

THINKING BIBLICALLY  
about the  
Life Model

Michael Sullivant

*Thinking Biblically About The Life Model* by Michael Sullivant

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# Why This Booklet?

Asking and grasping the simple “why” of something is normally a great place to start for any undertaking. Here are several outstanding reasons, among others, why I want to put my thoughts into a booklet like this.

- My life (and that of my wife) has been deeply and unalterably impacted for good through our exposure to and experience with The Life Model and the leaders associated with it. Our friends and family have noticed our growth—especially in trust and joy of God. Let the redeemed of the Lord, say so!
- The lives of the people we pastor are also being transformed by a greater influx of joy in Christ as we have begun to gently and regularly testify to and embed the ways of The Life Model into the church community we planted in 2014.
- Because I am a very curious person—and due to my background as a practical theologian, author, pastor, and Bible teacher—I am always energized to equip people to “think biblically” about the teachings and practices of ministries and movements that claim to represent the ways of God with His creation and His children.
- As such, I am eager to share with any wondering hearts and minds why I believe that The Life Model has been formulated out of well-grounded, well-rounded, well-bounded biblical theology and thought.
- Through my many years of interacting with sincere believers, I have seen so many struggle with why they have not experienced more lasting personal transformation and growth into the likeness of Jesus Christ. I believe The Life Model holds out vital and practical pieces of hidden (and forgotten) wisdom that has been sorely missing from our traditional approaches to sanctification.
- Finally, I have witnessed—over and over again—church communities (with both solid doctrines and stated practices) all over the world which have suffered devastating

setbacks and breakdowns when under stress due to a lack of maturity in leadership and within the general church culture. The Life Model provides revolutionary insights into why this is so. It also offers us practical pathways that can inspire a much greater degree of personal and social maturity and, therefore, sustainability within our communities of faith and even beyond into our cultures at large.

I pray that the testimonies and Scriptures I share in this booklet will help many dear people to be more eager to learn about The Life Model. May their lives, relationships, and faith be adorned with the transforming joy and peace of Jesus Christ that The Life Model warmly invites us all to more richly experience.

# Is The Life Model Biblical?

As a passionate Bible student and teacher, of course, I have reflected much on this question over the years since we were first exposed to The Life Model. I am aware that many dedicated Bible-loving and believing people have and will ask the same question. This little booklet was birthed out of this question, and I have been eager to share my meditations with like-hearted people.

Dr. Wilder is a neurotheologian. That is, he is highly educated as both a scientist and a theologian. In his writings, he often intersperses biblical language with the terms coming from his scientific research and clinical background. In this way, he shows his understanding of how people find healing from traumas and deep transformation through the Spirit of God. This form of communication can seem quite foreign to Bible readers and Bible preachers.

My chosen method to address this question is simply to hold forth some key Scripture passages I believe are relevant to The Life Model, say a bit about each one from my personal study and musings, and let other Bible-lovers decide if they agree. I will draw a conclusion and then answer some frequently asked questions regarding The Life Model. For the most part, I hope the passages will speak for themselves and create some breathing room for believers from various theological schools of thought to incorporate many of the simply profound practices of The Life Model into their approaches to sanctification, prayer, and healing.

PART ONE

# Scriptures

## Isaiah 61:1-3

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor;  
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
to grant to those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;  
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.*

This is the very passage Jesus read from at the inauguration of His public ministry that speaks to the essence of His mission as Messiah. (See Luke 4:18-19.) It is well known as a key Scripture that refers to central purposes for which the Father sent Jesus Christ to be among us as Immanuel (God with us) and to rescue us from our plight. It seems significant to me that the first aspect of Christ bringing good news to the poor is *“to heal the brokenhearted,”* and one main outcome of His mission is that the people of God would have joy that naturally overflows in robust praise to His.

My observation as a pastor is that all of us have had our hearts broken at various times, in various ways, and to various degrees. I also see many sincere believers strive to forge ahead in life to obey God and His word without receiving the tender healing of Christ's presence and ministry for their broken hearts. I often witness manifestations of this ongoing brokenness in both believing young people and adults. Indeed, our hearts are broken by our own sins and failures and their effect on our souls, our bodies, and our relationships. But, if we acknowledge that sins do damage to relationships, then our hearts have also been broken by the sins of commission and omission that others have done against us. This aspect of our human experience

must also be addressed by the good news of Jesus. Added to this, we have the traumatic events of human life, due to the presence of sin and Satan in the world at large, that also break the hearts of human beings.

The church world is generally well-equipped to lead people to repent and receive direct forgiveness from God through Jesus Christ for their sins . . . to assure them that they have been accepted by God through their faith in Jesus. This is one remarkable effect that the first reformation had upon the church and across the world, which began about five hundred years ago in Europe. Great freedom comes with this experience. Thank God. Where would we be without knowing the forgiveness of our sins? It's wonderfully overwhelming! This grace brings needed cleansing to our consciences of much guilt and shame for our past failures.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, typically, once this takes place in a person's life, church leaders focus energetically on challenging their followers to learn and believe correct Bible doctrines and then motivate and mobilize them for the myriad tasks associated with spreading this message of forgiveness of sins to others near and far. Sadly, however, many church leaders do not impart the ministry skills necessary to bring healing and resolution through Christ to human hearts that have been broken by the pains of injustice and the traumas of life.

**If we try to drive correct beliefs into people with broken hearts . . .**

In carrying on the mission of Christ, it seems that we have often leap-frogged over the importance of "healing the brokenhearted" in a more comprehensive way. One reason for this is that many spiritual leaders have not themselves experienced the wholeheartedness that is available through Immanuel. A terrible irony results from this missing piece of the good news. Though, most church leaders *have* noticed this without necessarily having a paradigm to describe it. If we try to drive correct beliefs into people with broken hearts, they may give mental assent to those right beliefs, but their attempts to make better or godly choices will be sabotaged, sooner or later, by the unresolved inner pains that are still informing, driving,

<sup>1</sup> From my personal relationships and study, I am also aware of many Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox believers who also confidently affirm this kind of assurance of God's forgiveness.

and governing their more basic sense of identity. Who we really feel we are deep on the inside will always overpower what we attempt to consciously believe and choose. And this is why we need our broken hearts to be healed.

The apostle Paul apparently understood this dynamic when he said, *“But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered” (Romans 6:17)*. It’s interesting language here. We are, more profoundly, “delivered into” right doctrine from the (healed/renovated) heart, than simply having right doctrine “delivered to” us! This speaks to the essence of the difference between indoctrination and the transforming grace and truth of Jesus Christ. What Jesus said in Matthew 7:6 – *“Jesus answered them . . . ‘These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.’”* . . . may have an application to this point.

From my own experience, I know there can be a vast difference between cognitively knowing/reiterating correct doctrines and emotionally/relationally connecting with the transforming power of right beliefs. This problem can be intentional, but is it possible that it can often be a subconscious disconnect that needs resolution/healing on the heart level? I think so.

One outcome of this dysfunction in the church culture is that there is not an effusive overflow of authentic and tangible joy that shines brightly over the long haul through the lives of believers and our communities of faith.

Isaiah 61:1-3 makes a good foundational passage upon which The Life Model can be established. The Life Model faces squarely, yet compassionately, the need to heal the broken hearts of people as a primary feature and priority of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Psalm 139

*O Lord, you have searched me and known me!  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from afar.  
You search out my path and my lying down  
and are acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.  
You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is high; I cannot attain it.*

*Where shall I go from your Spirit?  
Or where shall I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there!  
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!  
If I take the wings of the morning  
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me.  
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light about me be night,"  
even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light with you.*

*For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.  
My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes saw my unformed substance;  
in your book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.*

*How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
If I would count them, they are more than the sand.  
I awake, and I am still with you.*

*Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!  
O men of blood, depart from me!  
They speak against you with malicious intent;  
your enemies take your name in vain.  
Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?  
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?  
I hate them with complete hatred;  
I count them my enemies.*

*Search me, O God, and know my heart!  
Try me and know my thoughts!  
And see if there be any grievous way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

This is a Psalm of David that is loved and cherished by the people of God everywhere. It communicates some very special truths to us as human beings. I have never heard anyone suggest the insights David received and penned through the Holy Spirit were unique to his life. Rather, they are applied across the board to all of us as well. This Scripture presents God as omnipresent in our world . . . He's the unavoidable God! Here are just a few of the realities about God's nature and His ways with us that we can glean from this beautiful Psalm.

- He knows us much better than we know ourselves.
- He is intimately acquainted with and actively involved in the details of both our inner and outer life.
- His nearness is not meant to intimidate or over-control us, but to comfort and reassure us.
- He has a foreordained plan for our lives.
- He is nearby us even when we are in a bad way or state of being.
- He is the Creator of all human life, and He created each of us uniquely.
- He is thinking good and redemptive thoughts over and toward us.

- He intends that His nearness would give us the courage to pray for Him to search us thoroughly so we can discover, face, and allow Him to resolve any wicked way in us. Then we can be led into His best—His everlasting—way.

Irrespective of our particular view of original sin (and there actually are quite a few views), this Psalm teaches us *there is something more original than sin* about each human life. We might call it *original design*. All human beings are made in the image of God, and this is the basis for us to affirm the dignity of all people—no matter how far short they may have fallen from the glory of God.<sup>2</sup> As James reminds us,

*With it (the tongue) we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so (3:9-10 note added).*

We should be astounded by and reminded of what God was able to make of “*the chief of sinners*” . . . a title claimed by Paul the apostle! (1 Timothy 1:15) I believe there is hope in God’s heart for anyone and everyone on the planet.

For years, I never knew that the original Hebrew for what was translated “grievous way”<sup>3</sup> in verse 24 is literally “way of pain.” To me, this simply implies that “unresolved pains” will invisibly drive and dominate our souls and relationships until they are processed through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. They may be the pains of personal sin and failure, the pains of trespasses or injustices done against us or others, and the pain of the grief, sorrow, and trauma we inevitably all encounter in a fallen world. If we don’t process our pains *vertically* with Christ, then they will come out *sideways*. They will “come out” . . . one way or another.

If we don’t process our pains *vertically* with Christ, then they will come out *sideways*.

<sup>2</sup> I also believe the “hatred” of God’s enemies in verses 19-22 above, needs to be pulled through the updated worldview grid of Jesus and the New Testament. Jesus said in Matthew 5:44 that we are to “love our enemies,” and Ephesians 6:12 states that “our warfare is not against flesh and blood” but against the powers of darkness.

<sup>3</sup> Or “wicked way” in translations such as the NKJV

Thank God that Jesus is very glad for us to bring all our burdens to Him to lift them off of us. He has done so much . . . and He will do so much more . . . to offer us true and lasting freedom!

*“. . . casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7).*

*“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . ” (Isaiah 53:4a).*

I see Psalm 139 as a very relevant component of The Life Model that seeks to address all the possible sources of unresolved pain within the human heart and that helps people connect with their tender loving Creator God who has, as Immanuel, been intimately involved with them from conception and through all of life.

## Acts 17:22-31

*So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for*

*"In him we live and move and have our being";  
as even some of your own poets have said,  
"For we are indeed his offspring."*

*Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*

As I review this intriguing encounter that Paul had with the philosophers of Athens, I see him making clear references to God's original design for human life as a way of seeking to find some common ground with them. Even though he was provoked within in a negative way by the rampant idolatry in Athens, he composed (regulated!) himself and seemed eager to build a communication bridge in order to ultimately share the good news of Jesus Christ with them.

He echoed aspects of what we read in Psalm 139 as he engaged with these non-Jews who did not have any background in the Hebrew

Scriptures. These are some of the main points that I glean from this passage:

- Human beings have a God-given longing to worship something above and beyond them.
- God created both the visible and invisible realms and is transcendent beyond them.
- He is self-sufficient, but generously provides all good things for human life to be sustained.
- He is the Author and Creator of all human life . . . wherever it is found. Each of us is His creation. As such, He has a valid claim on every human life.
- He has continually exercised His providential power over all the nations for one primary purpose—that all human beings might seek after Him. God doesn't need anything from us, but He wants many things. Apparently, He especially wants people to want Him and connect with Him!<sup>4</sup>
- God hopes we will even grope to find Him, but when we do, we realize that Immanuel was never far away from any one of us. I find it fascinating that Paul emphasized the nearness of God to all people, not their separation from Him, in his appeal to the idol worshipping Athenians, despite their ignorance of Him and their need for His salvation in Jesus Christ.
- The first coming of Jesus was the climax of the international human story by which God mitigated the evil in the world. Christ conquered sin, Satan, and death and has thrown open the doors of His salvation to all peoples. Now we all have a gracious invitation to receive God's great mercy, gladly change our minds (repent), and follow Jesus Christ as the true Lord.

As I have meditated on this narrative, I see this passage as a fundamental part of The Life Model that properly emphasizes God's providential care for, goodness toward, and nearness to all people, even if they have yet to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>4</sup> I often compare this part of the passage with how loving parents joyfully play "Peek-A-Boo" with their infants and "Hide-And-Seek" with their young children. In fact, these are universal games. The Scriptures reveal that God both hides from and shows Himself to us to stimulate our longing for Him and our spiritual quest. Like little children, we experience a powerful emotional tension when He hides and a joyful release when He shows Himself and we rediscover His face. After the parent gladly loses the game, little children normally say, "Let's do it again!"

## Psalm 19:1-4

*The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.  
Day to day pours out speech,  
and night to night reveals knowledge.  
There is no speech, nor are there words,  
whose voice is not heard.  
Their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.  
In them he has set a tent for the sun*

This passage, and others like it in Scripture, point to the value of gaining knowledge and wisdom from God through carefully examining the hidden wonders of nature and the visible world. Societies of people have benefitted in untold ways by carefully pondering, studying, working with, recording, building upon, and passing on to successive generations the physical realities discovered and proven by observation, experimentation, and practice.

The original mandate and authority God gave to Adam and Eve—to cultivate what He has made—appears to still be in play, even though it was marred by their fall in the garden. They were the original royal priests of God’s creation who ministered to Him in what has been understood in theology as the first temple . . . the garden in Eden. *“The heavens are the Lord’s heavens, but the earth he has given to the children of man”* (Psalm 115:16). One might even dare to say that God expects us to comprehend, reshape, assemble, work with, and apply what we discover for the greater good of human existence and His good creation. As Paul alluded to in his interaction with the Athenian philosophers in Acts 17, God’s common grace, generosity, kindness, and greatness have been at work in the nations throughout all history.

One beneficial outcome of this is how people have always cultivated, innovated, and made creative use of the natural resources that God has placed in and around the earth. Think about the many blessings that have come to the world via new discoveries and innovations related to medical science, animal science, farming, technology, transportation, and better ways to run organizations and to do business. We would be

hypocrites to suggest that there are not many wonderful and helpful things we utilize and enjoy because God has given us the power to grow in our knowledge of His universe. I believe these kinds of amazing developments in human life are a manifestation of the greatness, goodness, kindness, and brilliance of the One who created the visible world.

Scientific knowledge, though it can and has been abused, is yet a marvelous sovereign provision of God for humanity. This is especially true when it is engaged for the glory of God. Too often in our zeal to convince people of the fall and its consequences, Bible believers have minimized and marginalized the importance of God's good original creation and its wonderful ripple effects upon human life.

God's common grace has been at work in the nations throughout all history.

In fact, the salvation He has wrought can be rightly understood as the renewal of His original creation through His new creation accomplished by the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Paul pictures this in the climax of his metanarrative

of God's grand purposes in Romans 8:19-21, in which the original creation is liberated from its bondage, not eradicated, to then take on dimensions it has never achieved or enjoyed before.

In Paul's hymn about Christ in Colossians 1:15-18, Jesus is presented as both the "*firstborn of creation*" and the "*firstborn from the dead*." Jesus is the glorious Lord of the original creations and the new creation . . . and both are terms of great honor, despite the marred state to which the original creation has been subjected.

Though some of the science-based discoveries and practices incorporated into The Life Model are *extra-biblical*, I perceive them to be not only far from *unbiblical*, but, actually, quite *biblical* in their essence, methods, and trajectory.

## Colossians 3:1-15

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.*

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*

The exercises and skills that The Life Model promotes can be summarized quite well by the idea Paul presents here as “set your minds on things that are above, not *on things that are on earth.*”

This passage implies an apostolic understanding, assumption, and mandate that followers of Jesus have received a “new self” by God’s free grace (i.e. regeneration, new heart, or new nature), yet have need to train their brains to *mind* (i.e. obey) the Holy Spirit within them and the teaching of Christ. As the apostle goes on to explain what

he means by this, it is clear that the “earthly things” are the sinful abuses and inordinate expressions of human life and relations that are dominated by the flesh . . . that is, the old self and its practices. They are not, intrinsically, to do with the visible things of this world—homes, jobs, families, our bodies and brains, speech, clothing, money, sleep, possessions, music, art, nature, food, interpersonal relationships, and the like. These are, indeed, things we should have and hold and use in wise stewardship under God.

In biblical theology, salvation is to do with the renewal of God’s original creation through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ rather than its absolute destruction.

Sin, Satan, and death are alien intrusions into God’s good creation. Jesus came and successfully mitigated this invasion and, ultimately, all of its ramifications. In Romans 8, Paul envisages the earthly culmination of the work of Christ when the entire creation is liberated from the fall and its effects (versus eradicated because of it).

*For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. (Romans 8:19-22).*

It is also clear that the “things that are above” are the virtues of Christ and the Spirit to be lived out here and now in this age. Paul is not instructing us to neglect our life in this world in favor of somehow only meditating upon, paying attention to, and esteeming matters regarding the invisible realm or the age to come. For too many people, the kind of idealized spirituality they imagine would lead them to “be so heavenly minded, they are no earthly good.” The great irony is that *true heavenly mindedness leads one to be of great earthly good.* This apostolic injunction is more about, “*Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” The community of faith is to be a visible outpost and prophetic sign in this world of the heavenly realm and its value system.

As new insights have been revealed by modern neuroscience regarding how the brain is designed by God and how it grows and thrives, we should delight in the fact that we have discovered—and sometimes merely forgotten or overlooked—new, practical, and scientifically validated tools to more efficiently “set our minds” on the things above . . . things like, according to the Colossians 3 passage above . . . *subduing our anger, controlling our speech, leaning in to compassion and empathy, finding grace to forgive, loving others well, expressing gratitude, doing acts of kindness, overcoming racism, and subordinating our strengths to live in Christ’s peace.*

*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:5-6).*

The Life Model simply teaches more specific and effective ways we can learn how to “set the mind on the Spirit” in order to experience a greater and more powerful flow of Christ’s life, joy, and peace within and without. Dr. Wilder has poignantly inquired, *“If we agree that the brain must be trained then should we not train it in the manner it learns best?”*<sup>5</sup>

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5 A personal conversation in March of 2017

## I John 3:16-24

**16** *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

**19** *By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; 20 for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. 23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.*

I will simply point out some of my observations on this passage as it relates to establishing a framework for understanding human problems and divine solutions. I intentionally mix up the order of the verses to make my points.

**v. 19:** God's intention is to "reassure" our hearts in the light of His grace and truth. This Greek word can also be translated "persuade." Our hearts need some persuasion to become free and whole.

**v. 21:** Our hearts tend to "condemn" us, and this robs us of our "confidence before God." Our hearts are the focus of the needed persuasion . . . from condemnation to confidence.

**v. 22:** In turn, this lack of confidence before God in our hearts hinders our intimate communion, or our conversational relationship, with the Trinity.

**v. 23:** If, however, we gain confidence before God, our friendship with Him achieves new heights, depths, and breadth. We will

discover a naturally supernatural flow of prayer, obedience, discernment, faith, and love for others.

**v. 24:** This confidence speaks of the grace and ability to remain present with God—and He with us—at all times (a good definition for “abide”). We also realize how close the Holy Spirit is to us, how involved He is with us in this process, and how accessible His presence and power are to us.

**v. 16:** The genesis of this transformation of heart is based in “know[ing] love”—first, knowing the sacrificial love of Jesus for us personally; secondly, as a direct outcome, knowing sacrificial love for others and their love for us within a spiritual family context.

**v. 18:** This love is authentic, genuine, divine, true, beyond rhetoric . . . it is practical and concrete.

**v. 17:** We can choose to “close [our] heart” to wrongly self-protect in the face of others’ needs (as one example among many), which effectively walls us off from the love of God and living well in a loving community. The result of the profound closing of the heart, which can be sudden or gradual—today we call it “shutting down”—is the formation of a stronghold.

**v. 20:** When we discover a stronghold, which John describes here as an area of our life in which our heart “condemns” us, we need not panic—strongholds are common to us all. The self-awareness, or the exposure, is a gift from God. The reality is that we do not even know the depths of our own heart. Fortunately, the self-talk of our own hearts is not the final judge of our lives, for “God is greater than our heart” and He knows everything! Nothing true about us can shock Him, scandalize Him, or deter His pursuit of cleansing and healing our hearts through Jesus the Son. We need His light to even see the precise nature of our hearts’ conflicts. We can fall back safely into His strong, waiting arms when we are bowled over by the blows of life and our own compromises.

**v. 19:** By this, our hearts go on this journey of discovery and transformation. By what? . . . by our ongoing experience of

living in a Christ-centered culture in which the love between people goes beyond rhetoric to a more genuine, practical expression. It involves dwelling in a sweet society—the true expression of the body of Jesus Christ, which understands the nature of the needs, longings, tendencies, temptations, and strongholds of our hearts . . . and that helps create a practical pathway out of condemnation into confidence for spiritual pilgrims.

I call such a culture a *human life refuge*. However large such a community of faith becomes, the community must be structured to continue including the centrality of God Himself, Scripture, and devotion; knowing others and being known by others on a heart level; taking genuine delight (high joy) in knowing and supporting one another; the freedom to be transparent without rejection; the welcoming of accountability for sins (confession, restoration, and restitution); generosity and compassion for the needy; family-friendliness; affirming of vocation; a sense of mission for those who have yet come to faith, and a reliance on the Holy Spirit's gifts and graces.

In the context of authentic, interpersonal relationships centered on Christ, this vision of transformation—occurring deep within the heart by the presence and love of God—describes well many of the concepts and practices of The Life Model.

## 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

*For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.*

This passage points to the problem of “strongholds” . . . inner negative fortresses . . . within human hearts and minds that can ultimately be traced back to the crafty deceits of Satan. Paul describes the need for us to engage in “warfare” with “divinely powerful” weapons that God has placed within our reach in order to plunder these kinds of stubborn problems. I think of them as tightly knit webs of negative inner motives, beliefs, lies, fears, vows, shame, unresolved pains, thoughts, desires, emotions, drives, and the like that manifest outwardly in carnal and immature ways of being, styles of relating, habits of speech, reactions to circumstances, and engaging our work.

Paul also seems to indicate that Christians are not automatically or instantly delivered from such strongholds through their initial conversion to Christ. There is a challenge set before believers to fight nobly, by God’s power, for a more thorough and complete obedience to Christ in their lives, in order to have the authority to help others become likewise liberated. We must actively employ the weapons God has placed in our hands in order to gain the personal and experiential authority in our lives and ministries in order to see the enemy’s work undermined in the people and cultures to which God sends us out to minister as Christ’s ambassadors.

The Life Model is packed with proven ways to address and dismantle such strongholds in people’s lives through the practical applications of the presence and grace of Jesus Christ—our Immanuel.

## 2 Timothy 1:6-7

*For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

For years I have been sharing this very intriguing passage with the Body of Christ in my messages on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. It fascinates me that Paul included “sound mind” in addition to “power” and “love” in this three-fold description of what the Holy Spirit wants to impart into our lives.

We often hear that He is a Spirit of power and love. But . . . the Spirit of a sound mind? What does this rather strange wording actually imply? It turns out this is the only time this form of the Greek word, *soophronismou*, is used in the New Testament. It doesn’t actually have a worthy English equivalent.

Here’s what the Adam Clarke Commentary says about it. (My elaborations are in parentheses.)

“Of a sound mind”, *soophronismou* (4995), of self-possession and government, according to some. But a sound mind implies much more; it means a clear understanding, a sound judgment, a rectified will, holy passions, heavenly tempers (thoughts and feelings); in a word, the whole soul harmonized in all its powers and faculties; and completely regulated and influenced, so as to think, speak, and act aright in all things. The apostle says, God hath given the spirit of these things; they are not factitious (bogus, fake, specious, false, counterfeit, fraudulent, spurious, sham, mock, feigned, affected, pretended, contrived, engineered, inauthentic); they are not assumed for times and circumstances; they are radical powers and tempers (internal abiding realities); each produced by its proper principle (expressed from the inside/out).<sup>6</sup>

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6 [http://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC\\_2\\_Timothy.pdf](http://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC_2_Timothy.pdf)

As I read over this expanded definition and application of the word *soophronismou*, I immediately see a number of connections to the goals and practices of The Life Model.

So, I believe The Life Model makes a significant contribution to our understanding of this “sound mind” aspect of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and how He works in our lives. My beloved friend, Dallas Willard, always spoke about the need for a “psychologically sound” model of sanctification, and I believe, as did he, that the practices of The Life Model fit this bill.

## Galatians 5:16-18

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

We see in this passage that believers have the ongoing capacity to either walk by the Spirit or to live below their true and full inheritance in Christ and live lives dominated by their flesh. This passage has similar themes to those found in Ephesians 4:14-16, Colossians 3:1-17, Romans 6, and Romans 8, in which Paul, by various word pictures and analogies, exhorts believers to lay aside the old creation, much like old, worn, tattered, and dirty clothing, and access the stunning wardrobe of the new creation they now have available in Christ. He spoke to them about their new nature and new identity in Jesus and challenged them to boldly see their identity through new lenses and learn to live from a new operating system based in the New Covenant God has made with us in Jesus' death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension and by the Holy Spirit.

The Life Model provides a rich understanding into profound means of healing, transformation, and spiritual maturity. It also offers simple and practical ways for Christ-followers to be more conscious of the Holy Spirit's presence within the core of their beings and to raise their awareness level of whether or not they are walking in legalism and/or in their flesh, or if they are indeed walking and being led by the Holy Spirit.

## Romans 12:2

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

## 1 Corinthians 2:16

*Do not be conformed to this world,[a] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

These passages refer to how, through the grace of Christ, our minds can be renewed and re-patterned to come into harmony with the very mind of Christ. With prayerful practice, we can literally learn to bring every errant thought “captive” to Christ and enter into harmonious mutual states of mind with our risen Lord because of our attachment love relationship with Him. Of course, we do not know the mind of God to such an extent that we could presume to give Him counsel! Even so, God empowers us to grow and mature, so that our hearts progressively begin to sync up with His heart and will and to think like He thinks so we can cooperate more fully and freely to fulfill His pleasure for our lives. He never designed us to live independently of Him. We are not alone, and this calms our many fears.

The Life Model provides inspiration and insights into how our minds are literally renewed (even re-wired) to allow the life, joy, and peace of God’s Spirit to flow through us and become a new normal. It instructs us how to regulate our emotions, drives, desires, and thoughts so that we can interact with God in a real-time ongoing conversation regarding everything in life—past, present, and future.

# Conclusion

So, I have asked if The Life Model is biblical, though it sometimes incorporates and utilizes insights, language, and science that may seem to be beyond direct Scriptural injunctions related to healing, spiritual formation, prayer, and maturity in Christ. Is it secular or worldly psychology that The Life Model is presenting to us?

Then I thought about the kind of “psychology” The Life Model actually promotes—the importance and innate powers of smiling, yawning, laughing, dancing, eye contact, physical touch, eating together, voice tones, facial expressions, body language, gestures, compassion, listening, mothers loving and comforting their babies, and the like. These are such well-known, obvious, and universal behaviors that are basic to human life and relationships. Would anyone really consider these things to be unbiblical in nature? Maybe we could be at risk of over-analyzing such normal human things that are woven by God into the fabric of His good creation by overlooking such childlike activities?

Maybe the leaders of The Life Model are, as good teachers do, explaining and teasing out applications that are germane to the broader biblical mandates such as *love one another deeply from the heart; pray without ceasing; be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; make the good confession; forgive offenders; love your enemies; be a doer, not just a hearer, of the word of God; give thanks in everything; make melodies in your heart; encourage one another; love God with all your mind; meditate on what is noble, pure, just, and lovely; rejoice and weep with others; lay hands on the sick; confess your sins to one another; be devoted to fellowship; be filled with joy unspeakable, and so many more?*

Maybe such simple practices aren't emphasized in the Bible when it comes to passages about spiritual formation and maturity because so many of these kinds of activities are taken for granted in Scripture? Maybe our culture has been horribly hacked by the inhuman abuses of mass communication, work environments, broken family cultures, excessive physical and mental stimulation, sexual exploitation,

celebrity culture, noise pollution, over-sophistication, rationalism, substance abuse, technology, and the like? Maybe we are actually in need in our modern/post-modern culture of going back and simply relearning how to be *more human* in our quest to be and teach others how to become *more holy*?

Again, I think we must distinguish between *extra*-biblical and *unbiblical* as we approach this question. I suggest we more closely examine the fruit of The Life Model practices/exercises as we evaluate its methods and their merits.

This is my view. Now, because of amazing advances in brain science, we are able to confidently promote what builds a “sound mind” into our souls as we mature by the Holy Spirit’s work in us. Our brains have been designed to thrive on the experience and “fuel” of joy. Moreover, this joy is rooted in a personal relationship in which, typically, a more mature person delights to be with us (healthy attachment).

Although marvelous, it shouldn’t surprise us that these scientific observations and breakthroughs simply confirm what apostles, prophets, saints, and sages have intuitively known and taught through the centuries . . . God, our Heavenly Father, His Son, Jesus Christ – our Immanuel and the Holy Spirit . . . designed us for the peace and joy associated with intimate and personal connection with the Divine and those who represent Him to us. This is, indeed, what the genuine gospel delivers to the human being.)

Additionally, this loving presence, delight, and peace is often mediated by God through mothers, fathers, caregivers, elders, friends, spiritual leaders, other members of the Body of Christ, and others who are God’s loving representatives to us and ambassadors of His joy. Thus, we have the vitality of the oft-repeated new commandment of Jesus: “*love one another.*” We need God, and we need one another too. This is God’s design, and this dual provision causes our human lives to flourish and be resilient in the face of adversities.

In the famous appeal to God for *wisdom* that King Solomon prayed in such a vulnerable and childlike way, I see the vital connections between the attachment love with God, hearing the voice of God, and

the human heart and the sound mind that The Life Model traces out and explains so well.

*1 Kings 3:6-9 [AMP] – Then Solomon said, “You have shown Your servant David my father great lovingkindness, because he walked before You in faithfulness and righteousness and with uprightness of heart toward You; and You have kept for him this great lovingkindness, in that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is today. So now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king in place of David my father; and as for me, I am but a little boy [in wisdom and experience]; I do not know how to go out or come in [that is, how to conduct business as a king]. Your servant is among Your people whom You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child. So give Your servant an understanding mind and a hearing heart [with which] to judge Your people, so that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge and rule this great people of Yours?”*

In The Life Model, God’s *lovingkindness* (Heb. *hesed*) . . . a very special and prominent word in the Old Testament that magnifies God’s intimate, faithful, “sticky,” and resilient love . . . is highlighted as the essence of the *attachment love* between the Heavenly Father and His children. It is akin, but even more layered, than the *agape* (love) of the Greek New Testament.

It is out of this *hesed bond* that Solomon prayed for *divine wisdom* in order to equip and transform him into a godly and worthy leader. This word for *wisdom* literally means a *hearing heart* in the original Hebrew. *He prayed for a heart with ears!*

This kind of heart condition would be adequately open, tender, and susceptible to receive the very heart—the thoughts—of God. This spiritual sensitivity would then be the basis for a clear understanding that would provide Solomon with good judgment and excellence in leading God’s great people in the ways and will of God.

Through the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, the *hesed bond* between God and His people goes to even greater heights, depths, and scope by the indwelling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This good news has the power to change the nations and make them glad.

*May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make his face to shine upon us, Selah  
that your way may be known on earth,  
your saving power among all nations.*

*Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you!*

*Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for you judge the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations upon earth. Selah*

*Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you!*

*The earth has yielded its increase;  
God, our God, shall bless us.*

*God shall bless us;  
let all the ends of the earth fear him!*

*Psalms 67:1-7*

The Holy Spirit will certainly move in even greater ways as we set our hearts to more authentically engage and welcome God's presence in our lives and relationships, be with one another as we open up more vulnerably to share our joys and sorrows of life with one another, and more intentionally be aware of and cooperate with the way our human brains absorb and process joy. May we become a part of inaugurating a second great reformation that builds upon the first . . . a reformation that brings authentic and amplified hope and joy in Jesus Christ to the children of God everywhere and to the nations of the world!

This is a poem I penned about how joy flows in our brains according to Dr. Wilder's understanding.

## BRAIN JOY-FLOW

The flow begins at bottom right  
For a caring one who's full of light  
Delights to be with me.  
Next the hub for my alarm  
Alerting me to cause for harm  
But all is quiet now.  
I ask then "Am I understood?"  
By others who will do me good  
I feel assured I am.  
So joy is really firing now  
Just behind my right eyebrow  
I delight in who I am.  
My left brain signaled by my right  
Has clearer views of truth in sight  
I choose and speak wisely now.

## JOHN 15:11

These things I have spoken to you,  
that my joy may be in you,  
and that your joy may be full.

PART TWO

FAQs



## The Life Model proposes that we approach God thankfully, and I hear very little about being repentant for our evil. Why is there this change, and is it biblical?

- In the pattern of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to honor God's name and declare His nature even before we confess our sins. The gospel of Jesus and God's grace do not begin and/or end with sin management.
- It's ironic that repentance actually means a "change of thinking" – which is a major emphasis of The Life Model.
- It's a good and biblical thing for human beings to acknowledge God's presence in the world and give Him thanks. The apostle Paul states that humanity has devolved into futile thinking due, in the first place, to the lack of honoring Him and offering Him thanks.

*Romans 1:21 – For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

- Honoring Him for who He is and thanking Him for His good grace and generous provisions can be first steps back into relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. *"Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"* (Romans 2:4) Repentance is not only away from sin, but also toward God.
- In the story of the centurion Cornelius, who was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a God-fearing Gentile, God accepted his prayers and gifts to the poor. After this, he and his entire household were led into saving faith through the gospel of Jesus that Peter was sent to share with them.

*Acts 10:3-4 – About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, “Cornelius.” And he stared at him in terror and said, “What is it, Lord?” And he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.”*

- The Life Model is certainly about inspiring people to repent for their sins. In fact, a case can be made that The Life Model helps people face personal sins and their fallout more head on and squarely than many traditional evangelistic/discipleship approaches that labor hard to bring people to a single point of “decision” to repent. They often do not encourage people to look more deeply into allowing God to repair the damage their past sins have done throughout their entire beings and to their interpersonal relationships.
- The Life Model creates much opportune space to welcome the Holy Spirit to move upon people’s souls and minds and be the One who brings conviction of sins.

*John 16:8 – And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. . . .*

- God is greater than our hearts and knows all things, which implies that we do not. (1 John 3:20) It is in interacting with Him as our Creator and Redeemer that we can see our faults and failures more clearly and overcome them through Christ. It was when Isaiah saw the majestic glory of God that he was able to see his own uncleanness and receive God’s simple, yet powerful, provision for it.

*Isaiah 6:1, 5 – In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. . . . And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”*

- Many of the people being reached by The Life Model have already repented of and confessed their sins. Yet, they

remain stuck in immaturity. In order to help them move on to maturity, they need to build upon the foundation of their “*repentance from dead works.*”

*Hebrews 6:1 – Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God . . .*

- Many have been taught, via emphasis, that if we repent from our sins, confess them to God, and receive His forgiveness, then the sole source of our problems has gone away. This approach makes it easy for people to live in denial of the unresolved pains of terrible injustices done against them and paralyzing traumas of living in a fallen world that trap them in spiritual, emotional, and relational immaturity. Jesus has come to fully heal the brokenhearted—forgiving sins, resolving the pains of injustices done against us, and healing us of past traumas—in order to transform us progressively into His image.

## 2

# What does the brain have to do with being Christian? Isn't training the brain the same as works righteousness?

God cares about us and wants our entire being, including our bodies (and brains!), to be saved and set apart for Him.

*1 Thessalonians 5:23 – Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- God wants us to love Him with our entire being . . . including our brains. The *great commandment* of the Old Testament becomes the *great promise* of the New Covenant through the Spirit's power when our lives are first saturated with God's love for us. Jesus and John are not in disagreement about love in these passages below. John is simply revealing the source of the love so we can then responsively express the love we have first received to both God and our neighbor.

*Mark 12:30-31 – “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

*1 John 4:10,19 – In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. . . . We love because he first loved us.*

- We do not need to train the brain to receive Christ into our life. Justification is a free gift that we receive by His grace

through childlike faith in Jesus Christ. However, we can and do submit to training in order to progressively become more fully like Christ. Disciplining ourselves is something native to being a disciple—the most often used term to describe believers in the New Testament. In fact, there is a biblical mandate to “set our minds” on the Spirit. That is, to train our brains to *mind* (i.e. obey) God . . . as in how children are trained to *mind* their parents. In the Great Commission, Jesus instructed the first apostles to teach new believers to not only be baptized, but also “*to obey all that I have commanded you.*” The Life Model makes this kind of non-optional training for greater godliness practical, accessible, simple, joyful, and . . . brain-friendly.

*1 Timothy 4:7b-8 – Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*

*Proverbs 16:32 – Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*

- Our bodies are “*for the Lord*” and “*the Lord is for the body.*” Being unconcerned with the body in spiritual life is a gnostic notion, not a biblical one. Certainly, our brains are a vital part of our bodies. In that the physical bodies of believers are temples of the Holy Spirit, it leaves no doubt there is a profound spirit-heart-mind-body association in the biblical view of God’s design of and purpose for the human being. And . . . though our bodies are *terrible masters*, they are *wonderful servants* and an aid in our sanctification as we position and use them well. We are called to subordinate our bodies to the dominion of the Spirit in our lives, while yet affirming their value and importance.

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20 — Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

*1 Corinthians 6:13b – . . . The body is . . . for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*

*1 Corinthians 9:24-27 – Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*

- There is a clear link in this well-known passage below between the extravagant offering of our bodies to God, in light of the good news of Jesus, and the renewing of our minds. Affirming the body-mind-heart connection of the truly spiritual life broadens our “playing fields” of worshipping, relating, serving, and bringing glory to God through living the abundant life in Christ.

*John 10:10 – The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

*Romans 12:1-2 – I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

- Our bodies, when properly subordinated to God become powerful instruments (literally *weapons*) of righteousness in our world. Because many believers have often seen their bodies’ drives, functions, and needs as hindrances to their spiritual life, they are intimidated by this and easily swayed to adopt a gnostic notion of the human body. Rather, we need to view it as our friend in becoming more like Jesus Christ and as a powerful weapon against Satan’s work in

this world. It is only with our bodies (and brains) that we can pray, preach, go on mission, work, study, innovate, create art, love, reproduce, do acts of mercy, and the like. It is only as embodied people that we can reflect the image of God into our world and do His will.

*Romans 6:12-14 – Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*

- Disciples *practice* their faith in order to be able to gracefully respond to the Holy Spirit and obey the word of God when the pressure is on in life. It's similar to how athletes and musicians must *practice* in order to perform well with ease in the heat of competition or in front of a watching audience. The Life Model provides many wonderful exercises that can equip and prepare us to do what we otherwise could not. (Such as regulating our anger, loving our enemies, and/or controlling our tongues in the face of a violation.) The Life Model *drills* lead to The Life Model *skills* that become "second nature" with practice! It takes grace and intentional practice to, for example, effectively resist temptations and forsake wicked thoughts in order to more fully abide in (or stay in sync with) Christ and allow Him to more fully abide in us.

*Mark 14:38 – Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

*Isaiah 55:7-8 –*

*Seek the Lord while he may be found;  
call upon him while he is near;  
let the wicked forsake his way,  
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion  
on him,*

*and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.  
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.*

- It should not surprise us that, through the centuries, we have learned more about how God has created us. This expanded knowledge can help us learn more ways to cooperate with Him to grow and mature as both human beings and as followers of His Son. We have a stewardship to apply wisely the knowledge God has given us as part of His creation mandate. Luke, one chosen to inscripturate God's word, was a medical doctor! I am sure he learned many practical things beyond what the Scriptures taught about healing the sick and injured that he applied in his practice for the glory of Christ. The Life Model has sought to carefully and wisely integrate the latest and best brain science with clear biblical injunctions to equip people with useful tools that can assist them to direct their hearts into the love of God and to thus become more mature.

*2 Thessalonians 3:5 – May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.*

# 3

## How important is joy in Scripture? Isn't it correct that joy in Scripture is not an emotion but a choice?

- What is known as The Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17) is possibly the most outstanding part of the Bible that reveals the deep heart-to-heart and joy-filled relationship that our trinitarian God wants to have with us and promises to share extravagantly with all His children. It is in these chapters we see the vital connections between love and the amplification of joy, relational attunement, and peace that naturally flow out from that love-bond. During this interchange, Jesus was preparing His circle of intimate partners and friends for His death, departure back to the Father and His physical absence from them. He was ministering to their hearts in a very tender and intimate way to buffer them from the anxiety and fear they would temporarily experience during those dark days of the passion week. And we know this certainly played out in their experience.

*John 14:18-20 – I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.*

*John 15:9, 11-12 – As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. . . . These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*

*John 14:27 – Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

*John 16:20, 22-24 – Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. . . . So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*

*John 17:13 – But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*

- Jesus made amazing promises to His followers about how He and the Father and the Spirit would soon gladly come as close as close can be to them after His ascension into heaven. This reality was a major paradigm shift for His disciples, and they struggled to get their minds around what He was intending to say. He said they would, in fact, become a home—an abiding place—for the Trinity to lovingly inhabit. Jesus promised His followers that they were going to enjoy the same kind of vital connection with the Father and Spirit that He experienced during His earthly life and ministry.

*John 14:23 – Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”*

*John 16:13-14 – When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

*John 17:26 – I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

- It was this communicative and conversational relationship Jesus shared with the Father and Spirit that was the key to

His effectiveness in carrying out His ministry. It was His primary *modus operandi*. It was also to be the method His disciples were to model to others after His ascension. Additionally, He is setting the stage for His ongoing earthly community . . . His “body” . . . to flourish under their care through the multiplication of the same love, union, joy, and peace dynamic He promised them. I deeply believe these very same promises are granted to all believers across the centuries up to this very day.

*John 5:19-20 – So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.”*

*John 14:10 – “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.”*

*John 20:21 – Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”*

*John 14:12 – Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”*

*John 14:26 – But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

*John 15:4-5 – Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

*John 15:16-17 – You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your*

*fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*

*John 15:11-12, 17 – These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. . . . These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”*

*John 17:20-23 – I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*

- Joy is a prominent theme and outstanding virtue of the spiritual life as it is presented in both the Old and New Testaments.

*Psalms 16:11 –*

*You make known to me the path of life;  
in your presence there is fullness of joy;  
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

*Nehemiah 8:10 – Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”*

*Romans 14:17 – For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

*Romans 15:13 – May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

- The notion that joy is a choice seems to rise out of a truncated view of joy. Many cannot imagine there is a way for griefs, sorrows, and trials to be nested in joy. Yet, biblical joy is that large, resilient, and encompassing. The most outstanding book about joy is Philippians in which the apostle exhorts us to “rejoice . . . again I say, rejoice.” And he wrote this epistle while confined in a Roman prison due to being persecuted for his faith in Jesus! Paul alludes to this paradox in the passage below.

*2 Corinthians 6:9-10 – as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.*

- In Hebrews 1:9, the writer applies Psalm 45:6-7 to Jesus Christ.

*You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;  
therefore God, your God, has anointed you  
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.*

- Yes, Jesus was, and is, most joyful! Yet, at the same time, Jesus is portrayed by Isaiah in chapter 53:3 as “. . . a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”
- According to The Life Model, joy can hold, carry, and undergird the whole range of human experiences because joy is essentially about not being alone. *Joy is relational and trans-rational.* It is especially about having God with us—our Immanuel. He heals our broken hearts. It is also about having other Christ-followers involved in our lives who love us. As we live out this fellowship of the heart with one another we are enabled to “[r]ejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:15) When in sorrow, we experience a deep joy beneath our tears because others are “with us” in life for Christ’s sake.

We register and validate negative emotions, but we are empowered to return quickly to our base of joy because we have previously trained our brains (especially our right brains) to access and enjoy the presence of God, the presence of friends in Christ, and because we have stored up a joy capacity through practicing The Life Model skills. This capacity is drawn upon in the face of failures, trials, traumas, and sufferings. Jesus Christ had enough joy capacity within His soul to take upon Himself the sins of the world. And His joy was not contrived, but authentic.

*Hebrews 12:2 – looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

- Joy is primarily presented as a fruit of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, not a choice that must be made. Joy results naturally from a whole life that is lived in union with the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

*Romans 5:2-5 – Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

*Galatians 5:22a – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy . . .*

- So joy is essential to the spiritual life in Christ. Dr. Wilder boldly announces, “*Joy Changes Everything.*”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.joystartshere.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Joy-Changes-Everything.pdf>

# 4

How biblical are the three distinctive features of The Life Model: multi-generational community, Immanuel lifestyle, and relational brain skills?

## Multi-generational Community

- When God revealed His proper name (“I am”) to Moses in advance of the Exodus, He identified Himself as a multi-generational covenant being. God chose a family and a family line in order to prepare the earth for His personal incarnation in Christ. Families have always been very central to God’s ways of working with humanity. Just a glance at the extensive genealogies in the Bible confirm this point. Throughout Exodus and Deuteronomy, God identifies Himself as the God of the three original generations of patriarchs.

*Exodus 3:16 – Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt . . .”*

- In the ancient culture, the “name” represents the nature and character of the identified object. In this verse below, Paul indicates that “families” in both heaven and earth derive their nature, identity, and character from the Heavenly Father. Even the fact that God is so often and clearly identified as Father in the New Testament speaks of Him being multi-generational in His heart and the cultures He creates. God is a God of families, not just individuals!

The church of Jesus is His prophetic witness on the earth as an outpost of the culture of heaven, an embassy of highest heaven, upon which the powers of the future age rest and are modeled. Being a multi-generational community is then basic

to the nature of Christ's community of faith and essential for its resilience and sustainability through the centuries.

*Ephesians 3:14-15 – For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named*

- When Jesus was preparing to leave the earth in a physical way, He made sure to connect Mary and John in an expression of a multi-generational extended family. This seems very profound to me in its priority and nature since it was among the few words spoken by Jesus from the cross.

*John 19:26-27 – When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*

- Paul affirms the excellence of how the faith of God was embedded and replicated in the culture of Timothy's family line.

*2 Timothy 1:5 – I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.*

- In the first public gospel address to the people of Jerusalem after the resurrection of Christ, the apostle Peter makes clear that there is a multi-generational promise embedded in God's great promise to the followers of Christ.

*Acts 2:38-39 – And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.”*

- We could go on like this through many passages to reveal the importance of “family” in the Bible if we just read between the lines a bit. Creating joy-based, sustainable, and self-propagating multi-generational communities centered in Christ is very close to the heart of God.

# Immanuel Lifestyle

- The essences of the Immanuel Lifestyle are obviously present and everywhere woven into the pages of the New Testament. Even a brief survey of the gospels and epistles reveals the invitation, even the commandment, to embrace such a Christ-centered life and lifestyle. I would especially direct people to the Upper Room Discourse in John 13-17 and have them meditate on the stunning promises of Jesus to us all. Because of all that Jesus is and all that He has done, we who follow Him are never alone. God is with us, for us, and even within us! We no longer need live in fear, break our ongoing interactive conversation with the Trinity, or fail to live in God's love, peace, and joy. We are able to progress beyond the boredom of sin management into the wonder of being companions of Jesus Christ on His mission in the world all around us.

*Matthew 28:20b – And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

- The sampling of New Testament passages below reflect some of the main elements of the Immanuel Lifestyle. One might call it a presence-based life. It does not live in denial of the pain, problems, and perplexities of human life, but it is grounded in a powerful confidence in the goodness and presence of God in the face of such things. We draw strength from being intimately connected to the Father, Son, and Spirit and our prayers, presence, and actions on God's behalf make a lasting difference in our needy world. Below are just two of many passages we could turn to that give us the feel of the Immanuel Lifestyle.

*Philippians 4:4-9 – Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God,*

*which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

*Ephesians 5:18-21 – And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

- God has in many places in Scripture invited us to perceive His “face.” It is in discerning the various “facets” of His exquisite nature that we then are empowered by the Holy Spirit to reflect and represent God in relevant and transformative ways to the people and situations all around us each day. The Immanuel Lifestyle would echo the famous quote from Victor Hugo, “*To love another person, is to see the face of God.*”

*Psalms 27:8 –*

*You have said, “Seek my face.”  
My heart says to you,  
“Your face, Lord, do I seek.”*

*Psalms 34:5 –*

*Those who look to him are  
radiant,  
and their faces shall never be  
ashamed.*

Progress beyond  
the boredom of  
sin management  
into the wonder  
of being com-  
panions of Jesus  
Christ.

## Relational Brain Skills

- The importance of the human brain for living the life given to us by God as our Creator is easily observed and indisputable. We all are “*fearfully and wonderfully made*” are we not? As we recall this, it leads us into joyful awe, wonder, and worship! The brain is a truly amazing part of the human body, and we are learning much more about it through recent technological advances. As those made in the image of God we are loved by Him. As such, God loves our brains and desires we learn to also love them, train them, and use them to engage with and glorify Him. The same holds true for every part of our beings—spirit, soul, and body. Moreover, there is also an indisputable body-brain-mind-heart connection that Scripture everywhere takes for granted. We are integrated beings, and God’s plan of sanctification for our lives involves our cooperating with His Spirit to offer our entire beings to Him to become fully integrated under the sway of His kingdom of Christ’s loving rulership and the dominion of His Spirit.
- The Life Model brain skills are scientifically researched and biblically sound, simple, and practical ways to help us intentionally *stay our mind on God, abide in Christ, set our minds on things above, set our minds on the Spirit, bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, glorify God in our bodies, renew our minds*, and the like. These are skills that have been tested in the heat of battle over many years—especially by helping many terribly broken people to recover from debilitating addictions, to build good character, to engage in loving relationships, and to mature on every front in Christ. If we are able to more fully discover and discern how God has designed our brains and how they best develop and grow, are we not simply being more faithful servants of God—indeed, duty bound—to use this knowledge to engage in those practices that help us to love God with our minds more skillfully?
- The Life Model posits that we now know more profoundly that the brain grows relationally. As such, our brains have

suffered in their development due to any toxic, or simply unloving, relationships with significant others in our lives. (And who among us has not experienced at least a measure of this malformation?) Furthermore, this relational immaturity hinders our capacities to receive the love God has for us and to love Him in response. The renewing of our minds in Christ involves a necessary retraining of our brains through fresh personal and ongoing experiences of healthy relational attachment love with others. We best learn how to freely receive our invisible God's love for us and how to love Him back well by understanding and growing in skills related to our visible interpersonal relationships with others in the context of a healthy intergenerational spiritual family. Dr. Wilder says, *"This is all learned from the Spirit, Scripture, and fellowship with those who are ahead of us in their relational relearning. How can we love God relationally, whom we have not seen, if we cannot love each other relationally?"*<sup>8</sup>

- These dynamics are especially seen in the first epistle of John. There is a symbiotic and interactive relationship between the vertical (divine) and horizontal (human) aspects of love and fellowship throughout his letter. These two dimensions of warm and transformative attachment love are co-mingled and intertwined in John. In some of the cases, the visible horizontal relationships are actually presented as a means to the invisible vertical relationship with God! For John, loving God and loving one another are not the separate paradigms modern evangelicalism tends to carefully differentiate. This simply betrays a gap present between popularized practices of Christianity and the apostolic form—a gap The Life Model seeks to bridge.
- The apostle John, who is often known as the apostle of love, wrote as a spiritual father that his “children” in Christ would find themselves in fellowship with God by being in fellowship with him and his companions. And that the outcome of this wonderful attachment love would also be joy.

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8 In a personal interchange in March 2017

*1 John 1:3-4 – that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*

- It is in walking in the light with one another that we find a love-rich fellowship culture with other believers that then leads us to the effectual cleansing of sins through the blood of Jesus. (This seems backwards for us as typical evangelicals!)

*1 John 1:7 – But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

- For John, loving our brothers is a prime evidence of having God's eternal life in Christ.

*1 John 3:14 – We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.*

- For John, if we struggle to be assured of God's love and salvation or in connecting with Him, we can settle this matter through the focus upon and experience of learning to love one another.

*1 John 4:7-8 – Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

- And, finally, John makes it clear that loving our brother is central to and inseparable from truly loving God.

*1 John 4:20 – If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.*

# 5

The Life Model focuses transformation around attachment love with God and others rather than around beliefs and choice. Is this shift biblical?

*John 5:37-40,42,44 – And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. . . . But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. . . . How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?*

- One of the main premises of The Life Model is that *we are transformed much more profoundly by who we love in contrast to what we believe, or say we believe, with our rational minds.* In the passage above, Jesus is interacting with the devout Jewish leaders of Jerusalem in His day. He clearly points out that very religious people are surprisingly and ironically capable of searching, knowing, revering, and believing the holy Scriptures without having either God’s word or His love abiding within their hearts. The root of this tragic irony and reality gap is that these people refused to “come to” Jesus and be connected personally to Him as their source of life. They believed, but they did not believe on a deeper level of the heart and soul and mind where the “attachment love” with God takes place in the human being.

It is in possessing this kind of saving belief or faith—a relational love-bond—that Jesus and the apostles refer

to throughout the New Testament that is the doorway into receiving eternal life—God’s own uncreated life—into our lives. This irony of mental assent in the absence of heart love-belief has become even more prominent in our world since the Enlightenment and its exaltation of Reason as the highest virtue of human life. Much of the church, at least in the Western world, has suffered long under the ripple effects of the exaltation of human reason that has become embedded in our approach to theology, organizational leadership, interpersonal relationships, and models of personal transformation.

The Life Model provides an explanation for this problem and offers means to rectify it. Sometimes we have to “read between the lines” of the New Testament to more clearly discern this philosophical and relational problem that has developed in our cultures. But it is clearly pointed out by Jesus and the apostles. So, attachment love with God is certainly central to biblical soteriology.

- I see this same irony embedded and exposed in what James teaches in the passage below. For Him, the “works” are not like the “works of the law” that Paul contrasts with God’s grace. Rather, they are manifestations of the reality of the attachment love relationship with God that has transformed the heart of a believer. It’s interesting to note that James compares faith to the “body” and works to the “spirit.” (As modern evangelicals, we would tend to do the opposite!) If the “works/attachment love” correlation is correct, then it implies it is the attachment love that is the essence of our faith. (Maybe this is a good reason for the name of the organization that has formulated The Life Model – **Life Model Works?**)

*James 2:14, 19-26 – What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? . . . You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was*

*not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.*

- We see a similar insight from Paul that turns spiritual knowledge right-side up and puts it in its native relational context. Being “*known by God*” is His divine response to our loving response to His love for us displayed in Christ. It is love, so much more than raw knowledge, that builds us and others up into spiritual maturity. We all long to be known by and to know our Creator—and others—without the fear of rejection interfering.

*1 Corinthians 8:1b-3 – . . . we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.*

- Joyfully added to this, loving attachment to others in Christ is also central to the ongoing sanctifying aspect of our great salvation according to the New Testament. This inseparable wedding of loving God and our “brother” is most clearly seen in John’s first letter. The attachment love of the New Testament might be best captured by the Greek words *agape* (love) and *koinonia* (fellowship) that are richly used by John in this letter.

*1 John 1:2-4 – the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too*

*may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*

*1 John 1:7 – But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

*1 John 2:9-10 – Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.*

*1 John 3:11,14,16-18 – For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. . . . We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. . . . By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

*1 John 4:7-8, 20-21 – Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. . . . If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

- Better choices via our conscious efforts for those in Christ are best understood as graceful responses to and cooperations with God's initiatives, the indwelling Spirit, and our attachment love bond with Jesus. These, among various other allusions and illustrations, reveal that human willpower is insufficient, left to itself, to bring about any progress in holiness. Obedience is best seen as a natural outflow of the love relationship with Jesus – *"If anyone*

*loves me, he will keep my word. . . .” (John 14:23) In the warm relational context of this conversation, this is a descriptive observation of Jesus more than a prescriptive duty. The Spirit’s power is everywhere seen in the New Testament as central and essential to real transformation into Christlikeness and is held out as far superior to mere willpower, however conscientious it may be. (See Romans 7-8.) Thus The Life Model rightly emphasizes attachment love with Christ and others—and the sense of belonging and secure identity that attends this dynamic—as more critical to the inside-out way of personal transformation and path to maturity.*

*Philippians 2:12b-13 (with author emphasis) – . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for **it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.***

*Romans 8:12-13 (with author emphasis) – So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if **by the Spirit** you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

*Hebrews 13:20-21 (with author emphasis) – Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, **equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.***

- The Life Model skills help us become more self-aware of, access, and engage our hearts and souls—our innermost being—literally the belly (Greek *koilia*) in the passage below from which the “rivers of living water” of the Spirit within us have their fount. It is fascinating that modern science validates the gut-brain connection via our nervous systems, hormones, and the immune system. “Hidden in the walls of the digestive system, this ‘brain in your gut’ is revolutionizing medicine’s understanding of the links between digestion, mood, health, and even the way you

think.”<sup>9</sup> The significant point here is that transformational beliefs and choices must proceed from and become embodied in deeper regions of our being where our sense of belonging, identity, and joyful attachment love are formed and generated, i.e. within our right brains. Dr. Wilder has said, “A left brain belief can never overpower a right brain relational experience.”<sup>10</sup>

*John 7:37-39 (with author’s note) – On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart (literally belly; Greek koilia) will flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

- According to the apostle John, it is simply critical that we learn to allow God to love us in such a way that our deeply embedded fears are displaced and we come to “know and believe” the love that God has for us in our innermost beings. (This often happens first through the love offered to us by His representatives.) Only then will we learn and mature in order to respond with unhindered love back to Him and others.

*1 John 4:9-11, 16a, 18-19 – In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. . . . In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. . . . So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. . . . There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us.*

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9 [http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/healthy\\_aging/healthy\\_body/the-brain-gut-connection](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/healthy_aging/healthy_body/the-brain-gut-connection)

10 In a personal exchange in January of 2017

# 6

## The Life Model teaches quieting and shalom in ways that include the body. Is this an Eastern religious practice?

- Much of Western Christian spirituality has unconsciously and gradually been influenced by Platonic notions that were repackaged for the modern world through the European Enlightenment. (It is also not insignificant to note that Christianity has its roots in the Middle East rather than Europe!) This neo-gnostic influence minimizes and marginalizes the importance of the physical body and visible world in God's economy. The Bible, in general, and the New Testament, in particular, presents a view of the human body that places it squarely into the midst of God's salvation plan and true spirituality in Christ. Consider these things:
  1. The eternal Son of the Father was incarnated as a human being into a mortal physical body. (This is considered as utter foolishness within gnostic views of spirituality.)
  2. Jesus Christ was raised bodily from the dead with an immortal, resurrected body.
  3. Jesus, who is also fully God, is—and will forever be—a glorified physical human being.
  4. As such, our faith is *incarnational* in nature, which has implications for how God intends to interact with, inhabit, and use our bodies, which He brilliantly created, to fit well with His eternal kingdom purposes. The abundant life that Jesus came to offer humanity is necessarily, in both time and eternity, physical and substantial.

- The worship of God pictured in Scripture involves our whole being—including our body: bowing down, clapping, raising our hands, resting, preaching, singing, dancing, shouting, being silent, crying, confessing, laying on of hands, anointing with oil, and more. Why would we be surprised to discover that God has also woven even more basic physical actions/interactions into the fabric of His creation to help build maturity in the human being? These are practices like breathing, smiling, laughing, eating, quieting, making eye contact, calming, yawning, and other such childlike things that The Life Model promotes. And if, for instance, we discover more profoundly how the brain works—and we have admitted that we need to train our brains as disciples of Jesus—why would we be opposed to training it according to the way that God has designed it?
- The Life Model practices and skills for training the brain, healing the emotions, and building relational and spiritual maturity in Jesus are not derived from the study or incorporation of Eastern religious practices, but from scientific and clinical research that is integrated with biblical thought and values. Any similarities are coincidental, just as there are many shared ideas and practices among the philosophies and religions across the centuries and nations in addition to their vast differences. According to Dr. Wilder, *“We have not backed off of using anything helpful simply because someone else in the world has known about it as well.”*<sup>11</sup>
- That other philosophies and religions in our world have observed and incorporated some of these powerful, and very human, physical/emotional activities into their spirituality actually stands to reason. We should expect some similarities between various religious thought and practice across the globe. This fact does not imply that integrating such practices into our discipleship are automatically to be considered as unbiblical or anti-Christian. All truth is God’s truth, as Christian philosophers and theologians have

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11 In a personal exchange in March 2017

long admitted. (This ultimately applies to both philosophy and science.) A New Testament example of this is how Paul quoted a line originally composed by the Greek poet Aratus to honor Zeus. Only Paul reframed it, used it, and directed it to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! The Greek philosophers weren't all wrong about everything.

*Acts 17:28a – In him we live and move and have our being; as even some of your own poets have said . . .*

- To discover more profoundly through scientific research that God has made our bodies, minds, hearts, and souls to be so connected is far from unbiblical in nature. Indeed, it further confirms His genius. Thus, to more wisely and intentionally employ these practices in order to grow in Christ glorifies our Creator and Savior.
- The Life Model inspires and teaches believers not just that we *need to* but *how to* “abide” in Christ in simply profound ways. The Life Model drills lead to the Life Model skills that lead to emotional, relational, and spiritual maturity and that equip us to access grace under pressure.

*Zephaniah 3:17 –*

*The Lord your God is in your midst,  
a mighty one who will save;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness;  
he will quiet you by his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing.*

# 7

## Is The Life Model a psychological “add on” to Christianity that expects therapy and healing to replace salvation and faith (human effort replacing God’s grace)?

- First of all, the word *psychological* comes from the root word for *soul*, which, thankfully, God has come to save, redeem, and restore through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. “*He restores my soul*” (Psalm 23:3).
- “Heal” and “save” are very often the same root word in the New Testament Greek – “sozo.”
- There is nothing intrinsically unbiblical about receiving therapy. It comes from the Greek word, *therapeúo*, to “heal” or “minister to.” The Holy Spirit is our personal Counselor and Comforter who certainly ministers to us. And it is good for us as Christ-followers to partner with the Holy Spirit in ministering to people. Nevertheless, The Life Model is well aware of the research that reveals the lack of lasting personal transformation in people who submit themselves to classic modern therapy. The Life Model practices are designed to be best applied in the context of consistently loving, self-propagating, and intergenerational communities of Christ-followers who are growing up together into extended spiritual families that host the presence of Christ.
- Indeed, we cannot effectively be involved in carrying on the ministry of Jesus to “*heal the brokenhearted*” without ministering healing (salvation) to the soul (psyche). So, it seems there is a false dichotomy embedded in this question.

- This question also brings to mind this fascinating passage where Peter specifically says we are actually called as followers of Jesus Christ to *add to our faith*. This is understood as a cooperative effort on our part through a deep and practical reliance on the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. It's interesting to note that as this process builds, it is crowned with the grace of *agape* (a good word for capturing what The Life Model refers to as attachment love). This list also refers to *self-control*, which is another biblical word that incorporates The Life Model concept of training our brains for the glory of Christ. This passage seems to profoundly capture the idea and paint a portrait of emotional, relational, and spiritual maturity.

*2 Peter 1:3-11 (with author emphasis) – His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith** with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

- The skills of The Life Model, which are scientifically validated, easily accessible, and practical, are simply ways to “*make every effort*” to “*practice these qualities.*”

- There is certainly nothing unbiblical about making effort and even taking pains to do our divinely assigned part to build virtues upon the initial and foundational gift of saving faith God grants us as a free gift. *Effort* is not equated with *earning* in the New Testament.
- Too often, believers think the definition of grace is limited to “unmerited favor.” However, it also carries the meaning of “divine enablement.”
- God will not do for us what He calls and empowers us to do by His Spirit who indwells us.
- Paul, and the other apostles, juxtaposed grace with meritorious “works of the law,” but not the “good works” that flow naturally from genuine heart-faith. These are the kinds of works we are to be zealous for.

*Titus 2:13-14 – waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

- We are not saved *by* good works, but we are saved *for* good works.

*Ephesians 2:8-10 – For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

- Finally, we must simply and always make a clear distinction between obeying God and engaging in good works in order to merit His grace versus co-working (cooperating) with God, who does the heavy lifting of imparting His grace into and through our lives.

*Matthew 11: 25-30 – At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

*Philippians 2:12-13 – Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

*Hebrews 13:20-21 – Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

# 8

How do spiritual and emotional maturity relate to each other and to godly character? (Generally, there is the impression that maturity is not important or godly if non-Christians can do any part of it.)

- We should be grateful for every expression of maturity and good character in human lives. This makes the world a better place in which we live to carry out the will of God for our lives. These qualities are best understood biblically as expressions and manifestations of God's goodness and kindness reflected in culture through the divine graces of Creation and Providence. For instance, we should be thankful and pray for expressions of human maturity and good character as it is embodied in civil rulers and government. (What better things to pray for them to embody than for them to be emotionally mature and exhibit good character?) The same principle can easily and wisely be extended to people, whether believers or not, into every God-ordained sphere of human societies.

*1 Timothy 2:1-3 – First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior . . .*

- One of the main philosophical premises of The Life Model is that God is the loving Creator of all people and is nearby them and doing them good long before they may personally come to faith in Jesus.

*Acts 17:24-28 – “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’”*

God’s common grace is at work in our world, and it goes ahead of us in our mission.

- Jesus encouraged His disciples to seek out and bless worthy people who have yet to come to faith in Jesus as a best practice for reaching their community with the good news. God’s common grace is at work in our world, and it goes ahead of us in our mission. We will do well to pay attention to its presence as it could be the means by which whole people groups are led to faith in Jesus.

*Matthew 10:11-13 – And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.*

- The apostle Paul affirmed the nobility exhibited by the pre-Christian Berean Jews.

*Acts 17:11 – Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*

- Paul also affirms pre-Christian Gentiles for having their consciences and character attuned to God’s moral law. Is

this not a clear witness of God's common grace at work in the world?

*Romans 2:14-16 – For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.*

- Believing spouses are able to exert a “sanctifying” influence of some kind upon their unbelieving spouses and impart a cleansing influence to their children. Whatever this means exactly is not the point. The point is that something godly and good can be relationally communicated from a believing spouse to an unbelieving spouse and to their children by the grace of God. This blessing is a marvelous thing in my eyes. It holds the power to sustain a family, help it mature, and keep it together for the glory of God and the good of society.

*1 Corinthians 7:14 – For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.*

- A simple review of the Sermon on the Mount will confirm that fear, anxiety, condemnation, despair, lust, vanity, greed, disgust, revenge, shame, and anger are the very kinds of primary human sins that are exposed and addressed head-on by Jesus. These problems are laced with classic emotional immaturities. Jesus and the apostles teach us throughout the New Testament how to overcome such things spiritually by relating in trust, love, peace, and joy to the Son, the Father, and the Spirit. So, there is a very close link between emotional and spiritual maturity in Scripture. Overcoming *anxiety* is in view in the passage below:

*Matthew 6:30-33 – But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

- One of the most famous passages in all the Bible is Paul’s classic description of a life of love in Christ in 1 Corinthians 13. And, we universally acknowledge that love is the primary aspect of the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the believer. (Galatians 5:22) What else could better describe the absolutely vital link between emotional/relational/spiritual maturity and godly character in the apostles’ teaching?

*1 Corinthians 13:1-8a – If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.*

- The Life Model practices are designed to build all forms of maturity into all facets of human life and relationships. It does so for both believers and non-believers with confidence that these things will work together for good and to further God’s will for all kinds of people and communities. This is all done in the name and for the honor of Jesus Christ—for the magnification of His presence and the furtherance of His kingdom in our world.

# 9

I am concerned about anything that attributes “God’s words” to human thoughts. Isn’t the canon closed?

- We should be eternally grateful for the written word of God that He inspired various holy servants of old to receive and record. It is the authoritative and historically settled measuring rod (canon) against which all other claims of divine revelation or inspiration are to be evaluated. It is the rule by which we measure any and all claims of divine communication, but this doesn’t rule out the possibility of genuine *extra-biblical*—in contrast to *unbiblical*—experiences of people receiving something directly from God. In His genius, God chose to superintend the writing and preservation of a book in order to most clearly and accurately communicate His transformative word and message to humanity across the generations. The Bible is truly amazing on many fronts when compared to all other books in the earth.

*2 Timothy 3:16-17 – All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

*2 Peter 1:19-21 – And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

- People sometimes assume that our believing and receiving the word of God through Scripture guarantees we are grasping God's truth objectively. But, though we can certainly come to know *objective* truths of God through the Bible by His power and grace, this does not negate the *subjective* nature of properly handling, interpreting, and applying God's inspired written word. A true and valid divine revelation can yet be distorted on the human, or even demonic, side. After all, even the devil misused and distorted the holy Scripture in his temptation of Jesus Christ in the wilderness. (See Luke 4:9-11.)

So, properly interpreting and applying divine revelation always involves a necessary subjective human side. Receiving revelation from God through the Bible is not as objective and merely rational as many people like to imagine. There is a sublime and energetic attachment love between God and us that is at the heart of engaging relationally in this vitally important and transformational spiritual art and science. We are invited to hear the voice of God's Spirit impart His word to our listening hearts as we ponder those words written on the pages of Scripture. *"We live by every word that comes out of the mouth of God."* (Matthew 4:4)

The Scripture does teach us to expect to subjectively hear God's word and God's voice.

*Hebrews 4:12 – For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

*2 Peter 3:15-16 – And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*

- Since the Holy Spirit is the one who originally inspired the authors of the Bible, it makes sense that the influence of the Holy Spirit upon and within us is essential for its proper interpretation and application. The word of God and the Spirit (*breath* or *wind* in both Hebrew and Greek) of God go together like our speech and our breath. They are never separated. I like to compare the written word of God to a *flagpole* and the experiential work of the Holy Spirit to a *flag*. The former is solid, grounded, immovable, and the latter is colorful, fluid, and responsive to the wind. They are quite different, but they make a great and essential combo. It is ultimately the Holy Spirit who wields the word of God as a sword of truth among us needy people upon the earth.

*Ephesians 6:17b – . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*

- We must know both the Scriptures and the power of God in order to rightly comprehend God's truths. The Sadducees were mistaken about correct doctrine because they didn't discern this blend of God's word and God's power. Jesus said to them, "*Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?*" (Mark 12:44) We also will be confounded by the truths of God if we do not embrace both aspects of the way He works with humanity. Even as we take in the plain meanings and forthright truths of Scripture, we must yet rely on the Holy Spirit to inspire and illuminate our hearts, souls, and minds in the process of digesting, understanding, interpreting, and applying it to our lives and to the lives of others, if we are teachers and preachers. If we will ask Him to, the Spirit will be our supreme teacher. One of the essential aspects of the promise of the New Covenant is that every child of God will be directly taught by God Himself.

*Hebrews 8:10-11 –*

*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel*

*after those days, declares the Lord:  
I will put my laws into their minds,  
and write them on their hearts,  
and I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.  
And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor  
and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'  
for they shall all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest.*

*1 John 2:27 – But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.*

- The Holy Spirit of God is communicative by nature. God wants His voice of truth to be heard among the nations. He is the one who communicates the truth of the good news of Jesus to the unbelieving heart, bringing life-altering new convictions. (See John 16:8.) He is the one indwelling the believer who has made the experiential attachment love to the Father and the Son possible. And, He will not always be silent. We cannot and must not try to contain the very wind of God that blows where it wishes. As we soak ourselves in the written word, He will be present with us to illuminate and inspire us to drink in the truths our Father wants us to build our lives upon. Ordinary believers across the ages, the cultures, and the various church traditions have testified to knowing the evident communicative presence of the Holy Spirit as they prayerfully meditate on the words of Scripture with open hearts that are eager to learn, believe, and obey.

*Luke 24:27, 31-32, 45 – And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. . . . And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" . . . Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures . . .*

- Furthermore, nowhere in holy Scripture is it taught that the Holy Spirit is limited to only communicate to people through the Scriptures, though one might safely say it seems to be His favorite way. He also communicates through conscience, creation, a listening heart, a still small voice, anointed human vessels, a dream, a vision, an angel, an audible voice, and the like. He is a free Spirit and able to speak and reveal the truth of God in any way that our Father and the Son wish for Him to do so.

The Bible does not teach that we are to write more Scripture. But it does teach us to expect to subjectively hear God's word and God's voice. And, just as the Holy Spirit helps us receive, interpret, and apply the written word of God into our lives, He can and will do the same with any extra-biblical encounter with a possible divine communication. He will also help us to recognize and reject a counterfeit.

*1 Corinthians 2:11-12a, 16—For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God . . . "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*

*1 John 4:1 – Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

- The Spirit is a faithful witness to God's truth and capable of communicating it to us in many ways. The Bible is a very selective book of reliable revelation, but it does not contain everything God has ever done, said, will do and/or will yet say. Not every word from God through the prophets (Old Testament and New), apostles or of Jesus Himself has been inscripturated. But those words were no less inspired by God.

*Acts 15:32 – And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.*

*John 20:30-31 – Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

- Everywhere in the New Testament we are promised a conversational, interactive, love relationship with the Trinity in real time. The holy Scriptures are there for us so we can compare any other possible divine communications to them. In a recent personal interchange, Dr. Wilder mused, *“We expect God to speak to us through sermons, pastors, hymns, spiritual songs, and these are all human thoughts and words we expect will be shaped by God. The Life Model suggests that we examine our own thoughts as well to look for any that might be shaped by God and pay attention to what they might be. Like any sermon, they must be checked for truth, but no one is saying that preaching is wrong because the canon is closed.”* He also expressed his concern that we neither elevate our thoughts too highly, nor dismiss them too quickly as a possible way that God is speaking to our hearts in His desire to shape and direct our lives.<sup>12</sup>

I have found the best safeguard against any spiritual deception on this front has been to immerse myself in Scripture with a devotional motivation and attitude so that I come in close and personal touch with the nature of God—especially as revealed in Jesus and the New Covenant—to where I am marvelously affected by the tone, tenor, and texture of the authentic voice of our Heavenly Father and the themes of His grand Jesus-story in the earth. They say that currency inspectors study the real thing so thoroughly and well that it is rather easy for them to spot the counterfeit!

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<sup>12</sup> In a personal communication in March 2017

*John 14:26 – But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

*John 16:13-14 – When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

*Hebrews 5:14 – But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

- Throughout the centuries and across the planet, godly people from all church traditions testify to receiving direct, divine communication that proves itself to be valid, transforming, helpful, and glorifying to Jesus Christ. In one of his seminars, Dr. Wilder inquired (and I paraphrase), “Why is it that many Bible believing Christians have no problem with the idea that Satan can put thoughts of evil into people’s minds, but do not make room for the living God to share His thoughts with us?”<sup>13</sup>

And why is it that many who tout the importance of speaking to God in prayer, have no expectation He might speak back to us—beyond maybe “leading” us somehow to a particular Bible passage? It seems we have formulated a limiting doctrine. Maybe this has happened in over-reaction to horror stories of people who have abused and harmed others in the name of hearing something directly from God? But we would do ourselves and people everywhere a terrible disservice by trying to deal with the challenge of receiving and processing subjective divine revelation and illumination by forbidding its possibility.

*1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 – Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good.*

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<sup>13</sup> In a personal communication in March 2017

- We must not allow a lack of experience or reactions to aberrant practices to determine sound doctrine and practice. The burden of proof that God cannot or does not speak directly into the hearts of His children by the Holy Spirit rests squarely on those who teach this view. To do so reduces our loving and living Father to a once upon a time retired author incapable of interacting personally and directly with us in the present moment. How far this is from the spirit of the deeply moving and robust hymn “I Serve a Risen Savior” by Alfred Henry Ackley!

I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today.  
I know that He is living, Whatever men may say.  
I see His hand of mercy; I hear His voice of cheer;  
And just the time I need Him He's always near.  
He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.  
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

My sheep hear my voice,  
and I know them,  
and they follow me.  
- Jesus Christ  
JOHN 10:27



PART TWO

# Appendices



## Who Developed The Life Model?

- The Life Model was pioneered and has been established over many years by a coalition of Christ-loving and people-loving philosophers, theologians, psychiatrists, psychologists, pastors, clinicians, and recovery practitioners. It was inaugurated in the 1970s out of a counseling center called The Shepherd's House in Van Nuys, CA. Dr. E. James Wilder is the founder and chief theoretician of this growing international organization.
- A team of wise and compassionate men and women has practiced The Life Model and helped many terribly broken people recover from debilitating negative habits, addictions, abuses, and past traumas.
- The Life Model team members are all well-grounded in Scripture, spiritual discernment, professional training, and real-world evaluated experience.
- The Life Model has received much confirmation for their basic theories and practices from the latest and best brain science that has especially emerged from Dr. Allan Schore's research at UCLA through many decades. Dr. Schore has been called the Einstein of Psychoanalysis.<sup>14</sup>
- Through the decades, Dr. Schore has tracked closely with the major shifts and developments in brain science theory from the behavioral (1950s and 60s), to the cognitive (1970s and 80s), to the affective (new century). He pioneered the neurological basis for attachment theory, which posits that the human brain grows and thrives on the experience of relational joy more than the drives for mere pleasures, survival, sex, or power. Now, because of advanced brain imaging technology, scientists can actually view the positive impact that attachment-based joy has

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.neuropsychotherapist.com/an-interview-with-allan-schore/>

upon the human brain, even after the brain-growth-rich months of infancy.

- Dr. Schore’s work has also revealed significant differences between the right and left hemispheres of the human brain that have helped confirm, further inform, and fine-tune the discernments, concepts, and practices of The Life Model.



## What Is The Life Model?

- According to its website homepage:

*The Life Model is a multi-generational model of redemption and maturity from birth to death. Based on a biblical worldview, incorporating the latest in brain science and best practices, The Life Model effectively provides lasting transformation of identity, character and culture.*
- The Life Model Works home page also states that the three distinctive features of The Life Model are how to build Multi-Generational Communities, live an Immanuel Lifestyle, and practice the 19-Relational Brain Skills that are rapidly disappearing from modern society.
- The Life Model is Christ-centered, joy-based, relationship-focused, and human design-friendly approach to personal transformation, healthy attachments, and genuine maturation.
- In his paper entitled “The Theoretical Basis for The Life Model,” Jim Wilder states: “*The LIFE Model is, as its name implies, a model for life from conception to death. It is an idealized model, that is to say, it proposes what life should be like as opposed to merely describing what life on earth generally produces. In short, the LIFE Model proposes that in order to thrive people need five things:*”

1. *A place to belong*
2. *To both receive and give life*
3. *The capacity to recover from malfunctions*
4. *Maturation*
5. *To stay true to their identities*<sup>15</sup>

- The Life Model is an integrated set of transformative faith-based concepts and prayerful practices/exercises that enhance our experience of peace and joy.
- The Life Model posits that deep and lasting transformation happen in our lives primarily by gaining a clearer sense of personal identity and belonging to others in a life-giving way than by mere verbal appeals to reason to simply make better choices.
- The Life Model posits that communities and cultures of joy will form around leaders who allow their right-brain skills to motivate their constituencies. Alternatively, left-brain dominated leaders will create cultures of fear, even though they may get things done. To use an acrostic crafted

The Life Model is fostering a movement of joy-based spiritual transformation.

by Dr. Marcus Warner of Deeper Walk International, such right-brain leaders are “R.A.R.E.,” in that there aren’t enough of them around and that they know how to **R**emain Relational, **A**ct Like Themselves, **R**eturn to Joy Quickly, and **E**ndure Hardship Well.

- The Life Model carries on the mission of Jesus Christ to “*heal the brokenhearted*” on various fronts—to empower people to build solid character, to grow into maturity, to thrive in life, to engage in healthy inter-personal relationships, and to build authentically joyful communities.
- The Life Model promotes and teaches practices and exercises designed to activate, engage, and grow right-brain capacities as a basis for lasting, hard-wired transformation. Because the right brain operates at a supra-conscious speed, the only way to engage with it and build it up is by

<sup>15</sup> This paper can be found here: <http://www.lifemodel.org/download/Model%20Building%20Appendix.pdf> and a slide presentation can be found here: <http://slideplayer.com/slide/6040423/>

relational/experiential/emotional/spiritual means. This is why many of the personal, physical, and relational practices seem very simple—and even remedial—to many when they first begin to employ them.

- The Life Model is fostering a movement of joy-based spiritual transformation with an international impact. It is producing a growing multi-media library of inspirational and educational resources and also hosts various kinds of web-based and live events in places across the world. Life Model Works also seeks to assist other communities and groups of people to embrace and apply the principles and practices it has innovated.



## Our Story

### My Background

At eighteen years old, in 1973, I was soundly converted to Jesus Christ and have never looked back for over forty-four years. I began to take in the love that He has for me and to also love Him and other people in response. I immediately became a fascinated student of the Bible. The four gospels and epistles of the New Testament especially came alive to me. Ever since, I have sought to understand and apply to my daily life what I read and learn. I just look for “what I need to believe” and “what I need to obey” in the light of the words of Jesus and His apostles, which I have meditated upon, journaled about, and prayed into for many hours, days, weeks, and years.

While I was in university, I began to share my faith with other students with boldness and compassion. Many fellow students came to saving faith in Jesus Christ during my years on campus, and we actually formed a local church—of which I became the first pastor. We studied Scripture and prayed together, we met in small groups, we shared our faith, and our lives were forever marked by that student revival. I began preaching

the word of God publicly on a weekly basis when I was nineteen. To this day, I am in touch with many men and women who were saved by grace through faith in those days on our campus, and their hearts are still burning with the same spiritual fire.

Since 1974 I have been a church planter, pastor, teacher, writer, and speaker. I have traveled to over twenty-five countries to share the love and word of God with many people. I have also been a curious observer regarding how followers of Jesus are transformed progressively into His image. Through the years I have attempted to understand and capture the insights, keys, and practices that have helped me and other believers grow into greater maturity. I have been especially interested in discerning God's part in our spiritual growth and the part that He empowers us to play by His grace. I have also tried to locate the nature and scope of the barriers that have hindered so many sincere believers from maturing, bearing fruit, and living victoriously in Christ.

Though there are many notable exceptions, I must confess I have not been satisfied with the degree of deep and lasting personal transformation I have observed across the Body of Christ at large. This is true even among those who are long-standing members of Bible-believing churches who sit under the regular preaching and teaching of godly and gifted leaders.

## Terri's Immanuel Healing

In 2004, my very vibrant wife, Terri, was suddenly stricken with a terrible condition called trigeminal neuralgia in which a vein in the brain wanders and interferes with the fifth cranial nerve. Her case was severe, and Terri needed brain surgery to correct the condition. She suffered searing pain in her face for an entire eighteen months due to both the condition and the resulting nerve damage. She had to quit her job and basically lay on the couch for two years as she recovered.

Thankfully, she received healing from the pain, but her life had been disrupted significantly. Added to this, she also suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder in the aftermath of all her pain and loss. This series of events was a deep test of her faith, and, although God often seemed very near to her in her affliction, she also struggled to hold onto her confidence that God was "for her" as a favored daughter of Christ.

In 2008, we were exposed to The Life Model and its approach to recovery, healing, and spiritual growth. I discovered they had experienced great success over many years helping some of the most damaged, broken, and addicted people in southern California recover and mature through the power of Christ.

Through the years, I had become a personal—though long-distant—friend with Dr. Dallas Willard. His books and lectures on discipleship and spiritual formation had deeply impacted my life. I enjoyed a handful of personal and private times with him, which only deepened the impact he had upon me in Christ. When I heard that Dallas was an advisor to Dr. Wilder and the Shepherd’s House, I was eager for Terri to go to Pasadena to receive their “Immanuel Prayer” —a specific form of healing prayer that was pioneered by Dr. Karl Lehman—a psychiatrist and close colleague of Jim Wilder.

In 2009, our friend Kim Specker, who was already involved with Life Model Works as a business coach, referred Terri to Jim Wilder’s wife, Reverend Kitty Wilder, in order to receive some “Immanuel Prayer” from her. During the two three-hour prayer sessions, Terri experienced a remarkable healing from the trauma of her past illness. She experienced a vivid spiritual vision in which she saw the sparkle in the eyes of Jesus as He lovingly gazed upon and into her. As a result, the symptoms of PTSD immediately abated! This stunning and immediate answer to prayer obviously inspired us to “tune in” more intently to the ministry of Life Model Works and its body of teaching and practice.

## Surprised By Immanuel

To paraphrase a statement by author and pastor Max Lucado, *“God loves us so much he accepts us just the way we are, but he loves us too much to leave us that way.”*<sup>16</sup> I think this simple statement captures an important insight into both the justification and sanctification aspects of our salvation in Jesus Christ. It’s obvious to most people that a true conversion to Jesus through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit does not result in instant spiritual maturity and its many intended ripple effects over time upon our entire lives. This kind of growth and development is a process, even though we may experience powerful crisis growth

<sup>16</sup> <https://maxlucado.com/products/just-like-jesus/>

experiences along the way. Crisis always leads to opportunity for further process.

My conversion was certainly a dramatic experience, and my life and lifestyle were radically altered when this happened to me at eighteen. Still, I am very convinced, as are the people who know me well, that I am not yet fully mature and/or entirely like Jesus! Through my forty-four years of being in Christ, I have sought to embrace the attitude that Paul expressed in Philippians 3:12, *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.”* The Lord is still at work in my life and I am eager to continue my journey of personal transformation into His image. The following is an example of the ongoing development that God is working into my life. It happened just after my sixtieth birthday.

In the spring of 2015, Terri and I were teaching and ministering at a well-known mission base in Kona, Hawaii. Weeks before we arrived, we had set aside one day and night to visit the Kilauea National Park. We took in the astounding sights of the live volcano and learned about its history. That night Terri had a dream in which a voice said to her, “I have brought you here for an Immanuel Healing.”

Through this dream she surmised that God was going to use images from our volcano experience as a parable for this healing. She also knew the particular past trauma she had experienced that was being targeted for a sweet resolution. After she told me about this illuminating dream the next morning, we spent several hours praying together. Terri received another remarkable “Immanuel Healing” within her soul that morning (that’s another story), but I was surprised to discover this experience also involved a profound healing for my heart as well.

I have struggled for a long time with an imbalance in my life. Some people refer to this as being “top heavy.” That is, over-relying on intellectual power in order to survive in this world and be more successful. My “intellectualism” has too often quenched the influence of the Holy Spirit in my life, relationships, and ministry. A good mind is a great gift, but it’s easy for us to overuse our strengths in life in our attempts to wrongly protect ourselves, mask our fears, and reduce perceived threats against us. This area of weakness in me was the target for the “Immanuel Healing” that I would begin to graciously experience on May 16th, 2015 in Hawaii.

A lot of times our problems peel off of us in layers as we walk with Jesus as our Lord and Friend. I had experienced a number of significant breakthroughs in this same area of my life in previous years. However, there was still a specific wound hiding within me that fueled my struggle with being too head-focused, which I had not previously perceived. As Terri and I prayed together in our hotel room on top of Kilauea that morning I was suddenly and clearly reminded of the influence upon me of a friend I had made as a new teenager. I probably spent a total of fifteen days with this young man. He was a brilliant university student who was studying at a highly acclaimed school in Chicago. I lived in a NE suburb of Detroit, and he was a family friend of our neighbors across the street. I don't think I thought of Robert more than a few times since becoming an adult.

At the time I met Robert, I was a young teen and emotionally disconnected from my father. He was a self-made businessman and a workaholic. He had never learned how to make himself emotionally available to his four kids.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, Robert took a genuine interest in me as a person and affirmed me as having the potential to become a highly educated intellectual like him. He taught me to play chess, and we talked about history, economics, life, and philosophy. My immature and insecure heart longed for this kind of attention and approval from an older male, so I gravitated toward becoming an intellectual.

Robert had given me a copy *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand, which I read and discussed with him. Because I admired him on an intellectual level, I thought I'd become an "objectivist" like him. Besides, the "Mr. Spock" character appeared on our TV screens around this time and I deeply identified with him too! By sixteen, I was a very confused pseudo-intellectual-hippie-jock! I was putting on all kinds of masks in a vain attempt to "find myself."

I had previously, with the help of Terri, shed some of the layers of "intellectualism" from the influence of idolizing "Mr. Spock" in my youth, but it was in remembering Robert and *Atlas Shrugged* that I was set up for an even deeper "Immanuel Healing" for my heart.

As Terri and I prayed together on top of the mountain on the big island of Hawaii that spring morning, she received a visual impression of how

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<sup>17</sup> Soon after this time, Dad became a believer in and follower of Jesus Christ. Many years later, after my mom passed away in 1989, Dad moved to Kansas City to be close to my family. He grew strong in his faith and matured in wonderful ways. We built an extraordinary friendship in those years until he passed away in 2007.

my heart was crusted over with a hardness in the first years of our marriage. In this mental picture, Jesus had His hand on my heart and was weeping over this hardness. We asked the Holy Spirit to show me how that hardness had been set up within me. That's when I suddenly and clearly remembered the influence that Robert and *Atlas Shrugged* had upon me as an insecure teen.

For the first time in my life, I realized this was a subtle, yet powerful, kind of trauma. This trauma—the “type A” kind—had to do with not getting what I needed from my earthly father to develop a healthy and well-rounded identity while I was in this vulnerable and formative stage of life. As a result, I took in a very cold, calculated, and overly objective view of God, life, and relationships.<sup>18</sup>

We asked the Lord, as we do in the “Immanuel Process,” where He was in the traumatic scene (after recalling a time or memory of appreciation as a “home base”). I did not get an answer that day. In fact, it wasn't until an early morning four months later that I received my insight, which came in a flash of what I believe was God's grace.

In that month, I experienced a vivid dream in which I saw the cover of the *Atlas Shrugged* book, upon which Atlas was pictured as having the world upon his shoulders. Suddenly, the image animated and Atlas shrugged the globe off of himself, and it rolled to the edge of the book cover and began to fall off. Then the scene froze, and I was taken back in my dream to an actual event in my life that happened when I was six or seven. I was in the passenger side seat of a car driven by a family friend from the town in Michigan where my mother grew up. John was the husband of one of my mom's closest friends. He was a free-spirited and artsy kind of adult male. I really hadn't been around men like this before. My brother and John's two sons were in the back seat. Suddenly, he looked at me in the eyes and joyfully stated, “I want to sing you boys a song.” Then he belted out the song “He's Got the Whole World in His Hands.”

I had never heard this song before, but I never forgot the tune or the words. This song left an indelible imprint on me. In my dream, a voice

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<sup>18</sup> Please know that I do not hold anything against poor Robert. I have only thoughts of good toward him. Though brilliant, he too was also an un-affirmed and insecure young man at the time!

said to me, “Michael, I was in the car with you that day . . . that’s why you remember it so well. I knew what was going to happen to you as a young teen, and I want you to know that I had you covered long before then and that I would turn the attack that would later come upon you to serve My purposes.” Then I saw the first scene of the dream and the image activated again. As Atlas’s globe fell off the edge of the book, it landed in two giant hands that I understood to be the hands of Jesus. This was absolutely stunning to me, and I was shaken awake as the dream ended!

Here was my takeaway that I submit for your consideration. Whereas Atlas finally and coldly shrugs off the weight of the world in the view of the objectivist, Jesus Christ is gladly and compassionately there to catch it in His capable hands, as though it were a Nerf ball. I believe He caught me in His hands even before I fell into the deception of my teen years. He catches you too. He’s got the whole world in His hands! Since that dream in September of 2015, I have been writing a lot of poetry and shedding a lot of tears—mostly from a new and tender sense of joy and gratitude!

Through the ministry of Life Model Works, we have seen more clearly how we all get stuck on our pathway to maturity by historic personal traumas of various kinds that are buried and unresolved. However the pains come, the evil one is always looking for a personal narrative to twist and exploit and confine us into some kind of spiritual, mental, emotional, or relational “prison cell.” Often, he accomplishes this significantly and early on through the angst of our childhood. Too often, these matrices of lies—or strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4)—plague us and drive us well into our adulthood.





## Michael Sullivan

Michael Sullivan resides in the Kansas City area, has been married to Terri since 1977 and is a father of five “wonderfully gifted” adult children. Their lives have been marked and shaped by a naturally-supernatural and interactive relationship with God as unashamed followers of Jesus the Christ.

Terri and Michael have been involved in active ministry since their days at Miami University in Ohio. They have given themselves to planting communities of faith in several U.S. states, pastoring, teaching, writing, coaching, building leaders, and traveling to offer ministry in many nations. Michael is the author of *Prophetic Etiquette*, *Your Kingdom Come*, and a devotional commentary called *The Romance of Romans: God’s Big God-Story*.

Michael and Terri are co-founders of Radius . . . an equipping ministry that reaches out to many people.

You can find them at [www.radius-group.org](http://www.radius-group.org).

