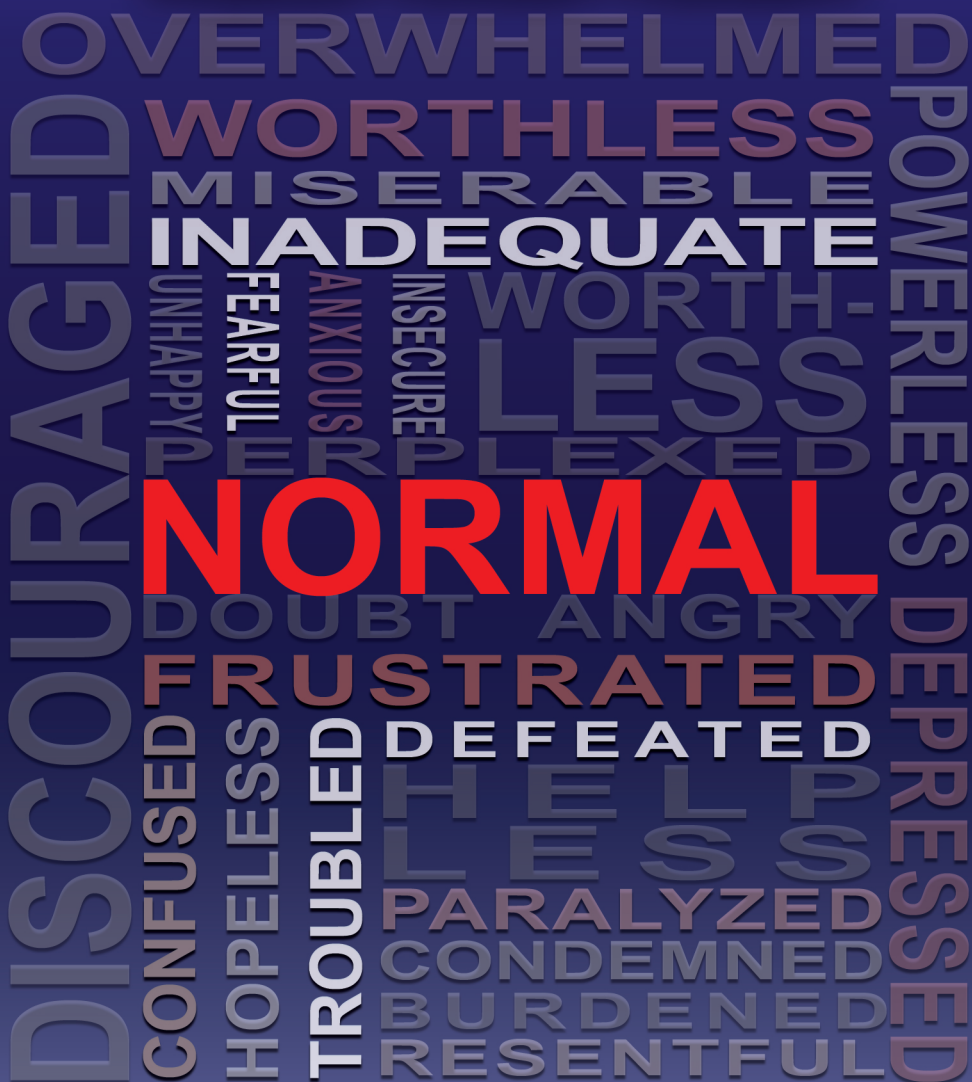


# Is This “Normal?”

(Perplexed? Confused? Frustrated?)



Bill Loveless  
Christ Is Life Ministries

# **Is This Normal?**

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**(Being Perplexed? Confused?  
Frustrated?)**

***Bill Loveless***  
***Christ Is Life Ministries***

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## Table of Contents

	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>Expectations About God and Our Christian Walk</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>Who? What? Where? When? And Why?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>Unmet Expectations and Unanswered Questions</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>"Normal" As it Pertains to Jesus</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>Where is God In The Midst Of Your Frustrations, Perplexities and Confusion?</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<b>God's Purposes In The Midst Of Your Frustrations, Perplexities and Confusion</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	<b>Dealing With Our Frustrations, Perplexities and Confusion In Christ</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>CHAPTER 8</b>	<b>Where God Is Bringing Us In The Midst Of Our Unmet Expectations And Unanswered Questions</b>	<b>32</b>

## **INTRODUCTION**

***“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord.” Isaiah 55:8***

I put a question mark after the word “normal” because when it comes to the Christian life, is there anything really normal about it? I know after I first learned about Christ as life, I had certain expectations about how that was going to play out in my life. How about you? As I began this new path, I would come up against everything from speed bumps to brick walls. They created internal turmoil, perplexity and frustration. Some even made me angry. Can you identify? The questions are: “Is this normal or not? Are other Christians experiencing these things or is it just me?”

The problem comes when these obstacles create roadblocks to our Christian walk. When this happens our flesh and Satan can use these roadblocks to derail us. The question when we come to these places is, “How do we deal with these obstacles in Christ?”

Even though everyone’s journey is unique and different, through my years of teaching and discipleship I have seen some common threads among believers concerning struggles, conflicts, perplexities and frustrations about their Christian walk. Therefore, in this booklet I would like to talk about those common threads, the truth concerning them and how to engage God to get past or overcome them.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Unrealistic Expectations About God and Our Christian Walk**

I believe the most common obstacle to our Christian walk is unrealistic expectations. I define an expectation as:

***A BELIEF that something WILL happen or will LIKELY happen.***

I put expectations into two categories: **realistic** and **unrealistic**. Here is the difference between the two:

***A REALISTIC expectation is one that lines up with God's TRUTH. An UNREALISTIC expectation is one that we believe is true or should be true but is a FALSE BELIEF.***

#### **Realistic Expectations**

Let's consider some realistic expectations that line up with God's truth.

##### **1. We can expect God to keep His promises.**

*"For Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule throughout all generations. The **Lord always keeps His promises**. He is gracious in all He does." Psalm 145:13*  
*"For **all of God's promises have been fulfilled** in Christ..."*  
*2 Corinthians 1:20*

Here are some examples of God's promises:  
to transform us into Christ-likeness. - 2 Corinthians 3:18  
to be our victory over our flesh, the power of sin, and Satan. - 1 Corinthians 15:57  
to set us free from our sin strongholds. - Galatians 5:1  
to heal us of our woundedness. - Psalm 147:3  
to renew our minds to the truth of our true identity. Romans 12:2  
to love us unconditionally. - Psalm 23:6

**We can expect God to be consistent in His character and attributes (i.e. love, goodness, mercy, justice, etc.)**

*"Whatever is good and perfect is a gift from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. **He never changes....**" James 1:17*

God is love. – 1 John 4:8

God is for us. – Romans 8:31

God is good. – Psalm 100:5

God is sovereign and in control. – Psalm 46:10

**Unrealistic Expectations Concerning Living the Christian Life**

As previously mentioned, unrealistic expectations are based on false beliefs. However, if we don't know our beliefs are false, we create unrealistic expectations concerning those beliefs. Consider the following examples.

With regard to living the Christian life, I was initially told that to live "successfully", I had to learn God's word and then make it work using my intellect, willpower and ability, with God's help. Since I believed what I was told, I expected

that if I lived my Christian life that way, I would be successful. The problem is that it did not work because what I believed was based on a false belief. This is the heart of many of the struggles in our Christian walk.

***If our expectations are based on FALSE BELIEFS,  
then the results will ALWAYS be NEGATIVE.***

By negative, I mean that your expectations will lead to such things as frustration, disillusionment or worst case, walking away from a trusting relationship with God. This is exactly what happened in my life.

After 30 years of living what I call “A” Christian life, I experienced no victory, no freedom, no healing of my deep woundedness and no spiritual transformation. The type of Christian life I was told to live did not work. In fact, over those thirty years my sin strongholds of fear, anxiety, rejection and unworthiness actually got worse. These were the devastating consequences of my living from a lie or a false belief instead of living from the truth.

In 1998, I heard the truth about living “THE” Christian life from a man named Ian Thomas. When he came to speak at my church, these were the first words out of his mouth:

***God NEVER intended for YOU to live “THE” Christian life that ONLY CHRIST can live in and through you***



The truth is that I can't live THE Christian life. Only Christ can because He is the only One capable of living it. I was trying to be the source, with God's help to live it, but there is only One Source and that is Jesus. Think about the following scriptures to better understand this truth:

Jesus says:

*"...I AM the way, the truth, and the LIFE..." John 14:6*

*"...I AM the resurrection and the LIFE." John 11:25*

Paul says:

*"For me, to live IS Christ...." Philippians 1:21*

*"He is the SOURCE of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30 (RS.*

The Lord revealed to me through these verses that there is only One Person who can live THE Christian life and that is Christ who is THE Life. You see, I was told to be the "source" with God's help to live THE Christian life. However, we see in 1 Corinthians 1:30 that there is only One Source and that is Jesus.

What this means practically to me is that I cannot produce any of God's promises in my life. In addition to that, I cannot meet my needs for unconditional love, acceptance, value/worth, security, etc. You see, for thirty years I was living FOR God when I could have been living FROM Him. It is not up to me to achieve something for Him. My part is to receive from Him. That is why Jesus uses this perfect analogy to describe our part in living "THE" Christian life:

*"I am the vine and you are the branches. **He who abides in Me** and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." John 15:5*

Since we cannot produce God's promises of such things as freedom, victory, transformation, etc., then our part is to abide in Christ for divine Life as the physical branch abides in the vine for physical life. Other words for "abide" are "depend on, rely

on, draw from or participate with.” As we depend on Christ, He will transform our lives.

As I began to learn, believe and walk in the truth that only Christ can live THE Christian life, my life began to radically change. God began to set me free from my sin strongholds of fear, anxiety, rejection and unworthiness. Instead of constantly being critical and judgmental of others, the Lord gave me His love for them. He transformed me to a point that I could forgive (and eventually love) my father who severely wounded me through physical, emotional, and verbal abuse. I am still very much in process, but I can bear witness that my expectations have been met and exceeded because I knew and believed the truth. The bottom line is this:

***The LIE kept me in bondage with no transformation.  
The TRUTH set me free and transformed my life.***

[Note: If you are hearing about Christ being “THE” Christian life for the first time, I have materials on our website ([www.christislifeministries.com](http://www.christislifeministries.com)) that explain this truth further. Under the Discipleship Booklets tab you will find a booklet called, “ ‘A’ Life? Or ‘THE’ Life.” I also have another booklet and curriculum called, “*Living Life From A New Source*” under the Discipleship tab. These resources will give you a deeper understanding of what I mean by “THE” Christian life]

#### **Unrealistic Expectations Concerning God’s Truth**

***We put UNREALISTIC expectations on our realistic expectations concerning God’s truth.***

We can know and believe God's truth, but we can also put unrealistic expectations concerning how the truth will work in our lives. Consider these examples:

**Unrealistic Expectation #1:** – When I initially start living by faith and depending on God, I will experience God working in my life.

**The Truth:** For the most part, you will not experience God's work initially in your life because God wants to teach you how to walk by faith which initially may not include experience.

For example, if you are an impatient person and you begin seeking the Lord to transform you to live from His patience, you may not initially "feel" His patience flowing in you when you ask Him to BE your patience. However, we know by faith that whether we feel it or not, God is filling us with His patience.

**Unrealistic Expectation #2:** When I start allowing Christ to live His life in me, then people will quickly see the changes the Lord is making in my life.

**The Truth:** Initially, the ones closest to you (spouse and other family members) may not see the changes the Lord is making in your life. After all, they have a history with you and are looking at you through that historic lens. It may take time for those closest to you to see the changes.

**Unrealistic Expectation #3:** Victory, freedom, healing, etc. is not real until I cross the final threshold where I can say I am living in total victory, freedom, etc.

**The Truth:** The Christian life is not about crossing over final thresholds. It is crossing over a series of thresholds because experiencing victory, freedom, etc. is a process. It comes incrementally. As you walk in dependence on Christ, you will find yourself walking in greater and greater freedom, victory, etc.

**Unrealistic Expectation #4:** – I should be able to measure my progress and know where I am in my Christian journey.

**The Truth:** Because we are so complex in our thoughts and feelings, it is impossible to fully measure our progress. We can so easily deceive ourselves that we can't be objective about our spiritual progress. Not only that, if we focus on our progress or the lack thereof, then we open ourselves to pride when we are progressing and self-condemnation when we are not.

God does not desire for you to measure your progress. He is much more concerned about you simply living in a moment-by-moment dependence on Him and building a relationship with Him.

### **Unrealistic Expectations Concerning God's Promises of Freedom, Healing, Victory**

**Unrealistic Expectation #1:** God will set me free from my sin stronghold of \_\_\_\_\_, sooner than later.

**The Truth:** We don't know God's timetable for what He is going to accomplish in our lives. Therefore, the only expectation is that God will set us free in His timetable, not ours.

**Unrealistic Expectation #2:** I don't have to forgive the person who wounded me in order to be healed.

**The Truth:** Forgiveness is absolutely necessary for healing because unforgiveness obstructs the flow of the Holy Spirit's power to heal your woundedness.

**Unrealistic Expectation #3:** I won't experience any more pain in the healing process.

**The Truth:** There will be pain in the healing process. However, the pain will come as a result of your relinquishment of the right to hold onto your pain. When it comes to woundedness, we take ownership of the pain associated with wounding events. When we allow the Holy Spirit to heal us, the tendency for the flesh is to hold onto that pain and not let go.

However, over time the Holy Spirit will give us the willingness to let go of the pain and allow Him to heal. Therefore, pain in the healing process is produced by wanting to hold on and not let go of the pain

**Unrealistic Expectation #7:** Once I am set free from some fleshly behavior, I will never give into that behavior again.

**The Truth:** Regardless of how much we live from our Christ-likeness, we are still susceptible to falling back into our flesh. There is a non-stop battle between the flesh and the Spirit and sometimes the flesh can drag us back to such places as impatience, anger, etc. However, as we are being set free from those fleshly behaviors you will find yourself less susceptible and going back to those fleshly behaviors less often.

## **Unrealistic Expectations Concerning God's Character**

### **1. God's LOVE**

**Unrealistic expectation #1:** God's definition of unconditional love will match my definition.

**The Truth:** Many time, God's love and our understanding of God's love don't always match.

**Unrealistic expectation #2:** I expect God to love me in the following ways:

\_\_\_\_\_.

**The Truth:** When we put expectations on how God is going to love us then we can be disappointed when He doesn't meet our expectations. Remember Isaiah 55:8 that says God's thoughts are not our thoughts or His ways, our ways? We will not always fully understand how God defines love and how it functions.

### **2. God's GOODNESS**

**Unrealistic Expectation #1:** God's definition of good and mine are one and the same.

**The Truth:** As with unconditional love, our understanding of good may not coincide with God's definition.

**Unrealistic expectation #2:** God will only allow good things to happen to me.

**The Truth:** God allows good and evil to occur because He has given man free will to choose good or evil. Negative events will take place in everyone's life.

### **3. God's SOVEREIGNTY**

**Unrealistic expectation #1:** I expect God to be in control in the following ways:

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**The Truth:** Remember that your expectations of what God's sovereignty should look like and what it may really look like may not be one and the same.

#### **Summary**

I hope this chapter has helped you understand about our realistic and unrealistic expectations may not be met. When this happens, we begin to ask the Who? What? When? Where? and Why? questions. Let's explore those in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Who? What? When? Where? and Why?**

One of the places we go when our unrealistic expectations are not met, is to ask “who,” “what,” “when,” “where” and “why” types of questions. We all have asked them, haven’t we? Consider the following examples of these questions and relate them to your Christian walk, God’s promises and His character.

#### **Questions Concerning Our Christian Walk**

Remember the earlier reference to false expectations that result from false beliefs about living the Christian life? Here are some questions we might ask if we don’t understand and are not living “THE” Christian life.

**Example:** “Lord, I have been working very hard to live the Christian life, but You don’t seem to be helping me. **Why?**”

**Example:** I read my Bible, go to church, and am in a small group but nothing is changing in my life. I’m doing all the things I was told to do but it’s not making any difference. **What** am I doing wrong?”

**What are your questions concerning your Christian Walk?**

#### **Questions Concerning God’s Promises**

“Lord, You promised to set me free from my fear of \_\_\_\_\_. So **why**, after three months of consistently seeking You, have You not done that? **When** will I be set free?”

“I am depending on You for victory over my struggle with pornography so **why** do I fail and get drawn back into it?”

“Lord, I am seeking You to be healed but nothing is changing. **What** am I doing wrong?”\_

“Lord, I’ve been asking You to move me away from being a controlling person but **why** am I just as controlling as ever?”



**What are your questions concerning God's promises?**

**Questions Concerning God's Character**

"You say you love me, but I don't feel Your love. **Why?**"

"You say you are a good God but **where** were you when I was being abused by my father?"

"If You are really in control, then **how** could You let my child die?"

**What are your questions concerning God's character?**

I hope you will take a few moments and be transparent with the Lord and share with Him your "who, what, when, where, why and how" questions.

**Summary**

The problem of unmet expectations only grows larger when God does not answer our Who? What? When? Where? and Why? questions. What will be the results?

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Unmet Expectations and Unanswered Questions**

Where can it lead when our expectations about God and our Christian walk are not met and we don't get answers to our questions? It can lead to thoughts and feelings of such things as frustration, doubt or even anger.

When you think about your unmet expectations, your unanswered questions, etc., which words below best describe how you feel about God, yourself or your Christian walk? Please write those words in the space below.

Discouraged	Hopeless	Doubtful	Unloved
Helpless	Worthless	Rejected	
Miserable	Inadequate	Burdened	
Frustrated	Condemned		
Critical	Unhappy	Angry	
Confused			
Depressed	Paralyzed	Troubled	
Perplexed			
Fearful	Anxious	Powerless	Weary
Overwhelmed	Resentful	Defeated	Insecure

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When we look at how we feel when our expectations are not met, there are three primary reasons why we think and feel the way we do.

We don't **know** the truth.

We don't **believe** the truth.

We don't **choose** to walk in the truth.

Knowing God's truth is the foundation for living the Christian life but without engaging the Holy Spirit to take us from knowledge to belief, that knowledge will do us no good. Furthermore, if we know and believe the truth but don't choose to walk in it, we will end up "wallowing" in the thoughts and feelings like those listed above.

Let's consider what the results may be if you continue taking ownership of these thoughts and feelings and don't allow the Holy Spirit to deal with them.

### **1. The thoughts and feelings will GROW and take us to SIN.**

*"Be angry and do not sin..." Ephesians 4:26*

We see in this verse that apparently it is not sinful to have an initial feeling of discouragement, frustration, etc. However, if that feeling is allowed to grow and is not dealt with by the Holy Spirit, it will lead to sin.

### **2. We will try to REASON or THINK our way through the problem.**

If you don't believe God can handle the problem or if you feel He is not responding quickly enough, the temptation might be to resort to your own intellect and ability to reason or think your way out of a problem.

**Example:** "I have been praying for wisdom about how to deal with my alcoholic son. Since God has not given me an answer, I am going to figure this out on my own and make my own decisions."

What could be some of the negative results of your finite reasoning and thinking versus drawing on the infinite wisdom of the Lord?

### **3. We will try to CHANGE, CONTROL or MANAGE the outcome of the problem.**

Believing that God is not in control makes us vulnerable to the temptation to try and change, control, or manage the outcome.

**Example:** "Lord, you know that my husband struggles with

pornography. I have sought your help and you have yet to help me. Therefore, I am going to take control of the situation and find ways to get him to stop.”

What might be some of the downsides of doing this?

#### **4. We will exercise our FLESHLY RIGHTS or DEMANDS**

If you are not familiar with the term “fleshly rights,” I define them as demands we make toward God or others that result from living from our flesh. Here are some examples as they pertain to God.

I have the right to have an answer.

I have the right to know why You didn’t intervene when I was being abused.

I have the right to know why that happened.

I have the right to get frustrated and angry because You are not giving me answers.

Where do you think demanding your fleshly rights will get you?

#### **Where These Four Options Take You**

##### **1. Doubting God**

Doubt is behind every one of the key points listed above. Doubting God will always lead back to self-made solutions. All it takes is an ounce of doubt to turn back to self as the source to solve your problems. Satan will play on your doubts by inserting thoughts to reinforce your doubts and your desires to turn to self for the solution.

##### **2. Hardening Your Heart Toward God**

If you continue to doubt God and turn back to self, you are slowly hardening your heart toward God. Each time you say “No” to God, it will be easier for you to say “No” again. Each time you reject God, your heart becomes “hardened” or more resistant to God.

### **3. Walking Away From Acknowledging God's Presence**

If you continue to harden your heart toward God, there will come a point where you eventually deny His continual presence in your life. This is the most dangerous place to be because you are now being totally controlled by self and Satan.

#### **Summary**

I hope from this chapter you have a better understanding of your feelings about your unmet expectations and where you may go to try and deal with those feelings apart from Christ.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **"Normal" As it Pertains to Jesus**

*"Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, **He gave up His divine privileges**; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being...." Philippians 2:6, 7*

Jesus gave up or set aside His privileges of being deity but of course this does not mean He was not deity while on earth. It means that He chose not to function from His own omnipresence, power, sovereignty, control and omniscience (all-knowing). He set aside His deity to show us how to live the Christian life. John 5:30 and John 8:28 tell us that Jesus did nothing on His own initiative. Rather, He lived (like we are to live) in moment-by-moment dependence on the God the Father.

Being fully human meant that He likely experienced struggles with the Father, unmet expectations and temptations. For example, Jesus struggled with his crucifixion.

*"And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, **"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me;** yet not as I will, but as You will."* Matthew 26:39

Jesus wanted Plan B. Can you identify? You see Plan A for Jesus was a horrible death by crucifixion. Our Plan A is that transformation does not come unless we experience death to our flesh, suffering, and conflict. We, like Jesus, wish there were a Plan B.

Let's consider some other events in the life of Jesus through the eyes of His human-ness.

*"Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. <sup>3</sup>In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the waters; <sup>4</sup>for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and*

*stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.” John 5:2-4*

When Jesus came to the pool of Bethesda, all around the pool were crippled people who needed healing. Don't you think that Jesus, being full of compassion expected all these folks would be healed by the Father? How do you think Jesus felt when the Father said to heal only one? Is it possible that Jesus might have been a little perplexed or struggled with what the Father wanted to do?

How about when Mary and Martha came and told Jesus that Lazarus was dying? Don't you think Jesus, who dearly loved Lazarus, expected to go immediately and heal him? And yet the Father said that Lazarus has to die. I can see the human Jesus asking the following “why” question: “Why does Lazarus have to die when he could be healed?”

Jesus had expectations that those who came in contact with Him would see Him as their Savior. When they walked away, don't you think Jesus may have felt rejected?

Think about all the incredible truths that Jesus shared with the disciples? How do you think He felt when their response was “Huh?”

On some level it brings me comfort that Jesus struggled like we all do. I can more readily identify with Him since He had unmet expectations and possibly frustrations. Of course, His unmet expectations and perplexities did not take Him to sin.

### **Summary**

I don't know about you but believing Jesus was “normal” like you and me in his humanity draws me closer to Him knowing that he too struggled in many ways that we do.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Where is God In The Midst Of Your Frustrations, Perplexities, and Confusion?**

You may feel sometimes that God is not aware or not interested in you and your frustrations. However, God is very aware of your struggles. We see this in the following two passages of scripture.

***“For He Himself knows our frame;***

***He is mindful that we are but dust.” Psalm 103:14***

***“O LORD, You have searched me and known me.***

***You know when I sit down and when I rise up;***

***You understand my thought from afar.***

***You scrutinize my path and my lying down,***

***And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.***

***Even before there is a word on my tongue,***

***Behold, O LORD, You know it all.” Psalm 139:1-4***

God has known for all eternity about every detail concerning all of your struggles. Long before you encountered your struggles, God was aware of them.

#### **Jesus SYMPATHIZES With Your Frustrations**

Jesus does sympathize with your frustrations. Not only is God aware of how you feel, He deeply cares about what you’re going through. I shared with you in the last chapter about Jesus when He was on this earth, so that you will understand that Jesus can personally identify with your perplexities, unmet expectations and frustrations. Hebrews 4:15 confirms this:

***“For we do not have a high priest (Jesus) who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One (Jesus) who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”***

***Hebrews 4:15 (9)***



At this moment, you have Christ in you who can empathize and sympathize with your frustrations and even your frustrations with Him.

**God Will Meet You Where You Are Concerning Your Frustrations**

God meets us where we are concerning our frustrations. Do you remember God's response to Paul concerning his thorn? He said in the first part of 2 Corinthians 12:9:

*"...My **grace** is sufficient for you..."*

The Lord's response to Paul confused me for many years, because I couldn't understand what the Lord was saying. However, it began to make sense to me when the Holy Spirit revealed to me that "grace" is a person. It is Christ himself. You may have been taught like I was that grace is something that God dispenses to us. The truth is that grace is embodied in Christ. Christ is sufficient to meet our needs.

*"And my **God will supply all your needs** according to His riches in glory **in Christ Jesus**"* Philippians 4:19

Think for a moment what you need from the list below concerning your confusion, frustrations and perplexities.

Unconditional love	Victory	Worth
Acceptance	Faith	Freedom
Patience	Strength	Peace
Forgiveness	Understanding	Security
Fearlessness	Wisdom	Discernment
Adequacy	Humility	Christ-confidence
Boldness	Righteousness	Selfishness
Rest	Compassion	Courage
Hope	Gentleness	Control
Faithfulness	Power	Joy

I know that for many of my struggles, I need patience, hope, understanding and faith. What the Lord is telling us is that whatever we need from Him in the midst of our confusion and frustration, He will provide.

### **God Is Really For You!**

*"If (Since) God is for us, who can be against us?" Romans  
8:31b*

The word "if" in the original Greek means "since." He is on your side and is encouraging you every step along the way in spite of how you may feel about Him. Why, in spite of all your struggles and confusion, is He encouraging you to keep walking by faith? First and foremost, because He loves you. Secondly, He has a number of purposes He wants to accomplish in your life through your confusion, frustration, and perplexity. We'll look at some of those purposes in the next chapter.

### **Summary**

I hope this chapter helps you by knowing that Jesus can sympathize with your frustrations, He can meet you in the middle of them and that He is really for you.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **God's Purposes In The Midst Of Your Frustrations, Perplexities and Confusion**

Not only is God aware of, sympathizes with and will meet your needs concerning your frustrations, He has a number of purposes He is trying to accomplish in your life. Let's consider a few of those.

#### **1. God Is BUILDING Your Faith.**

*"The apostles said to the Lord, **"Increase our faith!"**" Luke 17:5*

First and foremost, what God is doing in the midst of our unmet expectations and questions is building your faith. In Romans 8:28 it says that God works all things together for good, which includes building and strengthening your faith.

God knows where we are in our lack of faith and why we have a lack of faith. He will use your confusion and frustration to reveal your need to continue trusting Him even when your flesh may be telling you to turn away from God and trust only in yourself.

#### **2. God Wants To PERSUADE You Of His Character.**

We have already discussed that our struggles take us to places where we may doubt God's love, goodness and sovereignty. However, let's look at this key truth concerning our doubt.

***Even though you may DOUBT or STRUGGLE with God's character, it DOES NOT change the truth concerning God's love, goodness, and sovereignty***

This is a crucial truth to understand because our doubt and unbelief do not change the truth of God's character. The word of God declares God's character whether we believe it or not.

Therefore, even in the midst of our doubt and struggle, He wants to persuade us that He is who He says He is.

### **3. God Is Using Your Frustration To TRANSFORM You.**

God is very efficient. He will use every event in our lives including our struggles and frustration to transform us.

*“be not conformed to this world but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind....**” Romans 12:2*

God is using all of our issues to renew our minds and to transform us into Christ-likeness.

### **Summary**

I hope this chapter better helps you because God is accomplishing many eternal things through your unmet expectations, frustrations, perplexities, etc.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Dealing With Our Frustrations, Perplexities, and Confusion in Christ**

#### **VERBALIZE To The Lord How You REALLY Feel.**

*“How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?  
How long will You hide Your face from me?” Psalm 13:1*

David was very transparent about how he felt about what God was doing or not doing in his life. I believe that verbalizing our frustrations is sometimes necessary to get it out of our system. God is big enough to handle any negative feelings you have toward Him or any negative words that you might say to Him. In spite of how you might feel or what you might say to God concerning your frustration, His love for you and His pursuit of you never changes.

**Example:** “Lord, I am so angry at You for letting my spouse die in a car wreck. If you are really in control, why did you let that happen?”

#### **2. RELINQUISH Control To God.**

As mentioned earlier, our flesh wants to change, control or manage the outcome. The truth is, we are not in control and therefore God wants you to recognize that He and He alone is in control so that you will relinquish or give over to Him your attempts to be in control.

You might take a step of faith and pray something like this: “Lord, remind me that only You are in control. I am living under the illusion that I can be in control. Therefore, I am asking You to move me away from even trying to be in control.”

**Step of faith:** “Lord, remind me that only You are the One in control and I am living under the illusion that I can be in control. Therefore, I am asking You to move me away from even trying to be in control.”

### **3. Engage The Holy Spirit To Speak TRUTH Into Your Frustrations.**

*“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, **He will guide you into all the truth...**” John 16:13*

Whenever a fleshly thought or feeling rises to the surface that is associated with an unmet expectation or a “why” question, put the thought or feeling on hold and speak truth into it. Or ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind the truth that you need to remember in order to speak into the thought or feeling.

**Step of faith:** “Lord, reveal to me the truth concerning my ongoing sin patterns that continue to defeat me.”

### **4. ENTRUST Your Frustrations, Perplexities, Etc. To God.**

“Entrust” simply means to give over to God something that you’re holding on to. To hold onto your frustration will only lead you back to your flesh and making things worse. What frustrations, perplexities, etc. are you holding onto that you need to entrust to God?

**Step of faith:** “Lord, I am giving over to you my “why” questions. I am leaving those questions in Your hands.”

### **5. Draw on Christ To MEET Your Needs.**

In the midst of your frustration, you may have need of such things as understanding, peace or perseverance. When those needs arise, ask Christ to be your need meter. Look back at pages 26-27 and find what your needs are concerning your unmet expectations and use them in the following example of a step of faith:

**Step of faith:** “Lord, I don’t understand why there is not more

transformation in my life. I am asking you to BE my peace and perseverance to continue walking by faith when my flesh is telling me to get upset.”

**6. Seek The Lord To Give You An AWARENESS Of How Satan Might Be Working In Your Frustration.**

*“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”*

*1 Peter 5:8*

The enemy it is always looking for an opportunity to steal, kill and destroy your walk with Christ. There is no greater opportunity than when you are frustrated with God or yourself. He will jump at the opportunity to tempt you to doubt God or walk away from Him. He does this primarily by inserting tempting, condemning, lying, and fleshly thoughts. Therefore, seek the Lord to give you eyes to see when he is tempting you.

**Step of faith:** “Lord, I’m asking you to make me aware if Satan is inserting lying thoughts into my mind.”

**7. Ask The Lord To Renew Your Mind To The Truth.**

*“You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32*

Ultimately, God wants to renew your mind to a point where, in spite of unmet expectations and questions, you will choose to believe and walk in the truth. Seeking the Lord to renew your mind will: move you from unbelief to belief about who God is and His promises.

move you away from the negative thoughts or feelings associated with your unmet expectations and questions.  
not allow your frustrations to rob you of your peace and rest in Christ.

**Step of faith:** “Lord, I’m asking you to renew my mind so that I will move from unbelief to belief concerning my unmet expectation of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Summary**

These are some practical truths that I hope you will start using in your daily walk and then ask the Lord where changes are taking place in what you are thinking, feeling, and believing.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **Where God Bringing is Bringing Us In The Midst Of Our Unmet Expectations And Unanswered Questions**

#### **1. God Is Bringing You To The Place I Call: “Well, Amen”**

I had a friend by the name of Mike Wells who had a like-minded ministry. He is now with the Lord. One of his famous quotes was, “Well, amen.” What Mike meant by this is that even though he didn’t understand what God was doing or not doing, he came to a place where he was “okay” with not understanding. Instead of getting frustrated, he trusted that God knew why it was happening and had a divine purpose in it even though he did not understand what God was doing in him in the midst of it. As a result, he accepted the circumstance rather than getting upset.

#### **2. God Is Bringing You To The Place Of “BUT GOD.”**

Whenever we get into conflict or experience some adversity, we tend to cry out for relief. We want the conflict to subside because we don’t want to feel the pain that arises out of these circumstances. However, God uses these situations to draw us to Him and to grow our trust and Christ-confidence in Him. In addition, He is working in these painful situations to produce Christ-like attitudes such as peace, rest or joy.

This does not mean you will not feel the pain. The pain is very real. However, God is taking you to a place where His truth is a greater reality than your pain/suffering. I call this the “but God” experience. Here are some examples:

“I am not getting any answers Lord, **BUT** I will continue to trust You.”

“I don’t fully understand why You allowed my father to abuse me **BUT** I will continue to walk by faith.”

“I wish You would answer my “why?” questions **BUT** even though you haven’t I will not doubt Your love and goodness.”

### David's "BUT GOD" Experience

Let's look at David's "but God" experience in Psalm 13. The first four verses describe the pain in David's soul.

<sup>1</sup> *"O LORD, **how long** will you forget me? Forever? **How long** will you look the other way?"*

<sup>2</sup> ***How long** must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day? **How long** will my enemy have the upper hand?"*

<sup>3</sup> *Turn and answer me, O LORD my God! Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.*

<sup>4</sup> *Don't let my enemies gloat, saying, "We have defeated him!" Don't let them rejoice at my downfall."*

In these first four verses we see that David is in real pain. He is focused on himself and is doubting God. He is wondering where God is in the midst of his turmoil and how long it will last. Have you ever felt that way before? I am sure we all have. However, the good news is that this Psalm does not end with verse four. In fact, the next word we are about to read is the key to the whole Psalm.

<sup>5</sup> ***"BUT** I trust in your unfailing love. (Emphasis mine.) I will rejoice because you have rescued me.*

<sup>6</sup> *I will sing to the LORD because he is good to me."*

We see the key word in this whole passage is the word **BUT**. Even though David is in this terrible situation and the pain is very real, he says, "but (God.)" We see in verse 5 that in spite of all the pain and suffering he is experiencing; he continues to trust God. He remembers the history of God's goodness and love towards him.

### Paul's "BUT GOD" Experience

Now let's look at Paul's dilemma in 2 Corinthians 1:8:

<sup>8</sup> *We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. **We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it.*** <sup>9</sup> *In fact, we expected to die...."*

There is no doubt that Paul was in dire straits when he said they were “crushed and overwhelmed” beyond their ability to endure. It sounds like they were at the end of their rope. Have you been there before? However, let’s look at the purpose of Paul’s situation in verses 9, 10:

“.....***BUT*** as a result, ***we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead.*** <sup>10</sup> *And He did rescue us from mortal danger, and He will rescue us again. **We have placed our confidence in him, and He will continue to rescue us.***”

We see that even though Paul was feeling crushed and overwhelmed, he realized that God’s divine purpose was for him to keep trusting and depending on God. Therefore, where God is taking you in the midst of your unmet expectations and unanswered questions is to the place of, “but God.”

### **3. God Is Bringing You To A Place Of REST.**

*“Come to Me all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28*

I believe one of the most important places for a Christian to reside is in a state of rest. Imagine Jesus as your divine hammock. He wants you to get into and stay in the hammock. Just so you understand, I am not talking about a physical rest. I am talking about an attitude of rest. As we live in Christ’s rest we rest FROM and rest IN.

#### **Here are some things we are to rest FROM:**

trying to be in control

trying to figure it out

trying to manipulate God to give us understanding

trying to resolve our frustration in the flesh

#### **Here are some things we are to rest IN:**

the truth that God is in control

God, knowing that He will give me answers in His timetable

not knowing and not understanding  
the truth that God will work it together for good whether  
we understand it or not

### **A Personal Story**

On a personal note, there was a time when I was in a great state of frustration in ministry over trying to understand what various pastors were doing and not doing. I finally spelled out my perplexity to God and sensed this response: He was not going to let me “connect the dots” and manage outcomes. Being perplexed was serving the purpose of keeping me dependent -----and dependence equals rest.

The bottom line is that God wanted me to “rest” in my perplexity. It was a hard lesson to learn “but God” finally persuaded me that I did not need to connect the dots because He had them connected! That lesson changed my whole focus in ministry. I now simply go where He wants me to go and do what He wants me to do, even though I may not understand any of it.

### **Summary**

I hope this booklet has helped you better understanding the common struggles we all face that are “normal” to our Christian walk. They will continue to occur, and we will be tempted to question the Lord, but I pray that in spite of your unmet expectations and unanswered questions, that you will, in the words of Paul

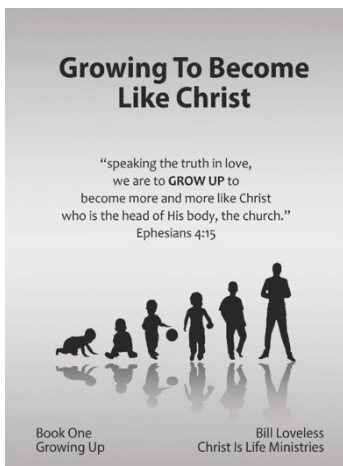
### **“PRESS ON”**

**That really is our only option, isn’t it?**

## Where Do I Go From Here?

At our website listed below, we encourage you to check out our four-part discipleship series called ***Growing Up – Growing Out – Growing Deep*** designed to teach Christians how to fulfill their purpose and calling. The first book in the series is called ***Growing to Become Like Christ***.

Book One covers the following topics:



- What it means to grow up spiritually to become like Christ.
- The difference between living “A” Christian life versus living “THE” Christian life.
- What it looks like practically to grow to become like Christ.
- What are some of the hindrances to spiritual growth and how we overcome them.
- How becoming like Christ transforms every area of our lives.

## CILM DISCIPLESHIP MATERIALS

CILM has this series and many other studies, booklets and videos at our website listed below. To purchase ready-to-use copies from **Amazon or download for free** and do your own printing, copying and binding, please go to the **Discipleship** tab of our website. We hope you will take advantage of these materials.

***Christ Is Life Ministries (CILM)***

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# Is This “Normal?”

I don't know about you but the Christian life seems anything but normal.. However, there are similar struggles that we all face that we may not realize are a “normal” part of our Christian walk. Such things as God not meeting our expectations or our timetable, or God not answering our “Why?” questions.

When these issues come up, they can create frustration, confusion, or sometimes even anger. If we don't know how to spiritually navigate through these issues, they can create doubts about God and about our Christian walk. If we don't know how to move past these unmet expectations, “why” questions, etc., they can eventually cause us to walk away from living from Christ. Therefore, I believe it is crucial to identify these roadblocks and understand how to engage God to move past them.

Therefore, in this booklet, we will explore the following topics

- What are some of the “normal” struggles that we all face in our Christian journey.
- How to deal with our struggles with God when He is not meeting our desires/expectations about Him and our Christian walk.
- Where these struggles take us if we don't engage God to deal with them.
- What God is teaching us in the midst of our confusion, perplexity, and frustration.
- Engaging the Holy Spirit to move past these obstacles and “press on” in our spiritual journey.



Bill Loveless is the founder of Christ is Life Ministries (CILM), a non-profit, non-denominational discipleship ministry. CILM's focus is teaching Christians that Christ is their only source for living the Christian life, what it looks like to be transformed into Christ-likeness, and how to be drawn into a deep relationship with Him. Bill finished his earthly journey in 2024 and is now with the Lord he loves.

For further information and to see other discipleship materials being offered, please go to our website: [www.christislifeministries.com](http://www.christislifeministries.com)

