



# How To Walk in the Freedom of Christ

by

Dr. Nicolas Andre Ellen

# *How To Walk In The Freedom of Christ*

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## About the Speaker

Dr. Nicolas André Ellen is the Senior Pastor of Community of Faith Bible Church in Houston, TX, and Senior Professor of Biblical Counseling at the College of Biblical Studies in Houston. He has also developed a biblical counseling training center, Expository Counseling Training Center LLC. He received a B.A. in Business Administration from the University of Houston; M.A. in Christian Education from Dallas Theological Seminary; M.A. in Biblical Counseling from The Masters University, Santa Clarita, CA; D. Min. with a concentration in Biblical Counseling from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY; and Ph.D. in Biblical Counseling from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX. Dr. Ellen is a Certified Biblical Counselor and also a Fellow with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). He travels nationwide with the organization teaching biblical counseling principles. Dr. Ellen and his wife, Dr. Venessa Ellen, have two children and four grandchildren. If you would like to see the catalog of material provided by Dr. Ellen, go to [www.mycounselingcorner.com](http://www.mycounselingcorner.com). You may also find his books on amazon.

## Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>About the Speaker</b>                                | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Table of Contents</b>                                | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Trusting God</b>                                     | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>How To Quiet A Noisy Soul</b>                        | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>The Passions We Must Deny</b>                        | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Guarding Your Heart</b>                              | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Learning To Be Content</b>                           | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Walking In The Good Works Prepared by God for Us</b> | <b>17</b> |

**Trusting God  
(Proverbs 3:5-6)**

**What Happens When We Don't Trust God with Our Lives?**

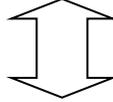
**Unbelief**

**(Hebrews 3:7-19)**

There is the idea that God is not doing enough for us; or that God is not enough for us.

(We reject the truth about God.)

(We believe a lie about God.)



**Selfish Ambition**

**(James 3:13-16)**

We live as if all things are for us (God is nonexistent).

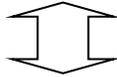
We live as if all things are about us (God is nonexistent).

We live as if everything revolves around us (God is nonexistent).

We become preoccupied with what we want in place of obedience to God.

We are consumed with pleasures of this life; use people as avenues for our satisfaction.

(I want need, I demand, I must have, I can't do without)

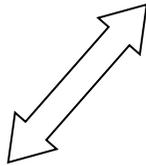


**Discontentment**

**(Ecclesiastes 5:10-11)**

We are never satisfied with anything or anyone and never seem to have enough of either.

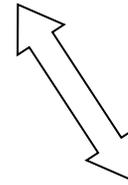
(If Only I had, I should have, Why don't I have, Life would be better if, I deserve)



**Anger**

**(James 1:19-20)**

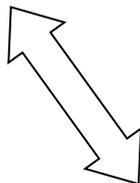
Negative reaction to not getting our way



**Worry**

**(Matthew 6:25-34)**

Fear of what we may lose or not receive

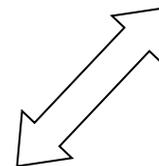


**Despair**

**(Ecclesiastes 2:17)**

Sorrow with no hope because we view life without a proper view of God

(Chart Adapted from Taking Time to Quiet Your Noisy Soul (Workbook) by Jim Berg)



## I. The Premise of Trusting God (v5)

- A. Trusting God means to rely on and place confidence in who He is.
1. It is not a mental assent of what you understand.
  2. It is an act of the mind, will, and emotion responding to who He is.
  3. It is an act of submission to the Self-Existent Eternal God.
- B. Trusting God must start from the inside out.
1. It starts with taking every thought captive to His Word.
  2. It moves to setting your affections on His Will, His Way, His Promises.
  3. It ends with a sense of well-being knowing God has everything under control even when things look and feel out of control.
- C. We must trust that God is:
1. Sovereign – controls all things at all times for His Glory and our good.  
(Lam. 3:37-38, Eph. 1:11, 1Tim. 6:13-16)
  2. Infinite in wisdom – knows the best course of action and the way to bring about the best results.  
(Col. 2:1-3, Rom 11:33 )
  3. Perfect in love – seeks the highest good of individuals.  
(Ps 32:10, 1John 4:9-10, Lam3:22-23)

## II. The Pitfall to Trusting God (v5)

- A. The pitfall to trusting God is relying on your own insight.
- B. Relying on your own insight is having a human observation apart from a biblical interpretation. (Ps 73)
1. You ask questions like why did God let this happen to me instead of How is God using what happened to me to make me more like Christ?
  2. You ask questions like why didn't God do anything for me then instead of What was God doing then to His Glory and my benefit now?
  3. You view life according to how things make you happy or unhappy instead how things make you Holy or Unholy.
  4. You interpret life according to your feelings and passions instead of from God's precepts and promises.
- C. Relying on your own insight alone leads to self deception, self protection, self centeredness, and self promotion. (Prov.14:12)

Signs of leaning on your own understanding:

1. Inflexible / your way or no way in almost every aspect of life.
2. Preoccupied with making things happen to you, for you, through you as you desire instead of submission to the Power, Presence, Provision of God as He as ordained and allowed.
3. Thoughts, words, actions are predicated on the response of people/ outcome of events not the will of God
4. Thinking/speaking/living as if the outcome of your life depends on you.

### III. The Process of Trusting God (v6)

- A. We must acknowledge God in every aspect of life.
- B. To acknowledge God means to acquire God's instruction for every aspect of life. (Matt.6:33)
  - 1. We must begin to examine every aspect of life from a Biblical perspective.
  - 2. We must be willing to accept His perspective above man's opinion and our personal preferences and desires.
  - 3. We must identify what God's Word has to say about marriage, dating, entertainment, money, children, employers, employees, evangelism, discipleship ect. and begin to govern ourselves accordingly.
- C. To acknowledge God means to obey God's instruction in every aspect of life (Matt. 7:24-27)
  - 1. We must turn away from people, places, things, ideals, desires, that lead us into sin
  - 2. We must turn to people , places, things, ideals, and desires that lead us into the Righteousness of Jesus Christ
  - 3. We must begin the hard work of functioning according to God's design in all aspects of life (putting off and putting on)

### IV. The Promise of Trusting God (v6)

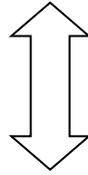
- A. God promised to make our way of life straight if we acknowledge Him.
- B. To make our way straight means to make us morally upright, productive and satisfied. (Ps 37:6, John 15:1-5, Matt 5:6)
  - 1. We will live a life that is beneficial to others and pleasing to God.
  - 2. We will live a life of satisfaction and contentment apart from the outcome of events the actions of others.
  - 3. We will have a sense of peace and confidence before God.
- C. God did not promise freedom from failure, freedom from trials, freedom from problems; nor did He promise material riches, or realization of all our expectations.(Eccl. 7:14,20,John 16:33, Proverbs 13:12)

## What Happens When We Trust God With Our Lives?

### Belief

(Psalm 73:25-26)

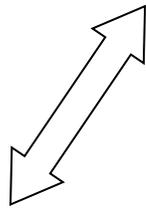
We accept the truth that God is doing enough  
We accept the truth that God is enough



### Contentment

(Philippians 4:10-14)

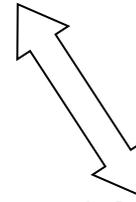
We accept what we have  
We accept what God has  
has allowed in our lives  
We accept who we have  
We learn to live without when  
necessary



### Thanksgiving

(1Thessalonians 5:18)

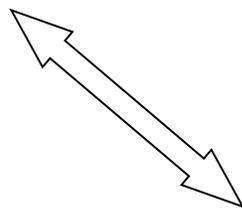
We appreciate that God is in control;  
that God will work all things to our good



### Submission

(Romans 12:1-3)

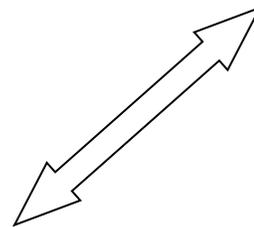
We obey God  
We follow God



### Hope

(Romans 5:1-5)

We put our expectation in what God will do according to His Promises  
(Idea adapted from Jim Berg)



## How To Quiet A Noisy Soul (Matthew 11:28-30)

### I. The Premise of a Noisy Soul

- A. A noisy soul is a mind that is bombarded with thoughts of:
1. guilt- the awareness in your soul that you have done something wrong, being down-casted in mind.
  2. fear of judgment –an impending sense of doom, anticipating something bad is going to happen, a sense of anxiety as a result of the loud noise of guilt in your soul.
  3. running away – thinking about ways to escape the pain you are feeling in your heart as a result of the loud noise of the fear of judgment in your soul.
- B. A noisy soul is caused by trying to control the good and bad that God controls in your life, instead of enjoying and enduring what God ordains in your life.
- C. A noisy soul is caused by reducing life to what you want, what you think you need, and living by what you think is right and wrong, resulting in living a life of self-indulgence and self righteousness which is all self-centeredness.
- D. In essence, a noisy soul is caused by trying to live a life without God resulting in preoccupation with your own cares, riches worries, and standards leading to being weary (tired from hard toil) and heavy laden (loaded down) thus a noisy soul.

**Summary:** *A noisy soul is a soul that is down-casted, doubtful, devastated, divided, and devoid of peace as a result of seeking to live life without depending on and submitting to God.*

### II. The Prescription for a Noisy Soul v28-v29

- A. God's calls us to come to Him – establish a relationship with Jesus Christ all who are weary (tired from the hard toil) and heavy laden (loaded down from the noise of our soul, the sin that so easily entangles us); *This is a call to salvation.*
- B. God calls us to take His yoke – submit to Jesus Christ in discipleship; *This is a call to sanctification.*
- C. God calls us to learn gentleness from Him- a willing submission from the heart to the rule of God over your life without grumbling or resisting; a willing submission to the agenda of God.
- D. God calls us to learn humility from Him – a willing disposition from the heart and willing practice to esteem others above yourself; a willingness to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ above making a name for yourself.

**Summary:** *We must come to Jesus Christ to receive salvation. We must walk with Jesus Christ in sanctification. "We must learn the Lord's Nature and out of love seek to relate to Him accordingly; Letting the Mind of the Master be the Master of our Minds" (Quote from Jim Berg)*

### III. The Promise for the Noisy Soul v29-v30

- A. We will be given rest (Christ's saving work is to give rest (b) in Mt. 11:28.)<sup>1</sup>for our souls if we come to Him- to be refreshed; to be revived in soul from spiritual death to spiritual life through salvation in Jesus Christ; This rest can be defined as Peace with God- legally declared right with God; *this rest is given through Salvation (Romans 5:1).*
- B. We will find rest (inward tranquility while one performs necessary labor)<sup>2</sup>for our souls if we follow Him – relief from anxiety and trouble, relief from the pain of guilt as we walk in progressive sanctification in Jesus Christ; This rest can be defined as the Peace of God- tranquility of soul as a result of following Jesus Christ; *this rest is gained through Sanctification ( Philippians 4:6-9).*
- C. His yoke will be easy – His agenda of discipleship is well fitted and suited for you; adapted to fit you; as you submit to His agenda, God's purpose is fulfilled in you and through you resulting in pleasantness for you and Glory to Him.
- D. His burden will be light – the load God has for you carry in terms of the demands of discipleship will not be more than what you can handle; It will be bearable and not burdensome. You will be able to carry the load without it weighing you down.

**Summary:** *Through salvation you will be given rest -peace with God. Through sanctification you will find rest- the peace of God. The lifestyle and responsibility God gives, teaches, and commands you to walk in will not be burdensome or more than what you can handle. It has been tailor made to fit you. It is well fitted for you.*

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<sup>1</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 56.

<sup>2</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, electronic ed. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

**The Passions We Must Deny**  
**(1 Peter 2:11)**

**I. We are called to abstain from fleshly lust.**

- A. We are to restrain ourselves from satisfying inordinate desires.
- B. That means we are to restrain ourselves from satisfying natural desires outside of God's will:
  - 1. Natural desires- the basic desires of the body for food, sleep, or sex.
  - 2. We are not to satisfy natural desires in ways that are disobedient to God i.e. gluttony, oversleeping out of laziness, sex outside of God's will.
- C. That means we are to restrain ourselves from satisfying neutral desires outside of God's will:
  - 1. Neutral desires- all that I want to be, to have, to create, to do, or to experience where God has given man freedom of conscience to decide i.e. to be an engineer, to have a nice home, to create a business or invention, to go fishing, to see a play etc.
  - 2. We are not to satisfy neutral desires in ways that are disobedient to God i.e. being dishonest on an application to get the engineering job, spending more than you can afford to have a nice home, focusing so much on creating a business or invention that you neglect being a disciple or making disciples, or going fishing or seeing plays so often that you neglect going to church and serving others.
- D. That means we are to restrain ourselves from satisfying naughty desires:
  - 1. Naughty desires - all that I want to be, to have, to create, to do, or to experience that God would define as sin.
  - 2. We are not satisfy naughty desires at all i.e. to define and be what I want according to my own rules and regulations apart from or outside of God's order or command, to live a life refusing to answer to anyone including God, to seek to control and possess any person that will satisfy all my agendas, to try create a way of life, business, or situation whereby I can be autonomous from God and people, to do what I want apart from or outside of God's order or command, to try control my destiny, or to try control your destiny etc.
- E. That means we are to have mastery of our internal desires through the power of God.
- F. We do this understanding we are loved by God.
- G. We do this understanding that we are not of this world which means we are not to participate in the values, customs, or lifestyle that contradict values, customs, or lifestyle of our citizenship in heaven.

## II. Here are key principles to help us abstain from fleshly lust.

- A. We must ask God to break us of our self-rule, self-righteousness and self-indulgence- preoccupation with being our own boss not having to answer to God or others, being able to care for, provide for and maintain ourselves apart from God and people; living by our standards of what is right and judging others by those standards; living to please self in whatever capacity we choose; We must ask this, believing that He will answer our prayer for this.
- B. We must ask God on a consistent basis to create in us a heart that embraces His rule over us; to create in us a heart that is desirous of Him and His will; to create in us a heart that is willingly submissive to Him, so that we will do what God has commanded without challenge, excuse, or delay; We must ask these things believing that He will answer our prayer for these things.
- C. We must evaluate the desires that consume our mind, time, and energy to determine if they are natural, neutral, or naughty and allow God's word to dominate our thinking accordingly in relation to these desires.
- D. We must determine when we are most vulnerable to succumb to these desires(i.e. Alone, Tired, Hungry, Bored, at Morning/ Afternoon/Night, Pressure situations, Painful moments, Around men, women, or children, at Home or Away from home) and begin to think through our exit plan to resist them.
- E. We must learn to say no to ourselves when seeking to satisfy naughty desires, or seeking to satisfy natural or neutral desires in the wrong way while enduring the pain of saying no.
- F. We must train ourselves on a daily basis to submit our minds and our bodies to the authority of God resulting in living according to His commands accordingly on a daily basis while enduring the pain of being disciplined in submitting of our minds and bodies to God.
- G. We must minimize the time we would normally spend thinking and acting on those inordinate desires by devoting ourselves to other activities at the moment those inordinate desires arise in our hearts (i.e. start to devote our attention to reading, responsibilities, relationships, or recreational matters that we should or could be attending to at that moment that would honor God and lead us into Christ-like character).

### Key Points to Consider:

1. We all have desires; these desires can be natural, neutral, or naughty in their existence.
2. We are commanded to keep ourselves from satisfying the natural and neutral desires in the wrong way.
3. We are commanded to keep ourselves from satisfying the naughty desires at all.
4. If we do not restrain ourselves accordingly these desires will destroy us.

“There are few greater dangers in this fallen world than to listen to the myriad voices that tell us that somehow, someway, satisfaction of heart can be found in the possession of or experience of something in creation..... Things are not always what they seem. And in this world of deceit and danger there is no more dangerous lie than the one says that life can be found somewhere outside of the Creator.....It is always the sin of thought and desire in your heart that hooks you to the evil in the world in which you live...If your principle motive is that God would be pleased then you can liberally enjoy the variegated (variety) pleasures of the created world without rendering yourself fat, addicted, and in debt. ....It is only when you live for God that you have both grace-given desire and the power to say no to yourself, to exercise daily self-control, and to live as God has called you to live.... You cannot live in the way you were created to live and have a lifestyle that chases personal desires.... We all need to be rescued from ourselves by being spiritually awakened to something bigger than us. No life is more dangerous than the “me-ward” life that every sinner quests for. ....You simply cannot have yourself at the center and not end up with a life that is evil in the eyes of God.” (Sex and Money by Paul Tripp pp. 151,49,62,176,178,180)

## Guarding Your Heart (Proverbs 4:23)

### I. What does it mean to guard the heart?

- A. The Heart can be defined as the immaterial aspect of mankind consisting of all that is within the mind, will and affections.
- B. To guard means to protect, to preserve and to watch over.
- C. With all diligence means to guard as a guard would watch over a prisoner.
- D. Springs of life means the control center of our thoughts, words, actions and experiences.

**Key Point:** To guard the heart means to watch over one's mind, will and affections as a prison guard would watch over a prisoner; understanding that the heart is the control center of our thoughts, words, actions and experiences.

### II. How does one guard the heart?

- A. One guards the heart by protecting it from the onslaught of evil from without.
- B. One guards the heart by purifying it from the evil that is within.
- C. One guards the heart by providing it with things from without that will cultivate holiness.
- D. One guards the heart by promoting within the heart all that cultivates holiness.

**Key Point:** One guards the heart by protecting it and purifying it of evil and to provide and to promote the heart with what is holy.

### III. What should one purify and protect the heart against?

- A. One should purify and protect the heart against being double-minded (James 4:8).
- B. One should purify and protect the heart against being evil and unbelieving (Hebrews 3:12).
- C. One should purify and protect the heart against being harden (Hebrews 3:8).
- D. One should purify and protect the heart again being proud (Proverbs 16:5).

**Key Point:** One purifies and protects the heart against all that leads one into a life of sin.

### IV. What should one promote within the heart?

- A. One should promote a broken contrite heart (Psalm 51:17).
- B. One should promote a pure heart (Psalm 24:3-4).
- C. One should promote a sincere heart (Hebrews 10:22).
- D. One should promote a wise heart (Proverbs 23:19).

**Key Point:** One should promote within the heart all that leads one into a God-honoring life.

### V. What should one provide the heart?

- A. One should provide the heart with the Precepts of God (Psalm 119:11).
- B. One should provide the heart with the Presence of God (Psalm 37:4).
- C. One should provide the heart with the Promises of God (Psalm 37:4).
- D. One should provide the heart with the Pleasures from God (Psalm 16:11).

**Key Point:** One should provide the heart with all that leads one into a God-honoring life.

## **Learning to Be Content in This Life** *(Philippians 4:10-14)*

**Definition of Contentment:** *Sufficient Satisfaction within the heart through the fellowship with and power of Jesus Christ apart from external circumstances and people.*

### **I. The Picture of Contentment Painted by the Apostle Paul (v10-v14).**

- A. Paul rejoiced in the Lord when others came through for him yet his state of mind was not conditioned upon their gift (v10-v11).
- B. Paul learned to live with what he had and let it be enough for him (v12).
- C. Paul learned to live without anticipating the provision of God (v12).
- D. Paul adjusted his desires to match his condition and circumstances (v12).
- E. Paul depended on God's power from within to cultivate contentment in his condition and circumstances (v13).
- F. Paul had fellowship with God in his condition and circumstances (v13).
- G. Paul showed appreciation when others came through for him yet he did not live for or by what others may or may not do for Him (v14).

### **II. The Perspective of Contentment Promoted in the Scriptures.**

- A. A content person is able to accept their condition. (Philippians 4:11-13)
- B. A content person is able to accept their contents. (Hebrews 13:5)
- C. A content person is able to endure their circumstances. (2 Corinthians 12:10)
- D. A content person is depending on Christ. (Hebrews 13:5)
- E. A content person is pursuing Christ-Likeness. (1 Timothy 6:6-8)
- F. A content person is not a complainer. (Philippians 4: 11-13)
- G. A content person has an attitude of consideration. (Philippians 4:11-13)

### **III. The Process to Contentment Presented in Eight Key Steps.**

- A. Enjoy the good and perfect gifts that God provides in your life through the means of people, circumstances, and tangible things of this creation.
- B. Grieve the disappointments in your life that come through the means of sin, suffering, and unrealized expectations in relation to people, circumstances and tangible things of this creation.
- C. Give thanks for your condition and circumstances knowing God will use it to bring about His glory and your good through your condition and circumstances.
- D. Accept and endure what God has allowed in your life through the means of sin, suffering, unrealized expectations, people, circumstances and tangible things of this creation through seeking to make the most of it without complaining about it.
- E. Adjust your desires to fit your situation in relation to people, circumstances and tangible things of this creation.
- F. No longer demand that people satisfy you but seek to help people glorify God.
- G. Function according to your roles and responsibilities in relation to people and circumstances as assigned and commanded by God out of your covenant with God and not your mood of the moment.
- H. Embrace the character of God that is befitting for the moment, leading to worship and enjoyment of God according to that character.

**Summary:** Jesus is the doorway into the life that is truly life. Confidence in Him leads to become His apprentice in eternal living. Those who connect with Jesus Christ will find all they need to have life and life to no limit. We must increasingly integrate our lives into the spiritual world of God at every point of our lives. We must live our lives in interactive dependence upon God and interactive submission to His kingdom rule. The condition of life sought by human beings through ages is attained in quietly transforming friendship of Jesus. We must learn what is real, discover how well off we are in Jesus and begin to live according to this reality. We are supposed to groan because there are things that we have been promised but do not yet have. We are supposed to groan because the full expression of God's kingdom has not yet come. We are supposed to groan because we are not yet all that God shed the blood of his Son for us to become. We are supposed to groan because the temporary pleasures of this physical world do not satisfy us; they always leave a void in our hearts. We are supposed to groan because in every situation and circumstance we see the damage that sin has done and is doing.

We are supposed to groan because we recognize how we each give in to the temptation to seek in the physical world what we can only find in the Lord and what will only be fulfilled in eternity. This side of eternity, groaning is meant to be the default language of the big kingdom. When we groan for these reasons, we get it right. This kind of groaning is only present in people who are submitting little kingdom desires to big kingdom interests. Where does one find ultimate fulfillment, satisfaction, and contentment? In God and God alone. Living for God is indeed fulfilling, but we don't find Him fulfilling because we are too busy being satisfied with the temporary pleasures of the physical world.

Before we ever come to God we have already decided the things that we want in order to be fulfilled. We tend to seek God so that He will deliver some kind of physical, relational, or circumstantial fulfillment. Rather than working to satisfy us with these, God wants us to experience hunger so deep that it drives us to forsake these things and finally find our satisfaction in Him.

**(Adapted from The Divine Conspiracy pp.94, 103-104, The Divine Conspiracy Participant Guide pp. 26,29, 37, 94, and A Quest for More: Living for Something Bigger than You Kindle Locations 1492-11547.**

## Questions to Consider this Week

1. What do I want that I cannot control getting?

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2. What am I getting that I don't want and I can't control it?

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3. How am I responding in attitude to this?

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4. How am I responding in conversation to this?

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5. How am I responding in actions to this?

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6. How am I treating others as a result of this?

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7. According to Scripture how would God view my attitude, conversation, actions, and relational patterns in relation to this?

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8. What do I need to accept that God has allowed?

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9. How do I need to obey God in this situation?

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10. What has God promised in His Word that I can rest on in accordance to this situation?

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11. How can I adjust my desires to match my situation?

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**Walking In The Good Works Prepared By God For Us  
(Ephesians 2:10)**

**I. We are God's Workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.**

- A. In Christ we have been delivered from sin and made into a new spiritual creation.
- B. In Christ we have been created to do morally upright tasks that are beneficial to others and Glorifying to God.
- C. God prepared in advance a path of work, a sphere of moral action that is to be accomplished by us, who are in Christ.

**II. This path of work, this sphere of moral action can be summarized into two basic roles which can also be seen as our responsibilities in Christ.**

- A. In Christ, we are to function in the role and have the responsibility of being an Ambassador- one who represents Christ to the world while presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to unbelievers. (2 Corinthians 5:11-21, 1 Corinthians 3:5-9).
- B. In Christ, we are to function in the role and have the responsibility of being a Builder- one who spends his life helping other Christians grow to maturity in their character and faith in Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-16, Colossians 1:28-29)
- C. We can be Ambassadors and Builders as single people, as married people, as family members, as American citizens, as foreigners, as co-workers; as people in authority, as people under authority or even as people equal in authority to others.

**III. Our path of work, our sphere of moral action in Christ can be carried out through:**

- A. Meeting needs with the intent of using that opportunity to function in our role as Ambassador or Builder.
- B. Speaking the truth in love with the intent of using that opportunity to function in our role as Ambassador or Builder.
- C. Building relationships with the intent of using that opportunity to function in our role as Ambassador or Builder.

**Key Point:** *“We were never made or remade to live for ourselves. We were created for transcendence. The borders of our lives were always meant to be way bigger than the borders of our lives. When we live this way, by his grace, we not only become part of the most important work in the universe, but we are given back our humanity”.* (A Quest For More by Paul Tripp pp.209-210)