



The way that we each relate to God [whether we are His child or His creation] can be illustrated in this manner: We have all been tasked with building a brick wall, and we have been provided everything we need to construct it.



To us, the wall represents the span of our life, and the things we have accomplished. In our perception, each brick represents a different aspect of our dreams, our wants, our desires, our passions, our plans, our ideals, and our priorities – in effect, our preset agenda. To us, the cement represents God. Whether we say we believe in Him or not, we still look to Him with some sense of hope and an air of expectation. In our heart of hearts, and in the very essence of our being, we know Him to be the solidifying agent that

miraculously fuses the disjointed fragments of our lives together – Taking mass confusion, and breathing into it some semblance of truth. An envelope containing instructions has been provided to make the process run in a smooth and orderly fashion; however, we have *our* own ideas on how we want *our* wall to turn out . . . we have *our* own agenda.

Somewhere in the recesses of our minds [whether we mean to or not], we have set up unrealistic time frames by which *our* wall must be completed [inwardly vowing to ourselves that it will be done]. Keeping this in mind, we set out to determine the best course of action. We remember that the Instructions were provided at the start of the project, but we conveniently disregard them. We are so obsessed with *our* own agenda that we fail to even pick up the sealed package. If we had, we would have noted that each individual package was designed specifically for the owner – Even down to the detailing around the name on the envelope. No set of Instructions was the same. Each wall, which was to be constructed, was tailored to fit the intricate dynamics of each individual. Clueless, we set out to build *our* picture perfect wall.

Having sorted out the details of *our* plan of action, we begin to construct *our* wall. We lay *our* foundation, but we have no clue as to what [or who] that foundation is. In *our* plan of action, we have allocated [at best] minimal time and attention to the foundation. As far as *our* wall is concerned, it is unimportant. We are satisfied with whatever the bricks will stand on [if it looks sturdy or even feels sturdy – it must be sturdy]. We overlook the significance of a strong/firm foundation that will undergird and carry the weight of the wall. Because we have failed to follow the Instructions, our need to see the outcome (the finished product) [within, or by, the predetermined time frame], outweighs the need to bring forth quality in our work.

We are ready to move onto the next step in *our* plan – eager to commence with the building of *our* wall. We are beyond rational thought and normal thought processing. Without batting an eye, we tackle the next step in *our* plan of action – the laying of the bricks. This is the point at which we have allocated the majority of our time and effort. We pay close attention to each brick that will be used to construct *our* wall. We carefully and meticulously select each one; making sure there are no defects or flaws. In our minds, we convince ourselves



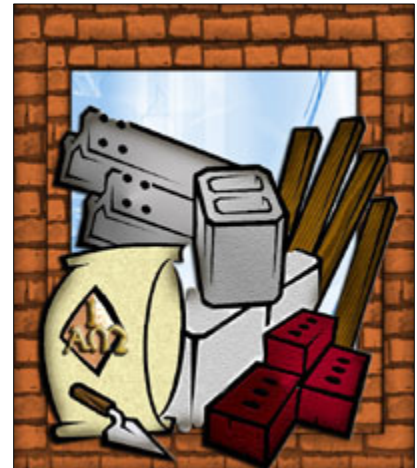
that the outcome of *our* wall depends on the worthiness of each brick that we pick out. After all, the results must meet *our* perception of perfection. Therefore, there is no room for anything that represents dysfunction or abnormality. If any is found, it must be quickly discarded or hidden away from view.

We strategically place each brick in accordance with *our* predetermined plan. Each brick has its specific space, and each brick is placed in a specific order. As we continue to lay each brick, we begin to see the fruit of *our* labor, and glory in it. Slowly but surely *our* wall becomes a reality.

Having laid the last brick in *our* wall, we step away from it to bask in the glow of our achievement. Our gaze runs back and forth over *our* creation, taking in the pseudo-splendor of it all. We even note that we have completed the project with time to spare.

As we begin to focus on the details of *our* wall, our elation tapers off into bewilderment. Something in our wall doesn't look right. It doesn't fit the picture we've held in our minds – it's not perfect. Something is missing. We stand in front of *our* creation trying to figure out what it is that is distorting *our* perfect picture. Then it hits us with a wave of clarity. No cement! We were so focused on the laying and placing of each brick in the right position and in the right order that we failed to realize that we had missed this most important step in *our* planning.

We sheepishly glance over to where the bags of cement lay stacked and unopened, and shake our head in disbelief. We hadn't even bothered mixing it. We fall to our knees, and cover our face in dismay. We reflect on the amount of time and effort we wasted making sure each brick went in the appropriate position on *our* wall, and think about how long it will take to take it down and rebuild it again.



With frustration at our stupidity mounting by the moment, *we* determine in our hearts and minds that [one way or another] *we will salvage our wall*, and regain some measure of achievement. We realize that time isn't on our side, and that we must now race against it. As a solution, we begin to formulate short cuts that will aid us in meeting *our* goal.

Over to the side, among the debris of discarded bricks, lays the answer to all of our problems . . . The Instructions. Yet, there they lay . . . the seal still unbroken.

Still trying to have *our* cake and eat it too [operating out of pride], we refuse to even look in the direction of the Instructions. We know they are there, but we are hell bent on doing things *our* way. We grab the bags of cement in anger [blaming them for our shortsightedness], and begin to mix it. At this point we don't even care whether we are mixing it to the right consistency. As far as we are concerned, it's just another road block standing in the way of the completion of *our* goals.



Once the cement is mixed [a gooey, gloppy mess], we stand there trying to come to a decision as to how to get the job done in the least amount of time. We reason with ourselves, deciding that it would take too long [and be too much of a hassle] if we were to dismantle the wall brick by brick, and rebuild it again with cement. In all of *our* great intelligence, we come up with the brilliant idea that it would be easier [and less time consuming] if we try to get as much of the cement on the wall as possible, without disassembling it. So, we begin to shove the cement into the cracks and crevices around the bricks. However, in our dogged determination to have some semblance of a wall, we fail to realize that, because the bricks have settled in on one another [becoming apart of each other], the cracks and crevices are few and far between, and we don't see the true image that stands before us. Rather than the [picture perfect] wall of our dreams, we end up with a self designed mess.

When we finally shove the last bit of cement into the last available space, we step away from *our* wall, and behold the end result of *our* planning, *our* rationale, *our* time frames, *our* efforts, *our* short cuts, and *our* focus. We try to categorize the atrocity that stands before us, and a single word blazes across our mind establishing the standard by which we measure everything else that we may attempt to do, in our lives, from this point on . . . Failure.

Our hearts, once proud, sink in despair, and we slowly turn away in disgust. As we begin to walk away from our fabrication of the truth, we catch a glimpse of a package [almost completely covered by the discarded fragments of brick]. Recognition marks our face . . . The Instructions. We bend down to pick them up, thinking to ourselves, "If only I had followed the Instructions."

As we examine the envelope closely, we notice that it more than just a container to hold the Instructions. We realize that a lot of time and care had been put into the detailing around our name, and even the seal was personalized. As we continue to admire the workmanship on the envelope, we spy a brief [but profound] statement:



All that we can do at this juncture is shake our head in conviction.



Curiosity gets the better of us, and we break open the seal. As we pull out the contents of the envelope, we take note that there are no step by step directions or diagrams – just a simple statement and an inspired Word:

