



# 7 STEPS TO CHRISTIAN MATURITY: DISCOVERY OF THE TRUE SELF & DEEPENING INTIMACY WITH GOD

A BIBLICAL STUDY BY JAMES DIGNAN, FOUNDER OF ABUNDANT LIFE CHRISTIAN COUNSELING  
WWW.ALCC.US • EMAIL: JDIGNAN@ALCC.US • PHONE: 734.788.0842 • ©JAMES DIGNAN

## PREFACE: THE EGO

Ego	The sum of all of what makes up a person. (Emotional, Spiritual, Physical, Mental, Social, Occupational...etc.)
Quote	"You are...who you are...when you are...alone."
Lk. 9:24, Mt. 10:39	Whoever believes he has found his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
Kierkegard (1813-1855)	"And now with the help of God I shall become myself."

## STEP 1: SURRENDER

PS 51:17	What is the sacrifice required by God? A contrite heart; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not ignore. Contriteness is to be broken in our individual spirits that we might understand our need for God and the power of His Holy Spirit to lead and rule our lives. Contriteness is the recognition of my human weakness and inability to adequately lead myself... resulting in a desperate seeking of and dependence upon the Holy Spirit's assistance...therefore communion with God becomes continual.
1 Th. 5:17	Pray without ceasing.
2CO 12:9	But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup> That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses... for when I am weak, He is strong. The true self is found in the heart of God's will. Surrender occurs when a person allows God's will and God's way to dictate and determine one's life course. Self-seeking tendencies and immaturity are part of the original sin and curse cast upon the human race. The only way to truly know the power of God is to completely surrender to His Holy Spirit and His will.
PS 143:10	Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground..

2Cor 10:17

But let him who boasts boast in the Lord,<sup>18</sup> for it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

## STEP 2: ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance of the present situation. (Give to God what He has taken away.)

Job 1:20

Then he fell to the ground in worship<sup>21</sup> and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

LK 14:27

And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Maturity requires the acceptance of losses due to obedience to God. Acceptance of God's will often requires that we "forgive" God for our lot in life.

JOB 1:22

In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. Acceptance accompanied by gratefulness is the beginning of true joy.

1TH 5:18

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

PHP 4:11

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.<sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.<sup>13</sup> I can do everything through Christ Jesus who gives me strength. The primary goal is to love God unconditionally. The secondary goal is to allow God to bring about the changes He desires according to His timetable.

## STEP 3: CONFESSION, ACCOUNTABILITY, & MENTORING

Seek to find someone with whom you can establish a relationship based on mutual safety and then confess your sins, believing that forgiveness and admonishment (wise advice) will also occur.

PS 38:18

I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.

PS 32:5

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Spiritual cleansing and purification often accompanies confession.

1PE 1:22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

## STEP 4: REPENTANCE & LONG-TERM REMORSEFULNESS

Remorse is the beginning of repentance.

PS 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

JER 15:19 Therefore this is what the LORD says: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me.

EZE 18:30 "Therefore I will judge each person according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. <sup>31</sup> Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit.

2 Cor 7:10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret.<sup>11</sup> See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to cleanse yourselves.

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. Repentance occurs as a person begins taking personal responsibility for his/her actions, and puts in motion a plan of action to insure that long-term personal change occurs.

## STEP 5: FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is when a past transgression no longer has any influence on our present relationship (with another human or with God).

MT 6:14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Forgiveness is reciprocal.

Mk 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. Forgiveness is no longer focusing on the sinful event. Forgiveness is being able to put the sinful event behind us.

Eph 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Forgiveness is starting over. Forgiveness from another human is earned.

Acts 26:20 I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

- Luke 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup> The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. As we work out our repentance we should hope for forgiveness towards us to deepen.
- Luke 17:3 "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. <sup>4</sup> If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."
- AC 2:38 Forgiveness of self is necessary to receive the full blessing God has to offer you. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Forgiveness is a process. Forgiveness can take a considerable amount of time and energy. Forgiveness can be compared to an onion...as the first layer is removed there lies another beneath.
- MT 18:21 Applying the principal Jesus posed is helpful: <sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. This principal applied to idea of the length of time needed to work through the process of forgiveness equates to 490 days, or roughly 16 months. So the "Forgiveness Onion" is a 490 day period in which the offended works through the process of forgiving the offender. It is important during this time that the offender be patient with the offended and not try to hurry the process of forgiveness.

## STEP 6: TRANSFORMATION

- This is the recognition and utilization of our gifts to build-up and strengthen others. This process involves the learning and honing of empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand completely both another person's viewpoint and the related feeling.
- MT 18:2 He called a little child and had him stand among them. <sup>3</sup> And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
- 1 Cor. 7:7 I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.
- 2 Tim. 1:6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God
- 1 Pt. 4:10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.
- 1 Tim. 4:14a Do not neglect your gift. Transformation brings joy... and joy is knowing in one's soul the God loves him/her.

## STEP 7: PERSEVERANCE

Long-term godliness. Accountability to significant others regarding our behaviors, life-styles, indulgences and relationship with God. God requires that we spend time seeking His Spirit.

PS 46:10

"Be still, and know that I am God.

PS 37:7

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.

Lk. 21:19

By standing firm you will gain life.

Rom. 2:7

To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

Rom. 5:2b

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Rom. 15:4

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

JAS 1:12

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

ISA 40:31

For those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.