

GETTING
PAST ME
AND
BEING CLOSER
TO THEE

A CLEAR PATH TO A MORE SPIRITUAL
AND HAPPIER LIFE

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Introduction

Many people are looking for something in their life that they have yet to find. There is a vague emptiness that defies to be filled. Money, fame, power, security or earthly pleasures still leave a void. Maybe it could be summed up this way: All my life my heart has sought a thing I cannot name.” This was found on a wall of a one-room apartment in a rundown apartment building housing hippies, winos, and street people in the sixties. It was on colored art paper, and the words were covered in glitter. Someone in this down-and-out place probably at a time in their life when they were as down and out as the place they lived in created this and hung it on the wall. It was the only thing in an otherwise bare room. Whoever came up with this was probably at one of the lowest points in their life and was digging deep into their soul and being.

They are not alone. How many people are there who are looking for something they cannot find because they don’t even know what they are looking for? “All my life my heart has sought a thing I cannot name.”

Maybe the answer lies inside of us. It must be something we can’t see or touch, but it’s there. It isn’t part of our physical being, but it is still within us. It is beyond ourselves. It isn’t in or even a part of our physical world. Something tells us it’s there, and so we seek it at a time when we feel we have nothing else. “All of my life my heart has sought a thing I cannot name.” No one can tell us what it is. No one can put a name on it. If this thing we cannot name is anywhere, it is in our spirit. This is only where true peace and joy can be found. Is this not the true deep-seated desire of every living being to live in peace and joy?

Our nature dictates that we are primarily concerned with ourselves before anybody or anything. This doesn't mean that we can't care about others or put things aside. We can and we do, but our self-preservation is still our top priority, the *Me*. It's still all about "*Me*" and what we want and need. It is our basic nature, and that doesn't change. What we can change is to put aside the "*Me*" to some degree. We do this when we love another person. We do this when we put aside a dependence on drugs and alcohol. The quest to become a spiritual person means putting the *Me* aside so you can be closer to God. It also means putting worldly things aside, at least some of them. We can have less and still be happy. We don't have to have the biggest house, the most expensive car, the finest furniture, or a clothes closet that takes up a small room. The secret lies in moderation of all things. We cannot do without worldly things, but we can do with less. We don't have to live in or practice poverty to be spiritual. We don't have to put ourselves completely aside to be a spiritual person, and we don't have to practice chastity to attain spirituality. This book is about finding a way to be more spiritual that is within our power to do as human beings.

Purpose

The purpose of this book is to bring one person closer to God so they will have true joy and peace in their life. We can only try to be a better person than we were and are. There is hope for everyone no matter who you are or what you have done.

A Sinner's Plea

All of my life has been about me
So it was very difficult for me to see
What was right in front of my eyes
Making up and believing my own lies
Such as I never had enough
I always needed and wanted more stuff
I treated people like they were Dixie cups
I used them and tossed them away like unwanted pups
My ego knew no bounds, all was fair
As long as I got more than my share, I did not despair
This is the life I had chosen to lead
Not knowing that I had planted a seed
One that would cut me down to size
And lead ultimately to my own demise
Now I'm trying to get past me
And get as close as I can to thee

There Are No Atheists in Foxholes

It's an old saying, "There are no atheists in foxholes." When bullets are whizzing inches from your head and bombs are exploding on every side of you within a few feet, something changes in you. You are alone, and your life is in eminent danger. When there is nothing between you and death, your whole being cries out for help. There is nothing or no one to help you in this time of peril, and as a last resort, you turn to God.

There is nothing else left to believe in. Out of pure necessity, you turn to and are forced by your circumstances to believe in God. You must believe God is your only salvation at this time. There is nothing else to believe in. "There are no atheists in foxholes."

Should an EMP (electromagnetic pulse) bomb explode over Kansas City, every electrical and electronic device in this country from coast to coast will be fried and useless. Since everything is tied to computers—our gasoline, utilities, lights, water, phone, food distribution, manufacturing, farming and retail outlets—we will be without food, in the dark, without water, communication or a way to travel and go places because the gasoline pumps will not function.

We will in effect be in the Stone Age. All of our possessions will have little or no meaning. Ninety percent of us will be dead in a year, either from starvation or from being killed for what little food we have. This will be the time when the great majority of people turn to God for help.

Some will be saved from death; most won't. It will be, however, a time to have the opportunity to believe in and get closer to God before death.

Being close to God means choosing between the world of materialism, pleasures, ego, and God. Since the material world will be for the most part destroyed, choosing God over the world will be made much easier. We will have nothing to cling to except our faith, love, and trust in God. God will become our reality. We will have a last chance to set things right with God before death takes us. The world we presently live in is so filled with materialism, pleasures, and ego fulfillment that the choice becomes almost too great to deal with. Most only become spiritual and see God as we are taking our last breath. There is a way to become more spiritual even though we are inundated by the lure of this materialistic, pleasurable, self-obsessed world. There is a balance that can be struck. We must take into account that we as humans are very susceptible to worldly things because of all the physical and psychological needs which are tied to our need to survive. Our number one and greatest instinct is survival. We have other instincts but none as great as the need to survive. Every cell in our body needs food, oxygen, and stimulation. These needs and how we meet them control what we do and how we choose to do it. To survive, we must feed these millions of cells, provide them with good, oxygen, and stimulation. In our body besides all of these cells is a spirit. Our cells will die. Our spirit never dies. Our spirit is connected to us as a part of God. Most of us are not even aware that we have spiritual needs also. Our spirit needs peace, balance and harmony with our physical and mental being. Balance is the key word here because we are caught between two worlds, the physical and the spiritual. We need to fulfill our physical needs, but we also need to fulfill our spiritual needs. The physical will someday die, the spiritual will live forever.

There are ways to achieve this balance, and if you are of a mind to find balance with the reward of peace within, then these guidelines will be laid out for you. It is up to you to choose how much spiritual and how much physical you want in your life and how close you want to be with God.

The Book

A great speaker came to the church I was attending one Sunday. He had a sense of humor, was fluent, and you could tell by his remarks that he was very well read. During the course of his speaking, he went on to say that if he had only one book he could keep out of the five thousand, there would be no doubt in his mind which one he would keep. This is a very strong endorsement for a man so well read of all kinds of literature and especially Christian writings. Most people may not even have heard of this book much less read it, especially Protestants. The reason for that is because it was written by a Catholic monk in the fourteenth century. It is part of the religious writings by Catholic authors. Remember this book is the only book a Protestant preacher would keep out of all the religious books he has read. This is a very, very strong recommendation for a Protestant preacher to endorse a book written by a Catholic.

Obviously this is no ordinary book but one that has been a huge amount of spiritual inspiration since it was first written hundreds of years ago. This book, which most people are not even aware of, has been translated into more languages than any other book except the Bible. It is one of Christianity's best kept secrets.

It was written by Thomas A. Kempis who was born in the lower Rhine town of Kempis, Germany, which is where part of his name came from, in 1380. His father was a blacksmith, and his mother a schoolmistress. His given name means little hammer in German. When he was nineteen, he entered the monastery of St. Agnes in Holland where he spent the rest of his life until he died in 1471. He took the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience when he entered the monastery and lived his life in almost total

obscurity. He read, wrote, prayed, and heard the confessions of people who came to the monastery. His book is all about how to love God. It is free from all intellectual pretensions and probes beneath the surface of our being. The book is divided into four books.

The first book has to do with the withdrawal of our earthly life. It emphasizes the spiritual life and renounces all that is vain about our life, our ego, our materialism, and our passions as being nothing more than illusions.

Book two, *Directions for a Spiritual Life*, teaches us how to have inward peace, purity of heart, and a good conscience. It also shows us how by moderating our longing and desires along with practicing patience we can become closer to God. Book three emphasizes a total acceptance of and giving of yourself to God. This is the part that deals with getting past yourself and leaving yourself behind.

Book four, *On the Blessed Sacrament*, shows us that when God resides in and is allowed to control our heart, we can put aside our own pleasures and desires.

We would be united with God and have peace. When we offer ourselves purely and completely to God, all of our sins will be washed away.

This book can help you attain what every human being wants and that is peace within ourselves. This book will help you achieve peace of mind. Read a chapter of this book every day which is usually only one page, as a daily devotional and spiritual guide. The name of the book is the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas A. Kempis.

Famous Sayings

By Thomas A. Kempis

The acknowledgement of our weakness is the first step in repairing our lost line.

Out of sight, out of mind. The absent are always in the wrong.

Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.

Great tranquility of heart is his who cares for neither praise nor blame.

First keep peace with yourself, then you can also bring peace to others.

Love feels no burden, thinks nothing of trouble, attempts what is above its strength, pleads no excuse of impossibility, for it thinks all things lawful for itself and all things possible.

What most of all hinders heavenly consolation is that you are too slow in turning yourself to prayer.

If you cannot mold yourself entirely as you wish, how can you expect other people to be entirely to your liking?

Oh, how great peace and quietness would he possess who should cut off all vain anxiety and place all his confidence in God.

A humble knowledge of thyself is a surer way to God than a deep search after learning. We usually know what we can do, but temptation shows us who we are.

The loftier the building, the deeper must the foundation be laid.

Gladly we desire to make other men perfect, but we will not amend our own fault.

He will easily be content and at peace whose conscience is pure.

All men commend patience although few are willing to practice it.

A man is hindered and distracted in proportion as he draws outward things to himself.

Man proposes, but God disposes.

I would far rather feel remorse than know how to define it.

Never be entirely idle, but either be reading or writing or praying or meditating or endeavoring something for the public good.

Blaise Pascal and the Wager

Blaise Pascal, who was born in 1623, is considered to have one of the most brilliant minds of all time. He was a mathematician, inventor, physician, religious philosopher, and a renowned writer of prose.

Besides writing one of the greatest classics of philosophy entitled *Les Provinciales*, Pascal had the passionate conviction of a man in love with the absolute who saw no solution apart from a heartfelt desire for the truth together with a love of God that works continuously toward destroying all self-love. Pascal believed morality cannot be separated from spirituality.

Pascal's Inventions and Conceptions

- Laid the foundation for the modern theory of probabilities
- Conceived and constructed a calculating device which was the first digital calculator
- Invented the syringe
- Created the hydraulic press
- Laid the foundation for the calculus of probabilities
- Conceived the first wrist watch
- Invented the roulette machine when working on a concept to create a perpetual motion device
- Was the inventor of the Pascaline which was the earliest form of the modern computer
- Wrote the *Pensées*—the purpose of the book was to overcome the skeptic by means of a wager.

Pascal believed that men must be brought to God through Jesus Christ alone because a creature could never know the infinite if Jesus had not descended to assume the proportion of man's fallen state.

Life is a gamble. Every time you make a choice you are gambling. Will it be the right one? What are the odds? Sometimes the odds are in your favor and then again at times they aren't. There is no such thing as a sure thing. Blaise Pascal was a brilliant scientist and mathematician, a genius born in France on June 19, 1663. He invented the calculator, the forerunner of today's computer. He discovered and proved that the vacuum does exist, and he formulated laws of change and probability which are still in use in today's world.

On November 23, 1654, he had a two-hour ecstatic vision that led to his conversion. He became a true believer in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and as a result came up with what is now known as Pascal's Wager. The concept is simple yet irrefutable. It is framed in the context of a bet, a bet which everyone must make during their life. It is the most important bet anyone will ever make because so much is riding on it. Place your bet.

Pascal's Wager

The most important bet you will ever make is going to be forced upon you. There is no way to get out of it. You must bet one way or the other. This is the bet.

1. If you believe in God and you are wrong, you lose nothing.

Let's say you bet that there is a God and Jesus Christ was divine. What happens if you're wrong? There is no God, Jesus Christ was not divine, and a life after death does not exist. You lose, but what have you lost? Nothing. You will have lost nothing.

2. If you don't believe in God and you are right, you gain nothing.

Suppose that you bet that there is no God and that Jesus Christ was just another man. Let's say you are absolutely right and win the bet. What do you win? Nothing. You will gain nothing for your wager.

3. If you don't believe in God and you are wrong, you have lost everything.

If, on the other hand, you choose not to believe and reject God and you're wrong you will have chosen to spend eternity without God, your eternity could be spent alone and in the dark with the torment of an awareness of what you have lost, that in an eternity that has no end.

4. If you believe in God and you are right, you gain everything.

On the other hand, suppose you bet that God and Christ do exist and that there is life after death and you are right and win the bet, what did you win? Everything. The winner of this bet will spend eternity with God, whose love is unconditional, all-encompassing, and infinite. There is no end to God's love. You will spend eternity being loved and feeling a love that will surpass any joy and ecstasy that you have ever felt. Your eternity, of which there is no end, will be spent in absolute peace, freedom, and harmony with the never-ending bliss of being loved by the greater love of all.

You have no choice but to bet. You are either betting that there is a god and a life after death or you are wagering that there is no God and when you die

it's the end of you, there is nothing else. In this matter you have no choice but to make a choice. You will have to place your bet one way or the other.

You are reading this so you are still alive and have time to place your bet. It doesn't matter what you have done with your life before now. God loves you, always has, always will, and this love is unconditional and includes absolute forgiveness. Everyone on Earth strives for the same thing to feel good. When you open your heart to God and let him come into your heart and life, you will feel better than you have ever felt. Your life will change and become better and better. Place your bet on God and his love for you. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

Famous Quotes

From Blaise Pascal

Love has reasons which reason cannot understand.

Small minds are concerned with the extraordinary, great minds with the ordinary.

Noble deeds that are concealed are most esteemed.

The sensitivity of men to small matters, and their indifference to great ones, indicates a strange inversion.

Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it may be true.

The greatness of man is great in that he knows himself to be wretched. A tree does not know itself to be wretched.

Time heals griefs and quarrels, for we change and are no longer the same persons. Neither the offender nor the offended are any more themselves.

Do you wish people to think well of you? Don't speak well of yourself.

There are only two kinds of men: the righteous who think they are sinners and the sinners who think they are righteous.

Since we cannot know all that there is to be known about anything, we ought to know a little about everything.

We sail within a vast sphere, ever drifting in uncertainty, driven from end to end.

We are only falsehood, duplicity, contradiction; we both conceal and disguise ourselves from ourselves.

All men's miseries derive from not being able to sit in a quiet room alone.

Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.

Belief is a wise wager. Granted that faith cannot be proved, what harm will come to you if you gamble on its truth, and it proves false? If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation, that He exists.

Man's greatness lies in his power of thought.

The least movement is of importance to all nature. The entire ocean is affected by a pebble.

Thus so wretched is man that he would be weary, even without any cause for weariness . . . and so frivolous is he that, though full of a thousand reasons for weariness, the least thing, such as playing billiards or hitting a ball, is sufficient enough to amuse him.

Happiness is neither without us nor within us. It is in God, both without us and within us.

Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established, that, unless we love the truth, we cannot know it.

Who We Are and What We Are

1. Before we ask who we are we must first find out what we are, we are first and foremost human beings with a human body. It is a scientific fact that we are composed of over 90 percent water. Water is a combination of hydrogen and oxygen atoms. The average person is comprised of nearly two thousand trillion oxygen cells inside of us. This is more numerous than the leaves in every forest on the earth.

The sphere encompassed by the electron in the atoms contains millions of yards of nothingness since over 90 percent of every atom is empty space.

Rather than the solid mass we seem to be, we are nothing more than a porous froth of atomic Styrofoam. The tiny central nucleus of the atom is so dense that if your body could be packed with deflated atoms rather than the empty ones that comprise your body now, the tip of one of your fingers would weigh close to a billion tons. This is a scientific fact. What does all of this mean? It means that we are simply big sacs of water, and over 95 percent of us is empty space. Our human bodies are basically an illusion of solidity, and if you still feel you are special then consider the fact that there are millions of water sacs just like yourself that inhabit the Earth we live on. And if you still feel special after knowing all the above then consider this one last scientific fact. If all of your oxygen atoms were to vanish you would still be visible but not for very long. The mist of leftover elements would scatter with the first puff of wind.

This is what we are as human beings. We have limited life spans and then this human body eventually evaporates into nothingness leaving only our spiritual being. We are but dust in the wind.

Who We Are

2. We are what we think and what we do, nothing more. It doesn't matter who people think we are, it only matters who we really are. Once you understand what we are, it's easy to understand why we live only a limited time in this world.

We are two beings in one, we are a human being and a spiritual being. On our human side, the only reason we are able to move, see, hear, speak and understand is because we have life inside of us. This life is in the form of a soul or a spirit. This soul belongs to us, but the essence of this soul is God. This is our spiritual being. God is in our soul, and part of it so when God leaves our soul, the life leaves our body, and we die. Our human being comes to an abrupt end. Our soul which belongs to us and to us alone at this point continues to live and has eternal life. God gave us this soul and gave us life in both human and spiritual. He was for us and always will be a part of our soul.

Our desire to become closer to our spirit or soul is also a desire to become closer to God and experience the everlasting life and the infinite love, peace and joy which only God can provide.

The Seven Deadly Sins

The Seven Heavenly Virtues and Everything in Between

The seven deadly sins are wrath, pride, greed, sloth, envy, gluttony, and lust.

The *seven heavenly virtues* are love, humility, generosity, work, gladness, fasting, and chastity.

The seven deadly sins are the extremes of the world we live in. They represent the worst within us that is taken to its very limit. Each deadly sin has a degree of evil and separation from God.

A Final Take Away

Getting past yourself is the biggest battle you will ever have to fight in this small life time we are given. The fight involves overcoming to the extent that we can is our human nature. We have a lot of negative emotions to deal with such as fear, hate, loathing, ego, lust and greed, and pleasure. The less materialist we are the more spiritual we can become.

The truth is we cannot overcome ourselves only God can help us. We will be able to understand how powerless we are without God when we take our last breath. One last word. Control your tongue and you will be better able to control yourself and get past yourself