

14. When a believer's spiritual advance understands the meaning of the integrity of God being the love of God, then he is able to rely on the unique example of Jesus Christ in His true humanity as the pattern to follow.

The believer with spiritual self-esteem thinks and applies Bible doctrine to life, motivated by his personal love for God. He understands enough doctrine to think independently, having the courage of his own perceptions and doctrinal applications rather than being erroneously influenced by others.

Furthermore, he orients to the biblical reality of who and what he is as a member of the royal family of God and at the same time never loses sight of who and what God is.²

15. Volition allows every person the autonomy to make his own decisions. He may independently respond to truth or reject it. The Law of Freedom guarantees and manufactures inequality. Some believers advance to spiritual maturity and become winners. Some remain ignorant of divine operating assets.
16. In the scum of the Angelic Conflict, believers are targets of the Dark Side's agents. Their task is to frustrate believers so they will exit the bubble and retaliate overtly. Communication of truth is advisable, but that approach must be conducted inside the bubble.
17. Nevertheless, believers are under scrutiny from the forces of darkness. This must be understood and tactics for survival must be learned and then applied. These tactics require understanding of Providential Preventive Suffering.
18. Two tactics are assigned to believers that are designed to protect while empowering them to engage in the contest for truth.
19. Providential Preventive Suffering introduces the first category of suffering for blessing. It functions both offensively and defensively. The former is designed to accelerate the believer's spiritual momentum. The latter is intended to prevent the problem of arrogance.

² R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Christian Suffering*, 3d ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2002), 80.



20. As his inventory of doctrines continues to enlarge and application of truth has its positive impact, he may assume that his success is from his own mental powers rather than the dynamics of the Word of God.
21. In this stage of the spiritual advance, God preempts this weakness from leading to systematic failure by allowing circumstances to occur that result in suffering for blessing.
22. These challenges are designed to remind the believer of his continuing dependence on divine operating assets. Situations are introduced that cannot be resolved by human rationales or abilities, but rather by the application of doctrines to the circumstances.
23. The believer must come to realize that whatever the circumstances he confronts, they are in the divine decree. Since this is a fact, then he must orient and adjust to them.
24. The challenge is there for a purpose: spiritual growth cannot be advanced by avoiding the issue. It must be confronted by the application of doctrine.
25. In the midst of the suffering, the believer must conclude that what enables him to endure the testing is the grace of God.
26. The suffering must be endured until doctrine wins the battle. This may be described as an engagement in the Invisible War. What God does not remove, He intends for us to bear.
27. The episode continues until its impact results in the application of doctrine to the circumstance. The tactics that result in victory include consistent residence inside the bubble.
28. It is accomplished by total dependence on the principle that doctrine must win the victory. It teaches the believer that regardless of the circumstance it is always doctrine first.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No testing has overtaken you but that which is common to humanity; God is faithful, Who will never allow you to be tested beyond your capacity to resist or overcome, but with the testing also make a way of escape so that you will be able to bear it. (EXT)

29. It is through the adversity of testing that the believer is able to advance to the level of Spiritual Autonomy.

7. The Fifth Floor is Spiritual Autonomy characterized by Cognitive Independence.

1. Spiritual autonomy is the result of using divine assets under providential preventive suffering while strengthening all the characteristics of spiritual self-esteem.
2. At this level of the spiritual advance, the believer is emboldened to efficiently handle the pressures of the devil's world.
3. When circumstances are addressed from an inventory of doctrinal ideas, the believer gains confidence, graciousness, and unshakable poise.
4. Spiritual autonomy means the believer is enabled to successfully meet the challenges and difficulties of life. This autonomy enables the believer to consistently apply the Royal Law to others.
5. Characteristics of Spiritual Autonomy include:
 1. Continuation of Contentment.
 2. Perpetuated Mental Stability.
 3. Impersonal Love for All Mankind.
 4. Cognitive Self-Confidence.
 5. Grace Orientation to Life.
 6. Doctrinal Orientation to Reality.
 7. Greater Decisions from a Position of Strength.
 8. Personal Control of One's Life.
 9. A Personal Sense of Destiny.
 10. Command of Self.
 11. Qualification for Momentum Testing.
 12. Attainment of a New Phase of the Unique Spiritual Life.³
6. Cognitive Independence occurs when the believer can make decisions from his own inventory of doctrinal ideas. Autonomy empowers the advanced believer to resolve issues with clarity of thought.
7. This level of the spiritual advance enables the believer to enjoy the copacetic spiritual life: sharing the happiness of God.
8. This level of a believer's advance is characterized by several principles that define this ninth problem-solving device:

³ Definitions of these characteristics may be studied in R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Christian Suffering*, 3d ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2002), 99–102.



Principles for the Development of True Happiness in the Soul:

1. Happiness is the result of right thinking. A right thing done in a right way is right. This principle of protocol applies to thought, decision, and action.
2. Error occurs when man assumes that happiness can be pursued in and of itself, but happiness cannot be found by pursuing it.
3. Happiness is a mental attitude—an inner resource—that develops when one pursues truth. In order to pursue truth, one must first establish its source.
4. If one is successful in locating the source of truth, then certain results follow. First of all, the source of truth becomes the source of absolute norms and standards.
5. For truth to be truth it must be absolute. It must be as true tomorrow as it is today. The discovery of absolutes reveals principles of right and wrong by which we may direct our lives.
6. When we subscribe to these standards, we associate our thoughts, decisions, and actions with them.
7. If we habitually make right decisions, then we associate ourselves with right action. Over time, this association with right action builds spiritual self-esteem and camaraderie with the Source of truth, God the Father.
8. From this advance we learn there are absolutes which define human choices (sinful) and absolutes which define divine choices (righteous).
9. We are able to conclude that God made choices based on absolutes and has set up standards that even He is unable to violate.
10. For example, because of physical birth and the imputation of human life, we become objects of divine selection.
11. At gospel hearing, man is left free to make a choice between heaven and the lake of fire by either accepting or rejecting the gospel as an absolute truth.
12. Those who accept through faith that the gospel is absolute truth are the only ones God is free to elect. We can see attention to this absolute standard expressed by John the Baptist in:

John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

13. The Lord stresses both the positive and negative aspects of gospel hearing in:

John 15:16 “You did not elect Me, but I elected you.”



John 15:19 “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have elected you out of the world. This is why the world hates you.”

14. For those who trust God as the Source of truth, both confidence and happiness will gradually define their lives.

Romans 15:13 May the God of confidence fill you with happiness and prosperity as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with confidence by means of the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit.

15. Knowledge of truth results in motivational love for God which in turn creates a desire to acquire more knowledge.
16. The tandem problem-solving devices result from this advance: (1) personal love for God, followed by (2) unconditional love for all mankind.
17. These are the categories of virtue love which, when facilitated into character traits, produce true happiness in the soul.
18. Colossians 1:8–13 describes the nuances of spiritual growth:

Colossians 1:7 Even as you have been taught from the source of Epaphras [Ἐπαφρᾶς (*Epaphrás*), pastor-teacher of the church at Colossae⁴], our dear fellow servant, who is faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,

v. 8 and who gave us a written report about your unconditional love which the Holy Spirit produced in you.

v. 9 Because of this [**unconditional love**], from the day on which we heard, we have not stopped praying for you and asking, that you might be filled with the epígnōsis knowledge of His will [**spiritual maturity**] by means of all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

⁴ “Epaphras. A native of Colossae and founder of the Colossian church, who was with Paul when he wrote Colossians. Epaphras may have been Paul’s convert. As Paul’s representative he had evangelized Colossae and the neighboring towns of Laodicea and Hierapolis during Paul’s Ephesian ministry. His visit to Paul in Rome and his report concerning conditions in the churches of the Lycus Valley caused Paul to write Colossians (Colossians 1:7–9)” (D. E. Hiebert, “Epaphras,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976], 2:315).