

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God."

*Abraham Lincoln 1863
(From Church and State in the United States
New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950.)*

"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie..."

Romans 1:25

"Truth is so obscure in these times and falsehood so established that unless we love the truth, we cannot know it."

*Blaise Pascal (1623—1662)
French Philosopher, Mathematician, and Scientist*

"A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely overthrow the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy. While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when they lose their virtue they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader . . . If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved. This will be their great security."

*Samuel Adams
Father of the American Revolution, instigator of
the Boston Tea Party, signer of the Declaration of
Independence, member of Congress*

Embracing the Truth

Understanding the Eight Keys to Christian Living

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Author:

Jim and Barbara Grunseth
Elkhorn, Wisconsin

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Special Note: Embracing The Truth is not to take the place of professional counseling, medical care, or appropriate psychiatric outpatient or inpatient care.

INTRODUCTION

Lincoln's words ring loud and clear. We have forgotten God. Because of this, as the Apostle Paul declares, we have exchanged the truth of God for the lies of the devil. It is night in America. Darkness prevails. If we, as a people, do not turn back to God, beg His forgiveness, and, once again, embrace the truth, all will be lost.

Embracing The Truth is an eight lesson study that is designed for use in small groups or one to one (man to man or woman to woman) relationships. It is designed to bring hope, encouragement, and vision to others and to help them to embrace the truth.

Our nation is in crisis! People today are hurting and wounded in their personal lives. Many have simply lost all hope. Many are living in sin and refusing to acknowledge their iniquity before Almighty God. We live in a pagan land where barbaric values are replacing the godly, humble virtues that forged our country.

When a nation rejects God's truth, whoever is in power determines what is right. The ruling philosophy becomes:

MIGHT DETERMINES RIGHT

This is what happened in Nazi Germany. Since Hitler had rejected God and had the power, he determined what was right. Millions lost their lives as a result!

America, as a nation, has rejected God. Politics has become a power struggle. The victor determines who and what is right. The victor also determines who and what is wrong. Christians who seek the truth found only in God's Word must embrace it and stand up for it. If we don't, who will?

We have been lied to and many of us are in bondage to these lies. This must stop.

Barbara and I hope and pray that **Embracing The Truth** will encourage and strengthen you in your walk with God and in your relationships in life. We pray, then, that you will make a difference in helping to restore our land back to Almighty God. He is the Victor and He determined long ago what *is* right and wrong.

If you are hurting, struggling, or in some sort of bondage, we pray that He who is the Truth will, indeed, set you free.

Jim and Barbara Grunseth

EMBRACING THE TRUTH GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Even though the Host person is the so called Leader, look to your time together as a time of mutual learning *and* growth. See yourselves not as "teacher to student(s)" but as "brother to brother(s)" or "sister to sister(s)." A small group or one to one (same sex) format will work best.
2. The Host: serves as a coach, facilitator, and participant in the group.
3. Spend an hour or preferably an hour and a half together each time.
4. As you meet, encourage warmth, openness, and trust.
5. Try attentive listening more than talking. Be understanding.
6. Be informal. Make this fun and enjoyable!
7. Go through each lesson and compare answers. You don't have to discuss every one—just the ones that are important to you and your friend(s). Be sure, however, to cover all questions where you are asked to CIRCLE something or SIGN YOUR NAME. These are very important! Remember: Caring, supportive relationships are more important than issuing information for people to absorb.

GROUND RULES

- * Be relaxed—be genuine—be the Real You.
- * Assure each other of strict confidentiality.
- * If the homework is not completed, DO NOT MEET.
- * Only share what you feel safe to share.
- * Pray for each other out loud at the end of each "get together."

VERSE MEMORY

At the beginning of each of your **Embracing The Truth** get-togethers, take turns sharing the Key's memory verse. Remember, verse memory is good for your soul!

1. Expose the Lie7 Peter 5:8
2. Present your Wounds.....I Peter 2:24
3. Embrace the TruthJohn 8:32
4. Rejoice in WeaknessHebrews 4:15
5. Be AuthenticPsalm 62:8
6. Commit to Character.....Psalm 25:21
7. Pour Out, Release, and PraisePsalm 100:4
8. Love the Lord.....Mark 12:33

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We also wish to thank Dennis Rainey, National Director of FamilyLife, a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, and his wife Barbara. Their humility, integrity of heart, and their godly commitment to each other in their marriage, helped to forge some of the key concepts such as "honor*", "accountability", "Ideal Self, etc. They, as well, have been such a blessing!

AUTHORS

Jim Grunseth is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

He and his wife, Barbara, are on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ Jim is a Biblical Counselor and Barbara teaches Kindergarten at Faith Christian School. They have seven children and six grandchildren.

Together, they have also written **Home to Home: Passing on Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage** and **Remember the Rowboats: *Anchor your Marriage to Christ***. To order call: 1(800) 827-2788 or visit www.marriageanchors.com .

DEDICATION

Barbara and I would like to dedicate **Embracing The Truth** to all those courageous people who have counted the cost, refused to retreat, and have decided to pursue, mentor, and disciple hearts and homes for Christ. These godly patriots know darkness will prevail should the light not shine!

OPENING THOUGHTS

FROM Jim

WIMPY! WIMPY! WIMPY!

A long time ago, I was a Boy Scout at an "up north" camp. I asked the Eagle Scout who was over all of us to please stop doing a certain activity that not only was hurtful but totally unethical for an Eagle Scout.

HE SIMPLY LAUGHED IN MY FACE!

I timidly warned him again. He ignored me, so I reported him to the Scout Master.

At age twelve **my life seemed to end**. For telling the truth, the other guys ganged up on me, encircled me, and beat me up. I was hurt physically and wounded emotionally.

I CRIED.

From that point on, almost every one of the kids ridiculed me by calling me:

WIMPY.

I grew to hate that name and myself. My **once loyal** friends would walk all over me, push me down, treat me like dirt, and wait to torment me in the school hallways by the lockers.

I AVOIDED THE LOCKERS A LOT.

I had no one to turn to. I felt I couldn't unload to my parents because they wanted "the best" for me—and the misery I was going through was not the best! It was not what a "good boy" should be feeling!

I never seemed to defend myself. I felt I was so rotten and "wimpish" that I **didn't have the right** to defend myself. They were right! I was probably as milk-toasty as they made me out to be.

I WAS EXPERIENCING A LIVING HELL.

The worst was when a very pretty and kind girl that I wanted to ask out, stepped up to me, and with the deepest sincerity, asked me,

"HOW'S IT GOIN', WIMP?"

This curse of peer rejection **cut me deep** and I still feel twinges of pain now and then. Their biting sarcasm and name-calling lasted through my freshman year at the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire.

It began to stop after I was accepted to The U. S. Military Academy at West Point. You see, I guess they felt I performed my way out of being "Wimpy."

I'LL SHOW THEM!

And I did! Little did I know that I merely buried my grief and my wounds. Although I became a Christian at age 18, for the next ten years I remained a:

PEOPLE PLEASER.

It was **more important** for me to win and maintain approval from my bosses at work than it was "to rest" in the affirming approval from God.

Biblical truth was not nearly as important to me as how I felt or as getting my needs met.

I married Julie, my wife of twenty years, shortly after I graduated from the Academy. The last seven years of her life she fought a brave, yet difficult battle against breast cancer.

My heart and soul were devoted to getting strokes and "atta' boys" at work. Pleasing and seeking the Lord and meeting the emotional needs of my wife and children got the leftovers.

On the outside, we appeared as the happy, respectful Christian family. The community's and church's attitude toward us was:

LOOK! A SOLID GODLY FAMILY

SERVING IN CHURCH

AND BEING AN EXAMPLE

TO THE COMMUNITY.

Boy, was that a joke! My marriage to Julie became greatly strained back in the late 1970's over the tragic state of my priorities and the fact that I was still trying to get my needs met from my performance and how others in authority viewed ME.

I bought the devil's **lie** completely. Getting respect, getting ahead, getting nice things, and delving into sin for personal perks now and then were my goals in life. They almost cost me everything that I held dear to me.

SATAN CAME SO CLOSE TO WINNING.

Apart from God's mercy and grace, I would have lost:

THIS BATTLE.

There are many **great battles** raging throughout the universe. None are more significant than the following two:

1. The battle for **souls**.
2. The battle for **truth**.

If you dive into the first spiritual battle by **ignoring** or **rejecting** the free gift of Salvation (saved from the penalty and power of sin) offered through the amazing sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, Satan will have won and you will have **lost**. You will spend an eternity in Hell never to experience the joy of eternal life with Jesus in Heaven. **You will be paying for this foolish choice forever!**

If you receive Jesus Christ into your heart as Lord and Savior by faith, trusting only in His ability and authority to save you, immediately you will be given Eternal Life—life found in Jesus Christ alone.

HOWEVER!

Even though you **commit** your life to the Lord and receive His Gracious Gift of Forgiveness and New Life. Satan will implement his "Battle Plan #2" to try to:

1. Deceive you.
2. Keep you deceived.
3. Teach and tempt you to compare yourself.
4. Lie to you that you have to **perform** in order to maintain your salvation and earn God's favor, approval, and acceptance.
5. **Discourage** you by convincing you Jesus has rejected you.
6. Keep you depressed and **self-focused** so you look deep and long into your past. (Some of this is fine and may be needed, but not to the point that you become self-absorbed, despairing over your own wretched heart, and stop focusing on your loving, caring Savior.)
7. Keep you **embarrassed** about sharing the Good News (the Gospel) of Jesus Christ since you believe He will **reject** you eventually and that you would be rude, arrogant, and narrow minded if you pushed your religious views on someone else. He will teach you to exemplify to others that being a good, law-abiding citizen—being kind and thoughtful to neighbors and others—is **all** one needs to be to get into heaven.
8. Urge you to be **isolated** from other Christians and to criticize them for their shortcomings. On the other hand, he will urge you to **tolerate** the destructive sin choices of others. He tells you that God would not want you to be judgmental or extreme. Those that choose to give in to homosexuality, pornography, alcoholism, abortion, adultery, or same sex marriages should be tolerated and, in some cases, encouraged to keep this up. You believe the lie that says God loves and makes room for such **alternate lifestyles**. You begin to believe that these people are simply born that way. The devil's lies will also keep you from serving others because that would detract from others serving you!
9. Help you to believe just how worthless, disgusting, and worm-like you *should* feel about yourself.
10. Convince you that to live in the grace-filled light of Jesus Christ is a "pie in the sky" fairy tale; that the best plan is to keep this foolishness of the Gospel to yourself and, hopefully then, you will work at **destroying** yourself. Satan is the Father of Lies. He has had centuries to become good at it. Really good!

EMBRACING THE TRUTH

Truth To Embrace:

"Keep falsehood and lies far from me..." Proverbs 30:8
"All your words are true..." Psalm 119:160

Key Number One

EXPOSE THE LIE

Think About This:

When we feel we have to measure up in order to win and maintain approval, our sinful pride kicks in. For a while, we feel good. But when the "approver" raises the requirements, we begin to tilt. A slow rotting death inside of us develops. Lies bring death. Truth brings life.

MEMORY VERSE

1 Peter 5:8

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your **EMBRACING THE TRUTH** Partner(s).

BRILLIANT!!!

The devil is extremely intelligent. In fact he is brilliant! He wants you to limp around like a deflated air mattress in the water. He wants you to wallow in the mire of self pity and self-loathing like a wounded hippo writhing in the mud. *He wants you to value yourself so poorly that you feel:*

DESIGNED FOR DESTRUCTION

Satan's plan for you

is personalized

and well thought-through.

It is utterly inescapable

apart from God's grace.

"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert

*Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion,
seeking someone to devour."*

I Peter 5:8 (NASB)

Barbara and I are convinced that Satan has a specifically designed **battle plan** to slowly and subtly destroy you spiritually, morally, emotionally, physically, relationally, and socially.

He hates the word "trust". It sounds too much like "truth". He knows that if you know the Truth, the Truth will set you free.

He **trembles** even at the thought of truth. As long as you allow him to deceive you, he will ensnare you in discouragement, compromise, and sin.

If you have trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, the devil cannot rob you of the Lord's gift to you of Eternal Life.

HOWEVER!

He most certainly will attempt to deceive you regarding your forgiven, secure, and beloved relationship with Jesus. He possesses a ravenous passion to enslave you and hinder your witness for the Lord. Many, foolishly, are giving him **permission** to do this.

The bottom line is he hates you—he wants you miserable—he will go to any lengths to ruin your reputation—he wants you in **bondage** to guilt, shame, and sin—he wants you dead!

HE WILL BLIND YOU TO THE TRUTH

WITH LIES

THE WORLD OFFERS.

Satan's Plan for deceiving, discouraging, and destroying you is based on his tempting:

LIE OF COMPARISON

This Satanic lie states that God determines your precious value to Him according to three comparison-oriented measurements:

1. PERFORMANCE
2. APPEARANCE
- 3.. POSSESSIONS

As you look at this lie, remember that:

COMPARISON IS A ROOT OF INFERIORITY.

1. PERFORMANCE

- a. We base our significance on how well we perform for others. We begin to crave their approval (from parents, teachers, bosses, peers, churches, etc.) based on accomplishments as well as attitudes. Sometimes, we even try to compare our intelligence to that of others.
- b. We become frustrated because we are not able to **please** them all. We just can't seem to reach and maintain their high, high standards.

- c. Sometimes even some churches will impose external measuring standards to *keep you in line* and to coerce you into trying to measure up to their idea of piety when, in reality, they have slipped into a legalistic, performance-oriented religion that makes people tired, weary, guilty (false guilt), and depressed.

The unwritten, or even written, rules might include:

- * We don't allow non-conservative women's attire, viewing certain TV shows, attending parties, etc. Any "breaking of these rules" will not only be looked down upon but may lead to disciplinary action.
(Putting hard and fast legalistic do's and don'ts on the backs of church members and voiding their need to love and abide in the Lord and seek their guidance from His Word only cripples the hearts of believers.)
- * We really don't tolerate anyone offering us constructive feedback. We call that slanderous criticism!
- * We expect you to attend Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night services! This may come in the form of polite requests, yet the underlying motive is to get you to meet their needs and requirements.
- * You will be considered "more godly and acceptable" if you "measure up" to our "religious" rules and standards.

NOTE: One dear Elder of a well-meaning church involved himself five nights a week in church activities and meetings. He felt better because he thought he was pleasing God, but, instead, he was simply **performing better!** By the way, his marriage and family suffered greatly.

- d. Satan has a good grip on us when we begin to **COMPARE** our performance with others. Since we find someone better than us, we despair and either drive ourselves toward the bottomless pit of workaholism or we quit the rat race and just give up (nervous breakdown, laziness, bitterness, social dropout, gross sin, etc.)
- e. This performance trap stems from the lie we embrace that declares God's love for His children is conditional and has to be earned and maintained.

2. APPEARANCE

- a. We base our significance on how well we look physically. What a bummer! If we're in the "IN" group, we fret over keeping in it. If we're not in the "IN" group, we either put on an emotional mask and become somebody we're not so we can be accepted OR we worry about how awful others **must** think of us, and then we enter despair.
- b. We also base our personal value on how we appear socially. The above mentioned "IN" group fakery and paranoia applies here as well. If we feel we look like losers, then most likely we will begin to act, appear, and respond like losers.
- c. Unfortunately, sometimes churches and Christian organizations want you to go through the externals of "appearing godly." Dress well, go to church with a smile on your face, and when they ask you how you're doing, always say—"fine" and then smile some more—even though you may be despairing, hurting, or lonely, with tears ready to burst forth.

If you just keep appearing godly, they feel, then you are godly, happy, and all your needs must have been met! These unwritten attitudes cripple and stifle Christians and drive non-Christians away.

3. POSSESSIONS

- a. We base our significance on Material Possessions. Perhaps if we owned a bigger home, had a nicer car, or possessed a thousand other **things** that the media tries to convince us we nicer, then we'd feel better, more fulfilled.

Sometimes, as strange as this sounds, we Christians base our value within the church on how **pious** and **poor** we can be. We adopt the attitude that less is better than **more**. True—we are to care for the needs of others and to give cheerfully, sacrificially, and abundantly to the Lord and His work. However, being poor is not a prerequisite for being godly.

If you are in full-time vocational Christian service, the above tensions can be particularly troublesome. One such honest and broken pastor told me in confidence his Elder Board's attitude toward providing financially for his family was this: "God will keep you humble and we will keep you broke!"

- b. We place hope in how much **power** we gain, maintain, or lose. Titles, rank, position, degrees, office size and location, promotions, number of staff answering to us, perks, awards, etc.—all these and more help us assess just how much "external" power we possess." The status rat race can be a real crippler!
- c. Some of us put stock in how much internal or personal power we think we possess or that others tell us we possess. The truth is that God gives different people different personalities. Some are energetic and assertive. Others are quiet, gentle, and approachable. With the power of the Holy Spirit, each personality is to serve others in order to **build up** the Body of Believers in Christ. Every person and his/her role are of equal value and importance to the Lord.
- d. We determine our ability to be happy and content based on the **memories** we possess.
1. **Memories that enable:** Fond memories of special holidays, fun with mom or dad, good times with friends, victories, campfires, fishing trips, "mountain top" experiences, etc.
 2. **Memories that disable:** Being raised in an alcoholic home, experiencing trauma such as sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, living through a "broken" home, having mom or dad sick, injured, die, or simply losing a job, moving to a new location and school, being picked on, labeled, or nick-named, experiencing a pregnancy outside of marriage, having a miscarriage, having one or more abortions, giving birth to a handicapped child, experiencing infidelity in marriage, etc.

**SATAN'S PLAN IS FOR YOU
TO BELIEVE THAT GOD LOVES YOU
ACCORDING TO YOUR
PERFORMANCE, APPEARANCE,
AND POSSESSIONS**

The lie states: If you are **winning** in these areas, God's love for you will be great. If you are **losing** in these areas, God's love for you will be **small**.

Take a moment and jot down at least three personal and specific examples from your own life and past when you felt you were losing or **not measuring up** in reference to these three measurements:

PERFORMANCE

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

APPEARANCE

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

POSSESSIONS

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Now assume you have a possible total of **ten points** to assign to these three measurements. Assign the number of points to each of them based on their importance to you in determining your significance. (Example: 4-Performance, 5-Appearance, 1-Possessions)

POINTS ASSIGNED

_____ **PERFORMANCE**

_____ **APPEARANCE**

_____ **POSSESSIONS**

NOTE: Why did the measurement that was assigned the most points, receive them? Be specific. Use a personal example.