves either. It's God's work of growth in us.

Philippians 2:13 (NLT) says, "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." That's a gift toward spiritual maturity!

The fruit of the Spirit is "of the Spirit." It's not "of Kelly," or "of Melissa," or "of Sue." God produces the fruit in us; it's our job to yield. The more we stay in tune with Him during the day, the more we'll see evidence of it.

So grow on, disciple of Christ. Continue to thrive!

If we only focus on the painful aspect of pruning, then we will miss the good part of it. The good part about pruning is the season of fruitfulness that follows.



How to Keep a Spiritually Healthy Heart to Thrive in Christ

In this section, I'm talking about keeping a spiritually healthy heart using your favorite analogy, the tree. Oh wait, that's my favorite analogy. Well, read on because we are all about thriving (growing well) here.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. Psalm 1:1-3 ESV

Using the simile in Psalm 1:3, the foundational verse for this eBook, a tree that's thriving (that's us) is a spiritually healthy heart. We will know if our heart is remaining in good health by looking at how we view ourselves, God, and others.

To understand a healthy heart, let's look at what is not healthy.

What Causes a Spiritually Unhealthy Heart?

There are four general factors that will cause a tree to be unhealthy and eventually die. Using compare and contrast, let's assess these four causes as they relate to us:

Adverse Environment

A tree will become strained after being exposed to a detrimental environment, such as immersed in pollution or soil with problems: salty, droughty, or draining inadequately. The unfavorable environment is usually a preceding factor to its eventual death; after becoming weakened, the tree will fall prey to other causes.

What is an adverse environment like for us? We might be sucked into the unbiblical beliefs found in our culture or surrounded by ungodly influences through our relationships. Our mindset could also prove to be a detrimental environment: deception (listening to a voice that's mistaken for God's), **starving ourselves spiritually**, or a form of godliness (religion instead of a relationship with God).

Detrimental Insects and Diseases

Certain insects will harm a tree, causing death directly, and will even spread disease to surrounding trees. They will take advantage of trees already stressed by adverse conditions. Disease will infect a tree through wounds in the bark, roots, or leaves. For example, fungi will enter wounds in the bark and cause heart rot, a disease that decays the heartwood in the center of the tree.



In *A Process to Overcome Weaknesses*, I said, “Letting fleshly deeds live on is like inviting a bug infestation to take up residence in your life.” I told the story of a bug infestation my family experienced as an example of letting sin stay. That’s when we reap sin’s destructive pattern (Mark 7:20-23).

Notice that disease invades a tree through wounds. When our hearts are left in the wake of the *hurts others have caused us*, we experience something like a disease that overtakes a tree. Just like with a tree, if those pathogens aren’t treated (or better yet prevented), it lacks the nourishment it needs and is destroyed. Isn’t that the case with the damage that hurt left unchecked can do?

Catastrophic Events

Tornados, forest fires, heavy ice, and floods all have the potential to severely damage a tree. In many cases, the tree is negatively affected but not completely destroyed; insects or disease encroach on the tree’s damaged state and finish it off.

What are examples of a catastrophic event for us? Enduring any kind of abuse, the loss of a loved one, a loss that greatly affects our livelihood, a desperate health crisis. These are extreme circumstances that require additional support. When a dire event occurs in our country, others come and help those affected bear the load. It’s the same way when a catastrophe hits us; we need others more than ever.

Chopped Down

We all know that trees die due to felling.

But you don’t need to worry about God “chopping you down.” Because of *His everlasting love for you*, God might arbitrate pruning or discipline.

It’s the devil who devises to destroy you (John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8). His number one goal is to make you ineffective for the kingdom of God and his ultimate goal to convince you to turn your back on God forever.

Why Do Those Cause a Spiritually Unhealthy Heart?

A tree is surrounded by bark. When the bark is wounded or damaged, it causes trouble for the tree. Beetles will directly attack this barrier. Not only does the devil prey on us like a lion and attack the weak, He will attack our identity in Christ itself.

When we don’t have an accurate understanding of who we are in Christ, sin, hurt, religious thinking, rule-keeping, and deception will all keep our hearts in a spiritually unhealthy condition. Eventually, these will strip us of the nourishment we need.



Symptoms of an Injured Heart

- Me-focus because of pain (which negatively affects relationships with others)
- Distrusts or rejects God
- Joy is stolen
- Doesn't feel like fulfilling her calling, takes a "what's the use" attitude
- Becomes envious of those who are happy, thriving in life, have a good relationship with God, or are walking well in their calling

When we have any of the above "symptoms," then it's time to apply Truth. We thrive in new health after we allow the heart surgery of the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12).

What Is a Spiritually Healthy Heart?

A flourishing heart after God knows that she is a daughter of God that stays in the family despite mistakes. She **biblically deals with an injured heart**. There is a true Father-daughter relationship. She continues to mature in Christ. She knows what God does with her sins.

We have a difficult time forgetting our transgressions, and "You Know Who" likes to try to remind us of them. But God doesn't remember them anymore (Hebrews 10:17). And neither should we. It's part of our covenant.

Attributes of a Well Heart

- Continually seeks heart wholeness
- Sees herself as a daughter of the King
- Is a good steward of the gifts and callings of God
- Chooses to love, **forgive**, and trust others

Why do we need a spiritually healthy heart? Heart wholeness promotes the light of Christ shining like a beacon in a dark world.

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Proverbs 4:23 ESV

Why Desensitization Will Keep You from Thriving

In this section, we're talking about desensitization, a devious enemy that dulls our spiritual senses.

What is desensitization?

To desensitize is to:

1. make someone less likely to feel shock or distress at scenes of cruelty, violence, or suffering by overexposure to such images;
2. or, free someone from a phobia or neurosis by gradually exposing the person to the thing that is feared." [source: dictionary app]

Desensitization in Culture

My dad visited someone who was stationed in Germany years ago and was shocked to find six foot tall posters of nude women adorning the windows of a porn store in the middle of a mall where families were often walking with their children.

Additionally, during his stay, the front page of the newspaper revealed a picture of a fully naked women to the eyes of every unsuspecting subscriber.

With a distressed heart, he asked the Christian man he was staying with about this common nudity. He responded with a shrug:

"After a while you get used to it."

A friend's parents were at Radio City Music Hall in New York City in 1939 for the first showing of *Gone With the Wind*, and after the expletive came out of the actor's mouth the entire company of spectators gasped at the shock of it.

*(This same expletive was used the year before in *Pygmalion* (1938), and previously a few sprinkled here and there in other films.¹)*



You probably already know how much profanity is used today. Does anyone gasp anymore?

Do you question whether profanity is acceptable?

If the world is aware that language is wrong by including it in the rating system in movies, then are we, as Christians, aware too?

After hearing these stories I can't help but wonder. How can something so wrong be a shock one day and no big deal a short time later? Is it simply the passing of time?

Not completely.

My Desensitization Story

Growing up, we were never allowed to watch movies with a PG-13 rating, but I allowed myself to indulge in the temptation as a young adult.

Back then, my friend wanted to watch a PG-13 movie together. A few times during that movie my spirit-man cringed, and I thought, I really should not be doing this.

The devil possesses cunning timing; the opportunity to watch a PG-13 movie came again. I remember being really angry about something and I had that "I don't care" attitude unchecked—so I watched it. During the movie, the same kind of appalling content that I had watched before was not so shocking.

At that point I subconsciously invited PG-13 movies into my entertainment repertoire for a few months. While I was still uncomfortable in my status quo, I watched rated R movies a couple of times.

The Lord really dealt with me. Somehow I woke up to the fact that I quenched His spirit. He kept bringing a verse to my attention:

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. Psalm 101:3 KJV

At first, I didn't listen to Him because I didn't want to. Surrendering is a process, and eventually I wanted to walk away from all that because I desired and loved God more.

I went back to my friend and shared the news of my repentance, the gradual inclination, and declared I would no longer be watching those types of movies. My friend didn't understand what the big deal was.



I analyzed the process of my desensitization. It was gradual. It was subtle.

I remembered this when bothered by the actions of other Christian friends and came to this conclusion:

Everyone is in a different place in their walk with God; it's not my place to judge, but to influence them **to keep walking**.

After that I was introduced to the ClearPlay DVD players, which have great content filters. Even with filtering, some movies shouldn't be watched anyway!

I rarely go to the theater. I wait for the movie to come out on DVD and watch it on ClearPlay, only after checking out the content on <http://pluggedinonline.com> or <http://screenit.com>.

He must increase, but I must decrease. John 3:30 (ESV)

Some people probably don't agree with me or don't understand my choices, but I'm not sorry that I live this way. I don't feel like I'm missing out. I'm getting a whole lot more of the joy of walking with my Savior!

What about you? Have you gone through a process of surrendering with something you felt the Lord wanted you to give up?

The Fight Against Desensitization

The culture of what is acceptable is changing, but God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Dear Christians that shine as lights in this ever-changing society, the dust of the earth is going to land on our "light bulb," too. We need constant vigilance.

We need to be aware of the dangers of the devil's subtle strategy of desensitization.

How does that happen?

He will not always just dangle blatant temptation in front of our eyes. He plants his seeds of influence slowly.



His plan is to make your mind comfortable enough, and move you from lukewarmness and carnality to complete deception.

If you listen to the devil's lies long enough you begin to believe them. If you let the dust of his earthly domain land on your "light bulb" and neglect cleaning it, your light will not shine as bright.

Can you see how the Enemy can use desensitization to negatively affect our walk with God?

He will not always just dangle blatant temptation in front of our eyes. He plants his seeds of influence slowly.



Find Freedom from Secret Sins Despite the Odds and Thrive in Christ

In this section, you'll learn how to get free from secret sins even if you kind of want to stay in it.

You know the saying, "You can't understand someone until you walk a mile in their shoes"? Well, I'm not writing this because I'm perfect, better than you, or a know-it-all. This is my calling: writing about thriving in Christ. And this topic? I've walked a mile in these shoes. Many miles, actually. (I'm older than I look.)

My Battle with Secret Sins

The first time I got serious about getting free, I was tired of myself and miserable in my besetting sins. Do you know what a besetting sin is? It's a sin that you keep falling into repeatedly.

What were my secret sins? I'm not going to get into that because this isn't about what is and isn't a sin. After sinning, I would confess it to God. But these were the ones that didn't come and go like a door-to-door salesman tempting me to buy-in, but were habitual residents of my heart.

I knew these sins that I had refused to deal with were the kind that were stopping me from growing well. I had allowed sin to grow in my heart like a weed, and God showed their ugliness to me.

Living with willful sin is like weeds in a growth competition against a healthy plant. I resolved to let Him uproot my weeds.

The Consequences of Allowing Secret Sins to Fester

For he knows the secrets of the heart. Psalm 44:21 ESV

In the Bible, David was up against Goliath, the giant. Staying in secret sins is like letting a giant stay around to torment you. David said the battle is the Lord's in 1 Samuel 17:47 because he was trusting in the God he knew, but that didn't mean he did nothing!

He chose the stones, put them in his sling, went running TOWARD the giant, and threw the stone. God made sure it landed in the precise spot that brought the giant down.

If you have a giant in your life, you do something about it. If not, then there will be consequences in both the natural and the spiritual.



- Natural consequences. It hurts you. It hurts others. (i.e. porn will negatively affect a marriage/opens door to lying/lust/adultery/and more)
- Spiritual consequences. Sin separates us from God. (i.e. If you are habitually envious and don't deal with it, you're going to go downhill spiritually.)

Grace is not a ticket to blow off God's commands. It means you are provided a way of forgiveness, help, and strength to be victorious over it.

How to Get Free of Secret Sins

"You can't defeat the demons you enjoy playing with." —Carlos A. Rodríguez

It's time to forsake that secret sin that's seeped into your heart. That means you need to deal with this issue before it deals with you and not in a good way. Right?

Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. Proverbs 28:13 ESV

So get your **journal** and go through these eight points below.

Respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

As there is a battle between your flesh and your spirit and right now your flesh is winning, He's causing you to recognize the need for freedom from this stronghold. You need God; you can't do it in your own strength or power. While the conviction of the Holy Spirit is uncomfortable, it's full of love and gentleness—yet simultaneously exciting and freeing. God's plan is to provide hope out of your mess. This issue doesn't have to define you forever.

Confess your sins (1 John 1:9).

You might have already confessed this to God, but I want to encourage you because we don't always think the way God thinks. Read that verse because it's full of His promises to you. Don't allow condemnation to overtake you. The Holy Spirit convicts; the devil condemns.

Put on some anointed worship music.

A part of you might want to stay in your secret sin. Let's be real. After I confess my sins to God, I don't necessarily want to walk away from my sin forever. Sin gives a temporary pleasure. That's where most of the battle is, sometimes. But I noticed something in 1 Samuel 16:13 and 23 one day. David was anointed before he played for Saul. He played for Saul under this anointing and three things happened to Saul:



1. Refreshing. Saul was refreshed, which means revive there. Do you need revival?
2. Healing. Saul received healing, and he wasn't necessarily seeking it.
3. Deliverance. The evil spirit departed from him. No one had to cast it out.

Go on a Fast.

Fasting also breaks yokes of bondage. "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" Isaiah 58:6. [See my post on the benefits, how-to's, and why's of fasting.](#)

Put a plan together.

Psalms 119:11 says that if you hide God's Word in your heart you won't sin against Him. Gear up for battle. What one, two, three (or more!) verses are you going to pick out, memorize, pray, and say [when that temptation hits](#)? Worksheets to help with this are in Insider Resources on the blog.

Make changes where needed in the natural.

Ask God for wisdom on what to do about this. Remember, He gives a generous outpouring of wisdom to those who ask—it's a promise (James 1:5).

Consider accountability.

Get a trusted person to cover you in prayer and encourage you when you are feeling weak. We thrive with accountability.

Now it's time to thrive spiritually.

Don't let this hinder you. Instead, guard your heart (Proverbs 4:23). [Keep a Daily Time with God](#) and regularly nourish your spirit to overcome temptations. Continue to grow and make amazing memories with God.

Daily struggles don't mean God loves you less. Kick shame to the curb and receive His grace. It's not about living without error, it's allowing Him to grow us into a great spiritual maturity so He is glorified.

[Click here to view, print, or download these 8 points.](#)

Your Good Shepherd Is Helping You Thrive in These 27 Ways

Jesus told us in John 10 that He is our Good Shepherd. It's more than a depiction, He said "I AM," as in it's an existing promise. I love that, don't you?

I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me. John 10:14 NLT

I can relate to the helplessness of a sheep during times when I feel defenseless, scared and in need of no small amount of consolation. So remembering Jesus as my Good Shepherd is a warm comfort.

In this section, you will see 27 ways your Good Shepherd guarantees you're thriving. May any doubt of it be dispelled.

Why Jesus Is Your Good Shepherd

Recently I watched a video on a new study done on sheep. In it they tested the sheep's ability to recognize a familiar face. The **study** first began with training:

Training involved the sheep making decisions as they moved around a specially-designed pen. At one end of the pen, they would see two photographs displayed on two computer screens and would receive a reward of food for choosing the photograph of the celebrity (by breaking an infrared beam near the screen); if they chose the wrong photograph, a buzzer would sound and they would receive no reward. Over time, they learn to associate a reward with the celebrity's photograph.

After training, the sheep were shown two photograph – the celebrity's face and another face. In this test, sheep correctly chose the learned celebrity face eight times out of ten.

Sheep are often thought to be dumb. They're not dumb, they just have a few specific needs. They need to stay together in a group to be safer from predators, graze for an average of seven hours every day, and survive much better with a handler or shepherd.

Jesus being the Creator of sheep, used them as a symbol of God's people because there's much truth we can glean there.

Jesus is my Shepherd; He's constant in my life when others have failed (that's an enormous comfort). He helps me know Him more by faithfully providing good soul food. And He encourages me to not forsake the rest of the flock because my chances for "survival" are much greater (Hebrews 10:25).



27 Ways Your Good Shepherd Is Helping You Thrive

The Scriptural passages, in Psalm 23 and elsewhere in the Bible, that relate our Lord to our Good Shepherd are rich with promises. They reveal the heart of the Father towards us. He takes us to a place of abundance and **provides daily nourishment**. Not only that, but He is qualified to be your Good Shepherd because He willingly laid down His life for you (John 10:11, 14-18).

- Makes you rest in green meadows (Psalm 23:2)
- Leads you beside peaceful streams (Psalm 23:2)
- Renews your strength (Psalm 23:3)
- Guides you along right paths (Psalm 23:3)
- Is close beside you (Psalm 23:4)
- Protects you (Psalm 23:4)
- Comforts you (Psalm 23:4)
- Prepares a feast for you in the presence of your enemies (Psalm 23:5)
- Anoints your head with oil (Psalm 23:5)
- Causes your cup to overflow with blessings (Psalm 23:5)
- Prepares a place for you live in the house of the LORD forever (Psalm 23:6)
- Speaks to you (John 10:27)
- Leads you (John 10:3, 27)
- Gives you secure eternal life (John 10:28)
- Doesn't want you to perish eternally (Matthew 18:12-14)
- Takes on your iniquity (Isaiah 53:6)
- Feeds you (Isaiah 40:11)
- Gathers you (Isaiah 40:11)
- Carries you (Isaiah 40:11)
- Gives His life (John 10:11,15,17-18)
- Knows you (John 10:14)
- Promises you know Him (John 10:14)
- Calls you by name (John 10:3)
- Goes before you (John 10:4)
- Promises you know His voice (John 10:4-5)
- Saves you (John 10:9)
- Provides abundant life (John 10:10)



Reflection

Look at that list again and ask the questions:

1. What does the Shepherd do?
2. What do the sheep do?

You could even write two columns in your journal and fill them in as “His job” and “my job.”

As your Good Shepherd, Jesus is good to provide nourishment and show you how He loves you in multiple ways. Everything God has for you is good.

My prayer for you today is straight from Hebrews 13:20-21 ESV...

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

I created a worksheet to help with this. It's in Insider Resources on the blog, so make sure you're **signed up to receive access!**



27 Ways Your Good Shepherd Helps You Thrive

- Helps you reach green pastures (Psalm 23:2)
- Leads you beside peaceful streams (Psalm 23:2)
- Restores your strength (Psalm 23:3)
- Guides you along right paths (Psalm 23:3)
- Is close beside you (Psalm 23:4)
- Protects you (Psalm 23:4)
- Comforts you (Psalm 23:4)
- Prepares a feast for you in the presence of your enemies (Psalm 23:5)
- Anoints your head with oil (Psalm 23:5)
- Causes your cup to overflow with blessings (Psalm 23:5)
- Prepares a place for you far in the house of the LORD forever (Psalm 23:6)
- Spreads his net for you (Psalm 124:7)
- Leads you (John 10:3, 27)
- Says you are eternal life (John 10:28)
- Doesn't want you to perish eternally (Matthew 18:12-14)
- Takes on your sin (Isaiah 53:6)
- Feeds you (Isaiah 40:11)
- Gathers you (Isaiah 40:11)
- Carries you (Isaiah 40:11)
- Knows you (John 10:14)
- Knows you know Him (John 10:14)
- Calls you by name (John 10:3)
- Goes before you (John 10:4)
- Promises you know His voice (John 10:4-5)
- Saves you (John 10:5)
- Provides abundant life (John 10:10)

You might think that only the left column will be filled, but put in your response to this job, e.g. for "guides me" would be "I follow"

HIS JOB	MY JOB

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About the Author



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