

# The Prisoner's Guide to Spiritual Wellness

Dennis 'Kenika' Sierra

**This guide is dedicated to those prisoners who are searching for peace even if it in our nature to do the opposite.**

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## **The Prisoner**

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,  
beseech you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,  
with lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering,  
Forebearing one another in love,  
endeavoring to keep the unity of the  
Spirit in the bond of peace.”

*Ephesians 4:1-2 King James Version*

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## Chapter 1 – A Brief History

I was born in San Jose, California in 1965 during the sexual-drug-rock & roll era. My mother, Bonnie was a fashion model of Irish-Cherokee descent from Oklahoma. My father, James was a musician for bands like Peaches and Herb, and Little Dion, a talented drummer. Both of my parents were addicted to drugs and alcohol and lived very violent and dysfunctional lifestyles. Born out of wedlock, my father's family, descendants of Spain and Portugal, disowned me because I was born an illegitimate child. I lived with my mother until I was age 5. My sister Denise and brother Billy often suffering from physical abuse and neglect, were finally relinquished for adoption. The last time I saw my mother was at a park in Los Gatos, California, we were feeding the ducks and geese bread, when my mother announced that this would be the last time I would be able to see her.

From 1970 until I turned 14, I was raised in a series of county referred foster homes and behavior modification group homes. Some of these homes were from good families, but most of them were as violent as my infancy, with abusers, power freaks, and child molesters. I got angry, and I started to lash out.

I eventually was placed in Juvenile Hall, and then the Boys Ranch. It was 1979. It was there that I started learning about Yahweh\*. I ran away a lot, eventually always getting caught and placed in solitary confinement for three days at a time. \*Yahweh (YHWH) is the original name for God, Lord, Adoni, or *Jehovah*.

In solitary confinement, the guidance counselors would leave me in a small cell with a pair of boxers and only a King James Bible to read. I learned all about people like David and Goliath, Samson, Joseph, Daniel, and the history of the Biblical world. I prayed constantly, crying out to Jesus to help me understand why my life was so full of turmoil and strife, why I couldn't function normally with others, why I was always afraid and angry all the time. I begged Him for relief.

I eventually asked Him into my life, and to have him teach me and show me what to do with myself. I didn't feel His presence like all of the stories I had heard in the past. But I had faith, and I suddenly loved Him. I started reading everything that I could get my hands on. I read books about religion, faith, Christianity, and end-times prophecy. I was very interested in the end-times and the way Jesus Christ was designated to return for all of His followers, and that there was going to be seven years of tribulation where the unfaithful will experience turmoil and pain. I prayed to Yahweh, asking Him to include me in this prophecy, and to make me wise in the knowledge of His ways.

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In 1980, an English teacher named Edith was interested in locating my lost family in the hope of extinguishing the fire of self-pity that raged deep inside of me. She first found my father and his family. One day at the Harold Holden Boy's Ranch in Morgan Hill, California I met my father Jim, my grandfather Andy, My grandmother Rose Marie, and all of my half sisters and brothers. It seemed to calm me down. They would come to visit me every weekend. My grandparents came to the ranch bringing me cream cheese and cucumber sandwiches on the weekends. I enjoyed my new found family and wanted desperately to fit in, to belong.

The County of Santa Clara California decided to see if it would be beneficial if I finally met my mother Bonnie. One day, the counselors advised me that my mother wished to meet me. A time was set up, and I met her.

The meeting was bitter sweet, with her crying while I sat there angry at her never trying to keep me or try to find me at all. She tried her hardest to explain, but I wouldn't listen, it added to the flames that consumed my anger.

After many failed attempts at juvenile psychotherapy, the County of Santa Clara decided to send me to a juvenile prison system called, California Youth Authority. I was charged with habitual runaway and juvenile delinquency. There I remained until I turned age 18.

Throughout my experience there, I became violent and angry, getting into fights, and spending most of my time in solitary confinement. I lost my love for Yahweh and Jesus Christ. I felt sorry for myself, only wanting to do harm.

In 1983 I was released from CYA into the custody of my mother. I lived with her for a while in a trailer park in San Jose, California. It didn't last. Racked with anger and bitterness, I lashed out, and started using speed and LSD. I made new friends and partied all of the time. I stole food and alcohol from grocery stores to feed my desire to forget my misery.

I became more and very angry with each passing day. I started shooting up speed and staying up all night drawing demonic pictures and hallucinating. I was stealing money from the till at a coffee shop in Campbell, California for my habit. I was eventually caught, and fired. I convinced my boss to let me work as a busboy instead. He said, yes. That night I waited for all of the customers to leave for the night and decided to rob the safe. I assaulted him; he came after me scaring me off. For a while I was on the run, but was eventually caught. I landed up in jail charged with assault with a deadly weapon. I was somehow relieved, knowing that it was over for the moment.

After a brief stint in the worst jail I have ever experienced. I went to court and I plead guilty to assault with a deadly weapon and was sentenced to 3 years 11 months in the state prison. The judge thought I was insane for not going to trial. But deep down inside I knew I was wrong and I just wanted to get it all over with. After the conviction, it was recommended that I be placed at Vacaville State Prison for a 30 day psychiatric evaluation before determining if I should spend the next three years in prison. It was 1984, and I was 19 years old.

The prison bus drove me to California State Prison Vacaville in Vacaville California. I was housed with some of the most demented prisoners. It was very "hospital like" with tall ceilings and rows of two man cells. There I learned quickly what it was like to be in prison. I was scared out of my mind, but curious. I took a series of psychological tests to see if I was 'prison material'. I spent the rest of my time learning about prison life and playing softball and horse shoes. After 90 days, I was then shipped back to the county jail. The court decided that I was not 'prison material', and released me on a 3 year probation period, at which I would be not be sentenced to prison if I lived in society without the use of drugs and violence.

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I learned to be a cook, working French, Italian, and Greek restaurants. But I was usually fired shortly after my employment there, mostly because I smoked a lot of marijuana, and drank a lot. I met a 28 year old woman named Gerri at the Holiday Inn in Milpitas California where I worked as an assistant chef. It was a passionate love affair at first, but we both had problems that stemmed from our past. The relationship became dysfunctional.

I started abusing cocaine. I spent all of my earnings on it and started to steal from Gerri. One day I stole all of her rent money, and she found out about it. She promptly kicked me out of her home. I slept in my car at night, snorting coke, and running around town. I still had my job at the hotel, but one day in a fit of cocaine induced paranoia, I bought a pellet gun and drove down a highway and shot out the windows in the cars that were driving by. I thought I had gotten away with it, but one day when I went to work I was greeted by the San Jose Police, and was carted off to jail in handcuffs.

In court the judge violated my probation one month before it was set to finish. I was sent to prison not only for the violation of probation, but also for the highway shootings. I was sentenced to 2 years state prison time. I was 21 years old.

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I went to a prison called California State Prison Susanville, just inside the middle corner of the State of California. I was sent to a level II prison yard, a kind of medium security prison. It was my first time in a real state prison. It was a yard with dorm living. The dorms were filled with bunk beds with 32 men in each. There men from all types of racial backgrounds and cultures. There were Chicano-Mexican, Mexican Nationals, Whites, Blacks, Asians, and Others. It was violent. Snitches and child molesters were not tolerated and were usually beaten or stabbed if the prison population found them out. One night 23 child molesters were taken off of the yard in fear of their lives.

I spent that next year learning how to be a convict and to follow the rules of the prison life. I eventually was transferred to a state prison in Solano California where I finished the rest of my time. At the end of my sentence, I received a call from my grandfather announcing my father Jim, had died from an overdose of a combination of drugs and alcohol. I felt deep sorrow for my grandfather's pain.

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After I was released from prison, I lived for a brief while back in San Jose, California. I lived on the streets, homeless and using drugs again. I slept in different people's homes working as a fry cook going from job to job. And so, after six months my parole officer found a pair of dirty methamphetamine baggies in my room at a house I rented from an ex-group home parent that I had known in my past. The parole board sent me to prison for the maximum one year. I was sent to a California State Prison called Corcoran.

At Corcoran, I decided to work on my body; I was tattooed all over my chest and arms. The pain was a relief from my mental anguish and served as punishment for my sins. I did copious amounts of speed, using the inheritance (that I fought over against my grandfather) from the death of my father. I was hooked on speed and the pain of tattoos, eventually tweaking out I went to the hole, (or solitary confinement) to finish the rest of my time. Finally I was released, back on the streets, free again.

I then decided that I was not going back to prison for any circumstances. I decided to go to college and learn a trade. I was still homeless at the time and I was living in a 65 Chevy truck with a chocolate lab named Hershey. I started school at Masters Institute of Technology, where I learned printing and technology. I was an 'A' student and I was learning fast. I was very interested in the trade of printing and toured many printing presses in the Bay Area. I eventually tested out of the rest of my software classes and started working in the printing industry as a desktop publisher designing yellow page advertisements.

Before I graduated from college I had met a woman named Jennifer. We fell in love, and together we lived in a duplex in San Jose expecting the arrival of my son Andy. After Andy was born, our relationship grew apart. Due to my lack of knowledge and understanding of family life, I grew frightened of being a father, and again started smoking speed. Every day I went to work and came home and smoked speed, neglecting my new family. After big fight about nothing, Jennifer and Andy moved out of the duplex with me standing there wondering what had really happened.

Then life turned into a big custody battle and my past was put through the mud. I was only given partial custody of my son with supervised one-hour visitation rights. After being rejected by my family and realizing what I had done, I was heartbroken at my loss, and roamed the highways of California driving from Monterey to San Francisco, driving nowhere, and seeking relief.

I finally decided to move out of San Jose, to San Francisco far away from the pain of all of my awful memories. I found a job with a printer in South San Francisco making good pay. I still slept in my vehicle, just me and my dog Hershey. I worked days, took showers nights at the YMCA. I went to work every day for a while, when, finally I found a place to live in a room at an old hotel on Grand Avenue.

Since the landlord didn't accept pets, I snuck Hershey into our place each night. Stability was alien to me and I started to drink more and more, and using speed and cocaine on the weekends. I lost my job, my van and my place; I was homeless back out on the streets again. My dog kept us warm but I was hungry all of the time, going from shelter to shelter in search of a hot meal.

I found another place to live that would keep a dog in San Francisco's Protrero Hill neighborhood. His name was Jeffery, and he was need of a roommate to share the house that he owned. I decided to move in and live there. I started my own design business in my small bedroom. I designed logos for companies that needed them, and produced small printing jobs.

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Life went well at first; I was exploring culture, and the unique San Francisco lifestyle. I Then discovered the medical marijuana community, and was at that time a new movement and almost underground. I learned more about culture, the city life and how to communicate with other diverse races and attitudes. It was very difficult at first, and I was hazed and vibed each time I made a mistake in my behavior.

I worked for a medical marijuana club called Californian's Helping Alleviate Medical Problems as a joint roller and washed the laundry after the Friday and Saturday night's harm reduction meetings. (A harm reduction meeting is like an A.A. meeting only they use cannabis as a medicinal remedy for pain and depression.) After four years of trial and error, I started to find my true self, and what it was like to be part of a community of friendly people that came from such diverse backgrounds.

I stared joining in their political movement picketing the streets to legalize the sale of medicinal marijuana. I helped a key political figure in San Francisco that was pro medical marijuana. I also helped the homeless and I found peace of mind in helping strangers cope with their life and troubles. I found a job in another print shop and at lunchtime went to the club to eat lunch served to the public by its members.



I enjoyed my lifestyle, and learned peace of mind. When I came to terms with my terrible self, saw the sadness, anger, and low self-esteem I had practiced for years, I wept...bitterly. I knew that I had wasted so much time, fighting the world and hating my life for the misfortunes that led me to disaster. I was confused, and was regretful of my past, hating again my own existence.

At age 34, I met a woman from Tochigi, Japan, named Ayako at a nightclub in the city, and asked her out. We dated for a while and we eventually fell in love and moved into an apartment together on Eddy and Van Ness Streets. We lived together while she went to school days and I worked at the print shop in San Francisco for about four years. But then I started to learn more about how the world works. I didn't approve of some of the social politics that were out there, and rebelled.

I became active against such politics and was very vocal about it. Depressed, I started to escape into cocaine again and spent all of my income hiding in the euphoria. I sometimes left Ayako at home and drove around the city for hours using coke. Ayako started to complain, and wondering why I liked drugs instead of her. After years of constantly spending my earnings on cocaine Ayako, my wife, called it quits and left me.

I moved into a room at a hotel off of 3<sup>rd</sup> street, and dived headlong into the world of cocaine. I got on Social Security because of my mental problems and smoked my life away. I roamed the streets of San Francisco's Tenderloin District, smoking coke blowing away the mind I thought I had once saved. I did this for another year, boosting from stores and panhandling for a fix of coke when I was broke.

One day I woke up and decided that enough was enough and took the train back to San Francisco to a friend's home to detoxify. My good friend, Sue, gave me a shower and a new change of clothes and we talked about the future. I knew a friend that I had met on the internet who lived in Athens, Illinois. I called her and asked her if she would help me to relocate there. She agreed to give me a place to stay and a job while I integrated there. I bought a plane ticket and flew into Springfield, Illinois the following day.

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I arrived into Springfield, at the beginning of January 2003, and I stayed with my friend Ginger and her mother. Her mom hired me to work as her website publisher's assistant in her prepress shop. I realized that it was easy to obtain a new driver's license, and transferred my social security information there. I was working for room and board and was finally off of the cocaine.

For the next four months I worked for Donna and went to the town tavern in Athens, Illinois every night to party and drink. I got to know all of the locals and made friends quickly. The alcohol started to play havoc in my personality and wrecked the relationship that I had developed with my friend Donna. One day she fired me from her shop and kicked me out of her home. Fortunately my friend Barbie, a lady I knew in Athens, decided to put me up in her place. I moved in with her. I knew that I needed a new job to supplement my income, so I got a job with Lincoln Yellow Cab in the capital city of Springfield.

Being a cabby was a great experience for me. I was able to see a new community and it was probably the best job I've ever had. I worked the hours of 5 pm to 5 am. It was scary at times especially when I had to pick someone up and drop them off in the hood. But I didn't care; I just treated people with the respect that I had learned on the streets of San Francisco, California and life prison.

Life was good; I started making about 90 dollars a day, and didn't have to pay rent. But I was drinking heavily, and things got complicated. After my income tax return came in, I bought a car and packed a cooler full of food and drove back to California.

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I started the driving across the Midwest, through Illinois, to Iowa, then the flatlands of Nebraska and reached Cheyenne, Wyoming. During the drive I felt free for the first time in my life. I enjoyed the fresh air and the freedom of the road. I arrived in Cheyenne, Wyoming and it was about 5 pm. It was very cold but not a sign of snow. It was early spring and I started to climb the Rocky Mountains. Suddenly there was a snowstorm. It was a total white-out. I'd never driven through snow and couldn't see in front of me. I prayed to Yahweh to get me through the next 300 miles of mountainous driving into Salt Lake City, Utah.

Suddenly, I saw the red tail lights of a diesel big rig in front of me. I decided to drive slowly right behind it, because I couldn't see either side of the road or the road itself. It worked! For the rest of the way up the mountain to the summit I drove this way. I refueled in a town called Rocklin, and drove the rest of the way into Salt Lake City. At one point I got lost, but the road finally got me there.

Once I got to Salt Lake City, I got out of my car and was amazed to see that the entire undercarriage was covered with snow. I was grateful to Yahweh that I had made it and it was the first time in a long time that I spoke a little prayer of thanks. I then drove through Nevada, into California and finally I crossed the Bay Bridge into San Francisco.

The first thing that happened to me as I crossed the Bay Bridge, was, (I got what A.A. calls) a "trigger effect". I got an overwhelming desire to smoke cocaine. I immediately went to the Tenderloin District of the City and spent my money on cocaine and paid for a hotel room and smoked all night long. The next morning I was paranoid and strung out. While driving my car to San Jose I was pulled over by a police car in South San Francisco. I was arrested for a coke pipe and under the influence and shipped off to the San Mateo County Jail.

After I was fined for the crime, I was sent to the Bryant Street Jail in San Francisco to take care of a warrant for shoplifting cosmetics for my coke habit. When I went to court, the judge and prosecutor seeing that I had been clean for a while dropped the charges and released me with my promise to stop using drugs. I agreed and was released from jail. Little did I know that this next phase of my life would be life-changing.

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I moved into a house that I knew about in San Francisco that was connected to the underground movement. I worked fixing drywall in my friend's basement for the rent while I detoxified from my coke experiences. I started visiting my old friends in the Tenderloin, drug addicts and the homeless. I never forgot where I came from. I treated them with compassion and they offered me drugs but I refused. I started praying to Yahweh again frequently asking Him for guidance because I needed to know what to do next. I decided to share my thoughts and my experiences by building a website based on the relief of abuse and oppression.

I became involved in \*activism and was very vocal about my cause. Since I created a controversial website on the internet, it invoked a negative reaction by a relative and his social network. I started to become accosted and beaten from time to time. I prayed constantly in the Holy Spirit, crying out to Yahweh to protect me and help guide me. I kept moving, riding the rail of the B.A.R.T. train from San Jose and San Francisco. I knew if I kept moving and stayed awake I could defend myself from the onslaught.

Then Yahweh started revealing to me tools for my survival, and I understood that I wasn't just fighting against my relative and some of his political factions, but the devil himself. I kept alert, washing myself in the fountain spring at St. James Park in San Jose, and praying in the Catholic Cathedral downtown. I ate lunch there and slept on the streets.

Then things got considerably worse and more violent. I was attacked several times while riding the train. My throat was slashed and had to go to San Francisco General Hospital and receive 14 stitches in my neck. The cut came within 3 millimeters of hitting my jugular vein.

I pulled my website off of the internet and the violence stopped...but only for a day when it returned in force. I realized that my relative was more involved than I had imagined, and it made me understand that my life was in danger. He started stealing my SSI checks and making phone calls having me harassed and followed. I knew that he was well known in the San Jose community and I begged him to stop. I loved him and forgave him but couldn't take this anymore.

(Out of respect to my family the rest of the story cannot be told because the graphic nature of the incident. It's sufficient to say in 2004 I was sentenced to 15 years to life for the murder of my relative.)

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Since 2004 I have been in prison in California. It took six of those years to forgive myself and to decide to change and live for Jesus. One day on my bunk in my cell, Jesus gave me a choice. I could serve Him and live in peace, or serve myself and satan and live in torment and depression. After much turmoil I chose to follow Him.

From that time forth I grew strong in Christ and gave my whole being to His power. I started educating myself in the ways of world social history, philosophy, spirituality, and it strengthened my mind. I decided to write this guide to help assist those of you who are seeking peace of mind even though you are in prison. It is a message for all people: Male and female prisoners as well as those on the outside who may also be struggling in search of inner peace.

*\*Activism: The doctrine or policy of taking positive, direct (non-violent) action to achieve an end, especially a political or social end.*

## Chapter 2 – Forgiveness

### Forgiveness hides the stain of hate.

#### Acceptance

Forgiveness is the start of a beautiful friendship with yourself and others. Forgiveness of self is the key to forgiveness of others. It's difficult to forgive. All of those days of madness at home as you grew up, wondering why life was so awful. Why it seemed that Yahweh is evil and has persecuted you for some sadistic reason. But life was never planned this way. Our mothers and fathers sometimes had no choice in the matter and you were born. Yahweh your creator didn't plan this for you, but He did see your value in spite of it all. This is something that cannot be helped and is called your destiny. But destinies can, (in fact) change, through time, with experience, and hard work. But it all starts out with forgiveness.

How do we forgive? An old Alcoholics Anonymous adage says, "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Wow! That's a tough one to swallow. Accept the things I cannot change? But 'I' am the creator of my destiny. But in reality sometimes we are not. Sometimes it's our surrounding environment that causes us to prejudge things and make ourselves our own worst enemy.

Let's take a look at our past experiences. We were wronged by folks. We were raised in a toxic environment. But to forgive is also a reason to change the situation. Once we immediately forgive ourselves for the errors and the sins of our parents and friends, then that is the first step towards acceptance. Once we accept our circumstances, we start to grow.

After we start to accept, we begin to realize one important and painful fact, we lost time. And some of us have lost years and decades. I did. It hurts mentally and physically.

Once we start to accept the situation, we need tools to continue. We can find solace in good friendships, (or others) that can relate to our situation. Even though your life is unique in general, there are others that have experienced similar circumstances. That's why this book was created. *For us. For you.*

Especially with us, (our circumstances whatever they may be) that landed us in prison. I'm angry for being here. What do we do? We accept it first and forgive ourselves. We ultimately need a higher power. But we will get to that chapter on faith later.

Yes it is imperative that we accept our creator Yahweh and His Son Jesus Christ,  
because that is what He has ordained for us.

When I was out on the streets at a half-way house for drug intervention, I couldn't accept that I needed a higher power. This was one of the fundamentals of change and acceptance that was taught to me, but I didn't want to have faith in Yahweh or a higher power. But it is necessary. The reason it is necessary is that we cannot accept ourselves if we think that we are all powerful.

But true acceptance is the acceptance of our creator (again we will get into the topic of faith in more detail later on). That we were indeed a created being that just didn't simply evolve into an ape, into a cave man, into a human being. If life were that simple, we would have evidence of that happening today. This guide is all about spiritual wellness, so in order to find the spiritual wellness that you desire; you must accept yourself as being a created vessel from a supreme being.

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### **Understanding Self**

Understanding ourselves is to know who we really are. Sit back and write an essay on your feelings and your goals and how you feel about yourself. Doing this will take time and effort. But once it's accomplished it reaps great rewards and is very therapeutic. I like writing letters to people. The words that you express on that sheet of paper is therapy. Even if you don't have family to write to, or a pen-pal, there are resources that you can write to that will provide an avenue for you to get your feelings and thoughts down on paper. *(There is a list of resources in the back of this guide).*

Even if you just write down all of your thoughts on a piece of paper and set it aside for a day and then read it, this will allow you to get a better understanding of where you are at with yourself, and give you a new perspective on how to live, teaching your psyche...your true self, a more positive way of thinking. This is just one way to understand you, and is a great exercise for daily activity.

Another is prayer and deep thinking. Ask yourself what you really want to do to change yourself. How does it feel to you when you make a positive effort to find out who you really are? Is it difficult? Yes, it is. Some of us don't have a clue that we really certainly are this way. We were conditioned to be the way we are from the teachings of our peer groups, parents, and foster home parents, siblings, and political viewpoints.

One way to find out who we are is to examine the simplest rules, like the Ten Commandments. (See Exodus 20:1-17). After Christ came down to this earth, He consolidated these Ten Commandments into two very simple but effective ones: 'Love thy neighbor as thyself. Love thy God with all your heart and your entire mind and all of your soul.' These verses are pretty self-explanatory.

Even if you don't have faith in a higher power yet, the Bible has very good rules to read and to live by. Start from the book of Acts in the New Testament and start reading from there. At first it will seem very difficult, you'll grow weary from the sometimes monotonous words and hard to read Old English Text, but if you need too, you can find a Bible that is translated in easy to read words that have sometimes better explanations of the verses that

you are trying to understand. I recommend for those of you who are new at reading the Bible to first try some of the recent versions, then when you start to understand better, then you might try the earlier versions.

Suddenly you will start to see some of the similarities in the way things are described in these words of spiritual wisdom, in yourself, your attitude, and your personality. Some of you will still deny this, but those of you who really wish for a change will seek out the truth about yourself, and your true nature. This is not only understanding yourself, but part of acceptance. This is not only part of acceptance but is the fruits of forgiveness.

The fruits of the Spirit are:

“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

*Galatians 5:22, 23*

## Chapter 3 – Other People

### Examining Your Surroundings

Examining your surroundings is the art of knowing who you are in the world, and getting to know the people that are around you. The eye is the most important organ on the human body. The eye cannot speak, and is a very silent friend in the framework of the social culture. Just examining your surroundings is what can be the difference between life and death. It is also used for learning. Studying your peers can show you how they feel at the time, and can help you understand how to commiserate with them.

You bring much power and wisdom to your life when you take the time to observe things, instead of flying by the seat of your pants and just being compulsive as we are sometimes. A simple routine of examining your surroundings is helpful.

Let me give you an example. The other day at a Kairos meeting there was a young man who had been conducting himself in an egotistical way to interject his own agenda. This was causing a negative reaction from the group. Weeks went by and the brothers there were talking about this guy and getting impatient with his attitude. One day he got up and started speaking negative remarks about a couple of brothers. This caused a reaction in our little group. The next day the topic was brought up on the prison yard. It was discussed among peers. In the following session he continued on with his own way of teaching and the Holy Spirit came down and convicted him. (or, reproached him).

When examining his demeanor, he displayed behavior consistent with having a guilty conscience. You could tell that he was getting more and more uncomfortable by the minute. Eventually to make a long story short, he spoke out and the group had a rap session letting him understand the problem they had with his style of teaching.

This is a keen example of understanding your surroundings. If you are unable to see such an action take place, you cannot learn from it. If it does happen to you, you accept it and the feelings that make you aware of your surroundings. Apologize for the mistake immediately and forgive yourself and move on.

Examining your surroundings can become a habit that can become a very interesting project for yourself, and also induces the practice of self-control. Self-control is conducive to having patience and will transfer into getting along with others.

Please let me give you another example. I was riding the BART train from San Jose to San Francisco one day during the time that I was involved in activism. I saw two men staring at me from across the car. When they noticed that I saw them, one of those men approached me and tried to attack me. Since I was already aware of my surroundings, I was ready for him and was able to defend myself from getting hurt. I used a defensive move and pinned him to my seat, keeping him from punching me. This surprised the man and he went back to his side of the car and sat down.

To examine your surroundings, you don't necessarily have to be in paranoid mode. It can be done in the form of sightseeing. Your goal is not to be mean or negative when you are examining your surroundings, it's to just be aware. That's all. It is a part of Yahweh's wisdom and insight to be aware.

### **Understanding Others**

Understanding others is as simple as having compassion when some else is talking to you. To listen to that person is one way of communicating in a proper way. When one turns their head or interrupts when a person is trying to talk, it's rude and is a form of control. Another way to understand others is to listen to what they have to say. Be aware of their body language and attitude, and think about how you can understand them. Sometimes this is very difficult, but you will gain more power spiritually if you use this technique.

Understanding others proves your own self esteem. It allows you to be favorable in the presence of your friends and your enemies. It calms down destructive behavior, and prevents violence from occurring. This is also part of life. In the Bible, it talks of, 'to love thy neighbor as thy self.' To love your neighbor you must be able to love yourself, and if you love yourself, you will love others. In order to do this with success, you must go to Chapter One and read about forgiveness.

To make friends and to be successful at work and in society, we must understand others. Sometimes we don't want to. We notice that some people are very abrasive and are always hostile or always want to be in control. The best way to understand and deal with this type of individual is to understand where they are coming from.

But you don't talk down to these types of people, because that would start a fight that could even lead to death. They are not aware, sometimes, of their behavior, because they may have been raised in a toxic environment, or had bad experiences in life. To understand this, is compassion. It took me many years to develop this type of wisdom. When I was at work I would find myself getting frustrated and angry, because I thought that a person that I was dealing with was an 'A-hole'. But when I went to my cell block that night, I realized through prayer that that person may not have even known what he is doing.

The next day I took a step back and let him be him, not taking things personal, and using compassion to better understand him. Instead of hostility, he started treating me with respect. A week later the attitude returned, but with careful communication and reinforcement, the animosity ended for good. Now we work together in complete harmony. He does his thing, and I do mine. In prison, our nature is to instantly retaliate into violence. It is prison policy to make sure that the person that is disrespecting you needs to be punished.

Sometimes this cannot be avoided. But when it can no longer be avoided it is most likely because you didn't originally use your common sense tools described in this chapter to understand others. That is why I have written these pages, because I believe with the proper mind, we can all get along and live without violence, not only in prison, but on the outside too.



Knowing yourself is also a tool to knowing others. When you understand what your limitations are and what triggers your anger, this will help temper the situation from getting out of control. Once you know yourself, and how far things can go, you can plan the conversation and use your skills in understanding to make the conversation go where you want it to, thus, eliminating further conflicting disagreements.

Using your mind and your spirit to understand others is the key to understanding Yahweh. Understanding Yahweh will help aid you in accomplishing what you wish in your life. It is also showing deep respect for Yahweh and His laws.

There is one thing the prophet Job talks about in a proverb that is very important to never forget; it is the use of the tongue. The tongue can be used to hurt, even kill. But it can also be used to for loving friendships and health. Even the way one speaks confirms how one really feels about oneself. It is our all-important organ that needs much guidance. Through practice and guidance and prayer with Jesus Christ and Yahweh, you can train the tongue for your own benefit, and the benefit of others.

“Discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you. To deliver you from the way of evil,  
from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of  
uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness,”

*Proverbs 2:11-12*

## Chapter 4 - Your Environment

“Then Yahweh saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”

*Genesis 1:31*

### Natural Environment

Go outside on the prison yard or out on your front porch and what do you see above you, the blue sky? Now ask yourself, did Yahweh create that? Then answer, “Yes He did”. The world was created in six days. Yahweh made the vegetation, the sky, the waters, the breezes the animals the insects, all of the creatures that sustain itself on this planet we call Earth. That in itself is a divine miracle.

Now when you see a bird or and insect or and animal outside. Look at it carefully. What is it doing? If you watch it carefully you will notice that it is an intelligent life form. It understands its existence. It has feelings and thoughts; it gets hungry, thirsty and happy, sad, and angry. It can be loving or violent. It is intelligent. Yahweh created life to be this way. If this is true, how can we just ruthlessly kill things? Through our own existence we can learn to understand all living things.

When you yell at someone, it causes a wave of discontent. The same is true when we kill things. It affects the natural world and it also affects us. For instance, does your pet dog or cat remember when you scolded it? Or were you loving and nice to it? When you abused an animal did it suddenly become frightened of you or even hostile? That is what happens in your natural environment. All things are interconnected. All reactions cause a separate and equal reaction. It goes this way in our human lives also. Yell and you will invoke depression, anger, or fear. Show happiness, love, and compassion, and you create peace.

This philosophy has been proven even with the growth of plant life. Studies show that different types of music played around plants create an existence of harmony, and is conducive to healthy plant growth. So it is when raising children, or just living in a place of your own. Even in your cell (if you are in prison) with music, art, and the cleanliness of the surroundings that you live in help increases your spiritual wellness. The way in which you use your resources and how you dispose of trash and drive cars and eat will help to make better environmental living conditions.

### City Life

I lived in a City called San Francisco, in California for 8 years. There I learned about the diversity of the social culture. I believed that the way we live is important to our wellbeing. Our friends and families are very important to us. When I would wander down the street, or take a bus ride, or a train ride, I experienced the life and the heartbeat of the city.

Living in the city was a far different experience from being locked up. I noticed how people lived and interacted with each other. Some were friendly, and some were indifferent. Some were just plain mean. But it was that unique diversity of people and their lifestyles which made the city, the place to be.

In the City, you could go to the park, or to a movie, or go to a club. Here were places where you could enjoy the company of others. It wasn't like prison at all, but in some ways it was. I still had to understand the people that I was involved with. Saying, 'Please excuse me.' when I bumped into someone walking down the street was proper etiquette.

But the laws of the environment will react to the same in this instance. Every reaction creates a separate and equal reaction. If you drive down the street and flip someone the bird in anger, it causes the other person to react. So while out in public, we can still examine our surroundings and obey Yahweh's law without getting into trouble.

I joined a Medical Marijuana Club called Californian's Helping Alleviate Medical Problems (C.H.A.M.P) on Church Street in San Francisco. I went to all of the functions, deciding to learn how to live in a community. I was just 3 years out of my second prison term. I was very uncomfortable among the different nationalities. The problem was they could sense this. But because of their compassion, and their attitude, and 4 years of hard work and dedication to change, I learned how to desensitize myself from my earlier prejudices.

Some people don't want to do this. They are set in their ways. But it is my experience, one of the keys to spiritual wellness is to change our way of thinking into a productive Godly way of understanding life. If you think about this and try to understand it, you will reduce harm in your life when you are out in the real world.

### **Prison Life**

I have spent a total of 24 years behind bars, or incarcerated in institutions. I was "state raised", and by the time I reached age 24, I was very institutionalized. I learned that to protect myself was a necessary evil. That I had to respect people completely or I could get beaten or stabbed. Violence is the way of life in prison. Fear is constant, and misunderstandings happen frequently.

One thing that helps us when we are incarcerated is the skills that I have outlined in this book. And as you read you will see and understand more wisdom that will get you through your time and help you live a better life when you are finally released. And if you are never going to be released from prison, you will be able to cope with your situation better, and have the courage and the mind to do well.

## Chapter 5 - Faith

"Faith corresponds to the Word, to believe. It is the attitude of the heart.

Faith is a form of steadfastness in our tenacity for integrity.

Faith leads toward salvation." *Mark 16:16*

### Understanding Yahweh

Understanding Yahweh is a complicated and sometimes confusing idea which sometimes leads to skepticism. It is not difficult to prove the existence of Yahweh. Just look around you and notice His creations. These creations are physically too complex to be just happenstance. The theory of evolution is just that, a theory and not a fact. But even in other cultures that don't even understand our Yahweh and Jesus Christ, believe in creation. It is only science that teaches the theory that this life and the world that we live in just happened from a big explosion.

Understanding Yahweh is not just having faith that He exists; faith and understanding is the acceptance that not only Yahweh is real, but He is also in charge. It says in the Bible, "Through Him all things are possible." Life can be explained, and life can exist without pain and suffering. Suffering comes from not believing and fighting with your natural instinct that He does exist and reaching out to godless dogma or false religion.

Understanding Yahweh also means that you understand yourself, and how you feel and know yourself. To understand Yahweh, it takes not only study, but prayer and faith. To do this I recommend studying the text of the scriptures in the Holy Bible. The Bible is an accurate Yahweh breathed guide to understanding God, who He is, what His plans for humankind are, and what His rules for everyday life are. The Bible also gives the complete histories of the people that served Yahweh in His perfection, but also proved to be very human in nature.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son Jesus,  
that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

*John 3:16*

### True Faith

There were so many people that are used in reference to the strength and power of faith. True faith is depicted in the story of Abraham. Abraham was instructed by Yahweh to sacrifice his only child because there was no sacrificial lamb. Abraham was so faithful, that he didn't hesitate to do as he was asked of him. Just before Abraham plunged the knife into his son Yahweh stopped him, and sent a ram in his son's place. (*Genesis 22*)

King David was a murderer, and an adulterer, but he was intelligent and very faithful to Yahweh. When he understood his sins, he spent years in contrition with Yahweh. Books like Psalms complete his prayers and songs to his Mighty Yahweh. (I Samuel; Psalms)

Joseph, although betrayed by his siblings, had great faith in Yahweh and became the Pharaoh of Egypt's greatest man. But he also forgave his brothers for their betrayal, and sent them home with gifts. He was blessed by Yahweh and was one of the most powerful men in Egypt at the time. (*Genesis 30*)

Daniel was so faithful to Yahweh that he prayed many times daily, and was persecuted for it. Although the king made decree that no man shall pray to his Yahweh, Daniel's faith was so strong that he prayed anyway. He eventually was condemned for it, and thrown into a den of lions. Because of his faith, Daniel was spared from the savage and ravenous lion's hungry appetite. *(Daniel)*

Solomon was so wise that people from all over the world came to understand his philosophy. He too had supreme faith in Yahweh. Through Yahweh's laws and teachings Solomon was wise beyond his wildest dreams. *(II Samuel)*

Job was rich and successful because of his faith, and even though the devil was allowed to persecute him by killing his entire family and animal population, making him poor, and suffering his body with infectious boils, he had great faith. *(Job)*

The story of Jonah was a good example of what happens when you don't have faith, and are simply rejecting Yahweh. Jonah was swallowed up by the fish, and for three days he sat in misery inside the stomach of that fish. Afterwards, he was spit out and commanded to alert the town of Nineveh to repent from their sins. This is why faith is and always will be the beginning of understanding Yahweh, and finding the spiritual wellness that you desire. *(II Kings, Jonah)*

Faith in Christ and Yahweh begets stability. Faith is the first step in the reliance of self; reliance on a higher power (Yahweh) leads to mental and spiritual strength, and insight.

I have always known that there is a supreme being and that through all of my past circumstances, I believe that it was faith that kept me alive when I should have died on the streets. It was Yahweh's persistent spiritual guidance that eventually led me back to Him. It was faith that got me through the misery of being totally alone and without anyone when I was an activist in San Francisco, California.

I was walking down Mission Street and the City, when I realized that I was truly alone. I felt a sense of depression and loneliness that I haven't ever experienced before. Then suddenly, I was aware of one thing, I had Yahweh, and I was no longer alone after all. Once I expressed faith in Yahweh, I also started becoming aware that there were others who felt the same way that I did.

Faith is important for the structure of life itself. We must have faith in our careers so that we can support our lifestyles. A child must have faith in their parents' guidance and support. Some of us lack the faith necessary to sustain ourselves, and to have faith in Yahweh because of our abandonment and from suffering abuse as a child. But having faith in Jesus Christ and Yahweh is the first step in repairing the damage done in our past.

So please at least take a leap of faith. When you start to have faith, your life will change. It is not instantaneous as some people claim. It can be a gradual change. The more you have faith in Yahweh, the more wisdom and knowledge He will reveal to you. The more faith that you have in Him, the more trust He has in you. But he will test your faith. The tests of faith bring strength and perseverance. Tests are difficult for everyone, but tests and trials build character. And soon, they will not be tests anymore; they will be part of your life.

Along with faith in Yahweh we must have faith in His laws and His scriptural guidance. The more you obey His standards, the more your life will begin to develop the fruits of the spirit. You will notice that you no longer need to be angry at people who annoy you. You will start to develop an understanding that is only given to those whom do have faith in Yahweh.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

*Romans 5:1*

**Webster's Dictionary of Terms defines' faith as: Faith** (faith) *n.* **1.** Confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, idea, or thing. **2.** Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence. **3.** Loyalty to a person or thing; allegiance. **4. Often Faith:** {Christianity} The theological virtue is defined as secure belief in God and a trusting and acceptance of God's will.

"For grace are ye saved through faith, and not of yourselves: It is the gift of God."

*Ephesians 2:8*

## Chapter 6 – Repentance

Repentance is the genuine will to receive pardon, for past transgressions.  
True repentance is the genuine change of mind.

“Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance.  
For ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.  
For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of:  
but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” *II Corinthians 7:9-10*

### True Repentance

I find that a lot of Christian organizations preach that all a person has to do is repent to the Lord and that's it. They are saved. Initially, this is true Biblically, but true repentance comes from not just from the confession of our sinful life, true repentance comes from contrition. Contrition is the act of honest and genuine remorse of the sin that you've been committing, that you wish to be forgiven for.

True repentance involves not only remorse and confession to Yahweh, but the act of regret that is profound that you no longer wish to perform the sin again. True repentance also comes without the habit of constantly repenting of the same sin as before, but stopping and making an effort to never act on this sin again. Of course, we all make mistakes, but the effort is worth a thousand pardons.

Think of it like this, if you have a child who you are trying to teach not to steal from the store and that child finally gets caught and repents and says that he/she will no longer do that again but does, this makes you believe that your child was never remorseful for doing it. It is the same with our Lord. Sooner or later it's like the analogy of the 'Boy Who Cried Wolf'; and He will no longer listen to your false cries. I know this by experience. When one doesn't receive relief from the repentance, it never was contrite or true repentance.

Out of respect for Jesus Christ and Yahweh, a person *must* be contrite and serious when repenting. It shows quality of self, and is not an act. Yahweh will forgive you over and over again, but out of deep love and respect for Yahweh, you must stop and look at the problem that you are dealing with, and make a solid effort to change that behavior which is causing you harm.

When you do this, other people will take a positive notice in the change. Some of them will let you know that they recognize the change and you'll find that it is refreshing to hear positive reinforcements rather than the negative, feedback. This will also help build your self-esteem.

Pride of self is one problem that occurs when someone is not sincere about repenting. Pride is a sin that derives from deep self-pity and can hurt the relationship with Yahweh. Ego and pride are needed to be purged in order to proceed. The way a person gets rid of pride, is self-examination. Self-examination is accomplished by getting

rid of the initial denial, and listening to what others tell you, and taking a proactive stance on change. Realizing and accepting change is a good step to true repentance.

There are many books that I have read which speak about true repentance. On the resource page at the back pages of this book, you will find a list of names of ministries and libraries that provide good literature which explains in more detail, the act of contrition, and repentance. I ask you to write to them and ask for a list. Many of these resources don't require money and some offer books in exchange for postage stamps.

*"The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and honor is humility." Proverbs 15:33*

## **Humility**

Humility is a word that people seem to misunderstand and misrepresent. Humility is not the act of being a complete sissy or coward, but is the act of stepping back. Stepping back is a term that is used when you are being argued with, or disagreed with, or even when an accident is not actually your fault, (like when someone bumps into you). Humility is a form of letting things go, but not to a point that you just ignore the action. It is when you realize the situation, and think about it and react in a positive way to disarm your opponent.

If you are always acting in a humble manner, then you won't necessarily be getting into altercations with others. Sometimes that isn't true. In those cases, it is usually when someone is just being mean. Even in that case, try to not be discouraged, step out of yourself, and try to understand the circumstances of that other person.

Some people are under the impression especially in prison that Christians hide in the church. Some do, but a real Christian is accepting the gifts of the Spirit which lead them. If a person walks in a Christ-like manner, in a humble way, then that will avoid 90% of the problems that happen not only on the prison yard but on the streets.

Some ask, "What about turning the other cheek?" Yes, that is in scripture. And it is true that when we are persecuted that we should allow it to happen and be happy in spite of it. But it doesn't mean that we are to allow other people to physically or mentally hurt us. If a person invites disrespect towards you, it is best to sensibly speak to them letting them understand that their behavior is not acceptable. The same goes with violence. I believe that we should always be able to protect ourselves in the case of danger, that we must be strong in the mind and of the body to dispel violence from others. It also means to be able to defend yourself in a fight. Defending yourself could mean blocking blows or fighting back to not get hurt. This is not against Yahweh's principles. The key is to not use excessive force. (Psalm 144)

Being assertive towards someone is not necessarily an act of hostility. Aggression is. Being humble or acting in a humble manner includes being assertive with someone when something is wrong. Ignoring the issue can be construed to some folks as, 'to turn the other cheek' but it's not. It's a sign of low self-worth, which I believe is a sin. It is letting the devil control you through fear.

When you practice humility, you practice the strength that you gain from the faith you have in Yahweh, and yourself. It is no longer pride, but self-esteem, being in high regards of your own life. And it also means that you respect others as well, and it will show. So be humble, be contrite, and be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father Yahweh!



"Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." *John 15: 13*

## Charity

Some of us believe that the key to charity is to give to those less fortunate. This is a definition. But isn't exactly what Yahweh had in mind for us. Charity, is also a form of love, in the Greek language the word agape, means simply to love thy brother. To love thy brother means that we must also respect others, and be conscientious of them when we are around them, to understand their likes and dislikes, being interested in them as a person, to be willing to give instead of receive. Brotherly love has no racial or ethnic boundaries. Even if they are from another nationality, culture or country, the universal language of brotherly love is standard...*to love thy neighbor as thyself.*

In doing this we honor ourselves and our creator. We honor our friends and our loved ones, our children. As I have pointed out before, every action causes a separate reaction. This is especially the case in how we treat our fellow person. If we use the virtue of brotherly love or charity, we invoke good feelings, and peace. If we don't act charitable with someone, it causes much stress and harm to not only you, but others as well.

Some of us thrive on negativity, which is caused by a person's own unfulfilled life and their want to bring you down to their level. But even if you notice someone like this, and use charity to counteract that negativity, it causes the other person to realize their folly. This is not the case in some people with a severe mental disease. There is scripture that talk of why certain people are mentally ill, scripture says that it is a direct relation to being habitually sinful, without a conscience and the effects of the power of the devil. Most professionals will argue with this attitude, but Yahweh created all of us perfect, it is because of how we dealt with our circumstances that makes us the individuals we are today. In seeing yourself, and if you have charity, repentance, and faith in your heart, you can change and be a kind charitable sincere person.

"And now abide faith, hope and charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love)."

*I Corinthians chapter 13 verse 13*

"But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you,  
do-good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you,  
and persecute you." *Matthew 15:13*

*Webster describes humility as:*

**Humility** *n.* The quality or condition of being humble. **Humble** *n.* **1.** Marked by meekness or modesty in behavior, attitude, or spirit; not arrogant or prideful. **2.** Showing differential or submissive respect.

**Charity** *n.* **1.** Indulgence or forbearance in judging others. **2.** The theological virtue defined as love directed toward God but also toward oneself and one's neighbors as object of God's love. **3.** Brotherly love.

## Chapter 7 – Prayer

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy father which seeth in secret; and thy father which seeth in secret shall reward thee.” *Matthew 6:6*

### The Philosophy of Prayer

From my experience, prayer philosophy is the belief that prayer is a form of release, meditation, and keeping a personal relationship with Yahweh and Jesus Christ. Prayer is helpful in many ways. It is an outlet to vent, to cry out in frustration, anger, sadness, or joy. Prayer gives thanks to the Lord. Prayer helps to build our faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. People from all walks of life engage in prayer. It is the foundation of worship and supplication with Yahweh. It gives *genuine respect* to our creator, and allows Him to understand our feelings and emotions. Prayer can be used for repentance, asking for more faith, guidance, strength, wisdom, and healing.

There are many scriptures in the Bible that focus on prayer. Jesus Christ prayed to His Father when he was in the wilderness fasting. He cried out to Yahweh at his final words as he was hanging on the cross. Prayer has been the fundamental avenue of communication with Yahweh since the beginning of time. Your spiritual wellness and your foundation in your walk with Christ depend on prayer.

I stopped praying in 1982 after I was sent to California Youth Authority in for being a habitual runaway. I was angry at Yahweh. But I regained my prayer structure in the year 2001 once I was aware that Yahweh had a plan for my life. I started to pray in the shower every day. My wife at the time was a Shintoist from Japan and didn't allow the worship of two gods in the house, and so I prayed in private. I prayed for strength and wisdom. He started answering my prayers. I started to understand the way different cultures live and how the world operated. I drew strength from the Lord, and when I started to fully understand things, I became shocked, awed and afraid, and my prayer life became extremely strong. I was shown even more wisdom and learned much about the ways of the Lord.

Prayer, starts out in little steps, and grows stronger and more successful with time. The more you pray, the more you will get out of prayer. The quality of prayer is very important. Don't pray for miracles all the time asking Yahweh constantly for things, but give thanks to Him, and praise Him. He knows what you need and will fulfill your needs accordingly.

After a while ask for constructive things like; strength, wisdom, patience, love, compassion, etc. It's ok to pray for the same things all of the time, for frequency of prayer is good, but be careful not to be redundant. Be creative when you pray. Be careful when you speak to Him; allow Him to guide you in your prayer. It will take time to develop a good routine, but silent prayer two or three times a day will give you the practice that you need, and will strengthen your faith and your Christian foundation.

I first pray in the morning when I wake up from sleeping, and just lie there, and meditate in prayer. I pray when something challenges my patience, and I need humility and strength. I pray in the shower, and I try to pray on the way to work every day. I pray for the friendly and the unfriendly. I pray for everything making sure that what I pray about is significant. I don't run around telling people everything I pray for.

When I pray for someone I don't inform them of it. I do pray for a person or a family member when it's requested. I give prayer requests at church when I need to. So when you pray, develop your own style of prayer, keep it to yourself and Yahweh will reward you.

"And prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall rise him up,  
and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven." *James 5:15*

### **The Power of Prayer**

The power that you receive from prayer is profound. At first It won't be felt in a special way like a bright light or a huge burst of energy, (although some say that this happens), but once a good and honest prayer routine is established you will start to develop the power of strength of the mind, wisdom, understanding, (some experience vivid dreams) and answers to your most important questions, the power is endless.

Prayer will give you the power to live a good daily life, even during the bitterest struggles. You will have the power to withstand false teachings, and the wiles of the devil and his minions. You will be able to discern from right and wrong. You will never be alone ever again. You will have the power to walk amongst your deepest fears with confidence, and an acute awareness of Yahweh and Jesus Christ.

A favorite all-time Psalms quotes, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." (Psalms 23:4) The power of prayer gives us the peace that we need to operate in a world of constant noise and where communication needs to be squelched to hear ourselves think. The power of prayer is a type of power not derived from money, fame, or worldly possessions. It is a power of self-control and ease of suffering.

There are prayer groups in prison chapels, and even in the churches on the outside. I understand that with our busy schedule it is hard to turn off the television or the computer with all of the chatter of the internet's information age (if you are out in the world). But try it, and if you do, you will be rewarded handsomely.

Praying with another person gives strength and power to your spirituality, because you are doing Yahweh's work by helping the needs of others. Nothing gave me more freedom from self, than when I volunteered to do the laundry for Californian's Helping Alleviate Medical Problems (C.H.A.M.P.) in San Francisco, California, or volunteering to help the homeless with my car or transporting groceries to a person who couldn't get out of the house, or even baking a cake for a family with children.

But it is advised that when you pray, you pray to your creator, Yahweh, and His Son Jesus Christ, who will give you the gift of the Holy Spirit to help your prayer. Try to do this a little each day, and this will help solidify your spiritual wellness.

Prayer is talking to your Holy Father.  
Spend time with Him daily.

## Chapter 8 – Your Spirit

### The Full Armor of God

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness. And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; Praying always with all prayer and supplication-“Ephesians 6:13-18

*‘Therefore take up the full armor of God’* is the Word of the Lord’s way of explaining how He wants you to develop your skills in warfare against the devil and his minions.

*‘Girding your waist with truth’* is having the thoughts and the attitude to do the right things in your life, to be a better person, always doing things for the betterment of others and yourself.

*‘Having the breastplate of righteousness’* is the manner in which you conduct yourself with others, and how Yahweh perceives you in the way you study, pray, and live. In doing this you have a breastplate that is denser than Kevlar when folks will try to dissuade you from the righteousness that you live for.

*‘Shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel’* is to understand what the Gospel means, why Christ died for your sins and how you can become the *‘fisher of men’* that He wants you to be. Understanding the Gospel will help you witness to others why they are saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Understanding the Gospel brings peace to those in need of saving.

To *‘Take the shield of faith’* is one of the most important pieces of armor in your suit. Having faith will keep negative thoughts out of your mind, and will give you great strength against those who will try to convince you that there is no Yahweh, that there is no Christ, and that there is no Holy Spirit. As you have read in this guide, faith is one of the most important steps in the quest for spiritual wellness.

*‘Taking up the helmet of salvation’* is the gift that Yahweh gave you for being His child and his disciple. Salvation saves you from harm and from dying into an eternal life of torment. Salvation is what saved you from your depression, your anger, your sadness. It is a great piece of armor in the fight against evil.

*‘The sword of the Spirit’* is your weapon that can be used to discern all types of false prophets, false religions, and it will alert you when you are in danger of retribution. It can be used to rebuke the ills of a person that is bothering you. It can help aid those who are in need of spiritual guidance. It is your knowledge of the Word of Yahweh, the Bible and scripture that can get you out of tight spots

*‘Praying in all supplication’* keeps you strong in the Lord, and will help you develop a real relationship with your higher power, Jesus Christ. Prayer will help you in all aspects of your life and your walk with Yahweh. It is the key to survival in the world, and is in chapter 7 of this guide for you to revisit.

*'Having on the full armor'* of Yahweh is an essential part of being a Christian and walking in the paths of righteousness. Just like those medieval armies had to protect themselves from the blade, the axe, the hammer and the arrow; we must protect ourselves spiritually also. So put on the full armor of God.

"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." *Romans 8:6*

### **Spirit Building**

Spirit building is your weapon against backsliding. Backsliding is when a Christian falls back into the world and finds that he has lost his respect for Yahweh and His ways. Backsliding can be very detrimental to one's character, the deeper that you fall into your old self, the harder it is to get back on track. So spirit building is a good way to exercise your spiritual wellness and keep yourself tuned up for battles of life.

There are many ways to build up your spirit. One way is to study the Bible. Daily Bible studies will help answer some of your questions, and will be a form of spiritual enlightenment. Studying the Bible each day a little at a time in your activities is very healthy. It will also help strengthen your resolve. Other forms of spirit building are helping others with their needs. Volunteering for activities in your community or in your prison environment is a great way to spirit building.

Teaching others the word of Yahweh and helping them overcome their problems will build your spirit immensely, and if you are doing it the way you were taught by the Word of Yahweh and the Holy Spirit, you will see great changes in the person that you are helping. This is very rewarding to your self-esteem, and humbles you in the midst of Jesus.

Prayer is another form of spirit building. Pray frequently every day, and you will see your spirit rise to great levels. When you are depressed or overwhelmed, you will have great reserves of spiritual energy to pick you back up, when you pray. Life is not as difficult when you are spiritually well. Even if you are in prison, you can come to be happy and content, I know that this is very hard to understand, but believe me, just try these techniques and you will see for yourself.

"Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree (or cross),  
that we, being dead to sins should live unto Righteousness:  
by whose stripe ye were healed." *I Peter 2:24.*

## Chapter 9 – Your Mind

*“As newborn babies, observe the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.” 1 Peter 2:2*

### **Positive Reinforcement**

Positive reinforcement can work in a couple of ways. You can positively reinforce yourself and your attitude, your work ethics, your love life, your respect for others, or you can positively reinforce others when they are doing well or even when they seem to start to change for the better. It is much more productive to positively reinforce others than to constructively criticize them.

I have found that when a person, gives constructive criticism to entice good behavior, the normal reaction is for someone to put up a block, or a defensive stance. Only those who seek true wisdom and understanding will genuinely accept constructive criticism from a friend or a colleague. If you have been working hard at using the tools of the steps in the chapters of this guide, then most likely you are ready to accept change and reinforcement from others.

True wisdom and understanding is related to understanding how to accept criticism, and positive reinforcement. Some folks have a difficult time coping with even the most loving and kind compliments and positive reinforcement. It's from lack of self-worth and good self-esteem. But through constant study of the word, practice in your peer environment and change for the good is the best way to make it work.

Even Jesus Christ and Yahweh will positively reinforce your good nature and your understanding for others. He will not do this with bright lights and fanfare, but He will reward you with wisdom, understanding, good health, and a good mental outlook. People will notice this change in your lifestyle. People notice a lot more than we may think that as. They are also are aware of their surroundings. In due time, you will begin to positively reinforce your own good habits, and forget the bad ones, leading you to a life of spiritual wellness.

*“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15*

### **Dedication to Self**

Being dedicated to self is as simple as doing little things that make you content and happily fulfilled. Even in a prison environment this can be achieved. Reading books that bring you knowledge and pleasure is one way, listening to good music, or watching something on the television is also. Even though we are Christians we can observe TV or read books or listen to music. We must enjoy those things without lusting after the flesh, or thinking evil thoughts or wishing we were doing evil deeds. Choice of activities is what will make the activity more pleasurable.

Dedication to self is writing down goals on the things that you wish to accomplish in the next week, or year, or five years. You can go to school, learn a language, something that will help you and your outlook on life. Dedicate your life to something constructive and valuable, something that will enrich your wellbeing.

Dedicate a part of your life to finding lost loved ones, or family members who you haven't corresponded with in a while. People that you need to make amends with. File a writ on a new trial if you believe that you have a chance to improve your current situation. Do research on it; find out all that you can. Dedicate this to yourself.

Dedicate things to yourself that are going to allow you to make a change for the better. You should want to do this to glorify Yahweh and to simplify your life. This is the definition of dedication. Dedication is also a devotion to self, and true dedication.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is good, and acceptable, and the perfect will of God." *Romans 12:2*

## **Education**

Some people say that you don't need a good education to survive in this world. This is not true. A good education helps you understand the things that others around you understand, and helps to give you an edge. It crushes ignorance, and saves you from many unnecessary trials and tribulations. If you don't have some type of education, people will prey upon you mercilessly, and manipulate you when you least expect it.

Learning psychology will help you understand the psyche, teaching you lessons on human behavior. Learning history will give you a good view of the past, the things which we as human beings have learned, the wars that have been fought and the disciplines which work and those which don't.

Learning music is part of learning history, and can open your mind to a new world of comprehension and understanding about diverse culture. Learning how to cook or be a chef can help diversify your understanding of food, taste, and health.

Learning mathematics, technology, computers and science will give your career an edge, especially in the high technological world of today. Even if you are in prison, most yards offer educational programs which are most times free of charge.

Learning about the Bible, religion, and faith are good tools for overcoming a lot of things which dissuade us from reaching our true potential. There are plenty of Bible schools which offer great studies, and you can earn a degree in theology and become a minister of your faith.

And finally, education will bring light into the darkness, wisdom to the unwise, and strength to the weak. Experience is also a great educational tool. But being street smart is only a part of the educational equation. Being street smart, having a good education, and having a good foundation in your belief and your study with Jesus Christ and Yahweh will make you a very wise person. One last thing, all education is not proactive. Learning how to kill and rob, and hurt others is not a good source of education. Learn to be educated with the understanding of the way of spiritual wellness.

## Chapter 10 – Your Body

“What? Know ye not your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which have God, and are ye not your own!” *I Corinthians 6:19 2:15*

### Spiritual Vows

Spiritual vows are completed by those who are dedicated to Yahweh to strengthen their spiritual wellbeing and their relationship with Him. One spiritual vow that can be taken is to take the vow of a Nazarite. A Nazarite vow is the dedication of a person's entire life to the glory of Yahweh. A Nazarite abstains from alcohol, vinegar, grapes and anything that is made with grapes, sexual lasciviousness, and retains a life of priestly purity.

A Nazarite's hair is to be unshaved until the vow is over. When the vow is completed the hair is shaved off, and burned. This vow can be taken for life or just temporarily. A man or a woman can take this vow. The Nazarites who are described in the Bible were, Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. (Numbers 6; I Samuel 1:10; Amos 2:10; Luke 1:15)

There are other vows that can be accomplished as a Christian believer. You can make up your own vow. It could be a vow of celibacy, a vow of education, a prayer vow. Search out your heart on the things that you want to dedicate to Yahweh and Jesus Christ and make that vow. It will strengthen your spirit and solidify your relationship with Yahweh.

### Fasting

Fasting is another way to dedicate your spirit to Yahweh. Fasting is an expression that is done in prayer and supplication in private. Never display your fast with an unhappy face, or brag about your fast with anyone. Fasting is supposed to be a personal prayer and activity only to be known by yourself and Yahweh.

Fasting is the act of giving up the pleasures of life to accomplish a prayer request that is important to you or a request of special circumstance that you need Yahweh to hear. Jesus Christ fasted for 40 days in the wilderness on a break from His ministry. (Matthew 4:2) He had His reasons for fasting, but I am sure it was for His Father to give Him strength to handle the future which was destined for Him. Some people fast for one day, or one week. Care should be taken that you don't fast for so long that it will do you harm. Trust in the Lord while you fast and He will be there with you.

A fast also involves much study and prayer time. It is a quiet time that is dedicated to Yahweh and is the sacrifice of carnal self, which is the important part of the fast. If you fast in the privacy of your cell, home, or office, Yahweh will reward you greatly. (Acts 13:13)

Some people never fast. It is not mandatory to fast as a Christian, and is subject to the person that is involved in the fast. So don't feel pressured to fast. If someone brags that they fasted, don't think that you have to do the same. If that person really knew the rules of fasting, you would have never known that that person fasted.



"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." *Romans 1:21*

### **Exercise and Fresh Air**

Exercise is the final step to spiritual wellness. Now that you have completed all of these steps and have practiced it to your good accomplishment, it's time to exercise. Your body is the temple of the Lord. It is your duty to keep it healthy and strong against sickness and disease. Exercise is a good way to balance the mind and the body together, and can help strengthen your physic when you need your strength in special circumstances like when you need to lift a heavy object or when you need to defend yourself against danger.

I met a man named Maku on the yard at prison and started to make friends with him. He grew strong in his faith in Yahweh and we learned much understanding from each other's experiences. Our friendship grew into a mutual trust and I asked him if he could help train my body, He showed me many different ways to exercise. One Saturday I decided to start working out with him after 6 years of being idle and just laying around doing nothing with my body.

Maku started out doing an exercise called *'push-ups'*. We did 24 sets of 6 push-ups followed by standing and leg lifts. After about 23 of these sets, I was sweating and ready to pass out, but I felt great, my body seemed to take the punishment and I got it done. Then we did about 30 *'jumping jacks'*, something that the military does in their morning routine. You do this by jumping up and down spreading your arms and your legs for 30 repositions.

We *'ran in place'* for 3 minutes straight, non-stop to help strengthen our stamina. Then we worked out our back-arms by doing *'backwards pushups'* off of a step. After that we extended our arms on a rail and pushed off the rail on three different inclines, ten repositions at time. Finally Maku asked me to complete a *'hand-stand'* and perform *'hand-stand push-ups'* with my back braced against the wall, (I could not even try to complete this task).

I was sore from head to toe for about a week after that day. But I went and met him out on the yard and we worked out again. It was just as hard as the last time we exercised. After about two weeks of working out every day, my body started to look better and feel better; I grew stronger even in such a short amount of time.

Another way of exercising and training your body is to learn a martial art-form, like Taikwan Do, or stretching. This is a great exercise. It will teach you balance, and give you courage. When the time is necessary, you will use this great discipline when you are faced with danger and need to rely on yourself for defense. Yahweh will protect you when you need Him, but it helps a great deal, if you have a trained body to help you.

There are many ways other than this to exercise. Some people dance, wrestle, run, jog, lift weights, perform yoga, and much more. You can even ride a bicycle when you are able to get released. But all exercise should be performed in moderation, not to injure your body, or stress yourself out.

Exercise and fresh air are part of living a good life, and it helps you appreciate your life and your existence. You will notice the change in your confidence and you spiritual wellness. Be sure to eat lots of protein rich food to feed your body and your mind. If you are in prison, eat a lot of refried beans, rice, nuts, and granola. If you are able to order items from a food package, buy amino acid supplements, and protein powder, this will help improve your function.

## **In Conclusion**

I have spent 47 years living my life and trying to understand the teachings in this guide, in the month of July on my 47<sup>th</sup> birthday I was ready to write down all that I knew. You have read all of my thoughts and experiences. I have used every technique in this guide to help me discover that in my life, (even though I am serving 15 year-to-life prison sentence), that I can be at peace with myself, and with my circumstances.

Through Yahweh's love and wisdom, I learned the power of good understanding of Yahweh, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Now that I have shared this with you all, I pray that you to will find the time to use all of these tools to work on your own destiny. I guarantee that if you follow these steps with real sincerity and hard work, you will finally receive the spiritual wellness that you are seeking.

I Bid Much Love and Great Respect to You All.

Dennis 'Kenika' Sierra

*Author*

*('Kenika' is the Hawaiian pronunciation of the English word Dennis given to me by a woman named Gerri from Pearl City Hawaii)*

## Inspiration

Yahweh, Jesus Christ, and the Gift of the Holy Spirit - *Which guides me.*

Sue Douglas - *Through it all, you were there for me through thick and thin.*

The Kairos Team - *For the dedication to the prisoners here and their love and good cookies.*

And Lastly *all those who anonymously let me typeset this out after my work was done. **Thank You.***

## Dedication

Andrew - *California*

Ayako - *Tochigi Japan*

Rose - *California*

Gerri - *Pearl City, Hawaii*

On hearing these true teachings  
the hearts of those who are receptive  
Become serene, like a lake,  
deep, clear, and still.

*Dhammapad Verse 82*

## Suggested Literature

**1599 Geneva Bible**

**1611 King James Bible**

**The Rise and Development of  
Western Civilization**

– Stripp, Hollister, and Dirrim

**The Kingdom of the Cults**

– Walter Martin

**The Cell's Design**

– Fazale Rann

**We're All Doing Time** – Bo Lozoff

**What is What** – Dave Eggers

**Countdown to Armageddon**

– Hal Lindsey

**The Origin of the Bible** – FF. Bruce

**I Have a Dream** – Coretta Scott King

**Alcatraz - Death Row – and Back**

The Story of an East L.A. Outlaw

Author: Ernest Lopez

## Resources

**The Jesus People Research Library** (“We Expose Cults!”)

4338 Third Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95817

(Newsletter; Literature; Free Booklist)

**Mount Zion – Chapel Library**

2603 West Wright Street, Pensacola, FL 32505

(Bible Tracts; Bibles; Dictionaries; Concordances and more)

**Aggressive Christianity**

HC60, Box 11, Fence Lake, NM 87315

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**ECS Prison Ministries of Northern California**

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