

IMPACT

July 2011

A Monthly Publication of Impact Ministries

NORMAL
or
average:
is grace really working?

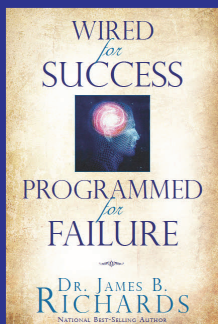


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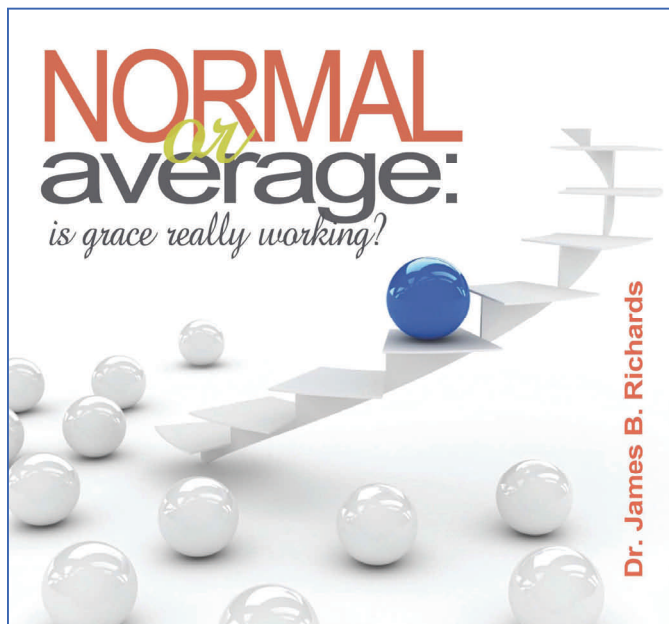
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Average is a calculation that is reached based on what the majority does. The acceptance of average is why the world has no sense of normal. Normal starts with a standard that is attainable by everyone. Average is the standard for which everyone settles!

The *normal* Christian life is one that enjoys the promises and benefits of the New Covenant. The *average* Christian life is one that accepts and is comfortable with far less than God has promised! By accepting average we come to believe that normal is above average, hard to attain, and beyond the reach of the believer!

God wants you to live the normal Christian life of health, love, peace, and prosperity! He wants you to enjoy all that Jesus died to give! But the normal Christian life is only possible when we allow the grace of God to empower us to do that which is far beyond our natural power. In fact, God says:...*the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all...* (Rom. 4:16)

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- Experience a new passion for intimacy with God

If the message of grace did not empower you to be the person you want to be, live in the promises of God, and experience a whole new quality of life, it is time to ask, "Is grace really working for me?" Better yet, it's time to connect with the grace of God in truth that always bears fruit!

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NORMAL or AVERAGE: *Is Grace Really Working?*

By Jim Richards

Whatever the mind sees as normal becomes the boundaries that shape and define the limits of our life. In fact, whatever we determine to be normal not only alters our mental perception, it alters our physical perception.

There was a study done where newborn kittens were placed in environments with no vertical lines. A few weeks later when placed in a normal environment they could not perceive vertical lines so they ran into the legs of coffee tables and chairs. They had been conditioned to see horizontal, but not vertical.

There are accounts that when the first explorers' ships arrived in the New World the natives would stand on the beach and see what looked like waves of heat across the water

but they could not see the ships. They saw the little boats that brought the men to shore but because they had never seen a ship they had no capacity to perceive it!

We think our sight is simply a matter of what happens with the eyes, but the truth is we perceive with our brain. Our brain receives about forty impulses per second that it translates into pictures or concepts that are familiar to us. The interpretation of what we see will be that which is familiar, that which fits into our current belief system, and that which serves our needs.

All five of our senses send the data they collect to the brain at the rate of about 400 billion bits per second. All but 2,000 bits are filtered out of our conscious mind, leaving us not a clear mental picture but a mere rendering of reality!

Thus, as Jesus taught, "For whoever has, to him more will be given." (Mark 4:25) In other words, whatever you have, you're going to get more of it. Why? Because your sense of normal is intertwined with your sense of who you are. Any attempt to stretch yourself beyond your sense of normal is a violation of who you believe yourself to be. It is like stretching for the stars!

The grace of God is given so we can be and do what we cannot be and do on our own! Once again, through incorrect definitions coupled with some plain old unbelief, we have created religious definitions of biblical promises and provision which make us settle for much less than what God calls normal. People use the word "grace" as being synonymous with mercy and kindness. While that is not com-

Normal or Average

(con't from page 3)

pletely untrue it is devoid of the reality of the meaning. Grace is the ability, capacity, and strength of God that comes by unmerited favor.

Grace is what keeps us from toiling in our own best “efforts” and settling for average. Grace is what makes it possible for us to actually live as Jesus and do the things He did. Paul identifies grace as that which brings forth fruit, empowered him for ministry, and gives us the power to live above sin and the capacity to live in the righteousness of God! If grace is only mercy, then at best, we can get forgiveness when we fail, but we still have little hope of ever living in the promises.

Average is what we get when we compare ourselves with others. I may be the smallest person in my family based on the average weight, but if we are all obese, average will not protect me from heart disease, high blood pressure, and all the other ailments that come with obesity! On average my sin might be no worse than everyone I know, but it may still keep me from living my dreams and reaching my goals!

Average is what we accept and settle for when we look at others instead of looking at Jesus. The writer of Hebrews said to look unto *Jesus the author and finisher of our faith*. The Message Bible says it like this, *Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed.* (Heb. 12:2) Jesus did not say if you believed on Paul you could do the same things He did. He said, *he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do.* (Jn. 14:12)

For me to do what He did, I don't believe on Him as an historical figure, I believe on Him as Lord and Savior. I believe on Him as my righteousness. I believe in His finished work! I believe that I am in Him and He is in me! For me to do what He did I have to believe I am like Him! The apostle John said, *As He is now* (raised from the dead, conquering death, hell, and the devil, having obtained an inheri-

For me to do what He did, I don't believe on Him as an historical figure, I believe on Him as Lord and Savior. I believe on Him as my righteousness. I believe in His finished work! I believe that I am in Him and He is in me!

tance that He shares with me, seated at the right hand of God, completely accepted) *so are we in this world!*

The word “righteous” means “as it should be.” If I am in Jesus I am as I should be. If I believe I am as I should be, grace (God's power, ability, capacity, and strength) makes me able to live as I should be; this is God's version of normal. Does this match your version of normal? If you are like most of us that isn't normal, that is the exception. The moment I consider something exceptional it is no longer normal; it is the exception! Religion has led us to accept average as normal and has deceived us into making God's normal the exception.

Invest in your life! Spend time every day acknowledging your new identity in Jesus. Meditate on it. See it! Feel it! See yourself being like Jesus until anything less is not normal!

This article is based on the latest series by Dr. Jim Richards: *Normal or Average: Is Grace Really Work-*

ing? For more information see the ad on page 2.

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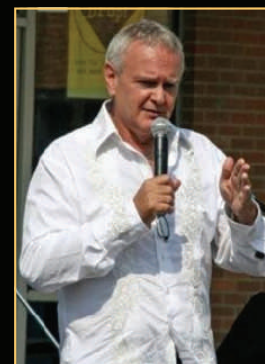
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Meeting Jessica Meeting My Dad

A Two-Part Story of Forgiveness and Healing Part 2

By Jimmie Bratcher &
Jessica Bratcher-Cottingham Strong

What can overcome abandonment?

How much love is necessary to heal decades of rejection? What kind of power does it take to heal a lifetime of neglect and mistakes? It takes divine power that can only come from God's power to save, heal, restore, and forgive. This is a story about my family coming in contact with that kind of wild, raw power. God unleashed Himself on my family earlier this year in a manner that changed every aspect of our lives in the most wonderful way. It is "beyond all I could ask or think."

In part one of our story we shared about our pasts, our hurts, and how after thirty-eight years the opportunity for Jessica and me to meet happened. In part one we were about to meet for the very first time. Here is part two:

Jimmie:

There she was! As I walked up to Jessica I was so excited. Would she accept me? Would this just be a one-time event or could we really become a family? Could she see beyond the hurts of her past? Could I get past the guilt and shame that I felt?

There I was, face-to-face with my daughter. I waited anxiously for her first words. Now, friends who know me know that I never use words like

"Hi or Hello;" I'm just too cool for that! I mainly say "Hey" (with a very cool nod of the head.) There we stood face-to-face, and then she said "Hey" (with a very cool nod of the head!) It was like I was listening to myself. It was so wild! She said "Hey, I'm a hugger." Then she threw her arms around me and we wept.

We then went into the restaurant and sat staring/studying each other's face. For me it was shocking. It was like looking at me in the mirror (except a much prettier version of me.) We stared at each other back and forth, it seemed like for hours.

There we stood face-to-face, and then she said "Hey" (with a very cool nod of the head!)

Then again I asked Jessica to forgive me. She listened to my request then reached across the table, grabbed my hand and said "Well, you're here now and we can't change the past, so we're cool." It had happened! Forgiveness had happened and from that point we began. We started sharing our lives with each other. It was and still is a wild discovery as we uncover traits in each other that only God could have made.

Jessica:

From February 13th until March 8th I wrestled with the emotions that were swirling around me. No matter how I tried to ignore this request and how I tried to let my busy life of work, family, and friends overcome me, it wouldn't. Every sermon I heard, every devotional I read, every scripture I pondered, God kept saying one thing to me: "Trust Me." I continued for three weeks to ignore that friend request and the possibilities it held. Everyone I talked to was someone who hadn't grown up with a father and had later met him. They warned me, "Be careful, you don't know how it will end." A co-worker of my husband told him about meeting his dad and how it ended with this coworker saying, "Please leave and never come back." But God continued to say, "Trust Me." Finally, after receiving a message asking if he could come to my house I looked at my husband and said, "I don't think I can ignore him anymore." So, together we sat down and wrote an email in reply. As we wrote we laughed, and there was peace. There was no fear. All my anxieties left me and I was comfortable for the first time since February 13th.

I sent the email on March 8th. I explained to him my apprehensions in meeting him but that yes, we could meet. My only concern at this point was that we wouldn't get along or be

Meeting Jessica
Meeting My Dad
(con't from page 5)

able to have a relationship. I soon saw that fear alleviated. He and I began exchanging email and text messages. Over the five days we waited for the day to arrive, I realized something was happening that I never could have hoped for: I had a Daddy. I wasn't angry or abandoned or rejected or alone anymore. That little girl had won and the woman was whole. God took away all my pain from the years of rejection and abandonment and I was able to see a love I never imagined from both my dad and my Father.

On March 14th when I watched them pull in I kind of giggled to myself amidst my nerves and said to my husband, "They weren't kidding when they said they were a couple of hippies; that's definitely a hippie vehicle." I saw before me an aging white van and a long haired guy driving. When he got out and walked around the van I realized I was looking in the mirror. For most of my life I thought I looked like my mother, but was I wrong! When I said, "Hey, I'm a hugger," the shakes left; the nervousness and anxiety were gone. As we hugged I knew this was the start of something incredible. I knew I had my daddy for the first time in my life.

Jimmie:

In the next few days so many wonderful miracles were revealed to us as Sherri and I met the four grandsons, each a gift from God. As we shared stories Jessica looked at me and said, "We have all this history or lack of history; this is what it's like: It's like a book and God has turned the page and the page is blank and we get to write whatever we want."

Easter Sunday Morning, 2011, was our first church service together. I was up early thinking about the day when Jes-

sica gave me a gift, a coffee mug covered with daddy names and full of her favorite candy bar (that just happens to be mine, too.)

As I wept, feeling the love of the moment, she touched my face, looked me in the eyes and said, "It's just like you were always here." What mercy, what forgiveness, what love made it possible? It was the love of an out-of-control, loving God who made us to be family. It was and is "beyond all I could ask or think."

Forgiven, accepted, reconciled; you would think I would be whole, but still in my heart I felt that gnawing of guilt, shame, and regret.

I mentioned it to Sherri, Jason, and Jessica while we were talking one day. It was like they unleashed a torrent of rebuke on me, not harsh but loving. As I listened to their words these words from Jessica penetrated my religious, ego-driven heart: "I won't live my life like that and I don't expect you to live your life like that either." I was stunned and said "I don't have a problem with the guilt and shame, but the regret - you'll have to give me that one."

What? I think I'll just hang on to this destructive emotion that God, Jessica, or none of my family was expecting from me. I wanted to hang on to the past while everyone else was moving on. It was crazy. So, like guilt and shame I said goodbye to regret and embraced the overwhelming love of my family and Jesus.

What have I learned now months into our lives and families being transformed? First, all things really are possible to those who believe. **They really are.** Second, **love never fails.** It is the indefensible strategy of Heaven. Third, after talking with hundreds of people with similar stories something common has come to light: Like Jessica and hundreds I have spoken with, the thing that keeps us apart is **no one knows what to do, so no one does anything.**

We just don't know where to start, so rather than risk making a mistake or being hurt we do nothing and live separated.

I know there are many of you with similar stories, so we are going to ask you to do something! That's it: "**Do something.**" What? Pray? Yes. Believe? Yes. Listen to God? Of course. For some, your something will be to do nothing. For others, it may be to wait. But for some of you it will be to make the call, do the research, and take the trip.

We (my entire family) were all missing something wonderful - something that would heal us, something that would fill is. We all knew something was missing, but we couldn't see it.

For many, what you could be missing is that one act of forgiveness that leads to overwhelming love and acceptance. For others, you may need to receive forgiveness that has been offered. I just know that life is too short to live with your heart full of the hard things life may have thrown at you when God can and will give you a new beginning. He can give you a new start.

I invite you to take this wonderful journey and experience His love and forgiveness.

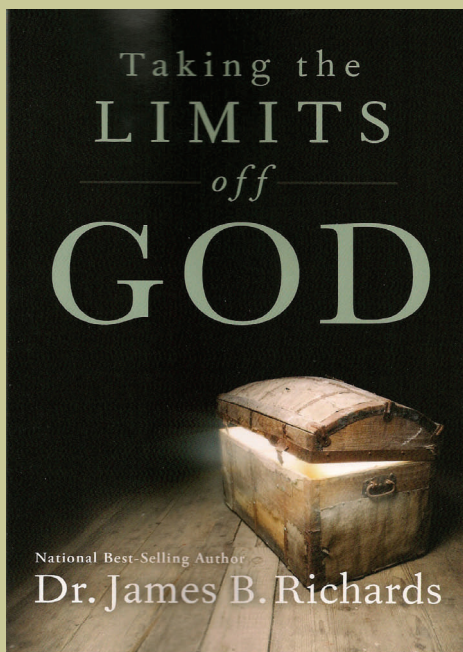
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The Rev. Jimmie Bratcher

Pastor, evangelist, author, singer, songwriter, and guitarist, "The Rev." preaches in churches every Sunday, but on Saturday nights you'll find him sharing his amazing testimony and blistering guitar licks onstage in blues clubs and at music festivals, prisons, and biker rallies.

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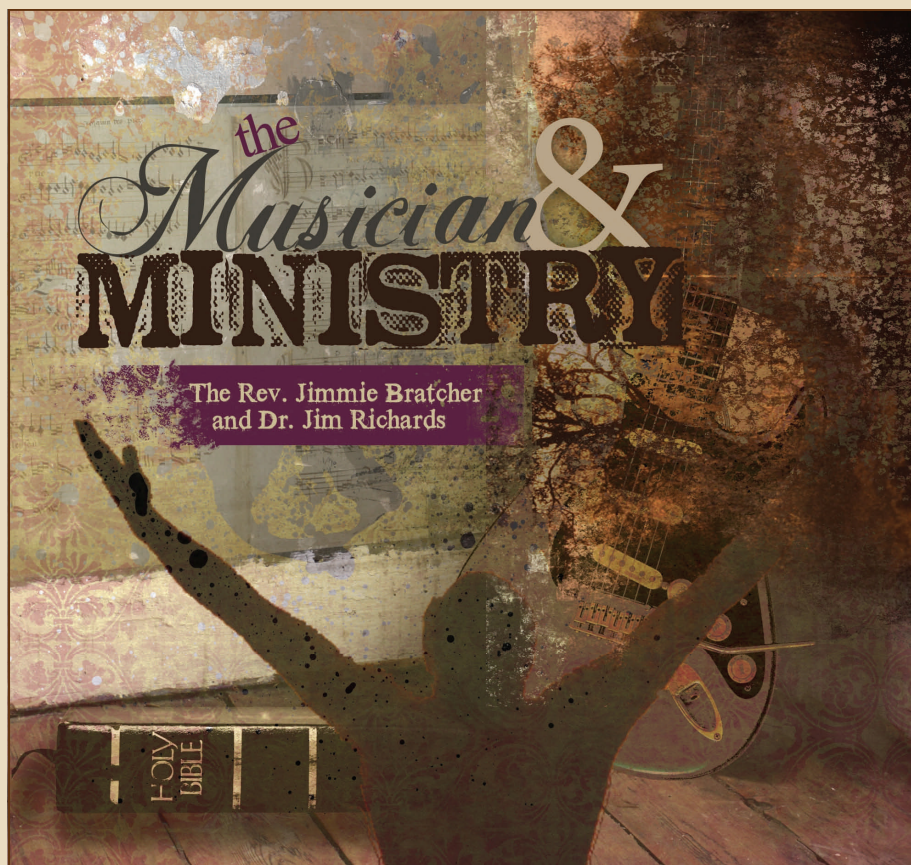
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There is probably no role as essential to ministry yet as misunderstood as that of the musician. The Bible presents music as one of the most powerful tools for influencing the soul; yet with all its value and power, the musician may be one of the most misunderstood roles in the body of Christ!

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The Pursuit of Happiness



The Bible

tells us that all things are given for our enjoyment! (1 Tim. 6:17) Contrary to a millennial of religious negativity, God intended for us to enjoy life. As Jesus Himself said, *I am come that they might live life to the fullest.* (John 10:10)

From the beginning of time man has acted in ways that created unbearable hardships, and then blamed God for the problem. Job is the perfect example. Job's fear and mismanagement of his family created some terrible hardships; however, to protect his ego he blamed God. Job may have had patience, but what he didn't have was truth! After Job and his friends pour out over thirty chapters of religious ramblings God finally speaks and brings clarity to the issue.

God asks Job one question that all people suffering hardship should ask. *Will you condemn Me that you may remain righteous?* (Job 40:8) In other words, "Will you blame Me instead of taking responsibility for your actions and their consequences? Will you make Me look like the bad one to the world so you can look good to the world? Will you hide your personal failures behind the cloak of religious negativity?"

From the Book of Genesis to the teachings of Christ, man is told to go out into the world and pursue happi-

ness and fulfillment! Our founding fathers understood the Bible and understood the nature of man. This is why they crafted the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as they did.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." According to Wikipedia these are the most potent and consequential words in American history.

Few people in America today seem to understand that the Constitution is not designed to tell us all of our rights, nor was it written to tell Government how to control us. The founders understood there would be millions of details to emerge throughout history that would not be detailed in the Constitution. If it was written to tell man everything he could or couldn't do it would soon be outdated and irrelevant! No! They had something far broader and more eternal in mind!

The Declaration of Independence is the Mother of the Constitution. Without a proper understanding of it one will constantly misinterpret the Constitution. The Declaration of Independence starts out by acknowledging the inherent freedom given to man by God. Among the many reasons the formers of this great document made this the

birthing statement of our nation is because they wanted to make it clear from the start: rights are given by God, not by Government!

The rights laid out in the Declaration of Independence are the basic rights endowed by God to man. They wanted all subsequent generations to understand the One who gives you the rights is the One who can take them away. If God gives us these freedoms no man and no Government has the right to take them away!

Because they so aligned their ideas of a free nation with the Word of God they made their stance clear: we were a nation that based its beliefs, government, and ideas of man on the Word of God as revealed in the Bible of the Jews and Christians. While all other religions are welcome here and given the freedom to practice their faith, it must be subservient to the Word of God. The only freedoms given to man are those that are revealed in the Bible.

Another important truth that is seemingly lost on this generation is the fact that the Constitution was written to control Government, not the citizens. I recently heard a liberal politician call the Constitution an outdated negative document. It is understandable that he would call it negative since he was attempting to pass legislation regulating the freedom of the citizens. The Constitution is our only legal protection from the abuses of Government.

The founders understood the nature of man. They saw from European Government that if given power man ultimately becomes corrupt and will use that power for his own benefit. They knew it was inherent in man's nature to seek to rule over one another. Therefore, they defined our God-given freedoms and wrote a document that limited the power of Government. We fail to understand that every attempt to expand the size and services of Government is an attempt to violate the Constitution and rule over the citizens.

Over the last fifty years Civil Rights and now Civil Just have become words that are used in a way that has little or nothing to do with their actual definition or legal meaning. Government has taken it upon itself to insure the happiness of mankind. Few of our citizens understand this is a basic tenant of Communism. In Communism the State, not God, defines our rights. Since the State defines our rights, the State replaces God. The State gives and the State takes away.

There are the gullible who believe we can trust man to determine and manage our freedoms more than we trust God's Word! The first of the three groups of people most susceptible to this erroneous thinking are the recipients of the benefits. They are generally functioning out of their own greed and laziness. They have lived in irresponsibility for so long they believe it is someone else's responsibility to insure their happiness.

The second group that naively buys into this lie is college students, those who have been educated in a pro-Socialist curriculum. They have never built businesses or owned companies, and may have never even had a job. Lenin called them "useful idiots." He saw that in order to sell his propaganda to the world they must enlist the egoistical, idealistic college student.

Then there are those who seek to usurp our freedoms by buying votes - that is until we are no longer allowed to vote. The elite believe they know better than God about how man should live. They believe the enlightened should make the rules that the rest of

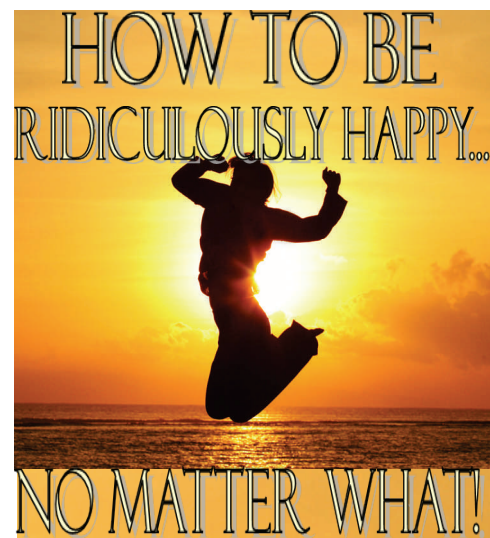
the world are just not smart enough to make. These are the very types of leaders our Constitution was written to protect us from; yet, we listen to their humanistic speeches and in our ignorance of the Word of God we think they are actually compassionate and caring, but they are actually ravenous wolves dressed in sheep's clothing!

Contrary to the Socialist agenda, our Constitution doesn't guarantee happiness for every man; it guarantees the freedom to pursue happiness. And like the Bible, it allows for the fact that giving people what they have not earned corrupts their character and under-

Read the Bible for yourself. Discover God's wisdom for health, wealth, and happiness. Purchase a copy of the Constitution. Read it, learn it, and come to understand what it means.

mines their ingenuity. The Bible says if you don't work you don't eat. Yet in our country we have millions of people who are paid to not work, to not find jobs, and to have illegitimate children. They don't pursue happiness; they think they are entitled to it. They live under the delusion that another person's success takes something away from them.

Our Government is upside down because Christians do not know and believe the Bible, and they do not know the Constitution. Read the Bible for yourself. Discover God's wisdom for health, wealth, and happiness. Purchase a copy of the Constitution. Read it, learn it, and come to understand what it means. I highly recommend reading the book *The 5000 Year Leap* by W. Cleon Skousen. It will open your eyes to the biblical basis for our Constitution. Then make sure that every city, state, and federal politician understands that you expect them to uphold the Constitution of the United States, and then "hold their feet to the fire."



Most destructive behavior in our lives would simply vanish if we were happy. Happiness is a God-given right! It is inherent in our makeup. We are genetically "wired" to be happy, which is why we instinctively pursue it. Yet, most of those pursuits end in disappointment, self-destructiveness, and even addictions.

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Good News!



A New Heart!

I have been doing Heart Physics on a daily basis since Dec. 2009. I've been to one live Heart Physics conference in Huntsville, October of last year. One month ago at 3:00 am I received a "heart transplant" (I don't know any other way to describe it!).

I have been in the Word since the 1980's and pastoring since 1982, but on Tuesday morning April 19th I received a new heart. I have been consistently re-writing the truth on my heart. I guess the scales got tipped, the new normal of the way it should be became real. The transformation is just remarkable. ~CD~

Free Wired for Success Teaching Videos

These 2 videos that I have just seen are marvelous! I will listen to them again and again.

Thank you so very much.
~BS~

Life is Good!

My wife and I are doing really great, PTL! We just celebrated 20 years of marriage! The last 5 years have had some pretty rough spots but we've more than survived, we've overcome thanks to Impact and Dr. Richards' teachings and Heart Physics.

I am now working part-time as a driver/chauffeur and in my spare time, I have started a recovery group for dually diagnosed sufferers of substance abuse/chemical dependency and emotional/psychiatric disorders.

Thanks to what I've learned through Dr. Richards' teachings I have found that place of peace and serenity that has eluded me since childhood. I am now 55 but I feel like a 20 year old. And the best part is I can start to see the fruit in my wife's life, too!

Thank you, Dr. Richards and Impact for planting the necessary seeds of Faith Righteousness, Grace, and Peace and entrusting me to the care of a good God for the eventual knowledge on my part of His total and radical approval of me and my lifestyle. And the most beautiful part about it all is that it's just beginning and it can only get better. ~RD~

TRANSFORMED

I have been listening to your material since 2004, just 3 yrs. after I was born again.

My pastor came to your conference and spent thousands of pounds as he purchased every teaching series and every book! Our lives have been transformed as a result.

I personally want to thank you and let you know that I appreciate you. I pray for you often and thank God for your life.

I was born in a Hindu family and believed in Christ from the age of about 8. I accepted Christ when I was 24 and its the best thing I ever did.

Thank you for helping me to have a relationship with Christ. ~MM~

Identity: The Heart of the Matter

At the core of our faith there is one root issue that must be our foundation! The mystery of the New Covenant is Christ in you, the hope of glory! Evidently it is still as much a mystery today as it was when these words were first written. The Church as a whole seems to be totally oblivious to who we are in Him and who He is in us!

We are in Him, He is in us, we are made one together in God. (Jn. 17:21) This is why we are the righteousness (as we should be) of God in Christ! We are as we should be because we are in Him. From this position our relationship to all things changes. From the reality of being as we should be (righteous) we have a new identity. Until we know and feel our new identity we will live as we have always lived!

Even in the Old Testament God pointed out that the problem in the Earth was due to men not really understanding His position in Planet Earth. *They do not know, nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the earth are unstable. I said, "You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, And fall like one of the princes."* (Ps. 82:5-7) We have authority in Planet Earth, but we don't believe it; therefore, we don't live it!

We were originally given dominion in the earth. Through ignorance and unbelief man failed to exercise that authority to bring about God's plan. Now in Christ we have been made righteous (as we should be.) We should stand before God with complete confidence. There should be no fear or condemnation. We should be unstoppable, unbeatable, always conquering, and always confident!

There is an identity crisis in the Body of Christ. We don't know who we are! As I have pointed out in my new series *Normal or Average*, we have rejected God's normal and settled into average. Our sense of spirituality is based on a comparison of ourselves with others. We see ourselves as sinners saved by grace, trying to become what we should be. The veil of religion has hidden the facts from our heart: we were sinners, we are saved by grace which makes us the righteousness of God... NOW!

All of our behavior, all of our choices, all of our limitations, and all of our successes are a reflection of who we believe we are, i.e., our identity! Focusing on behavior alone is an endless effort of futility and frustration. Change your awareness of your identity and every choice, every action, and every emotion changes to match that identity!

Heart Physics® was designed to help you establish yourself in an immovable, abiding sense of "Christ in you!" With the abiding sense of His presence your sense of self (identity) is transformed, you move the boundaries of your life, and your heart is established!

Thirty days from now you could be living in the new you, the identity that Jesus died and rose from the dead to give you. When you know who you are the power of sin is broken, the confidence for faith emerges, and the peace of God overflows!

Every day of your life you should spend time investing in your heart and experiencing your righteousness. You should lose all awareness of any identity outside of who you are in Jesus!

Positive, Painless, Permanent, Effortless Transformation



In this life-changing program you will learn to take control of your life.

Imagine a Key—something so small, so simple, and yet so powerful. All through history the

key has represented knowledge, the power of entrance, and unlimited access.

In this Essential Heart Physics® Program, you will receive the HeartKey® that, in essence, will give you unlimited access to your heart bypassing years of faulty logic and reason. You can simply open the door of your heart and experience God's reality. Through this innovative thirty-day program you will establish a conscious connection with Christ in you.

You will gain possession of your HeartKey which will enable you to make positive, painless, permanent, and effortless transformation.

In just thirty days of simple HeartWork you will connect with the ultimate essence of the Gospel—the mystery that has been hidden for generations: Christ in you!

Dare to imagine how your life will change as you are filled with peace, power, and the confidence of constantly being aware of God's presence in your life. The awareness of His presence is the first step toward accessing His limitless power.

Within thirty days you will be able to gain access to the HeartZone at will. No matter what is going on around you, you will be able to enter that place in your heart that the Bible calls the "Secret Place" where you will experience God's peace, power, and presence.

From the HeartZone you can make decisions with a new confidence. You can conquer stress, anger, and negative emotions. Essential Heart Physics® will establish a sense of limitlessness. There is no other way to describe it! With God's presence comes the abiding realization of a limitless life.

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