

“TO THOSE WHO OVERCOME...”

A DISCIPLE'S GUIDE TO GROWING
STRONGER IN THE LORD



ERICH KLEINSCHMIDT

All rights reserved. This book may not be copied or reprinted for commercial gain or profit. Use of copying for personal or group study as directed by the book is permitted.

To Those Who Overcome – A disciple's guide to growing stronger in the Lord
By Erich Kleinschmidt

©2026 – Erich Kleinschmidt

Design and Layout by Elizabeth O'Rear (hello@eorear.com)

Editorial Assistance by Sandy Meindersma

To contact the author please email: tothosewhoovercame@gmail.com

Acknowledgements and gratitude:

Thanks be to God who rescued me over 40 years ago and set me on a spiritual journey beyond anything I ever would have imagined for myself. I thank you for your patience, love, mercy, vision, blessings, deliverances, and much more than I am aware of.

Thanks to my wife Karen and daughters Hannah and Kaila for all their love, support, and connection over the years. Your relationship to me has been an anchor and refuge.

Thanks to all of the brothers and sisters in the churches I have been a part of and their deep loving friendships in Christ: Pioneer Valley Church of Christ, Boston Church of Christ, Capital Rivers/Montgomery County Church of Christ, Greater Frederick/Monocacy Valley Church of Christ, and Worcester County Church of Christ.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
About Me	2
How does this Workbook Work?	3
THEME ONE – Be Still	4
THEME TWO – The Grace of God - No Limits	10
THEME THREE – Getting Real with God	16
THEME FOUR – Better Together	23
THEME FIVE – Fight for Your Faith	28
THEME SIX – The Key to Everything	36
THEME SEVEN – It’s a Way of Life	38
THEME EIGHT – Keep the Prize in Mind	43
Final Thoughts	45

INTRODUCTION

This “book” is really a workbook and guide to help you move forward from whatever condition you find yourself in spiritually. It’s to help you get on the path to spiritual strength and reconnection with God. The Christian life is a journey AND a destination. Between the time you become a disciple and the time you die physically and go to be with God, there’s a whole lot that can and will go on. There’s highs and lows, joys and pain, beauty and ugliness, excitement and the mundane. It’s often not an easy road, but it’s also what makes your life full and meaningful over time.

Imagine watching a movie and the main character had the “perfect” life – wealthy, healthy, successful, great relationships with everyone, and never any tragic events in his life. For two hours you watched this movie showing how great this guy’s life is. What a boring movie! Think of some of your favorite movies, or books, or historical figures – the main character had some major life challenges to deal with – family tragedy, military battles, health challenges, abusive childhood, racism; it could go on and on. The character goes through the many challenges and finally overcomes and triumphs. We often get inspired by those stories and gain a sense of hope for our lives. But often, it can be really hard to see the “inspiration” in our lives when we’re in the middle of life events that can be so challenging.

Most of us, myself included, would rather not experience too many of life’s challenges, some of which can be incredibly painful. The blessings are there though sometimes not very obvious. As we persevere and overcome, we get stronger, it keeps us humble, and grateful for God and spiritually encouraging people in our lives.

But as we go along this journey, we can get tired, discouraged, allured by things or people that appear to provide joy or comfort that ultimately don’t fulfill what we originally thought was going to be so good. We can get complacent and let our relationship with God become routine to the point of near meaningless. We can have doubts about God’s existence and the reliability of the Bible. We can get stuck in a swamp of self-pity and discouragement and lose hope for a better future in Christ. I have been in every one of these scenarios.

The workbook is here to help you to draw back to our Father and to Jesus. This is meant to be a workbook, and not just a book to read and get information. It’s meant to be interactive and to help you to put spiritual principles into practice to the best of your ability.

ABOUT ME

All of these lessons have been borne out of my life as a disciple of 40 years. I'm not a church evangelist or elder, I've never been on a foreign church planting, and never been paid to work for the church. I was not brought up in a church-going God-believing household. It was pretty much the opposite. I never read the Bible until I was about 22 years old. After I became a Christian at that age, it was pretty much starting at square one to develop a belief and trust in God and the scriptures. It was about ten years after I was a Christian before anyone asked me lead a small Bible study group. Honestly, I feel like most of the first 20 years of being a disciple, I was struggling with my faith, trying to trust in God, or dealing with some internal emotional battle.

I will say that over time, I realized I was good at persevering and not giving up. And I knew deep down in my soul that being a disciple was the best thing in my life no matter how much I struggled to be a strong Christian. So, I'm sharing these lessons I've learned with you in hopes they will help you to move forward, on your journey.

Also, some work background on me; for the past 35 years or so, I've worked in the human services field. Prior to that, I worked in a bank and got fired (I wasn't very good with numbers!). In my late twenties, I went back to school and eventually got a master's degree in social work. I've worked with people with developmental disabilities, worked in state and federal prisons with men with serious mental illnesses, I've provided counseling to active-duty military, military retirees, and their families, I've provided counseling to immigrants from central America, provided counseling at a women's addiction recovery residential program as a volunteer therapist. The majority of this workbook is based on my own spiritual journey and lessons I've learned. Also, I do draw from some of my professional training and experiences in working with people in challenging life situations as well.

Unfortunately, we have no ability change the past, and at times guilt and discouragement seem to be calling for us to quit or makes us believe we're a failure. But I encourage you to start today to walk, crawl, or run to our Father and His constant love and grace that He has for you, my brother or sister!

HOW DOES THIS WORKBOOK WORK?

I tried to make each lesson short enough that it could be done daily within a reasonable time frame. But it can be spread out over a few days or more too if you need more time to engage with the lesson. Sometimes you may find it helpful to really contemplate a certain lesson and take more time to let it sink in more deeply. I grouped lessons together into themes (such as Be Still, Better Together, Get Real, etc.) with several lessons within each theme. I would encourage you to follow the lessons in the order they are placed in the workbook, if at all possible. I intentionally put the themes in the workbook as a step-by-step progressive approach to getting stronger in the Lord.

A big part of this workbook is engaging with the questions in each lesson. When you engage your mind and heart by writing out answers that are personal to your situation, then it really moves you from simply gaining information to gaining insight and openness with yourself and the Lord. You may find not a whole lot of detailed explanations in most of the lessons, but more of a focus on the scriptures, some guiding thoughts and questions, and life lessons I'll share.

Regarding writing out your responses to the daily questions, you could save the document to your computer and write on the document itself. Each section is fillable for responding to questions. Or you could use a notebook or journal to write in as you go through each devotional lesson. Or you could print out these pages so you can write on them. Since it's a lot of pages, you may want to put it on a flash drive and print it at a print shop such as Kinkos or Staples. The main point is that you will get the most out of the workbook by writing down your responses to the lessons since it will help you to engage more deeply than simply reading and thinking about the lessons.

You can use this workbook with others as well. You may want to do it together with a trusted friend or spouse. Or in a small group, it would work well also, and having the support and perspectives of others can be very powerful.

One more thing, growth in your relationship with God does take diligent effort. Pretty much anything of significant worth and value (such as a marriage, close relationships, being skilled at a job, etc.) takes time and effort. But take the long view and see that moving in this direction will be worth all the effort. *"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne"* Revelation 3:21.

THEME ONE

Be Still



1. Do Nothing - Part I

We live in a hyperactive society. It seems like we always have multiple things to do. It seems like taking time for quietness, reflection, or “being still” is a sign of laziness or being unproductive. It’s easy to let our relationship with God get marginalized; like a check list item in all we “have to do” each day. Our relationship with God can be dry and disconnected. We’re stressed and wonder why, since I’m a Christian and I’m not at peace and feel stagnate. We can feel like being a Christian is not working, or feel guilty that we’re stressed and not stronger in the Lord.

Before you start reading, take a few minutes (or longer) to pause, breath, and humble yourself to receive God’s word. Please do this before each scripture reading in this workbook.

Read **Psalm 46** (out loud if possible)

The scripture says “be still and know I am God”. What is it saying to you specifically? How does that speak to your current situation? Take some time and write answers to these questions below.

Take some time now and pray through this Psalm and be still. Listen to what God is saying to you now through his Word and in your silence with Him.

2. Do Nothing - Part II

Most things in life don't just get messed up in a day or two. Usually slowly over time things break down, kind of like driving your car for thousands and thousands of miles without getting an oil change, and ...uh oh...break down! Or not cleaning your house or apartment once in a while. It can get pretty rough looking quick. Or more seriously, if you don't give your marriage the time and attention it needs on a consistent basis, eventually your relationship with your spouse becomes distant.

It's hard to turn around your struggling or disconnected relationship with God in a few days. I know for me when I've been struggling spiritually, it often is due to excessive worrying, and my faith in God's power is nearly nonexistent. For you, it might be something else such as being overly consumed with other things in your life (job, education, health issues, etc...), and your relationship with God becomes disconnected over time. There is always something that seems to be trying to take up our time and attention.

Like we read in Psalm 46 yesterday, let's continue to focus on just being close to God and His love for you. Likely you will need to make some intentional time to reconnect with your heavenly Father.

Read **Psalm 23**

How does this scripture speak to you? Write down those thoughts and reflections.

This may sound strange but do not pray FOR anything. I suggest you pray a prayer of thanks; be still and aware of God's closeness to you and His goodness in your life right now. Look around and try to see the blessings right in front of you despite any challenges and negative feelings and thoughts that are going on for you now.

3. Do Nothing - Part III

Matthew 11:25 - 30

Jesus, in this well-known scripture, has an amazing promise – Fame? Fortune? A problem-free life? Not quite...simply – rest. Sometimes that sounds just as good as all the other “stuff” we’re pursuing doesn’t it? Just to have some rest. Be encouraged though, apparently, we’re not the first civilization on Earth that had problems with the demands of life, being stressed, and feeling disconnected from God. Jesus said this over 2000 years ago.

Read through this passage, and dive into these questions:

What is Jesus’ yoke? Why is it easy, according to Jesus?

How can a “yoke” and rest go together?

How can this combination of yoke and rest help you move in a forward direction?

I encourage you to focus your prayer on being thankful for Jesus' love and grace for you; to continue to "be still" with God and allow His love and forgiveness to come over you.

4. Be Still - Part IV

Some of us have a very focused way of going about things. We plan ahead, we're on time to most things, we're very reliable, we notice details. Most of my life, that was very typical. Some of us are not known for our spontaneity. It's just who we are and part of our nature. These traits can be useful, and help make our lives and others around us very secure and taken care of. But like most things in life, there's a balance. When we go too far on the control side of things, and elevate our need for control above having loving relationships, problems occur like anxiety, irritability, and conflicts. This can include our relationship with God. We can cram so much into our lives, including many "good things" like church activities and serving others, our ability to manage it all eventually breaks down.

Let's read **Luke 10:38 - 42**

Jesus loved Martha and I'm sure appreciated her making efforts to make him feel welcome, but gives her a mild rebuke. What do you think he meant when he said "only one thing is needed"?

What do you think Jesus would say to you today, or sometime last week, when you were so busy and stressed that you weren't very connected with God?

What can you do, going forward, to have consistent time with God in prayer and the scriptures?

I have found that early in the morning, before my day gets going, usually works well and there aren't a lot of distractions. Change usually happens with small efforts done consistently. Once you make small efforts day after day, you will see growth and find you're getting stronger. But it will take time, so be patient with yourself if you struggle with being consistent in the beginning, and stick with it, especially when you don't feel like it.

Also, I have found that there are times when I need to take extended times to be with God. I've found that doing this regularly can be really helpful. You may want to go to a park or someplace outside of your home; where ever you can be real with God without many distractions. Time in nature can be a very connecting time with you and God as you enjoy the beauty of His many natural creations.

THEME TWO

The Grace of God - No Limits



The grace of God. It's the foundation of Christianity. C.S. Lewis said it's what separates Christianity from all other world religions. We could probably spend the next month or two just learning and appreciating it. Often times when I'm not doing well spiritually, I'm not even thinking about God's grace. I'm likely feeling down about some situation, and trying to figure it out on my own; thinking it through over and over. Or I've tried to change something or deal with some sin and I keep failing. There are many things in life that can get us discouraged, down, and end up with our faith being weak, or we just feel like giving up on being a Christian. Making changes in our character can be like taking one step forward and two steps back. How's grace going to help?

Fortunately, we do not earn God's grace by being a "better" person than we were a few years ago. Or sometimes we think that since we're struggling to change something in our lives, we're not doing well as a Christian. Struggling actually means you're making efforts to grow, and you haven't given up! Knowing and appreciating the depth and extent of God's grace for you is one of the most important areas of your relationship with God, especially when you are struggling with some life challenge currently or something from your past.

Early in my Christian walk, I really didn't have a good understanding of God's grace. Part of it, I think, was because I had been a very pessimistic, self-critical type person for many years before becoming a Christian, and that mindset just didn't disappear in the waters of baptism. Also, truthfully, the church at that time was very focused on being a high performing disciple, and didn't teach a lot on God's grace. It was a breath of fresh air, when I started to spend more time in the scriptures soaking up all the teachings there about God's grace for us.

Let's read some Psalms and let them start to sink into your soul.

1. The Grace of God - No Limits Part I

Read **Psalm 25**. How do you see God's grace and mercy described here?

How do you think God’s heart for you is in your current life situation?

Take some time to pray and connect with God. Let the scriptures speak to you as well. Also, read this Psalm as a prayer to God.

2. The Grace of God - No Limits Part II

Read Psalm 34

I have found this Psalm very helpful over the years and read it regularly.

What do you find in this Psalm that speaks to you about His care for you?

What do you want God to say to you right now in response to this Psalm?

Continue and take some time to prayer and open up to God.

3. The Grace of God - No Limits Part III

Let's continue with **Psalm 63**

What really gets your attention with this Psalm?

This Psalm was written by David while he was on the run from King Saul in a Middle Eastern desert. How can his prayer be an example or “template” for your prayers?

Using this Psalm prayer as a guide, try to pray like David did; with emotion, praise, and gratitude.

4. The Grace of God - No Limits Part IV

Read **Ephesians 1:1-14**

What does the word “lavish” mean to you?

What does the Word say here about God’s grace for you?

As part of your prayer today, be still and contemplate God’s grace and love for you right now; even if you don’t feel worthy of His grace.

5. The Grace of God - No Limits Part V

Read **Romans 7:7-25 & Romans 8:1-4**

Consider God’s grace is for all of us no matter what we’ve done or not done; that it has no limit, no sin is unforgivable. For some of us, it can be difficult to believe this, and our thoughts and emotions tell us the opposite. Of course, we don’t want to sin at all, but we are human and have a sinful nature that needs guidance from the Word daily. Even the apostle Paul described his struggling with a part of himself that doesn’t want to sin, but also is drawn to it, and another part of himself that is so grateful for God’s standards and the goodness that it brought to his life. How is it possible to have a part of you that struggles with temptations, and at times, giving into sin, and still be in God’s grace continuously? What do these scriptures tell you?

Let these scriptures direct your prayer focus today.

6. The Grace of God - No Limits Part VI

Read **2 Peter 1:1-11**

Focusing on verses 5 through 11, why do you think forgiveness and grace and spiritual growth are connected?

How do you think that these scriptures on grace in this section connect with what Jesus said about giving us rest, as well as sitting at His feet listening to Him?

I encourage you when you pray, to be open with your burdens, struggles, and sins to God. Meditate on God's grace for you; His full and complete grace for you. As you become more and more aware of His grace, consider how this can free you to move forward, start anew, and progress in the changes you need to make to live righteously and more connected with God. Consider studying out grace over a longer period of time as it often can be difficult for many of us to not continue in a performance-based, guilty and shame mentality.

THEME THREE

Getting Real with God



Sometimes when life is going badly it is our own fault due to a series of bad decisions. Other times we are really struggling due to something that was done to us, either by another person or some life events. Sometimes it may be recent. Other times it could be something from our childhood or other past life experience. At times, some internal struggles felt that they controlled me so strongly that it seemed like it took the effort of a rocket going into space breaking through the earth's gravity to be released from its grip.

For many of us, there are situations that so deeply hurt us that we simply have to cry out to God with our anger, realness, our frustration, our feelings of injustice, of betrayal, and confusion towards God as to why these situations occurred under His presence.

Back in 2006, while I was working as a social worker in a federal prison psychiatric unit, I was attacked by an inmate in my office. It was a horrible incident, and I'll spare you the details. Fortunately, I wasn't permanently injured. But I had to deal with about two years of mental health misery due to it, and some residual effects to this day. I had been working for about ten years in prisons prior to that, and it seemed like this event just broke open years' worth of toxic experiences I had absorbed in my soul while working in that environment. Eventually, I wrote a letter to that inmate, which I never mailed, but felt I needed to get out my feelings towards him. It was raw and full of anger. But it was freeing, and in a way, I had to emotionally release it out of my being. Other times I would write to God in a journal. Often it was very emotional and raw also. But I knew God wanted me to be real, and over time, it helped free its grip on me.

You may be dealing with your own inner pain. I encourage you to read and reflect on these scriptures. I think you will see that God does not want us to be fake and act like everything is okay when they are not. And it's okay to be open with God, even if it's anger or other stressful emotions. Even though we are Christians, it doesn't mean that if we feel negative emotions that God is upset with us. God created us to have a range of emotions. And God gives us the ability of "choice" and how we can respond to our emotions with love, patience, and grace (consider I Corinthians 13 as a guide as how we can love ourselves). Though making this choice consistently will not be quick and easy as emotions can be very influential at times. Patience and persistence with ourselves will be important.

I will add that you may not be at this kind of place in your life now, and these series of lessons don't apply currently. You can read through them and see if anything does apply, or simply learn from the scriptures how to deepen your prayers to God as well as how to respond to others who are hurting.

1. Getting Real with God - Part I

Read **Psalm 88**

It seems like the writer of this Psalm was really down and depressed because of many challenges in his life. Why do you think he continued to pray even when it seemed that he doesn't see God changing his situation?

It seems like to me that he still felt comfortable with being very open with God even though he felt God had left him in a desperate situation. Sometimes, it can be like he says - "a flood" (v. 17), and its consuming and we can't see a way out. And we can continue to connect with God during it.

Take some time to pray and just be real with God; with humility and honesty.

2. Getting Real with God - Part II

Read **Psalm 142**

David, as usual, is very open with God about his troubles and how he feels about his situation.

Within this Psalm, David is very honest about how he feels -

v. 1 - "I pour out my complaint before him...",

v. 4 - "...no one is concerned about me...no one cares for my life,

v. 6 - "...I am in desperate need"

Still intermingled with his sadness and weakness, what is his perspective of God?

Sometimes, as Christians, we feel guilty for feeling down, angry, hurt, or other normal emotions. We think that something is wrong with us if we don't "rejoice in the Lord always". How does this scripture (as well as others in this section) address this common misconception? How do you think God wants us to respond to our spectrum of human emotions?

Take some time to pray. Be real with the burdens in your heart, and be open about the real blessings you have in your life right now too.

3. Getting Real with God - Part III

Read **Psalm 73**

This is one of my favorite Psalms. There have been many times in which I've questioned God about why is ____ (fill in the blank) going on? Or why do you let _____ continue? Or why don't you deal with ____ person or situation?

How about you? What's your attitude like when something is going on that you don't understand or doesn't seem fair, or you wonder if God cares or exists because surely God would not allow such a situation to occur?

What can we learn from this Psalm about how to view situations in the world and in our lives? What you do think v. 26 has to say to you?

Take some time to pray about what’s really troubling you. Also try to pray with a spiritual perspective about these things.

4. Getting Real with God - Part IV

Read **Psalm 131**

Are there times when you mentally dwell on life situations (personal or beyond your life such as politics, local or world events, etc...)? Does it become consuming at times? Is it beneficial emotionally and spiritually?

What do you think David is addressing in verse one?

Despite our modern-day culture of technology, psychology, and achievement, as human beings, we actually have a limited capacity to fully understand many of life’s challenges, tragedies, injustices, and disappointments. In fact, when we attempt to over-analyze and “figure it out”, we can be stuck in mental traps, chronic anxiety, discouragement, lack of faith, and pull back from trusting God. I’ve experienced this a number of times.

What is David’s response to this temptation in verse two?

Acceptance of what is beyond our human understanding, humility, and drawing near to our loving God despite the lack of answers we may seek is the response I see from David. It doesn’t mean you have to like or agree with something that is ungodly, unjust, or simply wrong. It does mean stepping forward in faith, trusting God, and taking a humble attitude towards the God who allowed His son to go to the cross for us. Make an effort now to pray with these qualities as part of your pray to God.

5. Getting Real with God - Part V

Read **Job 6**

If you are familiar with the book of Job, you will know about all of the loss and suffering he went through (if you have not read the book before, you may want to read the first few chapters for more context).

What stands out to you as Job is speaking with God? How could this provide guidance to you?

Focusing on verses 11 through 13, where have Job’s trials brought him to?

In your spiritual struggles, what could be the blessing of not having any power to help yourself?

Take some time to pray out of your weakness and lack of “power to help yourself”

Also, like I discussed earlier, you may want to go beyond these lessons to address deeper emotional needs. It could be helpful to write out more of the deeper hurt and anger you have. It may also be helpful to talk with someone you trust about it too, or engage with a professional mental health provider.

THEME FOUR

Better Together



1. Better Together - Part I

Read **Luke 8:26-39**

The account of this man is challenging for me to read. He was so troubled and distressed. It's sad that he was homeless and living in a cemetery. Although the man seemed dangerous and unstable, Jesus was fearless and had so much love and compassion for him. But in some ways, I can relate with the man. After being assaulted at the prison where I worked, over a period of time, I felt more and more isolated. I felt that no one could understand my situation. I was depressed and lonely, and I didn't want people to see me like that. It was embarrassing for me so I pulled away from people. Although it seems to make sense in the moment, over time the isolation can bring us further down into an emotional pit.

Are there some aspects of this man's situation you can relate to?

What might they be?

If Jesus came to spend some time with you, what do you think He would say?
What do you think He would do?

Take some time to pray and draw near to Jesus. Consider the caring He had for this man and He has the same love and caring for you.

2. Better Together - Part II

Read **2 Timothy 4:9 - 22**

If you are familiar with the apostle Paul and all of the persecution he went through (if not read 2 Corinthians chapter 11), you don't think of someone that felt down much or had much difficulty staying motivated. It seemed like Paul always bounced back and was ready for another adventure on the mission field. But we read here, that a number of former disciples had turned against him or just didn't come to his aid. You get a sense from his writing that it was painful and discouraging. We also read that he urges Timothy to come quickly and to bring Mark (with whom he had a falling out with some years past). He also talks fondly about other disciples he is close with.

What are the blessings of close relationships with other disciples you've experienced especially during challenging life situations?

If you're not in close communication with another trusted brother or sister, what can you do to reach out to someone? Even if your mind is giving you reasons to not do it or put it off, can you do it anyway? What do you think the results will be when you do it?

Pray about connecting with other disciples you are close with. Pray for them as well since they may be going through some challenging times. Take an action this week to set up time with a close brother or sister.

3. Better Together - Part III

Read **Hebrews 10:19 - 25**

There's a lot in this chapter, and I'd recommend reading the whole chapter for more context, but for today we'll focus on this section. I know verses 24 & 25 are commonly used in the church to encourage members to attend meetings of the body, and to use those times to encourage each other. Even on some down days, I would push myself to church events. I realized deep down that there was something powerful and healing about being around other brothers and sisters. It truly was "better together". I even came up with a saying "even a bad day in the kingdom is better than a good day in the world." It's not about going to church events to be seen as a "good disciple" or going because "that's what I'm supposed to do." I don't think it's by chance, that just prior to these verses, the writer encourages us with the awesomeness of being close to God because of the blood of Christ. No guilt; no shame. We're able to "...enter the Most Holy Place." Your brothers and sisters don't judge you either. In fact, they'll be so happy to see you, and you will encourage them by your presence as well.

What is your perspective on participating and engaging in meetings of the body?
How do you think your presence at meetings of the body will affect other disciples?

What does your mind tell you when you don't feel like participating in church events? Can you still take positive actions?

How can being with other disciples be part of taking care of yourself?

During your time of prayer, ask God how you can help build up other disciples in your church.

THEME FIVE

Fight for Your Faith



This section was born out of what the title says. There were many times when I was struggling spiritually over the years. I was always an anxious quiet person, and didn't like conflicts with others and felt insecure around most people. I often felt like there was a black cloud following me around. I was raised in a home without any belief in God, and after I became a Christian, doubts of God's existence would plague my thinking on a regular basis. Other times, I was in inner turmoil because I wondered if I was saved because maybe I didn't do everything right when I decided to become a Christian and get baptized. It seemed like Satan would keep pushing me down, and waited to see if I was going to get up. Eventually, I realized "the bully" wasn't going to stop until I fought for my faith. And over time, I got stronger and stronger spiritually. As I discussed earlier, the past life challenges helped me to develop my strength emotionally and spiritually.

1. Fight for Your Faith - "The Silent Killer" Part I

Read **John 5:1 - 15**

This story really challenges me to check myself when I'm living in self-pity. There have been a number of times that I've felt like this guy. I wanted to change and overcome some weaknesses, but I couldn't seem to do it. I underestimated how difficult change was so I felt sorry for myself. At times, I felt that I kept on trying but no one understood me or no one was trying to help me. Or because of my upbringing, I didn't have what it took to be like others more successful. Self-pity is like a deadly gas that you can't see or smell. It seems so appropriate, so acceptable because my reasons for not overcoming have some elements of truth to them. But, all the while, I'm stuck, I'm miserable, I'm down, I'm defeated, and not going anywhere. Self-pity is one of Satan's greatest deceptions. It's deceptive because often we do have legitimate reasons for chronically struggling with some character issue, some sin or temptation, or other problems. Some of us have suffered some type of abuse as a child - be it physical, sexual, emotional, or a combination. Some of us may have a physical disability. Some may have a loved one who walked away from the faith. Whatever the life experience that impacted us, we all have personal challenges with living a Godly life over our years as disciples of Christ.

Why do you think after so many years of trying to get into the healing waters, he still had not gotten healed?

What aspects of this man’s situation are similar to your situation?

Take some time and pray; connecting with God’s grace for you as well as asking God for guidance on moving forward.

2. Fight for Your Faith - “The Silent Killer” Part II

Read **John 5:1 - 15** again

At some point, we must move forward. We must stop drinking from the seductive but deadly well of self-pity. I had to come to this realization and be really honest with myself. Like Jesus said to the man - “Get up!” we too have to say that to ourselves - “Get up, enough of this! Satan you will no longer make me live in the pit of self-pity”. We must move forward. Accept what happened in the past; this does not mean it was okay or to sugar-coat it. Are you sick of living this way yet? It may be time to get angry; not with yourself but with the lies Satan has been feeding you for a long time. It’s time to fight for your faith.

Have you ever gotten mad about a situation that was just totally unfair and unjust? Perhaps how someone vulnerable was treated badly or a similar situation. How did you feel inside?

That feeling is not necessarily bad or ungodly. Indignation can be powerful emotion to help move us forward. There are certainly situations that we read in the gospels in which Jesus was quite indignant, such as the time He cleared out the temple. Or when religious leaders questioned Him for healing a man on the sabbath. It's helped me at times to connect with that emotion. Satan is quite happy to see you stuck. But he has no power to actually do anything to stop you from going forward. He uses strong emotions and past memories and experiences to try to hold us down. Those things from the past won't necessarily be erased from our memories, but we can move forward with resolve, indignation, and determination to fight for your faith. It is our responsibility to move forward. No one else. God respects and blesses our ability to make our own choices. And He is expecting us to make a choice to move forward in faith, despite how our mind and emotions may be reacting.

Pray what's on your heart, and accept God's complete and eternal grace and love for you. No more guilt. He does not hold this state of self-pity against you. He is right here to walk with you as you move forward.

Take some time and pray; connecting with God's grace for you as well as asking God for guidance on moving forward.

3. Fight for Your Faith - Time to Dig - Part III

Read **Matthew 7:24 - 29**

Have you even dug a hole before? Not just a little one at the beach, but something that took time and effort. Such as planting a tree or holes for a fence or some other house project. It's hard, isn't it? Your back aches from bending over, your hands hurt, you get sweaty, and you get dirty. I had to dig a trench in my backyard for an electrical cable a few years ago, and the trench had to be about two feet deep and about forty feet long. It took most of a day, and I was wiped out!

This short passage is really full of lessons. The soil around the Sea of Galilee got very hard in the heat of the summer. In the winter months, there would be heavy rains. So, to build a house that didn't get destroyed during storms, the builder would need to dig down sometimes ten feet to hit the bedrock to set the foundation on. Imagine digging a large hole ten feet down! Better call some friends over.

What is Jesus saying here about how to establish a strong faith?

Why is He comparing putting His words into action like building a house on rock? How does it make you strong?

During your prayer time, talk with God about how you can put into action a Biblical principal to help you build a strong faith. And be intentional today about putting it into practice.

4. Fight for Your Faith - Time to Dig - Part IV

Read **Matthew 7:24 - 29** again

What is Jesus saying here about the storms of life?

Jesus talks about storms and building in a way to get through them. Where do you see yourself in regards to your spiritual house? Now you may be tempted to feel guilty and be down on yourself for not being a stronger Christian. Or you may believe that everything is okay, but not acknowledging the need for serious home improvements. I encourage you to have a balanced response (areas that need work and areas that you are making positive efforts in).

During your time of prayer, talk with God about what you can do today to put Jesus' words into action.

5. Fight for Your Faith - Time to Dig - Part V

Read **Matthew 7:24 - 29** one more time

About 15 years ago, I was still having issues with being solid on God's existence and related doubts. It wasn't that I didn't want to be a Christian, it's just that my mind would come up with all sorts of questions such as – how can I trust what the apostles said about Jesus rising from the dead? Or, the Bible's story about Noah and the ark; it really seems like some made-up story from thousands of years ago. Or, the virgin birth; that really is hard to believe. I could go on and on.

Finally, after many “doubt attacks” as I call them, I got the idea to buy some books that addressed the evidences for Jesus, for the resurrection, the accuracy of the Bible, books on how science actually reveals that the vast complexities of the universe point to a superior being not just by random chance. I read a number of books on these topics. Some of ones about DNA, biology, and astronomy were pretty challenging since I really don't have a mind for science. But they gave me “weapons” to fight back. These books refuted the pop culture ideas that attempt to provide easy answers to complex questions. My point though is it took some

work, some digging in the trench. It took having an attitude to fight for my faith and be motivated to take some action to address my spiritual needs.

What area(s) of your life do you need to get some “weapons” to fight for your faith?

What “weapons” do you need? What will you do to fight for your faith?

It also can be very helpful to talk with a spiritually mature brother or sister to get some support, encouragement, and guidance for this area of your life.

6. Fight for Your Faith - How bad do you want it? - Part VI

Read **Luke 8:40 - 48**

When I read this account, I’m always amazed at what the woman did. Certainly, she must have been very discouraged about her medical condition. She spent much time and money trying to get cured. Now she saw Jesus and had faith that he could help her. But he’s being mobbed by a crowd. And she’s a female and in those times, women were second-class citizens at best, and she also had a condition in which the Jewish laws required her to remain apart from others. Now here she is fighting through a crowd and touching a religious leader’s clothes. It was quite likely, some in the crowd pushed her away as they were trying to get to Jesus. How bad do you want your faith? How many times will you get up when you are pushed down? Satan absolutely wants you to fail and to be miserable. Be inspired to be like this woman who overcame. It’s time to push back.

What do you think was going through the woman's mind right before she went into the crowd? What can you learn from this and apply it to your situation?

What "crowds" are getting in your way? How can you use qualities such as determination, indignation, persistence, courage, and other such qualities to push through and go after what you need for your faith? Are you willing to feel uncomfortable emotions while you are taking steps of faith?

Pray for courage and perseverance in the face of obstacles and resistance. Then step out in faith (even if you don't feel brave or strong or your mind is telling you otherwise).

THEME SIX

The Key to Everything



Read **Matthew 18:1 - 4**

What does Jesus say we must do to enter the kingdom of God?

I finally realized that taking on the attitude of humility can be the solution to so many problems and challenges that I was dealing with. Instead of fighting with God, I humbled myself to his ways, his Word, his plans, the way he arranged the world to work, and on and on. Instead of having the attitude of “why God?”, even though I did not understand or like a certain situation, taking on a humble attitude was like opening a door to moving forward. The struggle in my heart and mind shrunk. Not necessarily that everything all worked out at once, but God was able to reveal himself and his ways to me now. He was able to provide love, grace, and comfort to my storming emotions and thoughts.

All I can say is, it works. And you’ll be better for it in so many ways. Having trouble with relationships? Stuck trying to figure out some situation? Frustrated with a situation at work or at home? Trying to figure out why God is not doing this or that? Humble yourself before God and see what happens. It truly is the key to everything. And I suggest finding more scriptures on humility and studying them out. The Old and New Testaments are full of teaching on humility and how God honors, lifts up, and blesses those with a humble heart.

Why is humility necessary? How can taking that attitude help you move forward with something you are struggling with currently?

Take some time and pray for God to show you how to take steps towards responding in humility to challenging situations.

THEME SEVEN

It's a Way of Life



1. It's a way of life - Part I

Read **Daniel 6:1-14**

Daniel was living in Babylon (currently the country of Iraq) after he and a large number of Jews were taken there after the Babylonians conquered Judah in 605 B.C. He had been living there for over 40 years at this point. By chapter six, Babylon was attacked and conquered by the Persians.

What qualities do we see here in Daniel? Consider that he had been living far from his homeland and living in a culture of idol and emperor worship for many years. And now he being persecuted by men that appear to be taking advantage of a new ruler to their country.

What do you see in verse ten that indicates that righteous living was a way of life for Daniel, not something he did when he felt good or when things were difficult?

2. It's a way of life - Part II

Read **Mark 10:17-31**

Here we read the account of a wealthy young man's encounter with Jesus. What seems to be the issue that Jesus has with him even though he appears to be following God's commands seriously?

Jesus challenged the man's security in his wealth. But what also seemed to be the underlying issue?

Of course, we should apply these scriptures to our own lives as well. This man had been living in a godly way to a certain point, but also was not allowing God's words to go deeper and become a way of life. This perspective became clearer to me recently. I was living in a godly way at a certain level, but it wasn't fully dependent on God and was living in a way that was somewhat repetitive and familiar with me over the years. I desired to live in a deeper relationship with God. But didn't really know how to go about it, and had inner resistance to do so. Over time, I realized that spiritual change wasn't about me doing a spiritual practice for a while until I felt better. It had to be a way of life; a lifestyle; day in and day out.

Consider a scripture that you find really addresses a core area in your spiritual life that's been difficult to overcome. How about you make efforts to live it out daily? Not just for a week or two. But for the rest of your life? You remember it and hold it with you always. When a life and/or spiritual challenge occurs, you can allow that scripture to help guide you and respond to it spiritually.

For me, the scripture "...I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Luke 18:16-17) has become a "way of life" scripture. I realized I must put this into practice to the best of my ability every day for life to move forward to greater spiritual maturity. Essentially, having a humble and child-like responses to God's word, living in trust as God as my spiritual dad when situations didn't seem safe and secure. I found that once

I accepted that it will be a way of living (not just something I do for a period of time), it became a comfort as well as guide to a deeper dependency on God. And at times, I've had to really wrestle with having this attitude when situations were very challenging. Of course, there are some days I don't remember to do this, but fairly quickly, I return to this scripture and mindset especially when I get stuck with some life situation.

Part of this approach is realizing and accepting that you have some character issues (ie - "flaws" or struggles) that likely have been in your life for most of your life. They likely have improved over time but they are still reoccurring, and likely will be something you have to respond to for the rest of your life (one of God's ways of keeping us humble).

Write down one character issue that's been something you've had to deal with most of your life. Write down a few situations that it typically occurs (such as with other people, with God, with yourself or some other situation).

Now write down a scripture that gets at the core of this issue, and helps you to respond to it spiritually. I would suggest a scripture that is not too long, and can be fairly easily memorized (or at least memorize the main point of it or a few words from it).

Now work on applying that scripture (and the overall theme of it) to your day today. With the commitment to live it out as a way of life. Not perfectly but humbling yourself to it as needed. As Jesus says “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

In the therapy field, we often talk with our clients about being “experiential”. Basically, meaning “experience” something that you want to work on; trying it out and feeling it; struggling with it; putting it into practice as best as you can each day. As therapists we can often get in the habit of talking with our client about change but not spending time helping our clients to actually practice it (as you would a skill you want to learn). We can be that way about spiritual change as well. Your inner being likely will find it uncomfortable, anxiety provoking, perhaps feel unsafe, and be reactive. At times, it may feel very difficult to live out your scripture in the moment. But continue to be “experiential” with putting it into practice. Over time, you will adapt and accept God’s guidance more easily.

THEME EIGHT

Keep the Prize in Mind



I don't think it's by accident that the book of Revelation is the last book of the Bible. Because so much of it is about our future with the King and his Kingdom called heaven. Over the years, you get to see how God guides and blesses you through your journey as a disciple of Christ. It's so important to keep this life in perspective with eternity. And keep fighting for our faith. We may not always be strong, but we can still persevere and keep the prize in our minds and hearts. As the saying goes "The days are long but the years are short". After being a disciple of Christ for four decades, I can say that the saying is very true. Life moves only in one direction, and at some point, God will call us home. And it will all be worth it.

Read these scriptures:

Revelation 1:9 - 18, 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:26, 3:5, 3:12, 3:21, 12:10 - 12

What do you read as the common themes in these scriptures?

Do these scriptures say you have to feel good all the time? Do they say you cannot have struggles at any time? What does overcoming mean to you? How can having the perspective of being in heaven with Jesus help you to move forward?

FINAL THOUGHTS

I hope you found the workbook helpful and that you are more connected with God and moving in the direction you want to go. Hopefully it has provided you a number of tools to help you grow stronger. And you certainly can revisit any of the sections as you need to, and create your own study on the themes and spiritual truths as they address your own needs.

So where do you go from here? As I said at the beginning of the workbook, the Christian life is a journey AND a destination. Focusing on consistent Bible study, prayer, and engaging in honest relationships with other disciples are the three main areas that will keep you moving forward spiritually in the journey in my opinion. And over all of those things is God's eternal love and grace for you. As Jesus said "in this world you will have trouble...." Life will have its highs and lows. Victories and defeats. Take some time to step back and consider what a good heart you DO have, and consider all the efforts you already have made to grow stronger with God and to help others in their lives as well.

Here are some suggested books that I have found helpful over the years (besides the Bible, of course) :

Emotionally Healthy Discipleship - Peter Scazarro

ESV Archaeology Study Bible (I have the NIV version of this but its out of print; I can not fully vouch for this version but the one I have has been incredibly helpful to bring the scriptures into the context of Biblical history)

A Praying Life - Paul E. Miller

Gentle and Lowly - Dane Ortlund

The Cure - John Lynch, Bruce McNicol, and Bill Thrall

Be Still My Soul - Sam Laing

Reasons for Belief - John M. Oakes

The Case for Christ - Lee Strobel

If you want to connect with me, feel free to reach me at
tothosewhoovercame@gmail.com

“To Those Who Overcome...”
A Disciple’s Guide to Growing Stronger in the Lord
© 2026 Erich Kleinschmidt