

The Pearl Within

**AN INTERACTIVE JOURNEY ...
THROUGH YOUR PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE
TO DISCOVER THE PEARL WITHIN YOU!**

Journey 3 – Thankfulness

*The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant
searching for pearls. ~Matthew 13:45*



Pamela and Michael Mathews

THE PEARL WITHIN

A SERIES
OF INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEYS AND
JOURNALING

By: Pamela and Michael L. Mathews

Published by Focusonheaven.com

Note: All Bible Scripture References are from the New International (NIV) version unless otherwise labeled.

Website: <http://www.focusonheaven.com>

Email: Pamela.Mathews@focusonheaven.com

Michael.Mathews@focusonheaven.com

Phone: 715-379-1430


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THE PEARL WITHIN

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Are you prepared for the *Journey of your Life* ... by finding out who you were created to be, and who you can become by letting the *Pearl Within* you be discovered? Will you ask, seek, and knock at your own hearts door to reveal that *Pearl Within*? The Kingdom of Heaven is waiting for each of us to discover our beauty, power, and potential.

Preface

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking for fine pearls!”
~Matthew 13:25

Welcome to your personal journey through the *Pearl Within Journal*. This Journal is uniquely designed for your life and is like no other journaling experience that you have encountered.

What makes this Contemporary Journal so unique is that it will take you through a personal journey of your life to find the hidden Pearl(s) within yourself. This is the very Pearl that God always intended for your life. The journey will take you through your past, through your present, and help launch you into the future as it illuminates the Pearl that God designed you to be from birth. The journey will blend many experiences and emotions that make you laugh, make you cry, make you rejoice, and lead you through many euphoric moments of thanksgiving as you see your true reflective pearl being extracted from the oyster and irritants of your life. You will soon see the similarities of the miracle of both the Pearl and your life, once you view the completeness God intended for your past, present and future.

The Miraculous Birth of a Pearl

The birth of a pearl is truly a miraculous event. Unlike gemstones or precious metals that must be mined from the earth, pearls are grown by live oysters far below the surface of the sea. Gemstones must be cut and polished to bring out their beauty. However, pearls need no such treatment to reveal their loveliness. They are born from oysters complete -- with a shimmering iridescence, lustre and soft inner glow unlike any other gem on earth.

A natural pearl begins its life as a foreign object, such as a parasite or piece of shell that accidentally lodges itself in an oyster's soft inner body where it cannot be expelled. To ease this irritant, the oyster's body takes defensive action. The oyster begins to secrete a smooth, hard crystalline substance around the irritant in order to protect itself. This substance is called "nacre." As long as the irritant remains within its body, the oyster will continue to secrete nacre around it, layer upon layer. Over time, the irritant will be completely encased by the silky crystalline coatings. And the result, ultimately, is the lovely and lustrous gem called a pearl.

How something so wondrous emerges from an oyster's way of protecting itself is one of nature's loveliest surprises. For the nacre is not just a soothing substance. It is composed of microscopic crystals of calcium carbonate, aligned perfectly with one another, so that light passing along the axis of one crystal is reflected and refracted by another to produce a rainbow of light and color.

The Miraculous Birth of the Pearls of Your Past, Present and Future

The full birth of who God designed you to be is a miraculous event. Unlike perfect people, God creates us into his image with a fallen nature because of the fall of Adam and Eve. Along your life journey many irritants such as disappointments, broken relationships, lack of self worth, dysfunctional family traits, addictions,

financial issues, thoughts of death, self-hatred, loss of hope, parasites, and many other clingy things seem to collect in the closets of your life. As your life progresses, the illusion of fear and failure are combined to force you to escape or resent the memories of your past, which in turn effect your present and eventually hinder your future.

God has allowed you as an individual to review your collection of irritants in a manner that allows Him to shine light into your past, present, and future, simultaneously. This review allows you to be thankful or exchange the irritants for a re-alignment that perfectly connects your past, present, and future via God's light. These light rays into your past, present, and future allow you to view the pearl of your life represented by a full rainbow of light and color that connects your past, present and future into the miracle God always intended.

Are you ready to begin the journey of finding the pearl within, by exchanging the irritants of your life for the miracle God intended! Should you embark on this personal journey you will be challenged to exchange your irritants for personal pearls.

The Pearl Within Journal includes various areas of your life that generally need to be refined, cultivated, and rid of irritants that have blocked the light rays of completeness to shine upon your pearl. In some cases, if you have released or exchanged your irritants over periods of time, the journey may be simple. However, if you have built up your irritants or hidden them through the years, the process could be lengthy and painful, but every bit worth it, as you begin seeing the ***Pearls Within*** you!

We encourage you to read and listen to the song called "Whatever Your Doing ... something Heavenly" by Sanctus Real. We encourage you to purchase the song once you have listened to the lyrics at -- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_t-PaBRSQY

"Whatever You're Doing ... Something Heavenly"

It's time for healing time to move on
It's time to fix what's been broken too long
Time to make right what has been wrong
It's time to find my way to where I belong
There's a wave that's crashing over me
All I can do is surrender

(Chorus)

Whatever you're doing inside of me
It feels like chaos somehow there's peace
It's hard to surrender to what I can't see
but I'm giving in to something heavenly

Time for a milestone
Time to begin again
Reevaluate who I really am
Am I doing everything to follow your will
or just climbing aimlessly over these hills
So show me what it is you want from me
I give everything I surrender...
To...

(Chorus)

Time to face up
Clean this old house
Time to breathe in and let everything out
That I've wanted to say for so many years
Time to release all my held back tears

Whatever you're doing inside of me
It feels like chaos but I believe
You're up to something bigger than me
Larger than life something heavenly

Whatever you're doing inside of me
It feels like chaos but now I can see
This something bigger than me
Larger than life something heavenly
Something heavenly

It's time to face up
Clean this old house
Time breathe in and let everything out

Sanctus Real, EMI/CMG Sparrow Records 2008

Introduction

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven." ~ Matthew 16:19

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." Marianne Williamson

Many people seek for greater things such as greater meaning, greater understanding, greater wealth, greater relationships, greater significance, etc. The Bible is clear that we are to seek, we are to ask, and we are to knock (Matthew 7:7). In essence, the Bible encourages all people to improve and become the person God created them to be. Taking this one step further, Jesus begins to encourage people to not only believe upon Him but to expect to do even greater works than He did (John 14:12). Lastly, God states that He has given you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven ... so that you can bind and loosen things in your life, your family's life and other people's life. Let it be known that for everyone that has allowed their past to block their future, feels inadequate, feels a failure, feels dysfunctional, feels incompetent, feels unworthy, feels relationally inept ... God has given you the keys to start finding and unlocking the pearl that is within you!!

Without a doubt, God has designed us to become more than many of us have become. However, few people have realized the simple process in which this takes place. That simple process can be explained in Scripture by stating what the Kingdom of Heaven is truly like. Open your hearts, listen, and pray over the following Scripture passage.

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."
Matthew 13:45-46*

This passage in the Bible is vital to understand a simple process that many people overlook. You will note that in this passage the object of discovery is a **pearl** of great value. You will also note that the subject surrounding the object of great value is the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus was instructing us that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant who is looking for fine pearls, and finally finds a pearl of great value. When the merchant finds the one of great value he is willing to **exchange** all else to get the one of greatest value. Therefore, the Kingdom of God includes an exchange process as we progress through our asking, seeking, and knocking (Matt. 7:7). The doors of your opportunity begin to open and close with the key of exchange!

This passage is the key to your personal journey through the *Pearl Within* Journal. The Kingdom of Heaven and the Keys that God gave you to loosen and bind the issues within the Kingdom, is very similar to the journey of finding the great pearl within you. In order to recognize and obtain the great pearl you must exchange the issues of life. Simply put, the

key(s) to the Kingdom of God that allow you to loosen and bind (Matthew 16: 19) is the very process of exchange.

This process is so simple that at first glance it may appear complicated. The great news is that throughout scripture and our everyday life the process of exchange is shown as the key to getting the very things that God intended for us. Below is a long list of exchanges that have taken place that have advanced the Kingdom.

- God so love the world that He **exchanged** His one and only begotten Son so that we might believe and be saved.
- Jesus was on the Cross and **exchanged** His blood and body for our eternal salvation. He set the example of exchange for us to follow. This is why he commands us to also **exchange** by 'taking up our cross, daily.'
- Adam and Eve **exchanged** a life of perfection for a sinful future by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
- Adam and Eve **exchanged** one more time by shedding the blood of an animal to cover up their new found sin.
- Noah **exchanged** the destruction of his family by having faith that rain would flood the earth even when there had never been any rain. He **exchanged** his role as a shepherd and shipbuilder for the title of a righteous preacher through his act of faith.
- Jacob **exchanged** His name for Israel upon confession of who he really was.
- Jonah **exchanged** his position in the belly of the whale when he committed to go to Nineveh.
- Joshua **exchanged** his lack of hope for victory when he listened to the voice of God to get up from prayer and move forward into action.
- Solomon **exchanged** his inexperience as a King, with the greatest wisdom in the world by acting and believing in His dream.
- Rahab, the prostitute, **exchanged** her faith for a place in the lineage of Jesus.
- The Apostle Paul **exchanged** his position as a martyr of Christians by asking God what He wanted from his life when he fell off his horse on the way to Damascus.
- Joseph and Mary **exchanged** their shame of having a child out of wedlock and became the parents of the greatest prophet and Messiah by believing what the angel of the Lord said to them.
- The Apostle John **exchanged** his fear of isolation and visions and wrote the greatest revelation of all time ... called the book of Revelation.
- Every sinner **exchanged** their life of sin by confessing that Jesus died on the cross for their sinful life in order to become a Christian.
- Many people in the New Testament **exchanged** their faith for a healing; as God said 'Your faith has made you whole'.

Simple and Personal Life Examples

- I **exchanged** my single life for a married life. The things I used to do with my single friends were exchanged for activities with my spouse and family.
- I **exchanged** marriage vows with my spouse making a commitment to be devoted to my spouse until death.
- I **exchanged** my feelings of a dysfunctional family by confessing that all families were born sinful, and therefore dysfunctional.
- I **exchanged** my college tuition for a college degree.
- I **exchanged** my college degree with a job in the computer industry.
- I **exchanged** my past failings with God's forgiveness by confessing the past failings. In **exchange**, God gave me a future direction.

- I **exchanged** my love for alcohol with a love for God's Word, once I realized I could ask for deliverance.
- I **exchanged** some of my retirement fund for a loan for my daughter's education.

As you can see by these examples, the process of exchange is what advanced the Kingdom of God and my personal life. Old Testament and New Testament people advanced the Kingdom and unlocked doors by exchanging what they had for something better. This is why Jesus stated that we could have the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven to bind, and loosen things on earth. Even though this is a limited list of exchanges, any of us would be hard pressed to find examples where things are advanced or improved without a form of exchange.

Consider the mere fact that Jesus was used as the ransom and sacrifice for my sins. Even though He paid the price through the sacrifice, three forms of exchange had to take place for the ransom or sacrifice to have meaning.

1. God had to **exchange** with Humanity by giving His one and only Son in an earthly form.
2. Jesus had to **exchange** His position, come to earth, and die a sacrificial death.
3. Each sinner has to **exchange** by confessing that Jesus Christ died for their sins, before the ransom or sacrifice is applied to them personally.

Even though we claim that salvation is free, we need to admit that there was a price to be paid, and that I cannot claim my own salvation without exchanging with God my confession that I was born a sinner.

The simplicity of the process of exchange is best explained by understanding the simplicity of a relationship. In every living relationship, there is a process of exchange. There is no healthy relationship where there is no ongoing exchange. This includes relationships with God, spouses, children, friends, family, co-workers, but most of all with yourself. Note again that Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant of pearls who is willing to exchange for the great pearl they have found. Possibly Jesus used this parable to indicate that we must be like a merchant, knowing that a merchant is an 'exchanger' of goods. A merchant is also always asking, seeking, and knocking for greater goods to improve their position. If we are commanded to continue to ask, seek, and knock, we should conclude that we are always finding/learning of greater things that we can exchange with. In fact, we can take all the irritants of our life, and begin to exchange for greater things. This is possible when God's light shines truth and revelation on my irritants, transforming them into the greatest ***Pearl Within*** me.

This process of exchange will be the basis for every chapter within the Journal. In other words, the keys to your personal healing and the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven cannot be used without an exchange that will take place. Are you willing to **exchange** in an effort to see God's full light come into each area of your life to make your past, present and future the full rainbow of perfect light, color, and reflection that God intended it to be? Your ***Pearl Within*** is waiting for the full light of God to be reflected!

If the key to finding the ***Pearl Within*** is the action or process of exchange, every chapter of this journal will require action on your part to exchange things from your past, present, and future in order to identify the fullness and completeness of who God created you to become. Because God did not wake up today and change His mind about you, or who He created you to become, He desires you to ask, seek, knock as you exchange your entire past, present and future ambitions. This process for the theological at heart would be known as the process of redemption.⁽¹⁾ God instituted the process of redemption through many facets including covenants, testaments, and promises throughout scripture. However the full nature of redemption does not reach full value and maturity until we meet Christ in heaven (Ephesians 1:14). This indicates that the exchange and/or redemptive process to be an ongoing transaction of exchange. This is very much what God intended when He said that we would be in His image and progress through stages of ever increasing Glory. *“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”* (1I Corinthians 3:18)

Let's begin the process of ever-increasing Glory in your life by allowing you the opportunity and privilege to exchange who you and others thought you were, with who God created you to be; as this is truly your ***Pearl Within!*** Make sure you write down the **Pearl(s)** that you find within yourself, in the spaces provided called *“Personal Pearls of Wisdom.”*

It will excite you to learn that in Genesis 9:13-17 that God made a covenant (agreement of exchange) that he will use a cloud and the rainbow to remind Himself and us of His everlasting agreement of love for humanity. The rainbow that is created by light-rays of reflection and refraction are a great reminder of God's light that is able to reflect and refract of the beauty of who he created you to be. This beauty can be found if you search and decide to exchange with Him.

Note: Because this journey is so interactive and requires you to exchange with God we have provided a Blog called ***The Pearl Within*** Blog at focusonheaven.com/pearlwithin.htm. Please use the Blog to openly discuss your findings and exchanges. If you prefer to keep things less public, you can email Pam or Mike at ThePearlWithin@focusonheaven.com.

**Personal
Pearls of
Wisdom**

Personal Pearls of Wisdom

Please start listing some of the things you learned in the introduction: Don't forget to list the Pearls you have found within. Also, please visit the Pearl Within Blog at <http://www.focusonheaven.com/pearlwithin.html> to share your thoughts, questions and breakthroughs.

Please list the things that you already know you want to exchange with God:

Journey 3 - Thankfulness

In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. ~ 1 Thessalonians 5: 18

“If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing.” ~William Ward

During the past year, God has allowed me to take thankfulness to a higher and more complete level. This transition has truly allowed me to see my *Pearl Within*. As you recall, we mentioned that a Pearl begins by being a simple single irritant within an Oyster. The irritant begins the process of many layers of ‘cover-up’ to try and rid and protect itself from the irritant. In my life, I had built up hundreds of irritants that I decided to forget about, ignore, or in a few cases become bitter over.

Once my view of thankfulness changed, I saw the irritants of my life as things to be thankful for; because they were the very things that made me who I am today. Without these irritants, I would have been a very limited human being with lesser value. However, the great secret for me was to clean out this lack of thankfulness in my mind and my heart. I was not able to see my full value until I understood the complete healing power of thankfulness for ‘all’ things. My room of thankfulness was swept, cleaned, and given a complete makeover.

Let me try to explain ... like many people, I had always viewed myself as a thankful type of person. I viewed myself this way because I was thankful for the good things that I could embrace in my immediate past, present and future. My view of my past, present and future were generally within a 6-12 month window of time. For instance, I was thankful for my children’s grades, my husband’s promotion, that we paid our bills last month, that my family was healthy, that we found a good church, that we found a new house, that we were going on a family vacation, that we had a good pastor, that we saw God heal our daughter’s sickness, that our mini-van was repaired, that my parents were healthy, etc. You get the idea! I was very thankful for so many things that were current or immediate in 6-12 month cycles of time. So, during most of my life, if people were to ask me if I were thankful, I would say, absolutely! This thankful life-style allowed me to progress through life in 6-12 month time frames in order to feel somewhat happy and content. This same process is possibly why the ‘Dreaded Christmas Letter was invented.’ It is a great means to reflect on your thankfulness over the last 12 months, while giving everyone an update on your family, and Christmas card all at the same time. (Long live the dreaded Christmas letter!)

What changed my whole view of ‘complete’ thankfulness this past year was a new understanding of being thankful over a longer view of my life, as well as some of the perceived negative circumstances of my life. This recently found understanding was as if God’s light and love shined a huge spotlight over specific negative circumstances of my past, and healed them instantaneously. My life suddenly reflected something of greater value even though nothing changed, except my confession of thanksgiving over those secret, hidden, or forgotten circumstances I never thought possible to thank God for. I am still amazed at what God’s light and love illuminated in me. The thought of giving thanks for

people were giving God praise for the irritants of their life, even if they were negative experiences. What I witnessed was a supernatural healing of the things that people were covering up, hiding, or could not get permanent healing from. For the next year, Mike preached and shared in numerous settings and allowed a new form of worship to take place by giving full thanks to God. I was part of this process in numerous settings. Over and over I witnessed people beginning the process of thanking God for things that they never knew they should or could be thankful for. Time and again, most people stated that they felt a healing or release from the very thing that hindered their life. These hundreds of people along with myself, experienced a supernatural **exchange** with God that set them free from years of hidden and shameful experiences. Metaphorically speaking, I witnessed people spitting into the face of their own shame, satan's accusations, and releasing issues that were irritants in their life for years. The positive confession of thanksgiving was an open exchange with God; whose light, love, and spirit are so powerful that when the areas of hurt were exposed by confession of thanks, they were instantaneously healed. It was like a radiation treatment hitting a spot of cancer, and watching it vanish. **Pearls Within** were being discovered!

The exchange process in this 'thanksgiving type of worship,' is a positive spiritual confession that allows God to heal a persons past and makes them more complete. This is truly an exercise of healing, and exchange where God shows his pure and complete redemptive nature for the following three scenario's of past shamefulness:

- 1) For people who have been violated by abusers, offenders, and criminal minds, God is able to fulfill His scripture that states that He will turn evil into good. This allows them to wipe away the bitterness, shame, guilt and ugliness that comes from being violated by someone else. Upon open thanksgiving, God exchanges complete healing. It is simply a process of exchange that allows your words of confession and thanksgiving to exchange with His light to allow your **Pearl Within** to be seen and harvested!
- 2) For people who have personally made a mistake in their past by putting themselves in harm's way, or committed a crime or trespass against God or themselves, God's light and love can allow them to be forgiven, redeemed and healed from the mistake that brings guilt and shame. Once again, upon the simple confession of thanksgiving, you exchange your past and make the irritant of shame or guilt becomes your personal **Pearl Within**.
- 3) For people who feel that they were just unfortunate, born into the wrong family, or a bad circumstance just happened to them; God is able to take that irritant and allow you to be a 'healer' to yourself and others with similar circumstances. He can do this by shining His light upon the confession of thanksgiving. Your exchange allows the irritants of unfortunate circumstances to be your personal **Pearl Within**.

I recognize that what I experienced was a glorious exchange that could only be done with my willingness to simply become thankful for the greatest irritants of my life. This exchange produced an understanding that helped me see my personal **Pearl Within**. But, it also gave me a fuller desire to see others experience their Pearl Within themselves. I desired to live out what the Bible states in Psalm 34:1-3. *"I will bless (give thanks) to the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My life (entire life) will boast in the Lord so that the humbled and afflicted will hear (my thanksgiving) and be glad. Come on, and magnify the Lord with me, and let's exalt his name together."*

Challenge Question:

Romans 12:21 says "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Name at least two evil things that have happened in your past that you have decided to overcome with good? In other words, what two things have you exchanged that were evil in order to turn them to good?

1. _____
2. _____

My sincerest desire is to get every reader to stop any hint that God is cruel and/or planned a cruel life for you. I want you to see God as He really is, and just because someone has violated you, or you have self-destructed, does not define your fate. Rather, your fate rests within your ability and willingness to reason with God and allow Him to use your afflictions and irritants to define and reveal the **Pearl Within** you. Will you choose to let His light, love, and Spirit shine on your irritants by exchanging words of thanksgiving to your creator? Listen below to what John Henry Jowett penned as well as King David in the Book of Psalms.

- *Being thankful over my entire past and future spits in Fear's face! Life without thankfulness is devoid of love and passion. Hope without thankfulness is lacking in fine perception. Faith without thankfulness lacks strength and fortitude. Every virtue divorced from thankfulness is maimed and limps along the spiritual road." ~ John Henry Jowett*
- *You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give you **thanks** forever. ~ Psalm 30:11, 12*
- *It was good for me to suffer, so that I might learn your statutes. ~ Psalm 119:71*

You can quickly surmise by these three examples that there is an exchange that takes place when we openly confess that God has a reason, season and purpose for our circumstances. If you cannot embrace this simple kind of faith, please know

Personal Pearls of Wisdom

that His Light can zap your past issues and He can redeem/exchange the issues. Your task is to consider your willingness to let faith move you towards God's greatness, or will you let fear continue to hide your past shame, failings, and/or violations by others.

I was amazed to learn that the great Football Player Reggie White had a dream the week before he died on December 26, 2004. In his dream, he stated to his Wife Sarah that he saw two Hebrew words and understood them to be a great treasure. Upon prayer, meditation, and researching the two Hebrew words he found that the treasure was the combination of the two words meaning; "Jehovah Redeems." Reggie found a treasure within himself before he died, and he shared it with others. This treasure is no different than the **Pearl within** you. Jehovah (God) redeems or exchanges with anyone and everyone who will reason out their options with Him. Upon giving God thanks, He is quick to redeem or exchange your issues to make you see your complete image inside of you.

I realized that this concept of being thankful for everything is a stretch for many people. I know that it took me months to grab hold of this concept in its fullest sense. I started stumbling for words, wrestling with whose fault it was, wondering if I could forgive those who wronged me. However, I was amazed that upon opening my mouth, a sense of instant healing and cleansing came. I believe it was an act of faith to move my lips, and upon spilling out the words of confusion God became my judge. The righteous judge working on my behalf did what He does best – redeemed and exchanged the confession. I think this is the very act that God mentions in Ecclesiastes 12: 14 *"For God will evaluate every deed, including every secret thing, whether good or evil."* You see God will eventually evaluate or judge everything in secret or in open to determine whether it was good or evil. My confession gives me credit to let him evaluate or judge this in my present life. I do not want it hidden, as I desire full redemption for my sin and other people who sinned against me. Even if I sinned and caused problems, God encourages me to be willing to discuss this with him and be forgiven of everything.

However, if I choose not to openly discuss, I may find that the things I hide will devour me like a sword. This is the context of Isaiah 1:17-19. I am so glad God gave options for every scenario of life; whether I am guilty or someone else is guilty. This is the very reason Jesus was able to ask God to forgive those who violated Him in every way. They violated his position, His status, His knowledge, His Name, his body, and drained His blood. I have not known this type of violation in my past. However, it gives me a reference point as to how far I could go and still give God thanks and have enough faith to ask Him to forgive the vilest of offenders and offenses against me.

Come, let's consider your options," says the LORD. "Though your sins have stained you like the color red, you can become white like snow; though they are as easy to see as the color scarlet, you can become white like wool. If you have a willing attitude and obey, then you will again eat the good crops of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." Know for certain that the LORD has spoken.
Isaiah 1:17-19

Now that you have read my story of finding the Pearl Within me through complete thanksgiving let us do a few exercises in our **Pearl Within** Journal. Some of these exercises may need to be revisited, as your ability for being free of your past and truly thanking God for all things may not occur until a few more Journeys in the Journal are complete.

Exercise 3.1

As you have read my story of raising my thanksgiving to a new level, I am sure that you have been processing your own thoughts as to the possibility for you to be thankful for past

experiences. Please rate your comfort level with thanking God for your past circumstances in Table 3.1. Please select one of the rating descriptions below. I have included two different times for you to rate your comfort level.

My Ability to Thank God for Past Circumstance	Description	Rating Now	Rating when Journal is complete
Easy	I have always thanked God for my past circumstance. It comes natural		
Somewhat Difficult	I am in the process of thanking God for past circumstances, but it is slow going.		
Somewhat Difficult	I have thanked God for some circumstances, but find it difficult for other circumstances.		
Very Difficult	I am not sure that I want to thank God for past circumstances. Don't know why, but it doesn't feel natural.		
Extremely Difficult	I will try, but doubt that I can thank God for some of my past issues.		
Impossible	I refuse to thank God for my past circumstances, as they are too painful.		

Table 3.1 – Ability to Thank God

Exercise 3.2

Please do not give up on processing the thanksgiving aspect. If you have a few circumstances that are too overwhelming to deal with right now, we can park those for the time being. I understand the difficulty to embrace being thankful over very stressful, traumatic, and painful experience. In some cases, before you can thank God, you have to forgive yourself or the person who violated you. Because this is so critical, I have created a *parking space* for these types of circumstances. This parking space will allow you to 'Park' any extremely painful or un-forgiven circumstances for the time being. Parking these will also allow you to move forward with thanksgiving in most other areas.

No.	Items too Difficult to Thank God about at the Present Time
1.	
2.	
3.	

Table 3.2 – Parking Space for Circumstances that are too Difficult

Exercise 3.3

Table 3.3 is a checklist that may be helpful to identify levels of thanksgiving. The column on the left includes samples of standard items that are easy to be thankful for. The column on the right are samples of items that are much more difficult to be immediately thankful over.

Standard Easy Circumstances	More Difficult Circumstances
Good health	A bad health experience
An afflicted person who gets healed	An afflicted person who dies
A stable job or career	A recent job or career change that seemed unpleasant.
A mortgage free house	Loss of house through foreclosure, tornado, hurricane, etc.
Children's health and success	Children who are challenging
The perfect and loving family that prays together, stays together, etc (you know the cliché')	Dysfunctional family (alcoholic parent(s), addictive and abusive behavior patterns, financial distress, etc.)
Wealth or financial freedom	Financially dependent on others
Parents who are still married	Divorced parents, parents in prison, adopted, or removed from home by the State.
Good church	Shunned by church or don't fit in
Natural ability or talented in a specific area	Everything comes hard and unnatural – Must work extra hard for everything you get.
Complete family is saved and in perfect health	Son or daughter was murdered, died in a war, died at birth, car accident, drug overdose, child raped or kidnapped, etc.
Periods of time where everything turns to gold	Periods of time where everything turns to rust or bust.
Supportive spouse	Abusive spouse
A great marriage that thrives	A marriage always threatened by divorce
Married	Divorced
Faithful spouse	Affair committed by a spouse
Lot's of friends	Loss of close friends
Sexually unscathed and pure	Sexually immoral or raped
Desirable in church because of knowledge or talent	Undesirable in church
Successful project(s) at work	Failed project(s) at work
Great boss	Demanding and difficult boss
Blank Spaces Are for Your Personal Examples	

Table 3.3

If you are able to thank God for all the events or circumstances in the left column, you are like most people who find it easy to thank God when things are going well. However, a truly thankful person is able to look at even unfortunate circumstances and reason with God on why they happened. Through the reasoning process, they learn that God ultimately is pleased when we thank him for going through afflictions, so that we are better people. Notice I did not say thank him for the afflictions, but thank Him for making it through the

afflictions to be a better person. God knows as well as most mature people do, that where there are no shipwrecks there are no lighthouses. Some of my personal shipwrecks have produced great lighthouses in my life. Mike and I have a friend who had three marriages and within these marriages, each wife eventually left on bitter terms. Through the struggles, he became a minister to an area that experiences heavy divorce rates. He became a lighthouse because of his affliction. Another friend, (Clay McClary) whose son was murdered, spent eight years of his life tracking down the murderer to kill him. After the eighth year, God told Clay that he must forgive his son's murderer. Through the affliction, Clay went on to be a minister of the Gospel, and tell his testimony of exchanging anger for love. Clay was another shipwreck who learned to thank God for the experience. Without

Challenge Question:

To error is human, to blame others is even more human. Take a step back and reflect on the last year and estimate how much time you invested either being suspicious that someone hurt you, or how much you have been hurt, versus how much time you gave negative circumstances over to God to heal and wipe the hurt out of your mind.

1. Time estimate on how much time was invested on suspicion and/or hurt:
_____ hrs
2. Time estimate on how much time was invested in giving issue to God:
_____ hrs

thanking God, he could not be who God desired him to be. The full testimony of Clay McClary is available at <http://www.focusonheaven.com/redemptioncenter.html>.

Exercise 3.4

You have been challenged to think about a new level of thankfulness. Now, we are ready to embark on an actual exercise to allow you the opportunity to exchange with God on a personal level. Pick out three positive and three negative experiences you have experienced in your life. Spend 3 minutes thanking God (verbally) for the positive circumstances. Now spend three minutes thanking God for the three negative circumstances. Table 3.4 is provided for you to write down your three positive and negative circumstances, so you can focus on how you might say a prayer of thanksgiving for negative circumstances. I have added a third column called "Reasons why the negative experience ended up being valuable." This will help you verbalize in your prayer of thanksgiving how you might be thankful that you made it through the negative circumstance.

Thanking God for Three Positive Circumstances	Thanking God for Three Negative Circumstances	Reasons why the negative circumstance ended up being valuable

Exercise 3.4

Exercise 3.5.

Please record how you felt after spending just three minutes on three of your negative circumstances. Also, record how hard it was to focus three full minutes on negative circumstances.

Record How you felt before, during and after the prayer:

Record how difficult this exercise felt.

If you go back to the song by Sanctus Real and listen to the lyrics it sums up how you may feel ... *Like Chaos*.

Time to face up
Clean this old house
Time to breathe in and let everything out
That I've wanted to say for so many years
Time to release all my held back tears

Whatever you're doing inside of me
It feels like chaos but I believe
You're up to something bigger than me
Larger than life something heavenly"

There is no doubt what you are experiencing may feel awkward. However, the awkwardness will have tremendous payback if you follow through. Look back to Table 1.1 in ***Journey 1*** where you rated the rooms of your life. Many of the rooms such as bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, sexuality, and control are directly related to one's ability to thank God for the circumstance from the past. Failure to deal with the past produces the clutter by not exchanging the issues of life with God's redemptive power. Recall that the altar in its simplest form is the place where we met God to exchange our earthly issues for heavenly elements. Giving thanks for all things may be the exercise that allows God's full redeeming nature to be experienced. If all we did was thank God for positive things, there would be no need for exchange or redemption. The greatness of God comes when we have severe issues that need to be exchanged. Perhaps God sees our willingness to thank Him as an extraordinary act of faith that allows a complete healing of the past.

In the Old Testament (Genesis 37-43), Joseph suffered during his life to a great degree. The afflictions and sufferings included:

- He was sold by his brothers
- Left for dead by his brothers
- Accused of rape
- Falsely imprisoned
- Removed from his family for many years.

In spite of all these afflictions, Joseph decided that he would name his first son Manasseh which means *'God says he has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house.'* He then named his second child Ephraim which means *'God has made me to be fruitful in the*

land of my affliction. Somehow, Joseph understood that without his many afflictions that he would not have benefited later in his life. He felt so strongly about giving God thanks for his afflictions and sufferings that he named his second child as a memory of this true concept in his life. Joseph learned the process and value of exchanging with God.

Let me close by sharing the very scripture which helps explain. ***“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*** *1 Thessalonians. 5: 18.* This passage tells us that in all circumstances give thanks for this is God’s will for you. God did not say to only give thanks in positive circumstances; anyone can do that. The truly faithful learn to let their past heal their future, as Joseph did.

Challenge Question:

Genesis 41.52: “The second son he named Ephraim and said, “It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.” What personal afflictions similar to Joseph’s life have you experienced? And have you given God thanks through some type of memorial or confession, like Joseph did?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

The Pearl Within



Ministers Michael and Pamela Mathews

What makes the Pearl Within so unique is that it will take you through a personal journey of your life to find the hidden Pearl(s) within yourself. This is the very Pearl that God always intended for your life. The journey will take you through your past, through your present, and help launch you into the future as it illuminates the Pearl that God designed you to be from birth. The journey will blend many experiences and emotions that make you laugh, make you cry, make you rejoice, and lead you through many euphoric moments of thanksgiving as you see your true reflective pearl being extracted from the oyster and irritants of your life. You will soon see the similarities of the miracle of both the Pearl and your life, once you view the completeness God intended for your past, present and future.

Michael and Pamela have been ministering in marriage for 23 years, and as licensed ministers for over 12 years. They have been affiliated with numerous denominations and parachurch ministries. Their background and hunger for God's truth and wisdom has allowed them to develop a systematic perspective that combines biblical history and future revelation to illustrate a modern-day understanding that enlightens truth for many.

Michael and Pam Mathews live in Ozark, Missouri. They have two wonderful daughters, Jessica and Tiffany