

The WAY to GOD

From THREE

Deadly Problems

Through THREE

Saving Solutions

Into the PRESENCE of

The Triune God

**Man's Fourfold Predicament Revealed by God's Convicting
Diagnosis in the light of his Matchless Love and Amazing Grace**
"Why would you die? I take no pleasure in the death of a sinner!"
(Ezek. 18:31-32; 33:16)

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- I. The Plight of Man : You have THREE Deadly Problems of Sin**
II. The Provision of God: I have THREE Saving Solutions in Christ
III. The Pledge of Grace : Call on Him for ALL THREE and you will be saved
IV. The Prayer of Life : Have MERCY on me, a THREEFOLD Sinner!
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INTRODUCTION: ADVANCE WARNING

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I. THE INDISPENSABLE NEED FOR GOD'S ILLUMINING GRACE

1. Looking in the mirror, you may not see the Deadliness of your THREE PROBLEMS, as God's Word explains them to you. Why would you not? There are two main reasons for this. The Abuse of God's "Common Grace" and the Necessity of God's "Special Grace!"
2. Providentially, God's "Common Grace" tempers the magnitude of the Three Problems, restrains them from breaking out to the full, and plentifully enriches life through all types of people, circumstances, events, opportunities, enjoyments, skills, achievements, etc. Ironically, God's abundant goodness that is expressed in all this is designed to lead you to repentance (Rom. 2:4). But man's blind and impenitent heart uses it as a cover to minimize the seriousness of its sinful condition, to question the reality of the wrath of God, and to laugh off the idea of an impending judgment (Rom. 2:5-6).
3. Only God's "Special Grace" can give you the sobering and much-needed 20/20 vision (Acts 16:4) when through the Holy Spirit He opens your eyes (John 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:12), and the stark reality and enormous impact of Human Depravity dawns on you (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit is also the only one who convicts sinners of the Judgment as the Just Penalty of the Threefold Transgression of the Law of God and as the inevitable outflow of his Holiness (John 16:8).

II. THE HEARTFELT HUNGER FOR GOD'S AMAZING MERCY

1. But once convicted of the guilt (John 16:8, 10) and shame (Rom. 6:21) of the criminal wickedness of your THREE problems, you will loathe yourself for your brazen mutiny before God that produced such intense world-wide suffering and such immense global destruction (Ezek. 20:43; 36:31).
 2. Recognizing that the Judgment of God upon your THREEFOLD wickedness could not be more certain (Heb. 9:27), and is more than deserved (Ezra 9:13), you will increasingly wonder whether there can be a Way to Escape, especially in the light of the unfathomable horror of the wrath of God on the Cross of Christ. The Cross accentuates the depth of human depravity and the enormity of Divine wrath. It displays the inevitability of the Coming Judgment for all who hold on to their Three Problems. But it also opens an Escape by producing the Three Solutions of God's Matchless Love and Amazing Grace!
 3. Aware of all these facts, you will recognize that only God can turn you to God to obtain his mercy as your only escape. So, drawn by the reality of the Grace of God, you will earnestly call on the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as the only Way (John 14:6) to obtain the THREE Solutions needed for salvation (Ezek. 36:37; Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13). Remember, salvation is not "for the earning," in whole or in part, nor "for the taking," in any way, shape or form, but "for the asking" in all humility ... only!
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**NOW ON TO GOD'S DIAGNOSIS AND THE MESSAGE OF HIS
MATCHLESS LOVE AND AMAZING GRACE!**

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I. The Plight of Man

God's Convicting Diagnosis: You Have THREE Problems of Sin

1. You Have a REBELLIOUS HEART

"Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and is desperately wicked. Who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9).

According to the Psalmist, the Rebel Heart resembles a Cobra

"The wicked are estranged from the womb. They have venom like a Serpent, like a deaf cobra that stops up its ear" (Ps. 58:3-4)

I Ask You:

Have you ever broken God's Law by your failure or refusal to fear Him and love Him for who He IS (Commandment 1), for what He SAYS (C2), for what He DOES (C3) and to spend QUALITY time with him in his Word and in Prayer (C4)

This shows Problem #1: Your Rebel Heart!

2. You Have a FILTHY PAST

"We are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousness is as filthy rags" (Is. 64:6). "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments" (Zech. 3:3).

According to Paul, the Filthy Past resembles Excrement

"I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but excrement that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

I Ask You:

Have you ever broken God's Law by your failure or refusal to love your neighbor in your disobedience to AUTHORITIES (Commandment 5), in your AVERSION to others (C6), in sexual IMPURITY (C7), in STEALING (C8) or in telling a LIE (C9)?

This shows Problem #2: Your Filthy Past!

3. You Have a DESTRUCTIVE LIFE

"There is no one who does good. Not one! Their throat is an open grave. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their paths" (Rom. 3:12-16).

According to James, the Destructive Life resembles Poison

"The tongue is a world of iniquity. It defiles the entire body, and is set on fire by hell. It is a restless evil and full of deadly poison" (Jam. 3:6-8).

I Ask You:

Have you ever broken God's Law by your envy or your failure to be content and to love God and the neighbor from your heart without without any reservation (Commandment 10)?

This shows Problem #3: Your Destructive Life!

THE SOBERING REALITY OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

1. Because of the flagrant persistence of the Three Problems (Gen. 6:5), God was sorry that he made man, and proceeded to drown all of early mankind in the Flood (Gen. 7:23). Only ONE MAN escaped with his family. Were it not for God's astounding grace, he would not have made it either (Gen. 6:8).

2. Because of its ongoing failure to deal with the Three Problems (Ezek. 18:31), God sent Israel into the Exile. Only a MEAGER REMNANT escaped (Rom. 11:5). Were it not for God's electing grace, none would have been exempt (Is. 1:9).

3. Because of the stubborn refusal to embrace the Three Solutions in our Lord Jesus Christ, much of mankind will face eternal damnation. Were it not for Him shouldering God's wrath on behalf of sinners, EVERYONE would stand condemned in the Judgment (Rom. 3:5-8; 2 Thess. 1:6, 8-9).

4. The three Biblical Judgments of the Flood, the Exile, but above all Eternal Damnation, which is the conscious and unending punishment upon the rebellious, guilty and polluted sinner (Mt. 25:46; Rev. 14:9-11), indicate the DEPTH of the Threefold Depravity of Man, and the ENORMITY of the Fully Deserved Wrath of a thrice Holy God.

II. The Provision of God

A. In his Love God the Father *PROCLAIMS* the Grace of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31ff) and *PROMISES* its Three Solutions (Ezek. 36:25-27)

1. “I promise you a HEART TRANSPLANT”

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26)

Tell Yourself:

Without a New Heart I cannot see or enter the Kingdom (John 3:3,5)

2. “I promise you a CLEANSING BATH”

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; and I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols” (Ezek. 36:25)

Tell Yourself:

Without a New Righteousness I have no peace with God (Rom. 5:1)

3. “I promise you a POTENT ANTIDOTE”

“Moreover, I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ezek. 36:27)

Tell Yourself:

Without a new Holiness I have no fellowship with God (Heb. 12:14)

B. In his Love God the Son *PERSONIFIES* the Grace of the New Covenant (Is. 42:6) and *PRODUCES* through His Crucifixion and Resurrection the Three Solutions that the Father Promises.

1. In his Crucifixion He Exterminates the Three Problems

a. He *ERADICATES* The Rebellious Cobra Heart. “We died to sin. Our old self was crucified with Christ” (Rom. 6:2, 6); “I have been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20).

b. He *PURGES* the Filthy Excrement Past. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7); “He is our propitiation through faith in his blood (Rom. 3:25); “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14).

c. He *ELIMINATES* the Destructive Toxic Life. “By his will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all” (Heb. 10:10).

2. Through His Resurrection He Produces the Three Solutions

a. He *SUPPLIES* the New Heart – His Own. “We are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11); “Though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed” (Rom. 6:11); “For I delight in the law of God in the inner man” (Rom. 7:22).

b. He *CONFERS* the New Righteousness – His Own. “You are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God and righteousness” (1 Cor. 1:30); “He made Him to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (1 Cor. 5:21).

c. He *DISPENSES* the New Holiness – His Own. “You are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and sanctification” (1 Cor. 1:30); “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10).

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C. In his Love God the Holy Spirit *PERSONALIZES* the Grace of the New Covenant (Is. 59:21) and PROVIDES the Three Solutions that the Father Promises and the Son Produces.

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1. He IMPLANTS the Heart of Jesus in Rebirth through the Preached Word

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5); “You have been born again through the living and enduring Word of God. This is the Word that was preached to you” (1 Pet. 1:23, 25).

When the Spirit implants the New Heart:

- a. It acknowledges the guilt and shame of the three problems of sin in heartfelt repentance and wants to get rid of these three barriers to the fellowship with God (Ezek. 18:31-32)
- b. It embraces the Lord Jesus for the three solutions of grace in heartfelt faith and wants to obtain them to return to the communion and service of God (1 Thess. 1:9).

2. He SEALS the Imputed Righteousness of Jesus by his Indwelling Presence

“Repent unto the forgiveness of sin and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38); “After listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:13-14).

Because the Holy Spirit seals the New Righteousness:

- a. He guarantees that it never can or will be withdrawn again (Rom. 8:30, 33)
- b. This cannot possibly produce licentious living because the new heart, bent on seeking holiness (Rom. 6:1-12), has no appetite for sin (1 John 3:9), and the indwelling Spirit, bent on implementing holiness (Rom. 8:1ff) writes the Law of God by means of their minds (Rom. 12: 2b; Heb. 8:10a) on the regenerate heart of all believers (Heb. 8:10b) to produce a fully transformed life (Rom. 12:2:a).

3. He IMPLEMENTS the Practical Holiness of Jesus through the Church

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death that the righteous requirement of the Law would be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:2, 4); “Let us consider how to stimulate each other to love and good deeds, and do not forsake your assembling together, as is the habit of some, but exhort each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:24-25).

When the Holy Spirit implements the New Holiness, he utilizes the Church to instill daily Repentance and Faith, leading to daily Forgiveness, and crowned with daily Holiness (Acts 26:18) in Obedience to the Law of God (Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Heb. 8:10) by means of the Fourfold Means of Grace (Acts 2:42)

- a. The Teaching of the Apostles so as to Absorb the Word of God (John 8:31; 2 Tim. 3:16)
- b. The Fellowship of the Believers to Share the Apostolic Teaching until every member of the Body of Christ is saturated with it (Mal. 3:16).
- c. The Supper of the Lord as the New Covenant personified to Live out the Apostolic Teaching in ever-ongoing repentance and faith, forgiveness and holiness (1 Cor. 11:25).
- d. The Persistence in Prayer to sanctify the Name of God to advance the Kingdom of God and to obey the Will of God (Mt. 6:9-10; Lk 18:1-8)!

III. The Pledge of Grace

1. The Backdrop of the Pledge

a. Man is Responsible to Clean up his own Mess, but is Incapable of doing so!

- (1) “Make yourself a new heart. Get rid of all your past transgression, and produce a new spirit of holiness” (Ezek.18:31)!
- (2) But “I cannot give myself a heart transplant! I need a Donor” (Rom. 6:6, 11). “I cannot blot out my sinful past! I need a Substitute” (2 Cor. 5:21). “I cannot produce holiness! I need a Fountain” (John 15:5). And to top it all off, “I cannot even come to Christ unless the Father who sent him draws me” (John 6:44, 65; Acts 16:14) through the Holy Spirit (John 3:5)

b. Man is Unwilling to clean up his Mess, and must be convicted of this Predicament!

- (1) “You are also unwilling to come to me in order to have life” (John 5:40). Only “the Holy Spirit can open your eyes and convict you of sin, of righteousness, and of Judgment” (John 14:8)!
- (2) So “what must I do to be saved” (Acts 16:30)? “I *must* return to God. But I recognize that I *will not* do so as long as I have a rebel heart; that I *cannot* do so as long as I have a filthy past; and that I *may not* do so as long as I have a destructive life. What, then, must I do” (Acts 2:37)?

2. The Beauty of the Pledge

a. Call on the Name of the Lord: “God, be merciful to me, a TRIPLE sinner” (Lk. 18:13; Acts 2:21)

- (1) Ask Jesus in Heartfelt Repentance to Exterminate your Three Problems on the Cross, “Repent unto the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:21, 38)
- (2) Ask Jesus in Heartfelt Faith to Grace you with his Three Solutions through his Resurrection: “To whom else can I go (John 6:68) to turn from darkness to light, to receive forgiveness of sin and an inheritance among those who are sanctified through faith in you?” (Acts 16:31; 26:18).

b. And you will be saved: “Be assured that when you ask in repentance and faith God *will* answer” (Mt. 7:78), and “*will* grant you forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2: 38; 16:31).

- (1) You will be a “Hopeful Convert,” until you become a “Devoted” and an “Assured Convert,” desiring to show the fruit associated with the gift of the Spirit. “Every good tree bears good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. You will know a tree by its fruit” (Mt. 7:17, 20; see also Mt. 3:8; Acts 26:18, 20).
- (2) You will be a “Devoted Convert,” when you embrace the Church as the Family of God, the Body of Christ and the Workshop of the Holy Spirit, and with it dedicate yourself to the teaching of God’s Word, to the fellowship of believers, to the Supper of the Lord, and to a life of Prayer (Acts 2:42).
- (3) You will be an “Assured Convert,” when you begin to show fruit. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit. When you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you will ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples” (John 15:5, 7, 8; see also Acts 2:42; 1 John 3:19-23).
- (4) You will be a “Productive Convert,” when (a) you take the Grand Command to heart “to make and train disciples” (Mt. 28:19-20; also 1 Chr. 16:23; Lk. 24:46-47; Acts 26:18; and (b) are certified in daily evangelism (Mt. 28:19; Acts 11:19-20), daily speaking of the truth in love (Eph. 4:15) and daily service (Gal. 5:13) by means of Godly teaching and hands-on experience.
- (5) You will be an “Unstoppable Convert,” when in the course of your training as a disciple of Christ (Mt. 28:20) you have identified your Gift, whether (a) in Evangelism (Mt. 4:19), (b) in Speaking God’s Word (1 Pet. 4:11a) or (c) in Serving (1 Pet. 4: 11b).

3. The Embrace of the Pledge

a. The Encouragement

- (1) God does not delight in the death of the sinner, “As I live, declares the Lord God, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die? Turn and live” (Ezek. 18:30b-32; 33:11). “Today is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2)!
- (2) Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and earnestly invites them to come to him for all three solutions to their three problems of sin, “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28).

b. The Obligation

- (1) God’s Command is for all of mankind to repent, “Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).
- (2) God’s Anger comes upon all who refuse to obey: “A king gave a feast for his son, and sent out his servants to invite men to it. But they paid no attention. Some seized his servants, treated them shamefully and killed them. The King was angry, sent his troops and destroyed them” (Mt. 22:2-7).

4. The Impact of the Pledge

a. Two Opening Questions

- (1) Is God tugging at your heart strings? Are you alarmed and convicted about your Three Problems (John 16:8)? And is your urgent question, “What must I do” (Acts 2:37)?
- (2) Does the marvel of God’s Three Solutions grip you (Eph. 2:4-10)? Do you here and now desire to get rid of your Three Problems in repentance, and embrace Jesus in faith for his Three Solutions (Acts 2:37)?

b. Two Concluding Questions

- (1) Do you recognize that in desiring this you hunger for both forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38)? Do you understand that you can count on the Holy Spirit to train you in the Church to observe whatever God commands you (Mt. 28:20)? So what prevents you from going on your knees and what keeps you from turning to God by calling on Jesus in repentance and faith for the forgiveness of our sins and for holiness of life (Acts 2:21; 26:18)?
- (2) If there is any hesitation, do you understand that God does not delight in the death of a sinner (Ezek.18:32), that it is offensive to God to remain a rebel, and that the Day of Salvation is now (2 Cor. 6:2)? Why, then, would you wait to seek the Lord (Is. 55:6-7), especially when you recognize that your life is a mist, here today and gone tomorrow (Jam. 4:14)?

IV. The Prayer of Life

1. Your Fourfold Prayer

- a. Father, I thank you that the Holy Spirit has convicted me of my THREE problems and is pointing me to Jesus for the THREE solutions (John 16:8-10).
- b. Lord Jesus, I repent and believe. Have mercy on me a TRIPLE sinner. Exterminate my cobra heart, my excrement past and my toxic life on the Cross, give me your heart, your righteousness, and your holiness through your Resurrection, and make me your Disciple (Acts 2:21).
- c. Holy Spirit, train me as a Disciple of Christ through the Church to observe whatever you command me, and as an essential part of this use me to turn others into disciples as well (Mt. 28:19-20).
- d. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thank you for adopting me into your family and giving me the privilege to worship you in the splendor of holiness (Ps. 96:9).

2. The Fourfold Outcome

- a. You call on the Triune God in this manner and you will enter into fellowship with him (Rom. 10:13).
- b. He will exult over you with joy, adopt you in his family and assure you with his love (Zeph. 3:17).
- c. He will train and equip you for ministry through the Church as the Residence of the Father, the Body of Christ and the Workshop of the Holy Spirit.
- d. You will love him with joy inexpressible and full of glory (1 Pet. 1:8) and worship him in the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26) and the splendor of holiness (Ps.96:9).

3. A Fourfold Exhortation

- a. Seek both God and the holiness of his Law daily in all humility (Zeph. 2:3) so that you, filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:32; Eph. 5:18) will enjoy his fellowship, sense his Presence (Phil. 4:6) and experience the smile of God's approval.
- b. Seek to read the Scriptures and to pray daily until you are a Bible-holic and a Prayer-holic and the failure to be in the Word and Prayer (John 15:7; 1 Tim. 4:4) causes you extreme pain.
- c. Seek to Evangelize daily (Mt. 28:19), to Speak the Word daily in Teaching (Eph. 4:15) and Exhortation, and to Serve daily (Gal. 5:13) in Sharing (Eph. 4:28), Caring (Rom. 16:2) and Showing Mercy (Mt. 5:7).
- d. Seek to determine your gift in the area of Evangelism, Speaking the Word or Serving, and so become "unstoppable" through your Giftedness either in hot pursuit of the Grand Command "to make" or "train disciples" (Mt. 28:19-20), or in tirelessly providing the logistics to facilitate both (Acts 6:1ff)

CONCLUSION: A FINAL REMINDER

**As a Christian you are by definition a Disciple (Acts 6:7).
Disciples are “learners,” “pupils,” “students,” who are “called” to be “sent”
(Mk. 3:14; Lk. 6:43; John 20:21).
Your Calling is Radical and your Mission is All-embractive**

I. YOUR RADICAL CALLING

1. You are (a) to follow Jesus (Mt. 4:19; Mk. 1:16-20), whatever the cost (Lk. 9:21), (b) to adhere to him, regardless of the refusal of others (John 6:68), (c) to absorb his teaching without reservation (John 8:31; Acts 2:42), (d) to surrender to it in total obedience (Mt. 28:20; John 11:16; Rom. 1:5; 16:26), and (e) in the process to renounce everyone and everything else who stands in the way (Lk. 14:26, 33).
2. Since every genuine Disciple possesses Jesus’ Heart of in Regeneration (Rom. 6:6-11) and with it a New VISION for the Kingdom to advance (2 Cor. 5:16), Jesus’ Righteousness in Justification (2 Cor. 5:21), and with it a New PASSION for the Kingdom to expand (Is. 6:8), and Jesus’ Holiness in Sanctification (Heb. 10:10), and with it a New MISSION for the Kingdom to forge ahead (Mt. 28:19-20).
3. With this the Prayer for Laborers, urged by Jesus (Mt. 9: 38), has been heard. Every New Christian is simultaneously a New Laborer BY DEFINITION! In principle therefore the Laborers are ABUNDANT in number. But in practice they MUST be trained to be operational and effective!

II. YOUR ALL-EMBRACIVE MISSION

1. You are “sent” (a) to “get your feet wet” as an apprentice in hands-on ministry (Lk. 9:1ff, 23ff; 10:1ff), (b) to mirror Jesus fully (Lk. 6:40; 9:23-24; 1 Cor. 11:1), (c) to embrace the implication of “dying” to be fruitful (John 12:24; 21:18-19; Phil. 3:10), (d) to experience the direst consequences upon your faithfulness (John 15:18), and (e) to multiply in the process (Acts 6:7; 1 Thess. 1:8).
2. You will progress from a Devoted Disciple in pursuit of the Four Means of Grace, the Word, Fellowship, the Lord’s Supper and Prayer (Acts 2:42) to an Assured Disciple perfecting Holiness of Life in the fear of the Lord (John 15:1ff; 2 Cor. 7:1) and from a Productive Disciple in obedience to the Grand Command (Mt. 28:19-20; 1 Thess. 1:6-8) to an Unstoppable Disciple in the exercise of your spiritual giftedness in making Disciples (through evangelizing), training Disciples (through teaching or exhorting), or supplying the logistics for all the ministries of the Church in serving (through sharing, caring or showing of mercy) (See Mt. 4:19; Rom. 12:3-8; and 1 Pet. 4:10-11).
3. With this your Training through the Church, mandated by the apostle Paul (2 Tim. 2:2), becomes unavoidable. It consists of Teaching from a Manual, Modeling in the Field, Observing in the Field, Refining, and Certifying. As a Genuine Disciple you eagerly embrace this Training until you are Certified in Evangelism, Speaking the Word and Serving, and in due time see your Unstoppable Giftedness emerge in one of these three Areas to the Glory of God and the advance of His Kingdom!

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