

I N T R O D U C T I O N

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How Did I Get Here?

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Have you ever wanted to just “get away?” When things start piling up at home or on the job, it’s easy to start feeling as though you’re merely going through the motions rather than truly living. At those times you just try to make it through the day, with dreams of escaping it all. We *all* have those days—sometimes even weeks, months, or years of them.

In the book of Exodus, the Bible tells the story of the Israelites, whose daily lives had been reduced to little more than a battle for survival. While bound in slavery under the heavy hand of the Egyptians, the Israelites struggled just to make it through the day. There seemed to be no hope of escape.

But even so, the people were never alone or forgotten. “The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob” (Genesis 1:23–24). And so God sent Moses to deliver the Israelites.

Imagine you were one of those Israelite slaves when Moses appears on the scene, telling you God had sent him to free you from slavery and deliver you from Egypt. You had heard stories about this God who had made a covenant with your ancestors. After hundreds of years of slavery and no sign of this God, however, believing he could be real would be difficult. And even if this God were real, it would be hard to imagine he really cared about you. After all, where had he been all those years? Your entire mindset would have been that of a slave because that’s all you had known. And it’s hard to have hope when all you’ve known is slavery.

But could the stories you’d heard be true? Could there really be a God that cares about you and wants to rescue you from slavery? A glimmer of hope was birthed.

When Moses first approached Pharaoh and told him to let the Israelites go, Pharaoh refused. In fact Pharaoh became more oppressive and made the people work even harder. So once again the Israelites’ hopes of freedom were crushed. It was bad enough to have lived your whole life with no hope. But to then have a glimmer of hope only to watch it vanish must have been devastating.

Yet God heard the cry of his people and would stand by his covenant. In that moment of despair among the Israelites, God made a promise: He said to them, “I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God” (Exodus 6:6–7).

The last words of that promise, “I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God,” had a familiar ring to them: They were similar to the words a Hebrew man would speak to his beloved when proposing marriage. This God, who had seemed silent for so many years, was not only promising to sanctify, deliver, and redeem them, but to take them *as his bride*. So even while everything appeared

hopeless, God was promising the Israelites they would indeed have a future and a reason for hope. God had promised to set them apart for himself, to rescue them from bondage, and to buy back their freedom. And in the process they would become his beloved bride.

God struck Egypt with ten plagues over nearly a year before Pharaoh finally relented and agreed to let the Israelites go. And by the time God unleashed the final plague—the death of the firstborn of every family—all of the Egyptians, including Pharaoh, were begging the Israelites to leave. When the Israelites left, as recorded in Exodus, “The Lord had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.” Not only were the Israelites leaving the land of their slave masters, but they were taking the wealth of Egypt with them!

Imagine you are one of the millions of newly freed slaves marching out to meet your God in the desert, loaded down with the wealth of Egypt you had never dared dream of possessing. What excitement, what joy—what a party! Things couldn’t have been better. That is, until you look over your shoulder and see Pharaoh’s armies coming after you! Now you’re up against the Red Sea with Pharaoh’s soldiers in pursuit. You’re trapped, with nowhere to go. Great joy quickly turns into terror.

Even so, God commands Moses to lift up his staff over the waters of the Red Sea. And when he does, the waters part. Who is this God that can even part the waters of the sea? All the Israelites pass through the sea on dry land as the walls of water are held back on either side. What a wonder, what a marvel. And what a God!

Marvel and wonder, though, turn to fear as Pharaoh’s chariots begin racing across the now dry land, bringing closer the threat of slavery, or even worse, with every fleeting moment. But then, right before your eyes, the chariots become bogged down in what has now become mud, and you watch as God releases the waters that rush back over your former Egyptian oppressors.

In a flash, Pharaoh’s armies are destroyed. You *thought* you were free before, but now you really *are* free! The enemy has been defeated. No longer can your former taskmasters have any power over you. You are free indeed! And once God has freed the Israelites, he fulfills his promise to take them as his bride.

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Before a Jewish wedding ceremony, the customary practice is for the bride to take a ceremonial bath called a “*mikvah*.” God’s bride, Israel, had already taken her *mikvah* as she walked safely through the parted waters of the Red Sea, and was now ready for the wedding ceremony. So God takes her to Mt. Sinai and there God presents to his bride a “*ketubah*,” or wedding covenant (the two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments).

Today we’re familiar with various documents drafted for specific purposes. Almost everyone recognizes a lease, a mortgage, or a will because such documents have become familiar to us. And while we often think of God giving the Ten

Commandments as the final say on how to live, these commandments were in fact only *part* of what God gave his bride that day at Mt. Sinai. The Ten Commandments were the equivalent of a preamble to a document written in the form and structure of a traditional Jewish wedding covenant.

We often refer to God's commands as The Law, and as a result feel weighted down or burdened by his law. The Hebrew word translated into our word "law," however, is actually closer in meaning to teaching or instruction. The Hebrew word we see as God's law is similar to the instructions a loving parent would give a child to help ensure a safe, successful life. So in retrospect, we should embrace God's commands as a gift of love rather than seeing them as demands or limitations imposed upon us.

The Torah, which comprises the first five books of the Bible, wasn't intended to put us in bondage. Rather it is the ultimate outpouring of God's love for his people. Because what could be more wonderful than being allowed to live as the cherished bride of your loving God and Creator?

After the covenant wedding ceremony with Israel, God quickly went to work building the tabernacle, where they would dwell together. And just as a Jewish couple will put their *ketubah*, or covenant, in the center of their house as a reminder of how much they love each other and how they have agreed to live out their marriage, God had the Israelites put their *ketubah* into the ark of the covenant, right in the center of their new home.

When their new home, the tabernacle, was completed, God moved in. And just so his bride would know for certain he was there, God manifested himself over the tabernacle as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

When the honeymoon was over, God led the people across the desert to the Promised Land. But even though the Israelites were God's beloved bride and had seen their majestic warrior husband defeat the Egyptians, they still couldn't enter in and enjoy the blessings God wanted to give them in the Promised Land. Because the Israelites had a problem—they still had a slave mentality.

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Scripture tells us the Israelites sent twelve spies to check out the Promised Land God had already given them. All they had to do was possess the land. The spies returned carrying a load of luscious fruit as evidence the land was flowing with milk and honey as God had promised. The spies also reported seeing fortified cities inhabited by giants. Their most significant report, however, was not what they saw as they checked out the land, but rather how they saw *themselves*. And this was their problem: The slave mentality they developed in Egypt was still alive and well. Rather than believing God, who had again and again proved himself faithful, the Israelites focused on their circumstances and the seemingly impossible odds they faced.

Ten of the twelve spies declared, “We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes.” And what happens to a grasshopper? It gets squashed. As slaves, the Israelites were indeed like mere insects—powerless to change their circumstances. Their lives had been crushed by their Egyptian taskmasters. As slaves they had no freedom to choose how they would live, but rather were at the mercy of others.

Here’s what is important: *If you still see yourself as a grasshopper*, you don’t yet have the mindset needed to enter and possess the Promised Land God has secured for you.

The Israelites didn’t see themselves as God saw them, and neither did they see the true nature and character of their God. So even though the Promised Land was now right before their eyes, the Israelites couldn’t enter the land because they hadn’t learned to trust God for what would be required to possess it. Their hearts and minds would have to be brought into alignment with their new reality. They needed to learn to see themselves as God saw them, and they needed to recognize God for who he truly is. God’s Chosen People had made the physical exodus from slavery, but now they needed to make a mental exodus as well.

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And so God had to take his bride, Israel, back into the desert. At first glance it might appear God did this to punish Israel. But as you consider the depth of God’s love, you discover the desert experience was designed to discipline Israel and help her see who she now was. Because the bride was no longer a slave, but God’s beloved.

The desert became the training ground God used to reveal how much he could be trusted. God spent forty years helping bring his bride’s heart and mind into agreement with the new truth of her existence apart from slavery. And once Israel understood who she really was, God was able to lead her back to the Promised Land where she could now possess it.

After the desert, the first place God took his bride was to Jericho, a fortified city. It was as though God were saying, “You can’t just sneak into your Promised Land. You have to go back and face your fears.” God commanded the Israelites to march around the walls of the city once each day for seven days, and then seven times on the seventh day. And while their slave-minded parents had been afraid even to step foot on the Promised Land, this new generation marched boldly around Jericho. And even though the people were totally exposed to the enemy as they marched, they did as God commanded. Because after forty years of seeing God’s manifest presence in the center of the camp, of having lived off manna that fell from heaven each day and water that sprang from a rock, they knew God was trustworthy. Now they could willingly do whatever he commanded.

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This exodus from slavery and hopelessness to an intimate, bonded relationship with the Living God was and still is *The Ultimate Journey*. God still hears the cries of his people today. He hears *your* cries. He knows the longing of your heart and your desire to experience the abundant life he promised. He hears the cries of each person who groans under the weight of life's burdens. This is why God sent his Son, Jesus, the one like unto Moses, to be our sanctifier, deliverer, redeemer, and hope.

Right now God is wooing and calling you to take *The Ultimate Journey* with him. Receive the love God longs to pour out upon you. Let him take you by the hand and lead you to the Promised Land.

The moment we put our faith in Christ, Scripture declares, the enemy has been defeated and we are free. We are no longer slaves to sin and the radical independence that separated us from God. As God's beloved children we are holy, righteous, and just—joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul writes that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit who now lives within us. But just as we saw with the Israelites, the important question today is this: How do we see *ourselves*?

The work God does in us is accomplished in our spirit. But our soul—the mind, will, and emotions—must still be brought into alignment with the work God has already done in our spirit. Because even after receiving Christ, most people continue believing voices from their past—voices that are contrary to what God tells us we are. And so like the Israelites we, too, need to make a mental exodus.

Most people fall into the trap of trying to change through self-improvement techniques that provide temporary results at best. By contrast *The Ultimate Journey* will change you from the inside out as you become one with your Creator, the God who loves you. And in this love relationship, you will experience the transforming power to set your compass at True North as you become the person God created you to be—in him, through Christ. Ponder the following Scripture passages:

Ephesians 4:22–24: “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Romans 12:2: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

THE THREE PHASES OF *THE ULTIMATE JOURNEY*

Phase 1 – Unpacking Self-Deception: Trading self-deception for God’s perception of you.

Phase 2 – Abandoning Self-Reliance: Trading self-reliance for dependence on God.

Phase 3 – Embracing Self-Surrender: Trading self-life identity for Christ-Life in you.

Where are you on this journey? Perhaps you don’t yet realize how much God loves you. Or maybe you acknowledge from an intellectual standpoint that God is love, yet you still wonder whether he really loves *you*. If this describes you, understand that it’s not enough to simply acknowledge God exists and that he is love. God longs to take you far deeper than an intellectual acknowledgment of his existence. In order for the truth of God’s love to leave a positive, lasting impact on your life, his truth must be woven into the inner depths of your being—your heart.

Each of us is at a different place in our journey, and it is perfectly all right to be exactly where you are at this time in your life. So never lose hope. Rather, stay the course during *The Ultimate Journey*. Allow your Creator to take you all the way from where you are now to the ultimate, intimate relationship your soul has always longed to experience. God is ready to fill the void in your heart and make you truly whole.

PHASE 1

Phase 1 of *The Ultimate Journey* helps answer the question, “How did I get where I am today?” During this phase you will be immersed in a safe environment for sharing and exploring your personal history. You will have opportunity to accept your reality, uncover the lies you believed, receive healing for hurts and wounds, and move beyond the circumstances of life that have kept you stuck. By looking at past events of your life, you will be able to identify your current thinking patterns and uncover how you acquired them. And by doing so, you will break free to bond with the new life God has given you.

And while the events of our past and their effects on us are significant, what’s more important is how we’ve responded—how we came to see ourselves because of those events. The events of our past have taught us to believe lies about ourselves, others, life, and especially God. These lies keep us from experiencing the life and freedom God intended for us, which is why Phase 1 focuses on unpacking self-deception.

As you learn to trade self-deception for God’s true perception, you will be free to boldly become the person God created you to be.

PHASE 2

Once you have unpacked the self-deception and realize where you truly are in life, Phase 2 helps answer the question, “Where do I go from here?” During Phase 2 you discover God’s solution to guilt, shame, fear, and anxiety as you explore the incredible love relationship God wants to restore with you. When you finally realize that God himself is your eternal covenant blood brother, committed to see to your every need, everything suddenly changes. You move beyond the hopelessness of never feeling good enough as you leave the wearisome treadmill of perfection-based performance. You can afford to stop worrying. Not even uncertainty or death can scare you anymore. He’s got a beautiful solution even for that! You’re universally covered, free, safe, loved, cherished, and endlessly prosperous.

During this leg of your journey, you ultimately learn to abandon self-reliance for *total* trust and freedom in God. Since God’s work is finished, all he needs from you is your total and exclusive trust and willingness to stay in position to wholeheartedly receive from him what he has already provided. It’s all there waiting if you will only believe and receive it at all times, as your daily bread, and not go off taking matters into your own hands.

PHASE 3

Whenever we’re on a journey, it’s customary to wonder, “Are we there yet?” Phase 3 provides practical tools that enable you to take the power of God beyond head knowledge and apply it to your everyday life. As you exchange old thinking patterns for those of your Creator, you will be transformed by the renewing of your mind as you begin to live, think, and act as one with him, bridegroom and bride.

The Ultimate Journey is not about arriving at a destination; rather it is the Christ-in-me way of seeing and responding to reality. And once we begin seeing ourselves, others, and life through the eyes of God, we are then able to recognize and live in our Promised Land.

What tremendous love God has for us! From start to finish, the Bible documents the greatest love story ever told: It’s a story of the love God has for you and the relationship he wants to establish. Can you hear his voice, wooing you even now? God longs to draw you to himself. Respond to his call and join him on *The Ultimate Journey*.

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LESSON

1

GETTING READY FOR GROUP WORK

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Welcome to Phase 1 of *The Ultimate Journey: Unpacking Self-Deception*. You are ready to venture forth, discover, learn, and grow. That attitude is compatible with God's desire to reveal more of you and more of him to you that he may guide you toward the wonderful destiny he has had for you since before the dawn of Time.

We are each a three part person composed of: Body, Soul and Spirit. Phase 1 focuses primarily, but not exclusively on the soul. Many of us have learned how we are to care for our bodies and spirits, but few of us have learned how to care for our souls. Our soul is the core of who we are as a human being. It is the "heart" of a person. This part of us is too often neglected by society. We are more inclined to first preach at, teach or try to fix people rather than taking time to really get to know a person. What a person thinks, feels, wants and needs comprises much of who a person is. People need a safe place to be accepted where they are at. They need someone to listen to them as they feel and process all that is going on within them. Feelings are to be felt, not fixed. Allowing people to express what is going on in their hearts and minds gives them the ability to grow beyond where they have been stuck. It is to this vital need that Phase 1 pays special attention. The preaching, teaching, and fixing part, if it is really needed at all, will come later, when a person is in a position to respond. If a person has all kind of static in their soul, it will be very hard for them to "tune in" to what someone is trying to say, even if what they are saying is the right "frequency."

What do wounded and traumatized people need at first? They need to be accepted—just the way they are. They need safety. They need time to let their mind catch up with exactly what happened to them. They need time to process and face the realities that are really theirs. They need to admit the truth, feel what they are really feeling, and be where they really are. They need to feel safe enough to unburden their hearts, in order to come to grips with whatever is going on inside of them and then be able to "get it off their chest."

Getting it off their chest involves admitting that it happened, describing what it was, feeling their feelings, counting their losses, expressing the pent-up emotions, and grieving those losses. They need a place where they can freely, openly vent and discharge the emotional voltage that built up as a result. Their soul needs time to truly resolve its inner conflicts and heal the wounds. By patiently helping them do this, you learn to bear one another's burdens, for real. You're not just dismissing another's distress with shallow, religious, lip service. Quick fix clichés and religious, magical wand waving merely prove that we really don't know what people need to deal with their distress, let alone teach them how to care for their hearts.

The Ultimate Journey will enable you to:

- Unpack the damage done to you as you have grown up in a fallen world.
- Process the emotions from the hurt of the wounds that you experienced. This enables you to effectively vent any trapped emotional voltage that has yet to be processed, even though it may have come from events from many years earlier.
- Identify the false and destructive lies and patterns that you developed as a result of your experiences and abusive relationships.
- Assess the damage done to you.
- Assess the damage you in turn have done to yourself and others.
- Do an inventory of losses you have suffered in the process.
- Make your own, personal response to God and to his blood covenant proposal to you.
- Experience God's salvation and, regeneration, and learn to switch over your brand new identity and life patterns in Christ, while learning to disconnect from outdated, destructive ones.
- Learn to stand your God-given ground and maintain the new identity and position Christ places you in. Operate from that position and initiate positive, productive, creative changes in every area of your new life.

To be able to say it like it is, in safety, is the first thing wounded people need. Rehabilitation and corrective measures come later. They first need to debrief the past. Since that is a real need, what would be the corresponding function of a real ministry that would effectively help them? What form would such ministry assume? Ministry to the souls of wounded people has to allow their emotional equipment the time and space in which to begin to work. That takes patience and a lot of understanding. It is not something you can rush and hurry people through. A large trust factor must first be built up. Friendship and an emotional bond must first have time to form. Then gradually, as it becomes safer and safer to be real, the emotional equipment will begin to do its work beautifully.

Emotional steam is not always reasonable, logical, convenient or accommodating. Very often, it is downright irrational and can be a lot to deal with, especially if it originates in the distant past of childhood. Nevertheless, just because it may not make sense to anyone else, it is still very real, powerful, and painful to the person experiencing it. It is like an internal hurricane going on inside

the person. That is why it is potentially dangerous to deny, downplay, and leave it stuffed and trapped inside for too long. It needs healthy, wise channeling, and effective, thorough venting and discharging.

A wounded person needs someone who loves and cares enough about them to be quiet, really listen and patiently hear them out, as they work through what happened to them. Let them be who and what they are. Let them say what they want to say. Let them feel what they are really feeling and express it. Let them be mistaken, wrong, childish, angry, unpleasant, and immature—at first.

They are usually stuck because of things that are trapped deep inside. Now is the time for them to be able to get them out. Let them work through the shame barrier and vent the inner steam buildup that they have been holding in, sometimes for years. Do not judge, criticize, moralize, preach, analyze, or correct them. If you do, you will just force them to feel trapped, abandoned, ashamed, overwhelmed, and ready to emotionally shut down all over again!

People, who do not realize how necessary and important it is for the recovery of wounded people, will not see the need for this form of ministry. They will not have the patience for it. They will care more for their own opinions, agendas, theology, Bible interpretations, and sense of propriety than they will for the long term, emotional well being of the person in distress. They will tend to want to resort to the quick fix, jumping right in to try to correct the person, and help them “see the light,” before they have even taken time to find out what is really going on. They will want to yank them out of the feeling, emotional part of their brain, and quickly pull them into the logical, rational, philosophical, theological, and behavior modification part of the brain. That is a good way to prescribe the wrong remedy, chase them away, and keep them stuck in the same old things, for a long time to come.

Of course, we need doctrinal and scriptural truth. Nobody denies that. Of course, people should not remain stuck in the past, with childish, immature thought patterns. However, we cannot help them grow beyond these things as long as the unfinished emotional business from the past remains unfinished *in* their minds. A person cannot leave the past behind if it is not finished. The events may be in the past, but the ongoing effects still remain. It will remain unfinished until the emotional equipment has had a chance to do its work, process the experiences, and blow off all of the steam buildup. Only then will the old wounds heal, and the person able to be pain-free and move on into the future with no hangover from the past. Notice how the risen Lord did this for two of his disciples in the following passage:

“Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing

Him. He asked them, 'What are you discussing together as you walk along?' 'They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked Him, 'Are You only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened in these days?' 'What things?' He asked'" (Luke 24:13–19).

Notice that Jesus, of all people, already knew better than anyone else ever could what they were so worked up about. They had been traumatized by the recent events in Jerusalem. They were afraid of the future. In their eyes, their lives were totally devastated. They had believed in Jesus, invested everything in him. They had taken a public stance on his behalf, expecting him to suddenly take power and become king of Israel, just like David had in the old days. Now, he was dead, executed in disgrace like the worst of criminals. Their hope was gone. Their standing and reputation finished. Their own lives were in danger as well. They were disgraced, discredited, and hopeless.

Right or wrong, that was their true emotional and mental state. As long as that persisted, they would not be able to learn anything new and go beyond it. The risen Lord knew that. He did not need them to bring him up to date. However, they needed to come out with it and get it all off their chests. Until the tension in their inner, emotional springs could unwind and be resolved, and the emotional energy discharged, it would do no good to try to reason with them, and teach them what was contained in the Scriptures. They first had to tell him all about what they were seeing, feel their feelings, and vent and discharge the voltage that had been building up inside of them. Then, once it was emptied out, they could naturally calm down, focus on the present, and he would be able to fill them with his truth and wisdom, and take them beyond the point where they had been stuck.

Jesus was no psychiatrist or psychologist. However, he was, and is, the Creator of the human soul with its mind, will and emotions. As such, he has the wisdom to know how these mechanisms work, what they need, and when they need it. Therefore, he gave those two disciples that vital form of listening ministry first so that they could be drained and emptied of all emotional voltage. These things constitute what we call, 'unfinished business.' They act like strong static and interference from something in the past that prevents people from really being in touch with what is going on in the present.

Without this vital and essential form of ministry of allowing them to process and express what they think, see and feel, the disciples would not have been in a position to really hear what he had to teach them. People remain stuck in past damaging relationships, issues, patterns, chronic fear, paranoia, anger, anxiety, depression, compulsions and addictions, when they are not allowed to effectively process what they have been through. But with this kind of ministry, exemplified by Jesus, the mental calculators of such people can finally hit the emotional clear button, and be effectively prepared to go beyond, to receive truth through teaching

and other, more rational forms of ministry. This is a necessary form of preparing hard soil, and making it soft and receptive to the seed of the word of the Kingdom of Heaven. Ground clearing, plowing, and tilling should always come before planting or else a lot of the seed that is sown will go to waste.

The Ultimate Journey is not just for one segment of society; drug addicts, alcoholics, and other assorted “basket case” people. Nothing could be further from the truth. What about perfectionists, people pleasers and workaholics? They are also suffering from addiction. The only difference is that the behaviors of the latter are more socially acceptable. Perfectionists are some of the most difficult people to be around. Workaholics lose their marriages and families just like alcoholics do, and people-pleasers often can’t say “no” to anyone if their life depended on it. And who are they really trying to please? Themselves! Because, in reality, they have a need to please others to avoid being rejected!

Phase 1 is for everyone. If you want to know the truth, from God’s perspective, we’re all basket cases! We all need some kind of recovery. If in your heart you smugly assume that you’re beyond all of that, or have arrived, or know just the people that really need this, you probably need this most of all! All of us, especially spiritual leaders, teachers, authority figures and role models need these things.

If you are leery of being real, and back away from intimacy with God, yourself, and other people, this is for you. Every human has “stuff” they are dealing with. Every human needs to keep learning and growing until the day they die. Are you human? If you are, you too desperately need more spiritual, mental and emotional growth. What can you expect along the way? You can expect the healing of soul wounds and the profound emotional relief it brings. There will be an increase in personal freedom and a deeper sensitivity to God and to other people. Your faith will become more personal as God’s love will no longer be something you know only intellectually, but you will experience his love in your heart. The same goes for forgiveness. Maybe you know intellectually that God forgives you, but you still carry shame, guilt and condemnation. That will change as you begin to see yourself as God sees you. Everyone, from the facilitator to the newest participant, is moving into new territory. No one will require you to do anything exceptional. Every veteran started where you are now. They paid their dues. Now they participate at deeper levels, as leaders, facilitators, and facilitators-in-training. They do it not just for their own, ongoing development, but also to help you get started in yours. Many have already blazed the trail you will follow.

Ponder the following questions: What is your motive for doing this? Why pursue it? What is your bull’s-eye? Most people want change in their life for negative reasons: they are desperately frightened, tremendously fed up, can’t take it anymore, or know there has to be more to life than this! In other words, they do not seek change out of love for something good they really want. They act out

of fear, contempt and desire to get away from something they do not want! They are like craven slaves, running from the lash of a cruel taskmaster. Fear, shame, desperation, and an intense need to solve problems energize them.

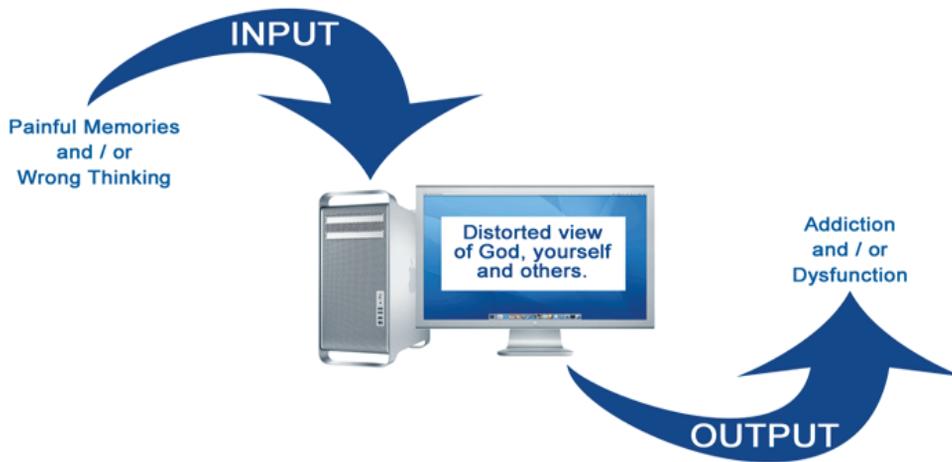
There is a law of Creation called *The Principle of Sowing and Reaping*. It really comes into play here. If you are motivated by negative reasons, you will reap negative results. Fear, hate, contempt, and desperation cause wellsprings of negative energy to generate deep within you. Then they spill over and contaminate your life. Isn't it crazy to fill yourself with that kind of negative energy? Isn't it absurd to have what you hate and fear become your major fuel and motivation source? The absurdity is that in order to continue on being motivated, you must have the continued presence and influence of what you cannot stand! In that case, such things will completely overshadow and engulf your life! If they go away, you will run out of motivation!

There is a better way. You would do well to adopt this as an ever-guiding principle: Do not do anything out of fear, anger, disgust or desperation! Do everything—out of love; let love of God and of what is good, true, and right be the energy that motivates and spurs you on.

Love the personal growth, maturity and fulfillment you will develop as you learn to face, accept, and garden your reality. Love the freedom you will have when you no longer dread and run away from truth. Love the personal knowledge of God you will gain. Love the wonders he has built into his creation, including you and those that will be in your group. Love God's winning ways. They can soon be yours. Love the higher caliber relationships you will develop. Love the treasures of wisdom and knowledge you will discover in Christ in days to come. Remember: Weeds beget weeds, wheat begets wheat, and positive ingredients beget positive results. Be a free lover, not an enslaved, fear-driven, negative critic! That's how to remain healthy, strong, effective, and successful.

What you get out of *The Ultimate Journey* will directly correspond to your study, participation, and perseverance. In that sense, the sky is the limit. Either you can waste your time playing games and going through the motions, or you can experience a revolutionary, life-transforming reality-shift.

We are deeply influenced and sometimes totally controlled by our sometimes wrong or obsolete belief systems and the learned behavior patterns we have accepted as right and true. Neurological researchers estimate that 75% or more of what is programmed into our subconscious mind and wired into our brain is negative, counter-productive, and self-destructive. That is like having a computer that runs your life, with three out of every four pre-programmed commands being wrong! That is a formula for failure! And that doesn't even take into account all the demonic activity that abounds, whether you know about it or not! You are included in those secular statistics! In addition, the powers of darkness have you in their sights. Isn't that worth looking into?



As we repeat these thought patterns and behaviors, they become like deeply embedded mental concrete channels through which our thoughts and decisions have to flow. This process helps you weed out obsolete, incorrect, destructive lies and patterns, in three phases. Through this process you can eventually replace the old thought patterns and behaviors with true, effective, God-given ones that free your mental processes and enable you to change course, toward more mature destinations.

It is understandable if initially you have reservations about involving yourself in something like this. Most people, who continually hide behind highly manicured public images, cringe at the thought of getting real in front of real people. These types of people may feel most vulnerable and tentative of all. However, a few weeks or months later, many of the people that feared this the most have said things like:

“At first, I had to drag myself to meetings. Now, I would not miss one for anything. I can hardly wait for group night to come around.”

“My group is the closest thing to family I have experienced in my entire life. Now I know what I’ve been missing all this time!”

“For the first time in my life, God actually seems real to me. I never knew it could be like this! I’m actually beginning to hear His voice!”

“I feel kind of angry. This has absolutely changed my life! Why didn’t we hear these things before? Why did we have to wait so long? This should be taught everywhere. Why isn’t it?”

Such statements indicate that many light bulbs go on during the group process. They also indicate these people didn't even know what they were missing until they plunged in and began. There is no reason why God cannot use your group experience to change your life as well.

WHAT IS OUR OVERALL BULL'S EYE?

We are by nature relational creatures, designed to interact and connect with others deeply, personally and by free will. We are born lovers, made to interact intimately, out of deep personal respect, affection, friendship, loyalty, concern, and tenderness. If you develop a real, honest relationship with yourself, you can really connect with God, and with other people. Our goal is to learn first class, Christ-centered relationship patterns.

Our Creator designed us to be filled to overflowing, from deep within, by his nurturing presence and love for us, but first we must learn to willingly believe and receive. If we do, his love can overflow from us to bless everything and everyone in our life as well. If God constantly cascades his love into us, we can afford to give it to others, and still not diminish, or burn out. As long as his love flows freely into and out from us, we remain healthy, alive, prosperous, and fulfilled. Without it, we dry up and die.

If we do not have his love, we cannot give it to others. Our cup will change from filled to empty. Instead of God filling us from within, we will instinctively seek to be filled by people and things around us. But they will be just as empty and needy as we are. Remember this: Trying to be filled from the outside in never works. We will see that only God can truly fill us, but He does it, from the inside out! If we seek to be filled from the outside, we become emotional blood-suckers, draining each other more and more, until there is absolutely nothing left for anyone. Then we get angry, sick, crazy, abusive, and dysfunctional. Our choices, actions, and results will reflect that sad state as we do unspeakably cruel and brutal things to ourselves and to others. Husbands and wives betray each other. Parents abuse, wound or abandon their own children. Enraged children tear into each other. The races divide and try to eradicate each other. Do they do these things because they are so fulfilled on the inside, or because they are so ravenously needy?

As you will see, *The Ultimate Journey* offers a radical new view and approach to everything. These phases explore God's Christ-centered patterns. His patterns are Christ-centered and bring us back to his original blueprint specifications and the God-filled humanity he originally intended us to be.

This approach is like a two-sided coin. From God's side, his agenda, as we will see in Phase 2, is to reveal his glorious, risen Son to the poor, self-mutilating, sin-blasted human race. It is through his Son, that God rescues mankind from its terrible sin, mortality, and corruption. Therefore, God's agenda toward us is—Self-Revelation—by his incarnation, through the person of Jesus Christ, in order to save and bless us.

From our side the agenda is—to recognize our desperate need and respond to God’s initiative, by the ongoing discovery and acceptance of his ways, through Jesus Christ. God invites us to join him in an awesome, blood covenant relationship, made possible through His Son. We have named this bonding to God, and the relationship it creates Christ-Life.

From our Christian, Bible-based perspective, we learn that God designed human beings in marvelous, astounding ways. Psalm 139, verse 14 says: “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful!” It is our God-given destiny to acknowledge and obey our Creator and heed the revealed truth of his reality.

A human being is equipped to endure, achieve and become many amazing things, but there are three burdens no human was designed to bear for very long, especially all alone:

The first burden is that of trying to be an independent agent, trying to run our own life, all alone. Independent agents see themselves as entirely responsible for everything. They depend on their own devices to meet every need and contingency. But God designed us to do everything together with him. He intended to complete, supply, guide and protect us by his indwelling power and ability.

The second burden is the heavy load of trying to stuff within ourselves all the damage and pain we suffered from the offenses, abuses, and neglect inflicted upon us by others. When we try to carry that load, we are automatically stuck with having to swallow all the anger, fear, bitterness, hurt, pain, and shame such things generate within us.

The third burden is the heavy damage done and guilt incurred as a result of our own sins, offenses, crimes, atrocities, betrayals as and the damage inflicted on others through our own inadequacies, ignorance, false assumptions, corruption, selfishness, and profound limitations. We need help in redemptive healing, growth, and maturity.

Whenever we believe we have to carry any or all of these burdens alone, we become sick in spirit, soul, and body. Life becomes sub-human, meaningless, and hopeless. We develop damaging thought patterns and lifestyles out of the toxic, damaging shame that builds up inside us. We try to manage everything on our own, year after year, as if we were God. In doing so, we become inadvertent abusers, doing great damage to ourselves and to the people around us.

In Phase 1 we will learn something that may be absolutely new and revolutionary to you. We will deal with the first burden, taking inventory of all the sins and wrongs committed against us in the past when we were very young and still incapable of personal wrongdoing. It is an inventory-taking process of

Discover, Uncover, and Recover. We will first deal with the past since it was the first thing to deeply influence us. We will stop running from the past and learn instead—to face, accept, and admit the truth about our life, and ourselves, just the way we were and just the way we are. We will honestly deal with the truth and work through our shame and fear. We will learn to desire truth, no matter what it costs or where it leads. You cannot deal with anything until you admit it is there and it becomes real. Nor can you obtain real results with falsified means and ingredients. Nations, organizations, churches, leaders, parents and teachers that encourage hiding from the past lead themselves and others to disaster.

In Phase 2 we will learn how God completely lifts those burdens from us. He heals the wounds and removes our shame, guilt, unworthiness, anxiety and sense of condemnation. Then we're freed from the false patterns that compel us to keep regenerating those very things. As we learn who Christ really is and what he did for us, we begin to understand the heart-wrenching depths of God's eternal, tender, love for us. Then we realize the awesome value, worth and destiny he gives us, and seeks to reveal to others, through us.

Phase 3 helps us go even further in the discovery of God's patterns for dealing with all of life's realities. We learn basic laws and principles that underlie the nature of God's creation and its true workings. We discover what happens when we trust and obey God, instead of relying on what we call common sense, luck, human wisdom, traditions, and feelings. We will receive tools with which to build a secure future, based on the rock solid foundation of God himself, and his endless wisdom, ability, love and covenant loyalty.

The Ultimate Journey never really ends. Once you begin exploring God and his ways, the watchwords are always—there is always more of God to discover and explore!

If you follow his truths and patterns, you will penetrate his heart and mind. As you do, you will launch into the infinite expanse of eternity, where you will experience the endless enjoyment of the infinite Lord of all Creation—Face to face.

THE STAGES LEADING TO HEALING GRIEF

There are steps or stages that the human mind usually goes through as it tries to process the deep impact of sad, painful, or traumatic experiences. The mind needs skill with which to process properly such experiences. Healthy families naturally supply these things by the way they interact with each other. However, individuals raised in ignorant, immature, unskilled families, are not properly prepared for the adult world, spiritual and emotional well being or the big-league responsibilities of marriage, parenting, teamwork, friendship, and life.

A mind free to process painful losses and difficult experiences generally proceeds through a series of stages along the way. The processing speed depends on many factors. The more resistance there is to the process, the longer it takes to heal and recover. In many cases, the processing work is never done this side of the

grave. Following are the grief stages, not always necessarily in this order, that the human mind tends to experience.

Stage 1: Denial: Immediate shock and a tendency to try to escape, often mark the first stage. The mind needs time to grasp what has happened. To buy that time, it tends to resort to immediate denial. “No, it cannot be. There must be some mistake. No one must know about this. Problem? What problem? There isn’t any problem.”

Stage 2: Minimizing: Downplaying the true impact of the blow is a form of bargaining with reality. The sufferer jokes or laughs off the pain. “It’s not that bad. It could be worse. ‘This is actually funny! Just look on the bright side. Don’t worry. I’ll be just fine.’”

Stage 3: Anger: When neither of the above makes the reality go away, then frustration and rage may follow. We think reality ought to be or do one thing, and it disregards our imperatives and does whatever it pleases, hence our frustration, critical spirit and negative attitude.

Stage 4: Depression: There are many kinds of depression. Some are due to a misfiring or chemical imbalance of the brain called Clinical Depression. This requires medical attention and we don’t deal with that in our group work. The kind of depression we are concerned with comes from our inability or refusal to admit that something we do not want is true and real. A muted form of anger and self-pity arises when the mind is still not quite ready to accept the fact that we have suffered a terrible, irrevocable loss. The tendency is to tell ourselves, “I shouldn’t feel this way. What’s wrong with me that I feel this way?” As long as the mind cannot accept it, it cannot properly process it. Thus, it remains stuck, not really getting over what happened in the past. This condition leads to severe emotional blockage that results in a myriad of negative mental, emotional, physical and spiritual symptoms and damage.

Between stages four and five, we encounter what we call the shame barrier. It is like a wall that prevents us from going further to full resolution and freedom. It comes from our instinctive reluctance or deliberate unwillingness to face, admit, own up to, feel, and express what happened. When we do that, the voltage builds up within our body and is trapped. That causes unhealthy, emotional blockage, behavioral disorders and sometimes, physical ailments.

THE SHAME BARRIER

“It’s not that bad...I don’t need any help...I’ve already dealt with it...It’s nobody’s business...To talk about it is disloyalty to people I love...Others are much worse off than I am...Whining about it won’t change anything...To show such weakness is to lose power and control... No way, I refuse to admit the real truth. It’s not that big of a deal!”

If we cannot break through this barrier, we will not receive effective help in getting over the experience. The voltage will keep regenerating and recycling. The blockage will prevent us from effectively discharging that powerful energy buildup. Thus it will contaminate everything else we try to do or enjoy in the future because the same issues always remain—anger, bitterness, resentment, fear, paranoia, childish viewpoints, control compulsion, insatiability, addictions, and bad relationships. These things will haunt us, like a beast in the basement. Here's what the shame barrier is like: "It's not that bad...I don't need any help...I've already dealt with it...It's nobody's business...To talk about it is disloyalty to people I love... Others are much worse off...Whining about it won't change anything...To show such weakness is to lose power and control... No way, I refuse to admit the real truth...it's not that big of a deal!"

Stage 5: Acceptance: The first four stages keep us on the bondage side of the shame barrier. As long as we stay there and avoid facing and accepting the reality of what happened to us, we will remain in bondage. Yet the reality of what happened will not change, nor will the truth allow itself to be twisted. When we try, the truth does not become twisted. Our thought patterns become twisted and our mind misled and confused. But when we finally break through the shame barrier, we begin to accept and own our life and the losses we suffered, just as they are. We can then share these realities with a safe ally or allies. Our experience-processing equipment straightens out and starts to work again. Then we can vent the emotion, discharge the trapped energy, and feel the energy blockage begin to break loose and come out of us. It is then that God, the Spirit of Truth, can truly heal us, restore us and lead us to a clean, uncluttered future.

Stage 6: Feeling: When you can admit and share the truth, you will really begin to feel the legitimate pain you have feared and tried so desperately not to feel all this time. You actually reconnect with the feeling parts of you that you had shut down and stuffed into your subconscious dungeon. That inner disintegration of the soul is what caused the chronic inner distress you have been trying to numb out with controlling, compulsive, addictive agents, false fronts and other mood-altering behaviors.

Stage 7: Expression: This is a natural by-product of the previous two stages. Once you begin to accept and feel what happened, you are free to vent and release the trapped emotional voltage you have held in for so long. The blockage begins to break up and the immensely powerful energy is expressed and vented in a natural way. You discharge it, allowing your wounded, tortured soul to find relief, resolution, cleansing and healing. Finally, when the flood has receded, you can count your losses, vent the pain, grieve, "bury your dead," and go, unencumbered, into a new future.

Stage 8: Grieving: This is your reward for truthful openness and willingness to share who and what you really are and what really happened. It enables festering pockets of neglected soul-wounds to break open, discharge their toxins and heal. It allows the tightly wound emotional spring inside to finally release its tension and unwind. It gives the mind cleansing and finality. When the grieving is done, the healing happens. The mind can finally let go of the past, put it to rest, and leave it behind. It will not keep bringing the same thing up to you with haunting regularity. It will truly be over.

These stages lead up to being able to experience the wonderful release and freedom that come from that healing feeling—Grief. That’s why the whole focus of Phase 1 centers on what we call grief work or reality-acceptance work. The better and more thoroughly you accept yourself and your life, just as you are; the more your grief work will progress. With each deposit of old, unfinished business you finally process, healing and an inner sense of peace will become more dramatic.

Success in breaking through the shame barrier is like starting an avalanche. The hardest part is getting the first large boulder loose and starting it moving. It takes a lot of digging, grunting, pushing, and straining, but once dislodged, it finally starts rolling downhill. Once it starts building momentum it does the rest of the work for you by dislodging other boulders in its path—all by itself. As other boulders begin rolling they dislodge many others, and so on. Soon the whole mountainside is crashing down to the depths below. However, it would not have happened if you had not started the first boulder rolling.

Many people start with a mountain of pain, shame, fear, anger, sadness, and immensely powerful emotional voltage trapped in their heart. It remains frozen because they never learned to get it off their chest. For some reason, they were not able. It wasn’t safe. Many homes, places of employment, organizations, relationships and even churches may not be safe. You can’t be real there. You can’t express your feelings or say what you really think without fear of shaming, blaming and rejection. It is a tragedy that some areas of the Body of Christ are some of the most unsafe places on earth when it comes to being real. People do not feel safe, nor do the pastors and leaders feel safe. They rightfully fear the gossip and backbiting that are sure to follow. So everybody is forced to go underground and become phony. But how can the Spirit of Truth operate in a system that so faithfully follows the patterns of the Father of Lies?

We are determined and committed to create Christ-Life greenhouses that are safe for every person, regardless of background, status, position, race, religion, persuasion or current situation. The group you are about to join is committed to that. Will you join them, roll up your sleeves and cooperate in creating such a place for yourself and the others? It won’t be there until you learn to work together to create it!

The exercises in Phase 1 help you apply the blow-torch of truth to various pertinent parts of the emotional icebergs we all have frozen inside of us. If you persevere, big slabs of that ice will start to break loose. As they do, they will dislodge even bigger chunks. You begin to break through the shame barrier wall as your need to be in control, your truth-twisting techniques, insecurities and the toxic shame that have held you captive for so long begin their meltdown. Some very accurate words to describe the results of that process are – freedom, spontaneity, character, maturity and integrity! The more your shame melts, the more your false self melts with it, and your true, God-created self begins to emerge. Then an avalanche effect of positive results begins, one thing leading to another, and another. Soon, you learn new, healthy, liberating patterns that allow you to get real, get unstuck, start growing, and develop the person you *really* are.

THE ADULT ALLY: WHAT EVERY CHILD NEEDS AND ABUSED CHILDREN SELDOM GET

Every child needs at least one healthy adult who will consistently help the child through the difficulties of life, explain things, listen, correct, teach and model new, mature patterns. The adult ally mirrors God's acceptance, love, understanding, and truth to the child. The ally demonstrates personally, what is right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, healthy and unhealthy, mature and immature. The adult ally faithfully and consistently invests time, attention and energy into the child's life. He or she is teacher, defender, corrector, and the one who explains things the child does not yet understand. The ally embraces, validates, and loves the child, listening sympathetically whenever the child goes through deeply significant experiences.

With an ally a child feels free to express their true feelings, be it positive or negative, without fear of being shamed, blamed, rejected, abused or abandoned. This helps their little mind learn to process reality effectively. With their ally, a child knows they always have a safe, welcoming, secure haven. Such fortunate children will learn and grow properly and have a much better chance of being emotionally and spiritually healthy. A secure emotional base is the optimal condition for a child's ability to learn well and to develop skills for problem solving, success and survival.

Whether a child is elated, frightened, needy, hurt, traumatized, angry or downcast, they need to share these things with the ally. Thus they can express and deal with the strong emotional energy build-up that such experiences generate within them. Such a relationship does for the child what a vent hole does for a boiling teakettle. Pressure that builds up inside can escape in a healthy, non-damaging way.

Without the ability to effectively vent that pressure, the energy inside the kettle builds until it becomes more than the kettle can contain. Then crazy, violent, damaging results follow. We never outgrow the need for encouragement and support. The need is there, waiting for us, as soon as we leave the womb and we never really outgrow it.

With an ally, a child learns to deal with life and all it serves up, right away. The ally's nurturing helps the child develop a healthy way of dealing with life, understanding one's self and understanding of life in general. In dysfunctional, sinful, abusive families and systems, children do not receive nurture, protection, and help with painful experiences. Authority figures that should be their adult allies are sometimes the very ones that torment, terrorize and exasperate children. They fail to instill emotional security that leads to proper development and training. Instead of being able to depend on these adults for help, the child has nowhere to turn, no mentor, no ally or emotional vent system. So the child learns to swallow all of that need, pain, shame, confusion, fear and frustration, and seeks relief in negative, destructive ways. Negative seeds produce negative results.

Once internalized, the emotional voltage produced by these things becomes trapped. It is very powerful when you finally vent it. However, it becomes even more powerful, in sick, dark, damaging ways, as long as it remains trapped. If trapped, it will continue to do spiritual, mental, emotional and physical damage to the sufferer and to those around him or her.

Decades later, such a person remains a full-blown adult-child; wounded, fearful, shame-based, angry, emotionally frozen and self-centered. By this time, they will be so used to being unacceptable, unlovable, unimportant, and neglected, that they will continue to see and treat themselves in the same way. Very little of their own issues and personal needs will ever be faced and dealt with. That would violate the pattern they are so used to acting out. Therefore, they develop few skills in this area. They may appear to be great helpers of others, but they remain true abusers and neglecters of themselves. We tend to treat ourselves the way our parents treated us. If they were neglectful, we tend to neglect our own needs. If they were hard on us, we tend to be hard on ourselves.

To escape the chronic pain and distress caused by their self-neglect, they find ways to medicate and numb their true feelings. The effect is that the original wounding experiences undergone years ago are denied and kicked down the mental stairs and locked away. In time, these festering wounds will become like immense, raging beasts in the basement. As long as they are there, they must try to manage and conceal them. Thus, they are held hostage and the rest of their life will have to remain on hold. Notice that this is an emotional reality. You cannot deal with emotional needs by waving a spiritual wand over them. That would be like trying to fix an electrical wiring problem by painting the front porch! If it's a spiritual problem, you resort to spiritual remedies. If it's emotional, you deal with it on an emotional level.

The wounded child you are may not have had an adult ally back then, but you still need one. You may feel forced, even after decades, to continue to think, look, feel and act like the lost, wounded child. As a result, you subconsciously depend on others to act as your adult caretaker. As long as you do that, you continue to play out your childhood victim role and will fall prey to any number of other, adult child predators.

It may have never dawned on you that by this time you could learn to receive real parenting from God, and apply it to yourself, as your own adult ally and authority figure.

It's common to encounter adult children, ranging in age from the late teens to the 90's, still trying unsuccessfully to operate in the adult world. It is common to find Christians, even those in ministry, continuing to follow thought and behavior patterns they developed when they were very young children.

When it happens, it is because the mind and brain see no other option. There is only one set of experiences and reaction patterns on the menu. Suppose your brain is wired only for American-English patterns, and a terrorist threatens you with instant death unless you begin to think, speak and act Japanese. You might want to do it with all your terrified heart, but that would not be enough to get your mental computer to do it. Minds can only follow the prevailing patterns that they are wired and pre-programmed to follow. It takes new wiring to be able to get different results.

All people are stuck in some kind of old patterns. People that were abused, neglected or traumatized early in life are especially prone to this. They can easily remain stuck in the effects of what they suffered in their original family, from their original authority figures and role models. As long as those patterns prevail, our past overshadows and engulfs the future. We regress back to those obsolete childhood experiences, viewpoints, issues, feelings, and tendencies.

The alternative to staying stuck in that rut is to develop appropriate new wiring and patterns, repeating them until they are deeply programmed into our mental computers. That takes practice and rehearsal. You really get good at whatever you keep practicing. It's like an actor deciding to stop doing the same old play they have done for years and choosing to learn a brand new role in a brand new play that they have never been in before. They will not be very good at first, but with enough serious rehearsal, they become absolute pros at following the new patterns and performing in an astoundingly new way. In time, they become those new patterns. Thus, you can rehearse your way out of any old play, by really learning the lines, moves, cues and spirit of a brand new one.

We want to help you form new patterns wherever needed to help you make the transition from lower to higher skill levels. If you still play the part of a scared, wounded, angry, shame-based child trapped in a big body, it's time to learn to grow into a healed, full-fledged adult. If you have several Ph.D.'s., but are spiritually, mentally and emotionally where you were five, ten or fifteen years ago, you are stuck and need to start growing again.

The new part we propose for you to learn is that of an adult ally or gardener, as opposed to the part of an immature, helpless, care-needer, a selfish, ego-centric, stagnant consumer.

Many people never had a trustworthy adult ally when they were growing up. That is one reason why they do not know how to recover from sad and painful

things. They were not able to crawl up on the lap of their adult ally so they could say what was on their mind, and feel what they felt, and blow out the emotional steam they had inside. They had to learn to clam up, stuff everything deep inside and play some kind of protective, manipulative, false coping role.

They ended up being adult children, codependents, and either professional abuse victims, or else angry, volatile, shame-based, controlling abusers in their own right. Their marriages are sad, unfulfilling and empty. They do not know how to relate to their children. Instead, they abandon or compete with or abuse them. They are usually filled with chronic, damaging, painful emotional voltage that they do not know what to do with, or how to handle in healthy ways. So they become addicted to something or other.

Over the next several weeks you will learn the pattern of the Adult Ally and begin wiring it into your mental repertoire. You are not going to come to group, or operate in the adult world as the same, angry, scared, helpless, victimized child you used to be. You are going to come instead, as the experienced, mature, adult ally and teacher, who is going to stand by and care for the wounded child you used to be. There is a very big difference between those two patterns.

The better you become at following this new pattern or playing this new part in the future, the more mature, adult, and healthy the new wiring you are installing in your head will be. So, during this introduction of yourself as your own little child's Adult Ally, please cooperate. Encourage yourself and your group to grasp this new concept and maintain it, for everybody's sake!

THE WOUNDED CHILD

Some people, for various reasons, smirk or frown when they hear us talk about the wounded child. They like to think of themselves as mature, sophisticated, and far beyond such hokey foolishness. Others, with rigid fundamentalist mindsets, suspect such psycho-babble of being New-Age. They deem such terms as unscriptural, and therefore unacceptable. Still others are too self-sufficient to be part of a whiny group that obsesses over past hurts, fears, and hang-ups. Instead they ignore their emotions out of fear and shame. And they independently will give the appearance of happiness and well being with grit, guts and manipulation.

However, when they are called on to provide effective help to anyone that really needs ministry for chronic emotional distress, these same people are at a total loss. Religious clichés and quick-fix pep talks do not work. Their rigid, shame-based cynicism prevents them from compassionately relating to deeply wounded, emotionally stuck people. So the wounded turn away because they realize it is not safe to try to get real with people that cannot face truth and have compassion for raw humanity. The wounded would be shamed and put down even more. So they go away, or fall through the cracks.

Many that were skeptical at first somehow made their way into one of our groups. Then they found, to their utter shock, that they too were really wounded

and deficient in relationship skills or unaware of the unfinished emotional business they had. They finally had to admit that they were not as knowledgeable, perfect and all-together as they desperately needed others to think. In addition, those who prided themselves on being biblically correct found that the issues and truths we deal with are totally compatible with the Spirit underlying the Scriptures, even if our terminology differs from that used by the venerable ancients. Many skeptics discover, to their absolute amazement, that they too have deep soul wounds and recurring, subconscious issues and patterns they never even suspected. After they begin Phase 1, a new awareness dawns on them and they are finally able to learn something new and mature beyond their present level. It is good to remember what the Bible says about us all, regardless of how smart, advanced, together, and wonderful we *think* we are.

It is a fact that everything you have ever experienced on this earth is permanently stored within the memory bank part of your brain and nervous system. That is a tremendous amount of data. It would be very easy to try to lose conscious remembrance of huge chunks of it, especially if it was painful, shameful, traumatic, or scary. Yet all that data abides there, just the way it originally went in as wounds, traumas, mistaken perceptions, emotional voltage, and all.

There are 6 H's that can contaminate our lives if they are not dealt with. They are:

1. Hurts: the painful things that happen to you
2. Horrors: the scary things that happen to you and the fear that follows
3. Humiliations: the embarrassing and humiliating things you experience and the shame that follows
4. Hatreds: the anger and bitterness you experience through abuse and rejection
5. Hungers: the unmet needs that come from neglect
6. Honors: the accomplishments that make you feel that you have to continue to perform well to be loved and accepted.

Any one, or a combination of the 6 H's, can truly contaminate our lives, lead to sinful behaviors, and severely retard our emotional, relational, and spiritual growth. They ruin our attempts at having intimate relationships with ourselves, with God, and with other people. When left untended, they force wounded people into very negative, damaging behavior and thought patterns, spiritual blindness, codependency, adult child issues, and abuser-victim behavior.

We state in this book that it takes the disconnecting of an old pattern and the installation of a brand new pattern, to enable a person to truly get unstuck, and begin growing toward effective recovery. (Read Matthew 12:36-37, Ephesians 4:22-32)

ENTER THE SMALL GROUP

At first, the support group supplies the person with adult allies—people who understand, care, listen, and validate. So if we are stuck as adult-children, we begin there. We learn to be adult allies for one another. We work to build an atmosphere where nobody abuses, tattles, tries to fix or change anyone. Acceptance is the name of the game at this point, so that it can be safe for each one to be real. We need time to learn these skills, but if we take the time, we gradually learn from our group what it is like to have an adult ally. And that lets us experience acceptance and real love. Once you experience it, you know what the words mean. Until then, the words are meaningless.

This in itself would be a big plus, but we dare not stop there. To recover from adult-child issues, we have to go further than this. We are stuck because we keep thinking in the same way we learned when we were much younger. We see ourselves as wounded, frightened, powerless, abandoned, rejected, and abused children. Especially in stressful, confusing, pressure-laden situations, we lose it and instinctively snap back to that wounded child part of our brain, working from the childish patterns contained there. As children we were at the mercy of the way things were, but now that we are adults, we get to decide the way things are going to be. We no longer need to live as the victims we were as children. But we need help processing our past so that we can finally live as healthy adults.

That woefully obsolete data continues to enslave and contaminate us even in the present. The more we operate from the child section of our brain, the more the patterns deepen and intensify, becoming truer and truer to the mind and nervous system. All the while, we are not able to begin developing our mature, adult part and patterns, because we are still engulfed in old childhood issues.

* * *

To grow beyond that, we need to develop the adult section of our brain. By that we mean a more mature, power-endowed, liberated, controlled section of data with new authority-figure patterns that enable us to rise above and beyond whatever it was we suffered in the past. However, you must learn to think in new ways because only you can develop those new patterns for yourself. Why is that? It's because your brain listens only to you. What you say is what your brain deems to be true and right, even if you are wrong. A lie unchallenged becomes the truth.

That's why you must learn to follow a new paradigm, and repeat it and repeat it, until it's wired in enough to begin taking over your old patterns and behaviors. A paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality. So, we offer this new pattern. It is a new paradigm of you. This is a temporary pattern. Later on, we will propose the permanent, Christ-Life pattern and encourage you to install it for the rest of your life. But for now, let's think in terms of the new, adult you, coming back in time, in your memories, to

seek out, accept, own, love, bond with, and rescue the wounded child you used to be. At first your brain will say, “What? What are you talking about?” You may have great difficulty thinking that way much less knowing how to go about doing it. That’s because you may have been the adult child all this time and have not grown beyond that stage. In that case, you will have almost no adult role wiring in your brain with which to see yourself accepting full responsibility for tending to your needs and managing your emotions as a mature, autonomous caretaker. Instead, you will feel the terror of abandonment any child would feel. You will feel stupid, inept, insecure, confused and bound to fail. But that will just be your old childhood wiring, playing the same old tricks on you!

Even though you feel awkward, and unsure of yourself, begin trying to play the part of that wounded child’s Adult Ally. You will be developing brand new wiring you never had before. You will also begin operating out of a completely different part of your brain and mind! The more you practice and rehearse, the more you will gradually create and install new, adult wiring. A new mental structure and pattern of you that has never been there before will emerge! You will develop a new style and system for both of you, with new rules, and a new, mature, autonomous role for yourself that transcends your original family system.,

You will become the Adult Ally, the parent, the gardener, and nurturer of that wounded child part of you. No longer will you reject, abandon, disassociate from, and forget that child. You are now here to face your fears and take care of every part of the garden of your life. You are now a responsible adult caregiver and gardener, just like God is. He wants you to be just like him in that respect. We’ll look into this much more deeply later on.

You will be taught how to journal this ongoing adult ally and re-parenting relationship process. You will learn to communicate with, listen, accept, love, nurture, and help the wounded child part of you so that you do not continue to regress back, to become and remain that helpless, victimized, wounded child from the past! You are growing and developing your maturity and autonomy from the past.

This is an Exodus process. You will truly, mentally and emotionally leave your original home, taking the stranded, abandoned child you used to be with you, going beyond, together, to create your own brand new life. This leaves codependency behind. It stimulates you to courageously fight for your own inner freedom and learn independence and inter-dependence. With that new identity and wiring you can begin to discover and develop all that God put into both parts of you. Thus, you will finally be learning how to get a life. You will become adept at taking care of the child you used to be. You will become your own ally, instead of continuing to depend on other people to do that for you. You will learn to parent yourself and develop your own relationship with God. It is no longer appropriate for you to

see yourself as your own god or to try to suck nourishment from somebody else's relationship with God. It's time for you to grow up and learn to keep on growing and growing and growing.

Your mind and brain can only do one thing at a time. It is one pattern or the other. As long as you practice the new adult pattern, you cannot regress back to the old child pattern. But fail to develop the new pattern, and your brain has no choice but to follow the old one.

HOW YOUR SMALL GROUP WILL OPERATE

You will be a part of a small group that will generally consist of a facilitator and 3-5 participants. Your group may also have a facilitator-in-training in addition to an experienced facilitator. Your group may operate separately or may be a part of several groups operating under the same umbrella. When there are several groups operating, there is generally an overall group director that oversees *The Ultimate Journey* process. Some of the groups may meet on the same day or different groups may meet on different days. It all depends on the structure through which *The Ultimate Journey* is being offered.

Each week you will be expected to read through the lesson in your book. Following the reading you will go to your Study Guide and follow the directions for each week. It is important that you do all of the assignments in a thorough and timely manner. Failure to do the writing requested will mean you will no longer be able to participate in the class. The success of the group depends on everyone's willingness to do their part.

In addition, attendance at all the meetings is expected. Missing a meeting can cause you to fall behind and it is hard to make one up once you miss it. Plus, you miss out on what others shared while you were gone. Please discuss any expected absences ahead of time with your facilitator. If you are unable to do the writing assignments for a particular week or unable to attend a meeting, please let the facilitator know ahead of time your reasons.

Regardless of one's degree of experience, the better each group members do at following the schedule and encouraging each other, the better the results will be. The more they change the subject, deviate, improvise, fail to respect each other's needs and rights or disregard the covenant and the schedule and instructions, the less effective and beneficial your time together will be.

Even at the beginning of your growth process, please know that you too, will have what it takes to become a great facilitator and group director in your own right. Those who occupy those positions today once started from scratch just like you. Do you know what their secret is? They paid attention to their leaders, followed directions, and did it well. By repeating that process, they learned the group work patterns. Now that they are familiar with the patterns, they can lead

others as first class guides. That makes it possible to duplicate the program and leadership functions. Anyone with ordinary ability can do it. It is truly that simple. It is not going to be about you anyway. It is going to be about God working through you.

WHAT IF YOU ARE NOT A CHRISTIAN?

The *Support Group Covenant* states that participation is purely voluntary and that everyone who meets the criteria and wishes to participate is welcome regardless of race, gender, religion, or age. The only exceptions to this would be practical, special case instances, due to individual limitations or disabilities that would put effective participation beyond a person's reach. One example would be young children, not yet mature enough to understand the issues or follow instructions. Other examples would refer to those who only speak and understand a foreign language, cannot hear, or have severe mental problems, physical disabilities, or injuries that make it impossible to realistically participate in the exercises and meetings.

Please understand especially if you are non-Christian and are not open to considering becoming one, that this is a Bible-based, Christ-centered program. Its ultimate objective is to facilitate understanding, and, if possible, acceptance of the Gospel of Salvation, and the specific claims of Jesus Christ. We would obviously be very pleased should you come to know and serve Christ as your divine Lord and Redeemer. That is the ultimate thrust of the material. The meetings and group exercises naturally lead up to that in Phase 2 and beyond, in Phase 3.

If that would offend or cause you too much discomfort, we understand. That is why we notify you of these facts before we begin. Nevertheless, even if you are not inclined to believe and personally surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we encourage and welcome you to participate in Phase 1. There are three reasons for this. The first is because Phase 1 deals primarily with the truth about you, and your own trapped emotional voltage and patterns of codependency, emotional immaturity, or abuse that may be plaguing you and your attempts to have healthy relationships. Regardless of your faith, you can benefit greatly from the information, skills, and exercises with which you will have access. You can also benefit greatly from the great bonding and friendships you will develop with your fellow group members. They could be a blessing to you for the rest of your life, regardless of what or how you believe!

The second reason we invite you to participate and listen has to do with personal integrity. People who operate out of integrity reject something because they have investigated and examined it thoroughly. They know what you are talking about and they know what they are talking about. Having done that, they can have an informed opinion and arrive at solid, intelligent decisions based on deep thought, logic, experience, courage, and maturity.

Those who reject something out of laziness, fear, ignorance, stubbornness, or bias do not really know what they are rejecting or why they think they have to do it. They simply reject it. Not only is that a mindless, childish way of acting, but it could deprive them of something that has monumental, eternal importance. In that case, it would have the devastating consequences of an all-or-nothing gamble. You could be staking everything you have or could ever have for all eternity, on a terminal decision you made about something you do not really understand and cannot intelligently explain. But what if you are wrong? You would be condemning yourself to eternal, spiritual devastation, and you would not even know it until it was too late!

On the other hand, if you investigated it, you might decide to reject it anyway, and that is okay. It is certainly your right to do so but by investigating it; you might learn some vital information you never had access to before. Light bulbs might start flashing on in your head. Something deeply spiritual might happen that would absolutely and radically transform your existence! It has happened to many others before you and it might just happen for you, too. You might find exactly what you have been unconsciously searching for all of your life. Then you would be eternally grateful that you went ahead and did it.

It would be tragic to have it so close, so attainable, and yet lose it without even knowing what it is you missed out on—until it's too late. It is better to thoroughly investigate something first, and then make up your mind. What would you really have to lose by investigating and weighing things?

The third reason is so that you can make sure that your rejection of Christ is not really the most eternally horrendous mistake you could ever make. Are you willing to take a serious look at what you are putting your faith, hope, and trust in right now? How is that working for you? Is it solid, or is it mushy, shifting and unsound? Does it really fill you with peace, relief, confidence, and joy? Does it excite and equip you for eternity? Can it remove your fear of sickness, disaster, and death? Does it adequately answer the question about what will happen to you after death? Does it melt away your anger, insecurities, guilt, condemnation, anger or jealousy? Does it empower you to have extraordinary, loving, nurturing relationships in this life? Has it set you free from your sense of inferiority and toxic shame? Has it made your life fruitful and productive? Are you willing to live and die for it? Are you absolutely sure of the truth of where you stand? If so, what makes you so sure? If you are not so sure, then why do you still stubbornly insist on playing a hand that you know is sure to lose? You may not be as sure as you would like people to think. So I invite you to explore these things with the group you are thinking of joining. You can always make a final decision one way or the other—later.

If you are seriously considering participating, please understand that regardless of background or religion, you are welcome! You will be a valued, respected, equal member of the group, from start to finish. All we ask from you is a corresponding

level of acceptance, respect, and consideration for everybody else. You need not worry about ever being singled out, pressured, coaxed, badgered, shamed, or recruited to become a Christian, join any church body, or commit yourself or your finances to anything. You are being called to go through Phase 1 of *The Ultimate Journey* support group process for yourself and your loved ones, period. If it gets to be too much for you, you can always stop. Nevertheless, just on the outside chance that you might discover something revolutionary and life transforming, we encourage you to participate, ponder, and learn.

We are sincerely committed to making it safe for people to be who they are, where they are, as they are, without resorting in any way to shaming, blaming, pressuring or abusing. If you see any of that, it will be coming from people who are acting independently, in violation of the spirit and boundaries underlying *The Ultimate Journey Support Group Covenant*. In that case, feel free to bring it up to your group and the proper leader or leaders. Let it be effectively dealt with, and then continue.

True Christian believers do not automatically have to embark on an endless quest to try to “get people saved.” We believe that it is not about Christians trying to accost everybody-and-his-brother and manipulate them into believing. We believe Christianity is about Christians getting themselves to really believe and obey! We are not to try to control or manipulate others, or force our faith, down their throat. Our focus is that we would be so in awe of and in love with Christ, we willingly set our own selfish agendas aside and defer to him. We focus on him living and manifesting his inner presence, love, wisdom and compassion, through us on behalf of others! That way he can draw others to himself, as only he can do, and we do not have to become obnoxious, pushy, arrogant jerks. You do not become a believer in Jesus because those around you try to force you into it. You become a believer when Jesus himself is free to well up from within your own heart and life. God reveals him to you from within your own inner being. Then you respond as you see fit.

Please interpret the *Support Group Covenant* that follows, in this spirit. If you do, you will more easily understand what each person is committing to by signing this important and necessary document prior to the start of the actual group work. The covenant provides the structure that protects the rights and interests of each group member. It is a structure for creating a “greenhouse” for bashful, anxious, or hurting human beings, so they can begin to heal, grow and thrive—with no strings attached! It keeps things in proper order and right priority. It prevents people from using you, and the rest of the group, to continue to feed their own compulsions, addictions, and abusive, shame-based behavior patterns at everybody else’s expense. In addition, it prevents you from doing the same to others.

The more seriously each person takes this document, the better and smoother the working of the groups will be, and the more personal benefit each person will derive from the time and effort spent. Undoubtedly we can all agree then that observing the covenant faithfully will benefit everyone concerned.

SUPPORT GROUP COVENANT

1. I realize that The Ultimate Journey support group is a Christ-centered tool for studying and applying biblical principles to my own personal life. I understand that it is purely voluntary, and that all who agree to follow this covenant and cooperate with the appointed leaders and group members are welcome, regardless of race, gender, or religion.
2. I assume full responsibility for my own future reactions and choices. I acknowledge that they are and will be entirely my own, and in no way will they be the responsibility of the church, pastor, or group leaders under which this group will operate. I am responsible for anything I choose to do.
3. I acknowledge that my group director and facilitators are responsible for the proper running of this support group process according to the guidelines provided to them. I acknowledge that they have the authority to see that others abide by them for the good of the whole group.
4. I promise to cooperate with the group director and facilitators and to follow their instructions, accept their correction and abide by their final decisions. If I cannot do that, I reserve the right to resign from further participation in the group. I acknowledge that the group leader has authority to excuse anyone from participation in this group that they believe is not ready or is incapable of participating safely and profitably.
5. I understand that Phase 1 is designed to help me learn to deal more effectively with unfinished, emotional business from the past. I realize this means learning to face my fears and weaknesses instead of continuing to avoid or deny them. I understand I will learn to admit what happened to me, what I learned to do as a result, and that I will be encouraged to express my true feelings, count my losses, and grieve them. I understand that to do my grief work effectively, I will have to suspend use of any numb-out techniques to the best of my ability. Therefore, I promise to refrain from indulging in excessive, counter-productive use of potentially addictive things. These include, but are not limited to:
 - a. illegal drugs, alcohol, misuse of prescription drugs
 - b. eating disorders (bulimia, anorexia, overeating)
 - c. pornography and other forms of sexual addiction
 - d. using religion as a means to avoid facing reality
 - e. abuse of self or others
 - f. TV, video/computer games/internet or other forms of entertainment that I use to escape
 - g. Relationships that merely distract and kill time
 - h. Anything else that I realize I use to escape and disconnect from my true feelings and emotions.

I plan to attend the group meetings fully prepared to get in touch with my memories, unhealed wounds, trapped emotional voltage, and truth-twisting techniques.

6. I promise to work to create and maintain a family of God atmosphere for my group, where it is safe to be who, what and where we really are. I understand that none of us, including me is perfect. We all need to learn to grow. Therefore, I promise to do my part to maintain a safe, learning, growing environment for everyone involved.
7. I promise to keep strict confidentiality concerning what is said and done in our group meetings. I will not relate or discuss anything personal about another to anyone apart from my small group, including my own family members and friends, or anyone from any other small group. I promise to protect the names and reputations of all group members at all times.
8. I understand that my group director and/or facilitator may be considered a mandatory reporter, and will be obligated to report anything the law requires of them.
9. I promise to attend the meetings faithfully, so my group can count on my attendance and promptness. I promise to cooperate and strive to learn whatever skills the process is trying to instill. I promise to follow whatever the exercises require, to the best of my ability.
10. I promise to be open and honest with my fellow group members when it is time for me, during an exercise, to share my life and myself with them. I promise to be attentive and truly listen when it is time for each person in my group to do the same. I promise to assist, encourage and allow them in gentle, non-threatening, non-abusive ways, to freely, thoroughly, express and vent their feelings, so that they can reconnect with their unfinished issues, unhealed wounds, and unprocessed emotions.
11. I promise to refrain from trying to fix, give advice to, teach or counsel any fellow group member. I acknowledge that therapy is not the purpose of our group work, that I am not participating for that purpose nor is anyone intending to do that with me.

12. I promise to refrain from trying to alter the curriculum or steer the group process in a direction different from the one required by the course.
I promise to refrain from imposing my own agendas, arguing or criticizing others in areas such as religion, politics, etc.

13. I promise to refrain from making romantic, sexually-motivated advances to any group member during the course of this support group cycle.
I acknowledge that this would interfere with our group work. I also promise to refrain from encouraging or accepting any romantic, sexual advances made to me by another.

14. I promise to refrain from discussing my issues with my fellow group members outside of the group time. I understand that this could result in relationships that become, co-dependent, damaging, or divisive, and undermine the group process.

15. I agree to gently and lovingly confront any group member with compassion, equality, firmness, and kindness when I detect a possible group covenant violation. I will say so to the appropriate person. This includes such things as denial, abuse, getting off the subject, or any other behavior that would harm group integrity or derail the intent of the exercise.

16. I agree to allow my group members to share with me what they observe. I will gratefully listen when they point out any attitudes or behavior in me that would help me grow in this process. I acknowledge that we must learn this healthy family communication skill to benefit from our group work.

17. I promise to comply fully with the requirements of The Ultimate Journey process. I will cooperate to make our work together as smooth, safe and beneficial as I possibly can for all concerned.

18. I acknowledge that this group is intended for our mutual help. I acknowledge that its purpose is to supplement but not to replace professional therapy, counseling, or any allied services. Thus, I promise to admit and acknowledge any therapy or professional help I have recently received to the group director and return the completed Participation Notification form.

19. I acknowledge that the material made available to me is for my information and voluntary consideration only, and that I am not at all obligated to accept or carry out any suggestions, explicit or implied in it. Therefore, whatever interpretation and response I come up with will be purely my own.

In your next group meeting, you will go over the above Support Group Covenant with your small group. At that time, you will be asked to sign and turn in a form affirming your commitment to the points listed above.

WHAT ABOUT MY NUMB-OUT TECHNIQUES?

The fifth point of the covenant deals with some touchy, sensitive areas. This is not because we want to meddle with your freedom or your life. Here is why: People who suffer from deep soul wounds that are still raw and open live in constant pain, stress, fear, anger, and shame. That creates all sorts of inner, trapped emotional voltage that makes it hard to focus, concentrate, and function in society—being married, having a family, working etc... Thus, in order to find relief, they tend to find and use various “pain killers.”

If you were significantly abused or neglected, you will struggle with chronic feelings of rejection, abandonment, shame, inferiority, inadequacy and insignificance. When that happens, you feel compelled to do something to try to make up for how incomplete and not good enough you really feel and believe yourself to be. One way is by trying to feel good enough through performance. For example, by achieving titles, positions, financial success, engaging in noble, socially applauded careers, crusades, and endeavors to help the less fortunate. In addition, you may seek out super spiritual relationships with God or with wonderful, notable people, in hopes that by association your value or significance will increase and that will help you numb your shameful feelings of not being good enough.

Moreover, you may have resorted to taking substances such as food, alcohol, or drugs, or looking at pornography or participating in unhealthy sexual experiences to alter your chemistry and manipulate your mood and emotional climate. These activities and substances give you the sensation that when you numb the pain, it ceases to exist, but that is not true. These painkillers do not work because they do not really address the root of the problem anymore than watching lots of TV will fix your leaky roof. Their effect soon wears off. The pain, emptiness, fear, and shame return so you need another “fix” and then another, and another. In time, you become totally dependent on these things, addicted, compulsively pursuing and being enslaved by them.

Insisting on increasing our slavery to such things is not a very effective way to learn freedom and stop damage.

Those who are under this delusion are like a primitive man with a mouth full of decayed teeth. The pain is excruciating but he has lived in the bush all his life and knows nothing about dentistry. Therefore, to deal with his pain, he gets certain potions and concoctions from a witch doctor. They help him fool his brain by numbing and disconnecting certain portions of it to the extent that he feels euphoric as long as he is under their influence.

Later he moves to a city and finds out about dentistry and what it does, but it never occurs to him to see himself as a dental patient. Why should he? He does not

think he has a problem. He feels fine—as long as he keeps using the potions the witch doctor gave him. In that case, you would never convince a man who “feels no pain” to go to the dentist. Not as long as he can fool his own brain and force it to be convinced that not being able to feel what you feel is the same thing as being healthy and feeling fine.

However, if he should finally run out of the witch doctor’s elixir, Reality will begin to catch up with him until there is no more avoiding or escaping it. His brain will begin to reconnect and start to let him know how he *really* feels and what is *really* going on within him. This new found freedom to start feeling again may not be very pleasant, but it is the best motivation for him to reconsider the possibilities of dentistry—for himself. In that case, the pain will be intense but it will be temporary, and his teeth will have a chance of being saved instead of totally rotting and falling out of his head!

Without any painkiller to numb out with, he won’t wait very long before he is pounding at the door of the nearest dentist begging for help. Without the mind-numbing distraction of a pain-killer, he enters the perfect frame of mind for effective care, healing and resolution—absolutely ready and willing to do whatever it takes to get some proper, thorough, effective help, once and for all.

That is the rationale behind the fourth point of *The Support Group Covenant*. If you compulsively resort to mood-altering activities and substances to stay on the stuck side of the shame barrier, you will not be effective and successful in your group work, your relationship with God, with yourself, and with others. It would be like trying to drive with your breaks on.

Grief work is geared to help you reconnect with your true losses and the sadness and hurt that comes from them. The wounds will never heal while you plaster them over with denial, overwork, rage, drugs, alcohol, food, pornography, religiosity or unhealthy relationships. They will heal when they are truly opened up, admitted, and properly cared for.

You cannot care for the wounds until you locate them. You will not locate them until you can feel them. You will not feel them if you do not stop trying to disconnect and run away from them! You must face, accept, and admit them to yourself and to others.

Emotional or physical pain is a necessary warning system—like the red warning lights on a car’s dashboard. They are friends and teachers. Compulsive, addictive, pain-killing behavior is like cutting the wires on those lights so that they go out and stop reminding you that there is trouble under the hood. That is a fast way to become a hitchhiker or pedestrian!

Group work teaches you to start being thankful for, appreciating and paying attention to the warning lights—your feelings of pain. See them as friends and gifts from God. Do not numb them out! Listen to what they are trying to tell you so you can locate the source of trouble, get whatever effective help it takes, deal with it,

and heal. Even though you may never have had the Adult Ally to teach you, you will learn that God designed you to be able to process pain in a healthy way,

If you are not willing to suspend use of painkillers and mind distracters and you sign up for our kind of group work, you are self-deceived and exhibiting childish, counter-productive, self-destructive, dysfunctional behavior. You will play games with yourself, your group, and anyone close to you who is hoping and praying for you, and you will be opting for self-abuse that leads to destruction. That certainly is not the road leading to health, relief, peace, joy, and recovery. You will not like where it leads.

THIS IS NOT THERAPY OR A SUBSTITUTE FOR IT

This process helps you learn to be truthful with yourself, with God, and with other people in your life. It teaches you to seek out and change damaging, crazy-making patterns. It is not intended as therapy or a therapy substitute for people who are mentally ill or suffer from clinical depression and other forms of severe emotional imbalance. It is not intended to compete with or to interfere with any professional help or therapy you may have received or need to receive.

If you have had severe dysfunction or breakdowns, or a history of serious mental or emotional disturbance, see an appropriate doctor or therapist of your choice. Get some consultation about whether doing grief work is a good idea for you at this time. A *Support Group Participation Notification* form will be provided for you to give to your mental health provider. You are responsible for getting the help or therapy you need. You are responsible for your own growth, maturity, change and results. You are responsible for how well you learn and how far you move toward healing and recovery.

The Ultimate Journey group directors, facilitators, and the pastor and staff of any church or organization your group may be connected with, are not likely to be therapists or mental health professionals. They simply want to assist your efforts to know God, grow and learn to better care for yourself with healthy life-patterns. Please do not view anyone connected with any of the above as being responsible for you and for what only you can control. Do not place unreal expectations or false responsibilities for your needs, decisions, and actions upon others.

No one in the group is to try to fix or straighten out anyone else. There is to be no counseling, preaching, advice giving, or problem solving developed within the support group context. To do any of these things would violate the *Support Group Covenant*. We are all students together. The Spirit of God is our teacher and guide. We are here to discover, grow, mature, and learn good, healthy group and communication skills. Anyone in need of private counseling is responsible for and encouraged to seek his or her own private, outside help beyond the confines of *The Ultimate Journey* support group context.

You are encouraged to be friendly, interested, compassionate, concerned,

helpful, and cooperative with one another. You can be all of these things without resorting to any of the previously mentioned boundary-violating, activities and practices.

THE PARTICIPATION NOTIFICATION FORM

If you are currently under the care of a psychiatrist, psychologist, or mental health professional, or if you have had medicine prescribed for depression or other emotional or chemical disturbances, you must complete and return a *Support Group Participation Notification* form. You can obtain this form from your group leader and you will be required to have it completed and returned.

Why is this important? It is primarily for your own protection. If you have been working with a mental health professional, the last thing we want to do is to interfere with or hinder what you have both been working to do. We want to complement and enhance, not harm or reverse what you have already accomplished.

People with a history of severe spiritual, mental or emotional distress need specialized help. We will not overburden any group leader, facilitator, church or ministry with needs that they are not equipped to handle. Nor do we make false claims, grandiose promises or create misunderstandings and expectations that are unwarranted and unrealistic. We acknowledge the professional mental health community and their expertise. We welcome any cooperation, communication and insight that we might gain from working together with them for the good of all concerned.

* * *

Approach this process with love, respect, excitement, and great, positive expectations. Expect to encounter the Living God in the midst of every life event, in the material you read, and in your interactions with other people. You always see what you expect to see, and miss what you don't. Expect God to be active in your own heart and soul and in the midst of your group during every meeting. Expect him to use each exercise and daily occurrence, positive or negative, to teach and help you grow you, no matter where you go, or whom you are with. Expect to develop and release the immense potential he put into you. If you expect these things, you will see them. They are all there waiting for you to discover them.

Starting now, begin to view everything in your life at home, work, or wherever you are as raw material for this course. The past is not finished, until you finish it, by your response to it! We are going to learn to meet God and discover his wise, loving ways, in the midst of all things. We will learn to interact with him in blood covenant faith, rather than by being slaves to the circumstances, or the way it seems or feels. All events will become opportunities for God to work them all for

your good. Take full advantage of the very spiritual, personal development tool that reality, past and present, can be for you. Develop this attitude, and the Holy Spirit will develop a wonderful adventure with him—just for you.

May God's protection and blessings be upon you. May you allow him to bring freedom to your life. May you learn to pursue, explore, and enjoy his awesome greatness to the depths and degrees, he has envisioned. May he take you to spiritual and relational heights you never dreamed possible!

* * *

RETURN TO LESSON 1 IN YOUR STUDY GUIDE
AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS

PHASE

1

STUDY GUIDE

LESSON

1

GETTING READY FOR GROUP WORK

Above all else, guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life. Proverbs 4:23

READ THE LESSON

Read Lesson 1 in your Phase 1 book for *The Ultimate Journey*.

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

In your journal or notebook, write out brief answers to the questions below.

1. List the eight stages of grief people go through.
2. List the three burdens a human being is not designed to bear.
3. List the six “Hs” that contaminate our lives if not dealt with.
4. Define a paradigm in your own words.

COMPLETE THE CHECKLIST

Inventory Of My Cargo

As we go through life, we develop beliefs that influence our behavior. Read through the list of beliefs and behaviors and check any boxes that apply to you.

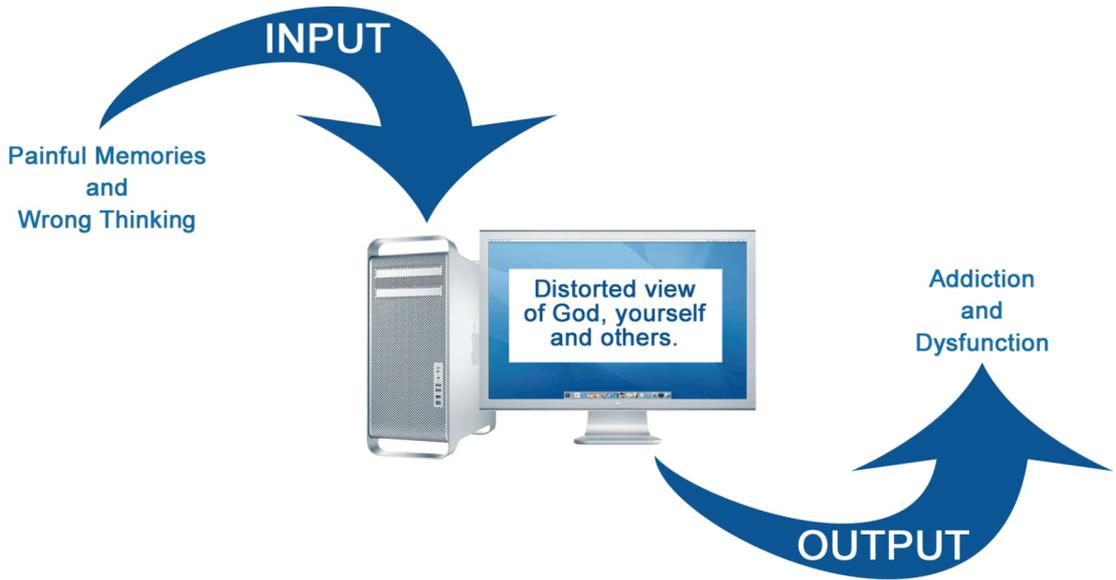
INVENTORY OF MY CARGO**Beliefs**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. I'm not good enough. | <input type="checkbox"/> 20. I must protect the family image at all costs. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. I don't belong like others do. | <input type="checkbox"/> 21. I must do whatever it takes to get people's love and approval. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. I don't have anything to offer. | <input type="checkbox"/> 22. It's my responsibility to make others happy. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. I'm stupid. | <input type="checkbox"/> 23. What I do makes me what I am. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. My needs aren't important. | <input type="checkbox"/> 24. You always get what you deserve. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. It's not OK for me to be who I really am. | <input type="checkbox"/> 25. You shouldn't need anybody. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. If something is wrong, it's my fault. | <input type="checkbox"/> 26. Something is wrong with me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Conflict must be avoided; I must keep peace at all costs. | <input type="checkbox"/> 27. I'm inept. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. It's not OK to get mad or express anger. | <input type="checkbox"/> 28. I'm inferior to other people. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. I don't have what it takes to be a success. | <input type="checkbox"/> 29. I'm a loser. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. I'm too much for people to handle. | <input type="checkbox"/> 30. It's not OK for me to have needs. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12. It's not OK to cry, especially not in front of others. | <input type="checkbox"/> 31. I'm too sensitive. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. It's not OK to ask for help. | <input type="checkbox"/> 32. I'm bad. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14. It's not OK to say, "I don't know." | <input type="checkbox"/> 33. I have to prove that I am valuable. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15. If I say no, then others won't like me. | <input type="checkbox"/> 34. I'm unlovable. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16. I don't have the right to be alive. | <input type="checkbox"/> 35. I'm not important. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17. I must be perfect. | <input type="checkbox"/> 36. I'm shameful. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18. It's not OK to make a mistake. | <input type="checkbox"/> 37. I'm a burden. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19. I'm a failure. | <input type="checkbox"/> 38. It's my job to make other people happy. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 39. I'm not enough. |

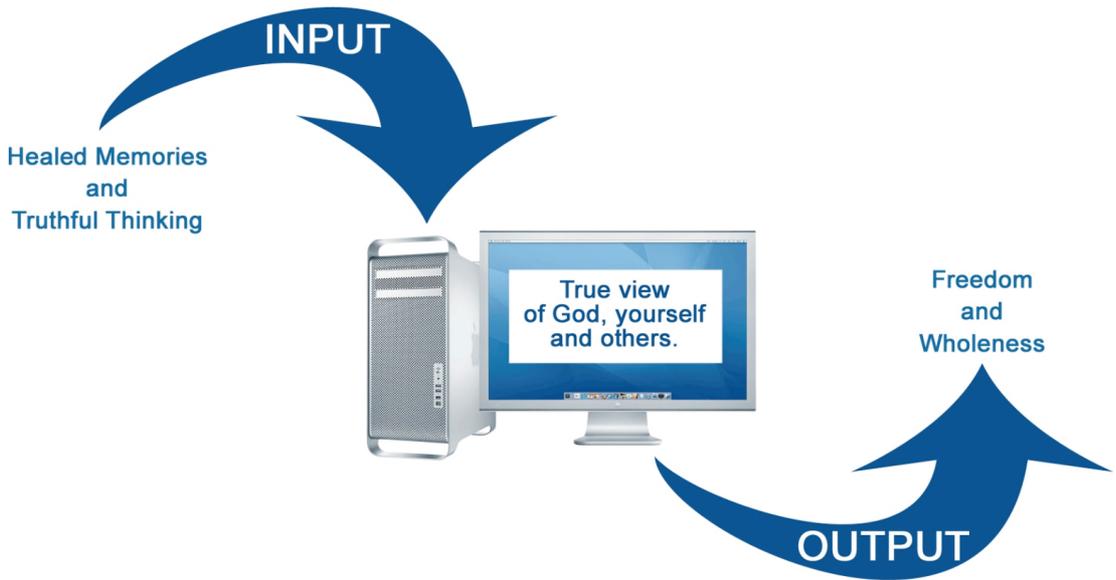
Behaviors

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. I procrastinate a lot of the time. | <input type="checkbox"/> 14. I compare myself to people alot. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. I “walk on eggshells” a lot of the time. | <input type="checkbox"/> 15. I have difficulty finishing things. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. I don’t trust easily. | <input type="checkbox"/> 16. I avoid conflict. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. I am argumentative a lot. | <input type="checkbox"/> 17. I feel responsible for other people a lot of the time. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. I am a people pleaser. | <input type="checkbox"/> 18. I am jelaous of others. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. I avoid my problems. | <input type="checkbox"/> 19. I tend to go along with the crowd. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. I have addictive behaviors.
(Check All That Apply To You) | <input type="checkbox"/> 20. I have difficulty espressing emotion. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol | <input type="checkbox"/> 21. I am depressed much of the time. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco | <input type="checkbox"/> 22. I am anxiety-ridden. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caffeine | <input type="checkbox"/> 23. I am afraid to give my opinion. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food | <input type="checkbox"/> 24. I perform to get approval. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drugs | <input type="checkbox"/> 25. I am abusive to other people. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pornography | <input type="checkbox"/> 26. I want to rebel against authority. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perfectionism | <input type="checkbox"/> 27. I feel like I have to be busy all the time. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workaholism | <input type="checkbox"/> 28. I am afraid to try new things. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eating Disorders | <input type="checkbox"/> 29. I have trouble accepting compliments. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Couch Potato | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gambling | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People Pleasing | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others: _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. I have a lot of worry and fear. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. I often over-react to things. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. I am overly competitive. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. I try to control people and situations. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12. I don’t take initiative when I need to. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. I often have trouble making decisions. | |

HOW THE BRAIN PROCESSES PAIN & WRONG THINKING



HOW THE BRAIN PROCESSES HEALING & TRUTHFUL THINKING



FIND SOME PHOTOGRAPHS

As you prepare for each exercise, it's helpful to look at photographs of yourself from each age period. If you have access to photographs of yourself from childhood, take time to get them. You will be asked to bring some photos to your small group meeting each week beginning with Lesson 3. These can be individual photographs from a variety of ages.

You may have an album where all the photos are kept, or you may not have any photographs of yourself for various reasons. If you don't have photos, perhaps your parents or caregivers didn't take any photos of you. Or maybe the photos were burned in a fire, or were lost. But even if you have no photos from your earlier years, don't despair. You'll still be able to do the group work.

* * *

AT YOUR NEXT MEETING...

Get Acquainted

You will go through this section during your next small group meeting. This will be your first chance to begin building relationships within your group—a time to break the ice and get started. We'll keep it simple by sharing some basic information.

Observe how your facilitator begins the sharing process. Follow the pattern until everyone has had a chance to speak. The facilitator will make certain each person has adequate time to talk.

Without getting into deeply emotional or personal matters, you'll share some of the following information so the group can get to know you:

- Your name
- How you heard about *The Ultimate Journey* and what drew you to pursue it
- Something about your personality
- Whether you are single, dating, married, divorced, or widowed
- Something about your spouse or children or, if single, your relatives or friends
- How you earn a living, spend your days, or enjoy retirement
- Any hobbies you like
- Your goals, dreams, or plans
- What would you like to accomplish through this group?
- What will pose your biggest challenge?

* * *

THE ULTIMATE JOURNEY SUPPORT GROUP COVENANT

1. I realize that The Ultimate Journey support group is a Christ-centered tool for studying and applying biblical principles to my own personal life. I understand that it is purely voluntary, and that all who agree to follow this covenant and cooperate with the appointed leaders and group members are welcome, regardless of race, gender, or religion.
2. I assume full responsibility for my own future reactions and choices. I acknowledge that they are and will be entirely my own, and in no way will they be the responsibility of the church, pastor, or group leaders under which this group will operate. I am responsible for anything I choose to do.
3. I acknowledge that my group director and facilitators are responsible for the proper running of this support group process according to the guidelines provided to them. I acknowledge that they have the authority to see that others abide by them for the good of the whole group.
4. I promise to cooperate with the group director and facilitators and to follow their instructions, accept their correction and abide by their final decisions. If I cannot do that, I reserve the right to resign from further participation in the group. I acknowledge that the group leader has authority to excuse anyone from participation in this group that they believe is not ready or is incapable of participating safely and profitably.
5. I understand that Phase 1 is designed to help me learn to deal more effectively with unfinished, emotional business from the past. I realize this means learning to face my fears and weaknesses instead of continuing to avoid or deny them. I understand I will learn to admit what happened to me, what I learned to do as a result, and that I will be encouraged to express my true feelings, count my losses, and grieve them. I understand that to do my grief work effectively, I will have to suspend use of any “numb-out” techniques to the best of my ability. Therefore, I promise to refrain from indulging in excessive, counter-productive use of potentially addictive things. These include, but are not limited to:
 - a. illegal drugs, alcohol, misuse of prescription drugs
 - b. eating disorders (bulimia, anorexia, overeating)
 - c. pornography and other forms of sexual addiction
 - d. gambling, shopping, hoarding
 - e. using religion as a means to avoid facing reality
 - f. abuse of self or others
 - g. TV, video/computer games/internet or other forms of entertainment that I use to escape

- h. relationships that merely distract and kill time
- i. anything else that I realize I use to “numb out” and disconnect from my true feelings and emotions.

I plan to attend the group meetings fully prepared to get in touch with my memories, unhealed wounds, trapped emotional voltage, and truth-twisting techniques.

6. I promise to work to create and maintain a family of God atmosphere for my group, where it is safe to be who, what and where we really are. I understand that none of us, including me is perfect. We all need to learn to grow. Therefore, I promise to do my part to maintain a safe, learning, growing environment for everyone involved.
7. I promise to keep strict confidentiality concerning what is said and done in our group meetings. I will not relate or discuss anything personal about another to anyone apart from my small group, including my own family members and friends, or anyone from any other small group. I promise to protect the names and reputations of all group members at all times.
8. I understand that my group director and/or facilitator may be considered a mandatory reporter, and will be obligated to report anything the law requires of them.
9. I promise to attend the meetings faithfully, so my group can count on my attendance and promptness. I promise to cooperate and strive to learn whatever skills the process is trying to instill. I promise to follow whatever the exercises require, to the best of my ability.
10. I promise to be open and honest with my fellow group members when it is time for me, during an exercise, to share my life and myself with them. I promise to be attentive and truly listen when it is time for each person in my group to do the same. I promise to assist, encourage and allow them in gentle, non-threatening, non-abusive ways, to freely, thoroughly, express and vent their feelings, so that they can reconnect with their unfinished issues, unhealed wounds, and unprocessed emotions.
11. I promise to refrain from trying to fix, give advice to, teach or counsel any fellow group member.
12. I promise to refrain from trying to alter the curriculum or steer the group process in a direction different from the one required by the course. I promise to refrain from imposing my own agendas, arguing or criticizing others in areas such as religion, politics, etc.

13. I promise to refrain from making romantic, sexually-motivated advances to any group member during the course of this support group cycle. I acknowledge that this would interfere with our group work. I also promise to refrain from encouraging or accepting any romantic, sexual advances made to me by another.
14. I promise to refrain from discussing my issues with my fellow group members outside of the group time. I understand that this could result in relationships that become co-dependent, damaging, or divisive, and undermine the group process.
15. I agree to gently and lovingly confront any group member with compassion, equality, firmness, and kindness when I detect a possible group covenant violation. I will say so to the appropriate person. This includes such things as denial, abuse, getting off the subject, or any other behavior that would harm group integrity or derail the intent of the exercise.
16. I agree to allow my group members to share with me what they observe. I will gratefully listen when they point out any attitudes or behavior in me that would help me grow in this process. I acknowledge that we must learn this healthy family communication skill to benefit from our group work.
17. I promise to comply fully with the requirements of The Ultimate Journey process. I will cooperate to make our work together as smooth, safe and beneficial as I possibly can for all concerned.
18. I acknowledge that this group is intended for our mutual help. I acknowledge that its purpose is to supplement but not to replace professional therapy, counseling, or any allied services. Thus, I promise to acknowledge any therapy or professional help I have recently received to the group director and return the completed Participation Notification form.
19. I acknowledge that the material made available to me is for my information and voluntary consideration only, and that I am not at all obligated to accept or carry out any suggestions, explicit or implied in it. Therefore, whatever interpretation and response I come up with will be purely my own.

the ultimate
journey

**SUPPORT GROUP COVENANT
SIGNATURE FORM**

I have read and understand the Support Group Covenant and I agree to abide by the guidelines and boundaries stated within the covenant agreement.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____