
THE THREE DECEIVERS

HOW TODAY'S OBSESSIONS WITH
CONTROL, OWNERSHIP AND INDEPENDENCE
ARE DESTROYING THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

*Perhaps the three most pursued and coveted things in our modern world are **control, ownership, and independence**. In Richard Eyre's mind, they are the Three Deceivers . . . and are not only unobtainable, but undesirable. They are, Eyre believes, the "false gods" that separate us from God and rob us of the things of the Spirit. This ground breaking book explores the obsessions we have developed with "CO&I," and then, when read from the Three Alternatives side, outlines a better and more spiritual paradigm to replace each of the three. Welcome to a new world of thinking that may change how you live.*

AUTHOR'S REQUEST...

First of all, thanks for reading and for allowing me to share some thoughts and perspectives that I hope will ring true.

Perhaps the first thing you noticed about this book is that it is reversible—that it has two front covers.

And perhaps your first impulse was to turn the book over and see what the other side is about.

Well, here is a request: Wait! Don't start reading *The Three Alternatives* until you have finished with the *Three Deceivers*.

Here's why: This side of the book is about unlearning three false ideas that most of us have come to accept; it is about getting rid of three bad habits that we have developed, about exposing three attitudes that cause unhappiness, about recognizing and overcoming three obsessions we may not have even known we had. I call these three bad ideas/habits/attitudes/obsessions *the Three Deceivers*.

The second, reverse part of the book is about three good alternatives to the three deceivers.

What I have learned is that you have to understand the *Three Deceivers*, and why they are wrong before you can discover (or even desire) the *Three Alternatives* that can replace them.

Now all of that may sound a little oblique until you know what I am talking about, but for now, just trust me, and keep the book turned right side up until you have finished this side.

You'll be glad you did, and you will be a little sorry if you don't.

AUTHOR'S WARNING...

Next a little warning: This is not one of those “ah ha” books where you start nodding your head right away as you grasp “why-didn’t-I-think-of-that-before” truths. The “ah has” will come, but they will come slowly, and they will come only if you bear with me early as I suggest to you that some very big ambitions you have always thought were good are actually bad, that some perspectives you have always thought were right are actually wrong.

It won't be easy or natural to accept the ways I am going to ask you to change your mind. In fact, some of what I suggest will seem to go against what your own mother told you, against what your teachers told you, and against the “traditional wisdom” that society dumps on you every day. Your instinct will be to resist, to reject, even to resent . . . because if my premise is true, then on these points at least, your mother was wrong, your teachers were wrong, and the world you live in every day is wrong.

No one likes to be wrong, and we like even less to admit that we are wrong. But that is what I have done, and that is what I will ask you to do in this book, so be warned.

Having said that, let me offer a compensating assurance: If you will “hear me out,” if you will read this front-side of the book with an open mind, you will, by page 42, be able to see the serious errors and problems that exist in the perspectives and attitudes we accept in our society today. You will want to discard and disown the Three Deceivers, and you will want to discover the Three Alternatives in the other-side section (partly so you can share them with your mother, your teachers, and the world around you).

A second warning is that we will be highly critical of the implied goals of the pervasive “self-help” industry that surrounds us today. In a sense, self-help has become the fastest growing *religion* in this country—when measured by book sales, or by speaking fees, or by what people are talking about when they wax serious or philosophical in their private conversations.

It is not the idea of self-improvement that is bad, it is the three predominant *themes* or objectives that permeate and dominate current self-help books and ideas. The three most commonly portrayed goals of today's self-help literature are The Three Deceivers.

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CHAPTER I



THE THREE DECEIVERS

The frustration and stress and imbalance we so often feel are not based as much on the details of how we live each day as they are on the fact that we are seeking the wrong things—that we have the wrong goals. That is a bold statement, and most people are quite determined and strong in defending the goals they have chosen to pursue. Nevertheless, it is a fact that most of us spend a substantial amount of time and mental effort seeking three goals that end up working against us and against our happiness and joy. They are goals that we have been programmed to think are good things, right things, things that will bring us happiness. It is our obsession with these three goals that destroys the balance and the quality of our lives.

The three goals in question are *Control*, *Ownership*, and *Independence*.

Before we expand the case for why these are wrong goals (*false* goals in fact), ponder for a moment how much we desire each of them and how much effort we put into their pursuit.

Oh, how we long for *Control*. We try to control the events of our day by making lists and checking them off. We try to control our children by disciplining and rewarding them. We try to control our destiny by deciding who and where and what we will be. And when things go a different direction than our plans, our lists, and our goals, we feel frustration and stress.

And *Ownership* is the American way! Life seems to present itself as a giant scoreboard where we are measured by what we own. We may work longer and harder than any people in the history of the world because we want more wealth, more possessions, more ownership. And when we compare what we own to what others own (a form of judgement we seem to find irresistible) the outcome is either envy and jealousy or pride and condescension—both of which lead to unhappiness.

The third goal of *Independence*, is such a revered concept that we have a holiday named for it. And we *revere* it, we strive to need no one but ourselves, to stand alone. Yet we continually find out how interdependent and dependent we are, how much we need other people and how much we need God.

We not only want and wish for Control, Ownership, and Independence; as a society we *worship* them. They are our idols. They are what we measure success by. They are what our self-help books and our casual conversations are about. They are the assumed goals that cause us to change careers, or to get a second job, or to move to a new place. They motivate us to avoid having more children, to go further into debt, to buy bigger planners or day timers, and to try to get through things on our own rather than ask for help. They are called herein *The Three Deceivers* because they have grown up into obsessions that serve the purposes of the adversary. They are authored and promoted by a force that desires our unhappiness.

There are two big problems with the concepts of Control, Ownership, and Independence. One is that they cause stress, frustration, and unhappiness. The other is that they represent false values and are, in fact, false concepts! They are lies!

Think about it. *What do you really control?* You are one tiny individual in a world made by God. It is He (and the laws and the plan he has set forth) that controls both the big and the small things that happen around you and to you. *What do you really own?* With the one possible exception of your will and agency or power of choice, you own nothing. You are a “user” of much that God has entrusted to you, but that He owns. Finally, *from what are you really independent?* You are dependent on so many other people, especially those you love, and completely dependent on God for the very air you breathe and the light that lets you live.

Think about the folly of trying to control everything. Life is essentially unpredictable. It happens; little of it is within our control. The measure of our success and happiness lies not in controlling what happens, but in how we handle and respond to what happens. Constantly trying to control what can't be controlled is a recipe for stress.

Think about the obsession with ownership. What do we really own? We pass through this life and we may obtain deeds and titles, but does anything really belong to us? And doesn't the illusion of ownership cause jealousy and envy and condescension and lots of other emotions that connect to unhappiness?

Think about the misplaced desire for independence. We are all interconnected and interdependent in so many ways. We need each other and it is these needs that make us human, allow us to love, and encourage us to make commitments. Too much emphasis on independence leads to isolation. And we are all ultimately dependent on God.

The bottom line is that we can't really have much of any of the Three Deceivers, and wouldn't want them even if we could. Too much control would take the adventure and spontaneity out of life. Too much ownership becomes bondage. And too much independence equals loneliness.

Regardless of their differing spiritual beliefs, when they really think about it, most people can see the limits and the falsehoods in the ideas of Control, Ownership, and Independence. As believers in a Higher Power, as partakers of the insights and truths that come with faith (and polls tell us that 95 percent of Americans are believers), we *really* know, and should be so grateful, that control and ownership lie with God. We are completely dependent on Him. We also know that His plan is one of interdependence on each other—not a plan whereby we stand alone. “No man is an island.”

Now, let's back off and make some caveats and concessions before we start sounding a little extreme. Control, ownership, and independence are very useful *economic* concepts, and are also at least partially useful and true psychologically. It's good to control our checkbooks and our emotions. Ownership and property rights are essential in a democracy and a free economy, and trying to live with relative independence in a psychological and economic sense is certainly a virtue. The problem comes when we desire the

three so much that we let the obsession take over our lives—even our spiritual lives. In the spiritual context each of the three is a lie—and the spiritual context is the most important one. Reality is best and most accurately understood as a spiritual paradigm. In the eternal, spiritual “things-as-they-really-are” point of view, control, ownership, and independence do not exist.

Nor should we want them to! Would you really like to control your life and the lives of those around you, or is that control better left to God? Would you really like to own things that are really God’s (“your” children, “your” talents, or the various parts of the earth that you “own”)? And would you really want to be independent rather than dependent on God and interdependent with other people?

The deeper, spiritual purposes of life (for existing on this earth in the first place) would be ruined and destroyed and frustrated if we had control and ownership and independence. How much more conducive to happiness it is to leave control and ownership to God and depend on Him to help us learn to cope, get along, and develop under the systems and situations He puts us in.

What we need is a clear and correct alternative to each of the three false concepts. As we try to stop seeking and being obsessed with control, ownership, and independence, we need true alternatives to turn our attention and desire toward.

There *are* true alternatives incorporated within a more spiritual view of life. Turning away from the Three Deceivers and focusing instead on their spiritual alternatives is the key to the happiness that God wants us to find. The flip side of this book will explore these Three Alternatives.

Real balance in life (and the peace and fulfillment that comes with it) is an inner thing obtained only by putting our desires in harmony with reality and with the will of God. However, before we can discover and adopt the alternatives, we must completely dispel the deceivers.

CHAPTER 2



DISPEL THE DECEIVERS & ADOPT THE ALTERNATIVES

Chapter One was originally written as an online article, and it produced an amazing amount of feedback. Apparently, the concept of these three subtle deceivers, which alter the way we think, and lead us in non-spiritual directions, struck a chord in many people, and caused them both to think and to worry. Something deep inside each of us seems to recognize *control, ownership, and independence* for what they are—robbers of our peace and separators of us from God.

Many readers of that initial article also asked, begged, and even *demand-ed*, to know what the Three Alternatives are, to have revealed the three attitudes or concepts that can be substituted for the Three Deceivers to produce the opposite effects. “Can’t you just tell us now?” they said.

And the answer is no, not yet! But when you get to these alternatives, you will recognize them as truth. The reason the second part of this book is reversed and turned upside downs is that the Three Alternatives will not be fully meaningful to you, or fully useful, until you are completely convinced that control, ownership, and independence are dangerous and deceitful concepts that lead us in directions we don’t want to go. But at this early point, many readers are a long way from being convinced of that, because much of our lives have been devoted to the pursuit of these three things, and few of us want to admit that we have been aiming in wrong directions. Even those

who quickly recognize “CO&I” as deceivers may need some reinforcement before they find the courage to try to turn their lives away from them.

There is a direct alternative for each of the Three Deceivers—three opposite attitudes that can be named, adopted, and prayed for—that will produce the opposite results of the concepts they replace. They will produce peace instead of stress, cooperation instead of competition, teamwork instead of tension. However, let’s keep our attention for the next few chapters on the *damage* that our subconscious obsessions with Control, Ownership, and Independence are doing to us. When we are thoroughly convinced not only that these are the wrong things to pursue, but that we must fight them and replace them, we will have a better chance to make a full commitment to their alternatives.

For so many, in fact to some degree for all of us, CO&I have become the conscious and subconscious *targets* of our lives. In too many cases they have grown into the framework and the parameters of how we think and of what we want to be. And they affect far too much the way we live.

There is a certain linkage between the Three Deceivers, because they feed on each other and each of the three foster and encourage the other two. They are all materialistic instincts that can cause us to isolate ourselves and judge others. They are secular instincts that do not allow for the influence, the guidance, and the ownership of God. Essentially, they are all *self*-help ideas rather than *God*-help ideas.

CHAPTER 3



BEWARE OF WHAT YOU WANT . . . FOR YOU MAY GET IT!

Beware of what you want, for you may get it.” As human beings, our objectives, even the subconscious or unconscious ones, affect everything we do. We often adopt the goals of the society around us without asking whether they are the right goals. The “herd mentality” influences us all in spite of our abhorrence of it . . . and the herd is charging toward the graven images of Control, Ownership, and Independence.

People often spend much more time and effort pursuing things than they spend examining what they really want and why they want it. We need to learn to ask ourselves if we are really pursuing the right things. We can be unduly influenced by our environment, by our peers, by the advertising and media that surrounds us. We tend to want what other people want, or what other people have, or what other people tell us we should want.

Deep down, within our spiritual selves, we may know what is real and what is lasting, and thus what we should be pursuing and working for. But the things “of the moment” seem to grab away our attention from the deeper things, and we live our day-to-day lives going after the temporary and the transitory rather than thinking about and working for what really matters.

In our urban society, we are surrounded by others, competing with others, watching media and ads featuring people who seem to have everything they want (and everything we want). We can easily find ourselves falling

into the pursuit of society's definition of success, rather than our own. Since everyone in our society seems to want certain things, it is easy to assume, subconsciously, that we want them too. This is an enormously dangerous assumption.

Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Perhaps the most important thing we can examine is what we want and why we want it. If we don't examine these key concepts, we fall into assumptions that are highly influenced by the media, by our peers, and by the world.

For example, we assume that we want proactive, check-off-the-list *control* of our every-day lives, and that we would be happier if we had it. We assume that we want to *own* nicer clothes and a newer car and a bigger house, and that we would be happier if we did. We assume that we want to be more *independent* and not need other people so much, and that we would be happier if we were.

What is interesting is that the "wanting to be happier" part of each assumption is the true and correct part. If someone asks us what we want, the most common answer might be: "To be happy." Happiness is our conscious goal, and it is the right goal. The problem comes not with the conscious goal, but with the subconscious, unexamined pursuits of the things we *assume* will give us happiness—control, ownership, and independence.

Scripture reveals the Three Deceivers to be lies—false spiritual concepts that will lead us in directions exactly opposite of our assumptions (toward unhappiness instead of happiness). Scripture tells us that God and the actions and interactions of His laws control our every-day lives. Scripture tells us that God owns the earth and everything in it, not us. Scripture tells us that we are dependent on God and interdependent on each other, not independent. Assuming otherwise and thinking that control, ownership, and independence will bring us happiness is not only inaccurate; it is unrealistic and selfish and will lead us instead toward stress, frustration, jealousy, and other kinds of unhappiness.

Of course, there are some things we should want to and strive to control—our emotions, our passions, ourselves. And we do own our agency, in a sense, and must accept that it is fully ours. And certainly a degree of financial independence can be a good thing. But we, and the society all

around us, carry CO&I so much further than that. The Three Deceivers get broadly defined as highly desirable, and become the yardstick by which we measure ourselves and others. We want to control more and more, and all the situations and people we can't control begin to frustrate us. We want to own more and more, and we become jealous of those who have more and judgmental toward those who have less. We want to be more and more independent, which separates us from other people and from God. We get caught up with runaway or extreme applications of CO&I without examining our own assumptions.

Figuring this out is one thing, but knowing what to do about it is another. Many who have realized that the headlong pursuit of CO&I brings unhappiness have gone in an opposite direction that is just as extreme and just as damaging. They have given up their proactive tendencies, dropped out, and started trusting their lives to "fate." They have substituted "no goals" for "false goals." And they have become even unhappier.

What we must do, instead, is replace false goals with true goals that are in harmony with spiritual realities. We must find the Three Alternatives, and discard and disavow the Three Deceivers. By now, many of you readers have your own ideas about what the three alternative attitudes are. To be correct, these alternatives must guide our lives toward God rather than away from Him. The alternative to "control" must acknowledge God's control and seek His guidance through impressions, nudges, and heightened awareness and perspective; yet it must still accept the responsibility for self that successful mortality demands. The alternative to "ownership" must acknowledge God's ownership of all and seek His guidance in caring for all that we are entrusted with; yet it must also accept accountability for all that we are given. The alternative to "independence" must acknowledge our dependence on God and seek His guidance in the serving, interdependent relationships we have with our brothers and sisters; yet it must also recognize that one purpose of this second estate is to help us learn to think and to decide for ourselves. *The Three Alternatives must preserve all of the good aspects of CO&I (initiative, motivation, discipline, etc) but eliminate all of the negative aspects (judgment, jealousy, conceit, presumption, envy, covetousness, etc.).* Don't wait for me to reveal what I think these alternatives are in the other-side of this book. Write down what you think they are and modify your guesses as we go.

But before we turn collectively to The Three Alternatives, there is *much* more to say on why and how the Three Deceivers affect us so negatively. Until we fully grasp their danger and the harm they can do, we may not be sufficiently motivated to make the serious life changes that Three Alternatives require.

It is important to be very *thorough* (sometimes I may sound like I'm repeating myself) in explaining why the Three Deceivers of CO&I are so destructive, depressing, and ultimately false. This explanation will proceed chapter by chapter, with the goal being first to pull ourselves away from our obsessions with (sometimes *addictions* to) CO&I and then, from the other side, to convert ourselves to the Three Alternatives that can cancel them out.

CHAPTER 4



HOW THE DECEIVERS DECEIVE

There are three particular *ways* we get deceived and carried away into the pursuit of CO&I—three *vehicles* that can confuse us and that we are particularly susceptible to: *appearances, media, and false paradigms.*

HOW APPEARANCES DECEIVE

We live in a world where appearances seem to be the main reality. In our effort to look good to others, we get caught up with the questions of how and where and who and when. We forget to ask ourselves the most important question: “*Why?*” We ask ourselves: How can I make more money and get more independence? Where is the most prestigious place to live? Who are the people to know and be seen with? When will I finally gain full control of my life? Instead, we should be asking why we really want these things and what we may have to sacrifice to get them.

Appearances deceive us because others around us, both the real people and the media people (our real neighbors and our cyber neighbors or sitcom characters) always look and act like everything is going great for them. They have a lot of things we want, and they seem to be very happy because of those things. Their lives look a little (or a lot) more in control than our own lives feel, and they don’t seem to have to depend on anyone but themselves. What we don’t always realize is that we look much the same to our neighbors. The

deceptive mirror works both ways, and we unwittingly deceive each other by looking better than we really are. Essentially, others are putting on appearances to impress us, and we are putting on appearances to impress them. We are both succeeding (and both deceiving).

HOW MEDIA DECEIVES

All of this is especially true (exaggeratedly true) in media (T.V., movies, etc.). Sitcoms try to show regular life, but by the end of the program or movie, problems are solved, relationships are resolved, and the slate is clean. In real life, of course, it is never that easy.

There are two parts to the media deception. One is the entertainment itself—the programs and dramas and even the talk shows and game shows—and the unrealistic, materialistic, and self-centered view of life they give us. The second is the advertising. Let's take the second one first:

A good friend of mine, the CEO of a giant New York Advertising Agency (and an unusually candid person, particularly for his industry) told me his personal definition of “advertising”: “The fine art of making people think they need what they really only want.” He also told me that the average American sees (or hears) over 400 advertising impressions each day! Little wonder we think we need more stuff, newer stuff, better stuff, and think we need to be more independent and more in control.

And the entertainment part is just as big a deceiver. Doesn't everyone you see in movies or on T.V. seem to have more than you do, and obtain it easier, and seem more in charge of their lives?? It's all make-believe and illusions, but it seems pretty real—especially with as *much* T.V., movies, and other entertainment as we see. Someone said, “Like our ancestors before us, we look through our rectangular, glass windows and observe and envy our neighbors. But unlike our ancestors, we turn those glass windows on and off with a switch.”

It is hard in this connected, media-dominated world, to think for ourselves— to ask more often “why?” Why do I want what I want? Why do I think I should have to control everything? Why do I want to have more, or at least as much as someone else? Why do I feel the need to be independent of everyone else? If we ask the deep *why* question we begin to realize that the honest answers have to do with envy and want and greed rather than

with need, and that our assumptions that CO&I are directly connected and necessary to our happiness are lies.

Focus on that last statement for a minute . . . *“the connections to happiness are assumptions and lies.”* Media leads us to the unexamined assumption that owning more and better things will make us happier, that controlling more of our lives and being more independent and less needful of others will give us more happiness. Deep down though, we know that the implied and assumed connections are false, and that the real connections to happiness lie more with things like commitment, relationships, interdependence, sharing, delayed gratification, appreciation, and faith.

HOW FALSE PARADIGMS DECEIVE

A “paradigm” is a viewpoint or inner framework for what we think is reality. The media and appearances lead us to a *false* paradigm, a collection of unrealistic and incorrect views of reality, assumed connections, and wrong world-views. And the problem is that the false paradigm itself becomes the biggest deceiver of all. Because once our view or perspective of something is accepted, even subconsciously, it becomes a filter through which we observe and interpret everything else.

False paradigms don’t become true when we accept them, but they become highly *influential* of our lives, our behavior, our priorities, and our thoughts. Once I accept the paradigm that “I would be happier if I owned more stuff and better stuff,” my actions and my whole thought process begins to be governed by the pursuit of more and better stuff. Once I accept the paradigm that “cool people are independent and in control,” I start hating myself for needing and being dependent on others or for not being able to control my life well enough to get everything checked off my list every day.

If you think the world is flat, you are going to make some bad navigation decisions and become increasingly frustrated. If you think happiness depends on control, ownership, and independence, you are going to make some bad prioritizing decisions and become increasingly frustrated. Once you correct your paradigm to “round” you will get back on course to your nautical destination. Once you correct your paradigm from CO&I to the Three Alternatives, you will get back on course to your destination of a happy life.

CHAPTER 5



THE SUBTLETY OF THE DECEPTION

There are some habits or thoughtless patterns we fall into which allow the Three Deceivers to take hold of us. These are subtle, gradual things. Like all addictions, they grow and take over a little bit at a time. To understand this sinister subtlety, we need to probe three “Hows”:

1. How we get caught up in the race without really thinking about the destination;
2. How the “mirrors and windows” of our lives get distorted; and
3. How seeking the wrong things keeps us from finding the right ones.

HOW WE GET CAUGHT UP IN THE RACE WITHOUT REALLY THINKING ABOUT THE DESTINATION

“The Joneses have one, so we should have one.” “We have to have the second income so we can have the second home.” “If we want our kids to get into the right college, we have to be able to pay for the right private school now.” “I need a better palm pilot and more planning so I can get more control of my life.” “Joe has so much more independence than I do. He goes where he wants when he wants. I’m too dependent on other people and have too many people who are dependent on me.”

Getting there faster, doing more, controlling more, having more, and constantly comparing ourselves with those around us has become a way of life for most people. When did life become such a contest, such a race? We ought to remember what Thoreau said: "If a man fails to keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him move to the beat he hears, no matter how measured or far away." And we ought to remember what e.e. cummings said: "More, more, more, more, what are we becoming anyway, morticians?"

Part of the problem is that we live so close to each other, and comparing is so easy. Another part of the problem is that we are surrounded by media that is always making comparisons for us and setting up false "ideals" that we are all expected to desire. We slip subtly into the race for CO&I, running along with everyone else, running faster and faster, seeing less and less along the way. Is it really a race we want to be in? And are the "rewards" of control, ownership, and independence really the prizes we want to win? Or do we want to consciously drop out of that race, and seek our happiness in other, more spiritual places?

HOW OUR MIRRORS AND OUR WINDOWS BECOME DISTORTED

The old carnival mirrors made us laugh because they distorted everything. Today's windows of fashion and of self-image and of trying to reflect what the world seems to want us to be, can be equally distorting.

Even worse than old wavy glass or circus mirrors is when our *windows* start turning into *mirrors*, and we lose our ability to see others and their needs. If our windows become coated with the silver of selfishness and absorbing self-awareness, we begin to see only *into* them and not *through* them. We see our own reflection, and we see others only in terms of how they can help us, or how they will affect our image, or how they will fit into our plans, or as the basis for competition and comparison concerning what we have more of, or less of. CO&I are all about ourselves, all about mirrors.

Anais Nin said, "We do not see the world as it is, we see it as we are." Or, we see the world as we wish it were or as we wish we were. We think

we want more control, more ownership, and more independence, and we fit everything into that model—including other people.

Happiness comes from seeing the world around us, and the people in it, as they really are—seeing through windows instead of into mirrors and being aware of the needs and feelings of others. It comes from accepting people as they are and not comparing ourselves to them. It comes from having true perspective about the things that really matter.

HOW SEEKING THE WRONG THINGS KEEPS US FROM FINDING THE RIGHT

At times when we have clear perspective and are tuned in to spiritual truth, we all know what really matters. We know that our relationships, our families, our health, our character, and our growth as human beings and as children of God are the things that count. We even know, when our spiritual discernment is clear, that we control very little and God controls all, that ownership is an illusion and that God owns all. We know that independence is not reality and that interdependence with each other and dependence on God is both the way it is and the way it should be.

The problem is that these moments of clarity don't come often enough. We live in a world of clamor and activity and impressions from media, peers, and society that all tell us we need to control more, own more, and be more independent and self-sufficient, and that we must compete and compare on the basis of the false ideals of the world.

The paradigms of the world not only lead us to false and deceiving objectives, they block our vision and our perception of the real goals. They take our attention away from enjoying all the gifts that God has given, away from noticing and helping those in need, away from developing our faith and character.

Before we can succeed with clear re-defining of the happiness (and the objectives) we seek, we must rid ourselves of the false perspectives and the rat race mentality that we absorb from the world. This book will, steadily and progressively, chapter by chapter, help us to do so. As we try to run away from CO&I we must also be asking ourselves what we are running toward. What are the Three Alternatives?

GUESSING THE THREE ALTERNATIVES

At this point, you may be developing your own idea of what the Three Alternatives are, the antithesis or opposite of each of the three deceivers, or their antidotes. There are blank spaces provided at the end of this side of the book where you can write your “guesses” or ideas as to what you think the Three Alternatives might be. (Go to page 44 in Chapter 13.)

Don't turn the book over yet, though; we have a little more dispelling and debunking and dismantling to do on CO&I.

CHAPTER 6



THE DANGEROUS “SECRET”

A couple of years prior to this book’s publication, another book about attitudes hit the scene with amazing impact. *The Secret* sold more than two million books and a million and a half DVDs in three months. Oprah spent two full hour shows on it and said she has lived by its principles all her life, even though she didn’t know it. If it wasn’t a best seller before Oprah, it surely was after, and it became a topic of discussion throughout the world of magazines, talk shows, and advice columns everywhere.

The Secret, for those few of you who may not have heard of it, is a book and video by an Australian woman, named Rhonda Byrne, that essentially says we control things by our thoughts, that we create our own reality by what we think about, that we can change and manipulate objective reality with our minds, and that we can have whatever we want by following the formula “Ask, Believe, and Receive.” Byrne, who is writing about a subject many have called “The Law of Attraction,” essentially claims that whatever we think about will be attracted into our lives. If we think about a particular car, or piece of jewelry, or a certain weight or body type, it will become ours. On the other hand, if we think about illness, we will be sick more, and if we notice or think too much about fat people, we will become one of them.

The reason *The Secret* is dangerous, is that a lot of it is true. It is an interesting and appealing series of half truths that have just enough of the ring of

truth to pull us in and cause us to buy off on the wrong parts along with the right parts. That is the way self-help literature has always been; it contains some optimistic, motivating, proactive ideas that make it almost too easy to believe. However, it leaves out (or doesn't give enough emphasis to) the biggest truth: *that we need God to bring about real and lasting change in our lives, and that the power is His, not ours.*

Sometimes self-help (and *The Secret* is the perfect example) actually tells us some powerful *potential* truths, but forgets (or doesn't know how) to tell us what we have to do to reach that truth. Changing objective reality by our thoughts really is possible. God does it. By the power of His word (or His mind) He made the worlds (see the book of Genesis). And we, as His children, have the embryonic seeds of that power, but we can activate it or learn it only through our faith in Him.

Thank goodness for that! If we could really do it independently, we would probably want, ask for, and create all the wrong things—things that would bring us misery and stagnation instead of happiness and progress. This is borne out by Bryne's book, which concentrates mostly on achieving or attracting cars, houses and vacations, on winning the lottery, and possessing the jewelry we see in the window.

It is a dangerous collection of half truths because it points us toward the wrong things, and perpetuates the myth of self: that we, *independently* and alone, can *control* what we *own* and what we are. Notice that all Three Deceivers appear in that last sentence. The bottom line of what Bryne is talking about (and suggesting that we use the law of attraction to obtain) is CO&I, Control, Ownership, and Independence.

OPRAH

Oprah, who ushered *The Secret* into widespread popularity and acceptance is also largely responsible for at least one of Linda and my books becoming a national #1 bestseller, and I appreciate her on many levels. I want to be personal for a moment to make some points about influence and about being influenced. So let me tell you a story:

We were sitting at dinner a few years ago when the phone rang. It was Oprah's senior producer, and she said that Oprah had read our book *Teaching*

Your Children Values and wanted us on her show. When we got to her studio in Chicago a few weeks later, with six of our nine children in tow (the other three were on missions), we had no idea of what awaited us. We had done a lot of T.V., talking about our books, and had experienced national attention on shows like *Donahue* and *The Today Show*. But we had not realized that Oprah was in a world of her own. We were limo-ed to the Drake Hotel, where we were told three shocking facts: (1) That we would be on for the whole hour, (2) That the show was live, and reached over twenty million people, and most shocking of all (3) that all six of our children would be on the set with us for the full hour. (We had previously thought we would do one short, five-minute segment, and that the kids would be in the audience.)

I learned a new definition of fear. When we got there, they gave us a seating chart, and my terror grew as I saw that Charity and Eli, our two youngest, who had never gone more than ten minutes without fighting, were seated next to each other. We also worried that Eli, who was eight and a little irritated at Donahue for not letting him talk on an earlier show, would vent in some way. Most of all, we were worried that questions would be asked that we couldn't answer.

But Oprah is just as she seems—warm, sincere, and truly interested. And she loved our book. She held it up and waved it around, as though the show was an infomercial, and told the parents of America that they had to read it and that they had to teach values to their children. God in his mercy let Eli and Charity be so dazed with the lights and cameras that they forgot to fight and actually made some very cute comments. During questions from the audience, one woman, miffed at how perfect our kids looked, asked where the other three were, obviously hoping for “prison” or “rehab.” Oprah, who had made it a point to get to know us a little before the show, answered herself, saying they were in Romania, Bulgaria, and London, “doing missionary work and humanitarian service.” The show was atop the ratings and, the next week, our book shot to number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

My point? Simply that people like Oprah (even those not quite like Oprah) have enormous influence in what we read, and what we think! The pop culture that surrounds us oversimplifies many things, and we must be

truly careful that we filter what we take in; of course, the best filter is the gospel. Things like *The Secret*, when viewed through the lens and within the framework and spirit of the spiritual truth, can be very helpful. We can appreciate the power of our thoughts within the context of wanting the right things and depending foremost on God’s Spirit and power and not on our own desires for control, ownership, and independence.

HISTORY

Actually, the very name “self-help” should be a warning to us, because it is all about *self*, about *me*, about what *I* want. And there really is a “gospel of self-help” that has grown up and built itself upon intriguing and appealing half truths. The oversimplified (and often inflating and then deflating) idea that we can be whatever we want, on our own, by ourselves, and right away, just by thinking about it, got its popular start over a hundred years ago by authors Emile Coue (“Every day, and in every way, I am becoming better and better”) and Wallace Wattles (*The Science of Getting Rich* . . . the book that inspired Bryne). It continued through writers like Napoleon Hill (*Think and Grow Rich*) and Norman Vincent Peale (*The Power of Positive Thinking*), and it grows stronger every day with advocates like Depak Chopra, Wayne Dyer, and Tony Robbins.

Again, there is truth in the writings of each of these authors, important truth, but it takes the Spirit to separate the accurate from the exaggerated, and to add the correct twists that make it serve rather than deceive. And it takes wisdom and guidance to know that the goal is not to be the source but to connect to the Source.

Let me end this chapter positively. I love some of what books like *The Secret* have to say. The emphasis on choosing gratitude over resentment is wonderful. Whenever someone says “ask” or “be thankful” they are at least implying that we direct those things to God. And I believe in the power of the mind, although I think that its power works more by awareness and by noticing the connections and opportunities God puts in front of us than by actually attracting or magically giving you whatever you want.

Perhaps the most interesting (and in a way depressing) thing is that we often have a propensity to accept a half truth rather than a full truth, and to

be attracted to a “star” when we have access to the “sun.” We have the scriptures, the actual word of almighty God, and we have the Lord Jesus Christ himself, willing to teach us and give us all He has. This does not mean we should not read the ideas and the philosophies of our fellow travelers on this earth; but it means we should read them in perspective, and never accept any part of them that is not in harmony with eternal, revealed truth.

Having said that, we put ourselves on notice don't we? As you explore the Three Deceivers with me, and as we search together for the Three Alternatives, may we be true to God's own scriptural word, and not try to create anything more than a useful and timely *application* of God's truth that can help us better understand and better live in today's complex and often misled world.

A POETIC CLUE TO THE THREE ALTERNATIVES

As mentioned, the material in this book was first written as an online column, which allowed for weekly feedback from readers. It was fun, during that writing process, to receive the “guesses” of readers as to what the Three Alternatives to CO&I are, or might be, or should be. I will share some of those guesses at the middle of the book.

The e-mails of readers taught me much! Many pleaded to know the Three Alternatives *now*, saying that they could not wait; that their CO&I-dominated lives demanded them right away. Most readers, though, seemed to enjoy the guessing game. They enjoyed trying to pry themselves away from the addictive behavior that is prompted by the paradigm of CO&I and thinking hard, in the meantime, about what the Three Alternatives might be. If you have not yet written down your guesses on what the Three Alternatives are, do it now on pages 44–45. Many readers asked for “clues” on what the Three Alternatives are. The biggest clues come in understanding the problems with CO&I and trying to find opposite options—alternative attitudes that do not produce the stress, selfishness, and materialism of the paradigms they replace.

Since so many asked, here is an extended clue for you in the form of a poem. Enjoy it, and see where it takes your mind in terms of how you want to live and in terms of what you think really matters.

TWO WAYS TO LIVE, AND THINK, AND THANK

Living, Type A

Be pro-active, be in charge, be self-confident,

Take control of your life.

Depend on yourself and go get the things you want.

Act, don't react.

Plan your work, then work your plan.

Only you can know what you want,

And only you can decide what your life will be.

Set your goals, make your plans, and let no one change them

Or stand in your way.

Cultivate strength and knowledge,

For these are the differences between man and Maker.

View your life as a series of competitions that you can win,

And as an ongoing effort to prove yourself,

And rise above your rivals.

Understand that achievements are life's measure,

And wrap your identity in positions and possessions.

Acquire, Achieve, Accumulate, Accomplish, Attain!

Let the "W&P" phrases be your guide:

Work and Plan

Will and Purpose

Winning and Pride

Worry and Pursuit

Wealth and Power

Seek and develop your capacity for

Control of circumstance and surrounding as well as self,

Ownership and obtaining the good things of this world,

Independence and being able to think and to act for yourself.

Living, Type B

Be spiritually active,
Seek guidance, be humble, turn your life over to God,
And depend on Him.

Strive to understand His plan and seek His will,
For only He knows what is best for your eternal Soul.
Be aware of His nudges and impressions,
Notice the needs of those around you,
And try never to win at someone else's expense.

Cultivate awareness and perspective,
For these are the differences between man and Maker.

View your life as a series of opportunities to serve,
And an adventure in discovering
Who God wants you to be and what He wants you to do.

Understand that relationships are life's measure,
And wrap your identity in your family.

Model your life after a different set of W&P words:

Watch and Pray

Wander and Ponder

Wonder and Probe

Worship and Praise

Waken and Perceive

Wait and Procrastinate (selectively)

Width and Perspective

Wisdom and Peace

CHAPTER 8



A BRIEF HISTORY OF CO&I

The concepts (and pursuits) of Control, Ownership, and Independence are very difficult to let go of even when we know there is a superior (and far more spiritual) alternative for each of the three. So it is important, before we flip over to the alternatives, to go even deeper into the problematic nature (and powerful destructiveness) of CO&I.

To figure out a way to get away from a deceptive concept it is helpful to know its evolution so that we can see it with perspective and causality. To do that, it is necessary to take a somewhat historical look of each of the Three Deceivers and their subtle infiltration into our societal norms.

HOW WE GOT SO CAUGHT UP WITH “CONTROL” AND HOW IT DECEIVES US

The history of the quest for control is essentially the history of the world. Human beings seem hard-wired with the desire to control things around them. This internal programming has probably saved our lives individually and collectively. However, in recent history, the instinct to control has been institutionalized by the whole industry of planning and goal setting and by the notion that control is what can bring us happiness. The good idea to set goals and have plans and control oneself gets expanded into the false idea that we should be able to control and manage everything (and every person) around us. In reality, we have control of a tiny island of things around which

swirls a huge sea of uncontrollability and unpredictability. Our challenge is not to control the ocean, but to see its beauty and appreciate and learn how best to ride on its waves and currents.

In the control mode, surprises annoy or irritate us because they may prevent our day from going exactly as we had planned. Our friends annoy us because they don't do things the way we would. Our children annoy us because they don't seem to want to be quite what we want them to be or to be interested in just what we think should interest them. And days when we don't get everything checked off of our list get chalked up as failures because we have defined success as control.

Striving to control our emotions, our appetites, and our habits is good and praiseworthy. However, we must strive with equal diligence to acknowledge that we need God's help in everything we do, even our most personal improvement goals. It is essential to understand that He has given us agency and choice so that we can exercise it in becoming more like Him, and that all of our goals and plans should be set within the context of His eternal plan for our eternal life and exaltation. Our goals and plans should exist within the framework of trying to find, understand, and do His will. In the proper paradigm, all of our plans need to be in subjection to His plan, and all of our little efforts at control need to be within His control.

There must be a better and more accurate attitude than Control!

HOW WE GOT SO CAUGHT UP WITH "OWNERSHIP" AND HOW IT DECEIVES US

The right to own property is a key underpinning of a democracy and a free enterprise system. This right had to be fought for and won in order to free people from tyrants and monarchy. In an economic sense, ownership is a prerequisite for responsibility. People aren't as likely to take good care of things unless they own them. Most home owners take better care of their houses than renters. But, like control, ownership becomes deceptive and destructive when it is taken too far. When an ownership mentality takes over our thinking, we forget that, in eternal and spiritual terms, God owns all. We are just using things which pass through our hands —things which come from or are part of God's earth, things we may have a deed for, but which ultimately are His.

If you think of the notion and attitude and perspective of Ownership as the trunk of a tree, what are the branches that grow? Branches of envy and jealousy sprout as we are in contact with those who have more things or better things than we do. Branches of condescension or superiority shoot up as we see those who have less. Branches of greed and covetousness begin to grow as we think about all that we wish we had. Branches of pride germinate as we think about what we have, or about having more of it than someone else.

There must be a better perspective, a better paradigm than Ownership.

HOW WE GOT SO CAUGHT UP WITH “INDEPENDENCE” AND HOW IT DECEIVES US

How can one speak or write against independence in a land founded on it and emancipated by a document called the Declaration of Independence? Of course independence is a desirable political condition, and of course personal independence is an asset in the senses of thinking for oneself and taking care of oneself.

But like the other deceivers, it gets dangerous and damaging when it is carried too far—especially when it is carried into our spiritual lives and our relationships. We have become a nation that worships independence and that equates strength with not needing other people . . . with “going it on your own.” It is easy to forget, in this mode, how interdependent we all are, and most dangerous of all, it is too easy to forget our complete and entire dependence on the God who gave us life and now gives us every breath we breathe. To need and to be needed is what keeps us human, humble, and honorable.

The real problem with Independence is in the “I.” Independence, at the lengths we often try to carry it, is the attitude of “I.” It’s about me and about what I can do on my own. Real life, the way God intended it to be lived, is always about *we*, about *us*, about our *interdependence*. It’s about how all of us are brothers and sisters because we are all His children, and all equally and totally dependent on Him. The old, positive “can-do” attitude is a great place to start, but a better (and higher) place is a positive “can’t-do” attitude that essentially says “Of myself, I am nothing, and can’t do much of anything, but with the help of friends and family, and most of all with the guidance and assistance of God, I can do anything that is His will.”

PROGRESSIONS OF DECEPTION

Progression is often a positive concept. We progress in our development of skills or in our mastery of a subject. We progress from grace to grace or from gift to gift.

But there are also negative progressions, slippery slopes where our slide gets faster and faster and harder and harder to stop, downward spirals where we lose control and plummet toward darkness.

In today's world, there are two dark progressions that scare me most, two quicksand dangers that should deeply concern us all.

One is the way *wants* can progress into *obsessions*, which can then quickly turn into *addictions*.

Wants—————Obsessions—————Addictions

The other is similar, but more complicated, because it can be a good or a bad progression. It is the progression of *acceptance* into *belief*, and then of belief into *worship*. The danger of this progression is that it can happen with falsehoods and carefully crafted lies as well as with truth.

Acceptance—————Belief—————Worship

Both types of progressions are easy to illustrate:

With the first, people *want* social acceptance or to be free of some kind of stress or pain so badly that they become *obsessed* with altering their body or their mind and they are soon *addicted* to anorexic or bulimic behavior or to drugs.

With the second progression, on the good side, someone *accepts* the idea of God and of religion and progresses to *belief* and faith and is thus driven to *worship* and service. On the bad side, someone *accepts* a false idea about materialism or power or exemption from responsibility and soon begins to *believe* in things that are untrue and then to *worship* his false gods of wealth or fame or imagined freedom.

As big a concern as these progressions are on things like substance abuse or pornography or materialism or narcissism, we should be most concerned, most forewarned, most determined to avoid negative progressions that act on our *attitudes*. Physical addictions are easier to cure than mental and spiritual ones.

Control, Ownership, and Independence have become our mental and spiritual obsessions.

The spiritual *obsessions* we have developed for the Three Deceivers lead inevitably and irrevocably toward spiritual addictions. Instead of letting the negative progression continue, we must find ways to reverse it—to go backward to our *wants* instead of forward toward *addictions*. We must attack this progression at the left end, at the beginning, at phase one.

We can begin this attack by questioning our wants, by asking ourselves why we want certain things, by asking ourselves if they are the right things to want. We can examine and operate on our wants before they balloon into obsessions and then mutate into addictions that eclipse our healthy wants and needs. We must ask ourselves if we want our own control or God's guidance, if we want selfish ownership of selfless stewardship, and if we want the loneliness of independence or the connectedness of synergicity.

The other, parallel progression is the same; we must reverse it back to its first phase and fight it at its source. Rather than going along with media, celebrities, peer groups, and society at large in unquestioned *belief* in the virtues and desirability of control, of ownership, and of independence, we must back up and question our *acceptance* of these goals. How much do we want to control? What can we really own? From whom do we want to be independent, and why? We must question our acceptance rather than blindly believing along with everyone else until CO&I become our idols, our gods, and the objects of our covetous *worship*.

THE THREE DECEIVERS AND THE ARCH DECEIVER

C S. Lewis said that we can make two mistakes with regard to the devil—one is to think about him too much, the other to think about him too little. Neither he nor his ways are something to dwell on, but being aware of some of his lies, and defending against his temptations must be a part of our life and of our goals.

Satan is often referred to as “the deceiver,” the “master deceiver,” and the “arch deceiver.” Indeed, his methods usually revolve around deception, which is often more than a simple lie. Deception can involve partial truth and subtle efforts to make good seem bad and bad seem good.

We know that the ultimate goal of Satan is to foil God’s plan of happiness, to make us miserable “like unto himself,” even to claim us as his and take us forever away from God. He would like to make us all sons of perdition. Since that is usually not possible, he tries to pull us back from what we could be, to hold us to lower levels. If he cannot take us away from one of God’s glories, he designs at least to dam or divert our progress and keep us in worldly or telectual realms of thought.

As mentioned earlier, CO&I are useful economic and political concepts that foster free enterprise, discipline, and certain types and levels of responsibility. Yet they each become deceivers when carried into emotional and spiritual realms, and when we begin to base our thinking and our goals on

their paradigm. The “arch deceiver” uses the popularity and self-centered appeal of CO&I to pull us down and away from higher principles. He popularizes and glorifies CO&I to the point that they become our measurements of success (for ourselves and for others) and to the point where they become first our obsessions and then our addictions, first our ideals and then our idols. Once he gets us wanting and worshipping them enough, he can dull us down and steer us off in various ways with sundry strategies. One of these strategies can be called “overload.”

WHAT IF SATAN’S STRATEGY HAS
SHIFTED FROM “ADVERSITY” TO “OVERLOAD”?

Much has been written about the value and benefits of adversity. None of us wish for it, but most of us have learned that it will always come, in small ways and big, and that if we survive it well, we will be better off for it.

The trouble is that the adversary (well named after his prime historical mode of operation) has learned the same thing. Tempting people with persecution and hardship and other kinds of personal adversity produces the kind of pain and suffering he enjoys for a while. However, people who suffer adversity often arise stronger and more stalwart for it, and thus move in opposite directions (discipline, devotion, empathy, service, and happiness) from where the adversary wants to send them. Consequently, like any fierce competitor, Satan changes his strategy.

His new approaches include Comfort and Ease, Acute Materialism, Satisfaction and Idleness. However, one of his best new approaches could be called “Overload.” He knows that if he can make our world so complex, so demanding, so overflowing with options and alternatives—and then add an overlay of compulsive comparing and competitive envy and pride—he can completely distract us from introspective, contemplative prayer and reflection and the seeking of God’s will. He knows that if he can keep our minds on what *we* want, they will never stray to what God wants. He knows that if we are exhausted every day from our pursuit of the world, we will have little energy left to see the needs of others or to examine where we, ourselves, are headed. He knows that if he can keep us occupied with our obsessions for Control, Ownership, and Independence, we will have neither the time nor

the desire to think about guidance, or service, or our dependence on God and our interdependence with others.

And what tools he has to promote his new approaches: Movies and media that portray amorality and materialism as the norm. Advertising that makes us think we need what we actually only want. Technology that helps us know more and more about less and less, and that substitutes virtual reality for real reality, and that sucks away endless hours by net-surfing and web-browsing and playing games with machines.

SOLUTIONS OF “WHY” AND “WINDOWS”

Part of the solution is learning to ask ourselves the question “*why?*” a lot more. We spend our mental energy asking (and answering) the questions of what (what we own, what we want, what is cool, what will make us look good) and where (where we want to live, where we want to travel) and who (who are the best contacts, who do we want to be seen with) and when (when do we want our promotion, or our independence) and how (how do we get more control, how do we win the many games we are playing). These are mostly CO&I questions, and they can be dangerous when they are not preceded by what should be the first question . . . *why?* It is the *why* question that causes us to think, and to ponder, and to prioritize, and to pray for guidance and inspiration and insight. Why do we want what we want? Why do we do what we do? Why is a powerful question because it makes us dig deep and be honest with ourselves, and when we are honest, we know if the answers are good or bad. Answers that relate only to competing, and winning, and appearances, and comfort and ease are not good answers. Answers that relate to the true good of our family, the welfare of others, and the will of God are good answers.

“Why?” is also a good question because answering it honestly often helps to simplify our lives and to break free of the Overload. When we don’t have a good answer for why we do something, we may be able to stop doing it—to eliminate one more complexity from our lives, and to thus put greater focus and greater priority on things that really matter.

A second guideline (asking *why?* being the first) is to think of our lives as a series of mirrors and windows. Mirrors reveal ourselves, and windows

reveal others. We all need some of each. We need to try to see ourselves, not through the selfish, competitive and covetous mirrors of the world, but through accurate mirrors of how we are measuring up to our potential, to our foreordinations. It is so important to balance the mirrors with windows—to try to be transparent as much as we can, focusing on others rather than our own reflections. What does my child need? What does my spouse need? What does my friend need? What does this stranger need? “Need” is the key word—not “want.” Questions of need make you think, and may help you simplify and thus to overcome the temptation of Overload.

No question that “overload” is one of the Adversary’s favorite new techniques, and it is rivaling adversity as the main tool he is using on many of us. Perhaps “overloader” is a better thing to call him than the adversary, and maybe both are involved when we call him the deceiver. Living better and with more joy in today’s complex, competitive, covetous world is all about simplifying, about asking *why?*, about seeing needs, about striving for more awareness and perspective, and about looking for the Three Alternatives to CO&I.

Both the benefits of adversity and the power of simplicity may have been in Shakespeare’s mind when he wrote:

*Sweet are the uses of adversity which,
like the toad, wears yet a precious jewel in its head.
And so our lives, free from public haunt,
find tongues in trees, sermons in stone,
books in the running brooks, and good in every thing.*

CHAPTER II



CHANGING OUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Remember the quote, “I make myself rich by making my wants few”? It has been said by many, with slight variations, including Thoreau, and it contains a deep truth that takes us such a long time to recognize. The truth is that if we want the right things, we will find that we already have them, and that they are all we need.

Essentially, there are two ways to pursue happiness in this world. One is to adopt the measurements of the society around us and kill ourselves competing with everyone else to own more, to control more, and to need others less. These CO&I “measures of success” that we so often judge by, and are judged on, seem to be held up in front of us everywhere we look as the goals, as the standards, as the thing that everyone should want—and want—and want, the things that will make us happy.

The other way to pursue success is to change the definition of what it is. If we consciously reject the measurements of CO&I by reminding ourselves that while they may be useful economic concepts, they are spiritual lies (God controls all, owns all, and we depend on Him for all) and if we re-define happiness as the receiving of blessings, guidance, and the gifts of God, we will realize that we already have all that we need to be happy, and we will begin to focus more on faith, gratitude, and relationships.

With true and spiritual goals replacing the false and carnal goals of the world, many useful variations of the opening quote become possible:

“I make myself happy by changing my definition of success.”

“I make myself rich by wanting only the simple gifts of eternity.”

“I make myself joyful by recognizing and appreciating what God has already given.”

One of the best interpretations of the famous couplet “Be in the world but not of the world” is that it is possible to live in a modern, secular society, and indeed to appreciate it for all it offers it, yet not to become obsessed with the same pursuits that those around us covet and seek.

Trying to own more than others, to control everyone and everything around us, and trying to be independent of those around us are telestial goals, and lead to frustration and unhappiness.

Seeking God’s will through gratitude and guidance, seeking to magnify God-given foreordinations, and seeking the humility of dependence on God and interdependence on each other is a wonderfully radical redefinition of joy, and it is available, immediately, to us all.

THE TELESTIAL MODELS OF THE WORLD

Have you noticed how everything in our world seems to be measured, evaluated, and valued in *economic* terms? From the personal ways in which we judge people (wealth, appearance, “success”) to the way we try to understand the broader world (GNP, productivity, recession) we base our opinions on parts of a giant and pervasive economic model.

Another worldly model is the competitive model where there is always a winner and a loser, one who controls and one who is controlled. It is a power paradigm where our judgments and evaluations are based on who has more or less power.

And a final cultural icon of modern measurement is something that could be called the individual rights model. We judge countries, programs, curriculum, and all kinds of other systems by whether they violate human individual rights and whether individuals can become all that they can be.

What is wrong with these models?

They ignore the spirit, they ignore the soul, they ignore the family. They are materialistic, telestial models that fail to take into account eternal priorities.

They fit, one to one, with the Three Deceivers. The economic model matches up with the “ownership” deceiver. The competitive model matches up with the deceiver of “control.” And the individual rights model matches up with the “independence” deceiver.

FRAMEWORK FOR THE THREE ALTERNATIVES

This chapter sets forth the framework within which the Three Alternatives will be presented once you flip the book over. Sub headings will allow you to read it in chunks. If you can take the time to digest this chapter, the Three Alternatives will be much more meaningful to you when you start reading from the other side.

FOUR OBJECTIVES

When I started writing this book, I had four objectives:

1. *Expose* the Three Deceivers of Control, Ownership, and Independence, and show the ways that CO&I can rob us of both our happiness and our full potential here in mortality.
2. Create a framework in which Three Alternatives could be clearly presented and effectively implemented in our thoughts and our lives.
3. Reveal the Three Alternatives and illustrate how they preserve the “truths and benefits” of the Three Deceivers while eliminating their deceptions and dangers.
4. Elaborate on each of the Three Alternatives, and do so persuasively enough that readers will want to absorb and adopt them and prescriptively enough that readers will understand how.

We have now finished the first objective, and if you are still reading, perhaps it means that you have seen through the veneer of CO&I and are ready for better and truer alternatives. It is important to have a good frame of reference for the three new attitudes or approaches to life that will be presented next. (A “frame” sets something off, holds it together, and presents it in its clearest and most attractive light; that is what I want to do with the Three Alternatives.)

THE “GOOD THINGS” ABOUT THE THREE DECEIVERS

We have criticized and put down the concepts of CO&I so strongly over the past several chapters, that this next sentence may surprise many readers: *Control, Ownership, and Independence are an important part of this world, and of God’s plan for His children.* Just as they are (or should be) a part of *our* goals for *our* children.

Think about it. As we raise our kids, we want them to learn to control many things—their tempers, their money, their habits. We want them to assume ownership and thus learn responsibility for their toys, their clothes, their education, their decisions. And we want them, gradually, to achieve the kind of independence where they don’t need us anymore. (In a sense, the goal of parenting is to work ourselves out of a job!)

Could God’s goal be similar with regard to His children? Heavenly Father wants us to progress, and mortality is a part of His plan for achieving that. He wants to move us along a path that leads us to being more and more like Him. He has fully achieved Control of all, Ownership of all, and can operate in a sphere of complete Independence if He so chooses. In our premortal state, living with Him, we had little need (perhaps little concept) of CO&I; this earth life opens their possibilities to us.

So if CO&I is what we all want to teach our children, and what God wants to teach us, how can they be the Three Deceivers?

Simply because we take each of them too far, and fail to understand them as gradual, progressive gifts of God.

If we deceive ourselves by thinking we can control what only God can control, or own what only God owns, or if we feign independence from Him on whom we depend for every breath . . . we misunderstand the *pace* of God’s plan and forfeit the very help we must have from Him to become

what we need to be in order to receive these gifts in eternity.

On this earth, options and agency are given to us so that we can begin to learn, like children, to choose and decide wisely . . . mortality thus becomes a training school for the skills and discernment that will one day afford us Godlike *control*. On this earth, we are entrusted with things that teach us responsibility and prepare us for a time when we will, like God, have *ownership*. On this earth we are given the freedom and agency that can prepare us for the *independence* of our own kingdoms.

Like children in school, we have many progression possibilities, but the Teacher is the one with the knowledge and the power, and we must learn from Him and depend on Him and acknowledge His sole control and ownership and independence. We cannot simply possess or assume these things; we can only learn and receive them from Him according to His timing and His curriculum.

The Three Deceivers deceive us not because they are inherently and eternally wrong, but because we can get their *timing* wrong.

LEVELS

Think with me for a moment about “levels.” There are three basic levels of law by which men and women on this earth can live. There is the *law of the Jungle*, survival of the fittest, kill or be killed. There is the *law of the Old Testament*, of justice, fairness, and an eye for an eye. And there is the *law of the New Testament*, of mercy, forgiveness, and atonement.

This book is not about these levels of law, but it is about somewhat similar levels of attitude, or paradigm, or perspective. The level of how we view the world and how we see ourselves within the world makes a great deal of difference regarding our happiness and even regarding the level of law we are capable of (and feel natural within).

Wrong and spiritually immature attempts to control others and to make everything happen the way we want it to put us in the Jungle. So does coveting and pride and wanting to own more than others own. And the Jungle is all about independently surviving at the expense of others. We know there are much higher laws, and we learn of them in the gospel and in our temples. What are the attitudes and approaches to life that can allow us to live by them in this telestial world? How can we be in this world but not of it?

CHILDREN

Many parents try to raise responsible kids by giving their children the early illusion of ownership and control and independence. We might give our young kids ways to earn their own money so they can buy things and think of them as their own and thus take better care of them. We might give preschoolers the choice of which shirt to wear or what color of juice to have in the morning so they can begin to feel some independence and control.

But of course they are still children, still completely dependent on us as their parents. And there is so much more to teach them.

This earth gives us, as children of God, our first illusions of control and ownership and independence, and the agency and choices we have here facilitate our progression, but how important it is to humbly recognize how totally dependent we are on Him, to acknowledge His ownership of all, and to put our lives in His control.

“BOTH”

There are some parallels with the classic argument between “works” and “grace.” One view (most of Christianity, actually) says, with scriptural backing, that “it is by grace ye are saved,” and the other view favors the scripture, “faith without works is dead.”

Are we saved by works or by grace? The answer, of course, is both. Those who say “by works only” miss the fact of our complete dependency on Christ’s atonement, and those who say “by grace only” miss the point of agency and the purpose of this progressing mortality.

Only the balanced “both” position brings happiness and maximized progress. The extreme and exclusive “grace” position can make us fatalistic and lazy. And the extreme and exclusive “works” position can make us proud, demanding, and frustrated.

We need to find a similar balance in our everyday lives between the self-reliant attitudes of CO&I and the God and Spirit-reliant attitudes of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

PARADIGMS

What are Control, Ownership, and Independence? Are they goals? Are they principles? Are they attitudes? Are they approaches to life? Are they beliefs?

Are they lenses through which we view the world? Are they ideals or idols which we worship?

It's hard to replace something if you are not entirely sure what it is. Like parts in an automobile or machine, you have to know what something is and what it does before you can replace it correctly and accurately.

I don't think CO&I are principles or values or precepts, and they are certainly not commandments. They are concepts or attitudes, and they have become, for most people in the world, goals and objectives, the objects of our pursuit. For many, they have become the idols we worship. Perhaps the best thing to call them, the word that combines all of these "things that they are" is *paradigms*.

The dictionary defines "paradigm" as "*a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality.*" That is really what we have with CO&I. They constitute a way of looking at life, a set of assumptions about what we should be wanting and about what makes us happy. Concepts that determine where we spend our energy and that are instrumental in determining our values and our practices.

False paradigms are dangerous because they stem from false assumptions and lead to false values and practices. False paradigms (or half-truth paradigms) are an enormously effective tool of Satan because once they are established and accepted in our minds, they can lead to all kinds of mistakes, wrong priorities, and sins.

The two ways to get rid of false paradigms are to debunk, expose, and abandon them (the purpose of part one of this book) and to *replace* them (the purpose of all that will follow, with the Three Alternatives).

A paradigm can be replaced only with an alternative paradigm. You cannot replace a paradigm with a principle, because they are not the same thing. If you are replacing a faulty carburetor, you have to replace it with another (good, working, improved) carburetor, or with something that does the same job better. Similarly, if we are going to replace a paradigm, it had better be with another paradigm—one that incorporates true principles and that leads to where God wants us to be.

The Three Deceivers are a framework for life, a way of looking at things; it is this frame that must be replaced.

CHAPTER 13



GUESSING THE THREE ALTERNATIVES

What we need as replacements are three separate new paradigms, one to replace each of the Three Deceivers. We need three new ways to view the world around us, three new approaches to living each day, three new frameworks in which we can see ourselves and our lives on this earth, three new ways of dealing with the materialism and shallowness and selfishness around us, three new attitudes to face each day.

THINGS AS THEY REALLY ARE

A true paradigm or set of paradigms would represent things as they really are—the realities of our dependence on God and of His ownership and control of all. A true paradigm would allow us to see as He wants us to see and to progress toward what He wants us to be. True paradigms would take into account where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. True paradigms would be frameworks in which all true principles of the gospel could flourish.

The Three Alternatives should be a set of attitudes or perspectives or paradigms that help prepare us to be like God, and to gain some of His characteristics. Yet, at the same time, they would acknowledge the correct current reality of His complete control, total ownership, and entire independence and our own humble lack of any of the three.

Are there three perspectives or paradigms that can make this earth the preparation it should be for living with God and sharing in some of His privileges and prerogatives, and yet keep us in the humility and receptive mode that allow us to draw down His help and comfort? Can they contain the faith of seeing what can someday be, but the humility of recognizing how *far* we still have to go?

This is no small thing we are looking for together. We are seeking “bridges” that can allow us to live in the world without being of the world. We are seeking attitudes that maximize our progression on this earth as measured by how close we get to God while we are here. We are seeking paradigms that rid us of false gods and point us toward the eternities.

Before you turn the book over, make your own three guesses on the next two pages.

I think the Alternative to “Control” is

Here’s why:

I think the Alternative to “Ownership” is

_____.

Here’s why:

I think the Alternative to “Independence” is

_____.

Here’s why:

POSTSCRIPT



FEEDBACK AND
GUESSES ON THE
THREE ALTERNATIVES

Thousands of column-readers have responded to the online articles about Three Deceivers with hundreds of “guesses” about the Three Alternatives. Read through the ones that interest you before you flip the book over. Some of those guesses, the most common guess, and in many ways the best guess, has been Faith, Hope, and Charity. These are, of course, the most important and powerful principles of the gospel. Putting them into practice is the goal of every true Christian, and doing so would certainly dispel the negative and self-centering tendencies of the Three Deceivers.

But they do not directly replace CO&I because they are principles rather than paradigms. What we need is three attitudes or ways of viewing life that replace the three deceivers directly, that can substitute neatly and powerfully for each one, and that prepare our soul’s soil for the springing up and growth of faith, hope, and charity.

One of the great blessings of having written much of this book as an online column before publishing it was the instant feedback I got each week. I’ve decided it would be selfish to keep it all for myself! (After all, as writers and readers, we are all in this together!) So here is a sampling of the comments readers have sent. I have identified people only by their initials because some of the sentiments may be a bit personal or controversial; and

I have removed a lot of the praise and flattering comments about the Three Deceivers concept so that it reads more objectively.

Scan the list for the ones that interest you most. All these good guesses about the Three Alternatives will prep you for the other side of this book.

SAMPLE OF READER COMMENTS

We have started a class on your Three Deceivers, and on trying to guess the Three Alternatives. We think the alternatives may be, as explained by Christ, the higher laws—loving God, then loving others *as yourself* (implying you already have self-love). I know that's only two, but we are still working on it. RV

I'm currently thinking that the Three Alternatives might embrace the Gospel Principles as follows: Control vs *Gratitude*—Acknowledging God's control of all things and return thanks and being grateful. I'm reminded of the scripture that says we should always acknowledge God's hand in all things and give thanks. Ownership vs *Responsibility and Accountability*—God does indeed own all things including each of us. We are to be accountable for the stewardship He has granted to us and consecrate all things to His will and service. Independence vs *Praise & Worship* (Glory to God)—We praise and worship God acknowledging our dependence on His supreme grace and our inter-relations (interdependence) of others God has created to assist us and whom God created us to assist. JW

I think the Three Alternatives could be Faith, Trust, and Obedience. MA

I think *The Secret* is similar to other self-help and positive thinking books. I have been somewhat surprised and disappointed by the two most common responses I have observed in those who have also read similar books or watched similar movies. The first is fear and paranoia and the second is reverence, perhaps near worship. Regarding the three deceivers, I see as alternatives to your three deceivers: Replace Control with Guidance. Replace Ownership with Meekness or submissiveness. Replace Independence with Gratitude. JO

Linguistically, Stewardship vs. Ownership is a fantastic juxtaposition. Control's opposite is a "Thy Will Be Done Attitude." Acceptance comes to mind although Contribute fits here rather well and is also a C, albeit a verb. Independence is the trickiest. Interdependence could work, but wants for substantial explanation. AT

I've read everything you have written on the false goals of CO&I—very thought provoking, very true. I would say that three beneficial alternatives could be Submissiveness, Stewardship, and Synergy. JH

If I had to guess the Three Alternatives I would say: humility, stewardship, and charity. My husband wants to include agency or choice somehow, I want to include gratitude somehow-but mentally include that with humility. BT

I'll take a stab at the Three Alternatives (I'm trying to narrow it down): Consecration - Stewardship - Spiritual Guidance. Interdependence maybe. I also had listed Charity (encompasses so much, including Service) and Agency. Discipline - Contentment (which includes Gratitude). Okay, I'll stop. I'm at fifteen or so. It's been nice to THINK. Thanks for helping us to do better and be better. With love and appreciation, ME

I say the three Alternatives are Faith, Hope, Charity. BG

How about: Self-control, stewardship, and interdependence? LH

I have thought for a while that the Three Alternatives are, "Faith", "Hope" & "Charity." After reading "poetic clue", if I'm not right, I'm close. What do you say? JS

Thank you for the opportunity to respond regarding the alternatives to the three great deceivers. I believe that control must be self-mastery, ownership must transcend to stewardship, and independence is encountered by using our free agent choice to mirror God's will as this is the only way we can be "free" and independent from our own ego. Thank you for allowing input and for seeing "The Secret" for what it is: DECEPTION. KR

As I run an Addiction Recovery Program here in Dallas and was a psychotherapist for a number of years, I've been talking about the same issues you are addressing. I believe the Three Alternatives are: First, *Faith* in the *correct* aspects and characteristics of the Lord. Secondly, *complete surrender and submission* of our will- the recognition that we cannot change our hearts, only the Lord does. Finally, *loving obedience*, that desire to do only those things He wants me to do, and, to do them for the same reason He does. That leads me to lose myself in His service. KH

I want you to know how greatly I've enjoyed your columns on the Three Deceivers, and that they've helped me with some serious reflection on the paradigms we use in our daily lives. As I've read and studied your columns, I've tried to think of the higher laws. I believe that the alternatives could be the attitudes of Consecration, Gratitude, and Service. RS

Following your series on the deceivers, I truly believe they ARE deceivers and that there must be some higher attitudes to replace them with. Nevertheless, a conun-

drum has arisen for me. It seems we must learn some CO&I behaviors to be like God eventually. Are they something we must pass through? RA

Thank you for the wonderful articles that have shown me the deception of “The Secret” and given me a clear view of why the three idols we worship are deceivers. My guesses for the alternatives are Gratitude, Consecration, and Faith. RM

I have truly enjoyed your articles and have learned much from them. Thank you for bringing the great deceivers into the open. I was led away by a self-help group that promised the answers and soon I was so confused and so selfish that I could think of nothing but myself. I think the alternatives are faith, hope, and charity. DM

Bravo and well stated!!! The book *The Secret* like so many self-help books, is a saccharine and very well executed marketing ploy for those with itching ears. After reading some discussion on people’s views of *The Secret* I was able to procure a general sense of the paradigm much like you described it. It’s like Norman Peale gone atheist. The one central thing missing was a sense of *humility* in the whole scheme. There was no real responsibility, no repentance, no real purpose or guiding light or accountability. And because that was missing there was no true love in it. (These are my alternatives—responsibility, repentance, and accountability.) AT

It seems that God has said that the alternatives are Faith, Hope, and Charity. Maybe I’m being too simplistic, but I think those three encourage the characteristics you describe as desirable (positiveness, initiative, discipline) and negate the negative aspects of the Three Deceivers (judgment, jealousy, conceit, presumption, envy, covetousness, and other deceiving and damaging qualities). RC

I believe the Three Alternatives for me would be hope, faith, and charity, or love. Hope giving us the positive outlook and leading to faith. Faith in Heavenly Father to help us with our needs indicating a partnership. Charity to get us out of ourselves by helping our brothers and sisters. SP

I would say the Three Alternatives would be prayer, faith, and listening to God. Thanks for all your very thought provoking articles. CR

My guess at the Three Alternatives: (1) Submitting our agency as a gift to God to receive grace for grace. (2) Consecration—Our all for His all. (3) Becoming one with God through the atonement and loving ourselves and others as He does. BB

I read your article about “The Secret.” Thank you for clarifying WHY I felt hesitant in buying this DVD. When I watched the Oprah Show, I was overwhelmed by the

concept. It was motivating to be better. As I thought about it later, they were talking ONLY on a telesial level of learning. It is only a counterfeit copy of the real thing. Thank you for verbalizing my own thoughts and feelings about. I feel good about my judgment call on this one . . . I think the Three Alternatives are faith, hope, and charity. PM

Here is my guess: Instead of control, we exercise charity. Charity towards others invites vulnerability but with time and God's power (the giving of constant, unfailing love) brings a power (worthiness of love) that comes without compulsory means and extends into the eternities. Instead of ownership, we exercise hope. Hope is somewhat different than knowledge that we can someday "own" a mansion on high and receive all that the Father hath. Instead of independence, we exercise faith. We know very well that we are nothing without His power. His power is real and can help us achieve miracles for righteous purposes. We can accomplish all that is through faith. SL

I would guess: humility, dependence, and endurance. KR

Surrender, Stewardship, Dependence on the spirit and cooperation—Becoming one. SO

The partnership we have with God to become better is expressed in a little saying that I like: "You alone can do it, but you can't do it alone." Thank you for your insight. Philosophies like *The Secret* would never be so popular if they didn't have many truths. I heard in a talk recently that the Devil does his most effective lying by telling the truth. It is what "isn't said" that deceives us. I can't wait for the Three Alternatives. I think they are love, love, and love. SS

My guess is that the alternatives are: discipline/disciple of Christ; stewardship; dependence upon God. DS

As I have read your words, I have received good ideas to apply to my own life and stewardship. When I have acted on these ideas, my life and those around me have been blessed. Thank you very much for influencing my life for good. I guess guidance, generosity, and interdependence. MB

It occurs to me, that in the gospel view, the alternatives to Control, Ownership, and Independence would be Preparation, Stewardship, and Submission (with submission being first and foremost). I look forward to your continuing series on the subject. BW

There seems to be an ever common thread running through most of the “Personal Growth Industry” as its professors like to call it. There is a focus on revealing our great gifts and the things that we can accomplish with them. Unfortunately, there is generally only a passing mention of gratitude to the source of our gifts. Thanks for exposing the flaws. For control let us substitute discipleship or discipline. Discipline so far as it is the study of and following Jesus Christ. For ownership let us substitute humility. For indeed we are mortal and require a wise Heavenly Father’s loving guidance to wend our way through mortality towards Eternal Life successfully. For independence let us substitute gratitude. Let us be grateful for all that we have received. KN

My choice of the three alternatives would be: service - love - contentment. DY

I believe that you are on to something deeply profound and profoundly valuable. False gods destroy any faith. The Lord’s people of all ages have faced the challenge. The ones you are unveiling are more subtle than Baal and inherently more dangerous. I just don’t know what the Three Alternatives are, so I will just wait and see. KC

I believe you have some worthy thoughts about our addictions to the three deceivers. I will tell you that I resist reading your article, not because I think your thoughts are wrong, but because I know they are good!! To me that tells me that when we are so addicted to these thoughts and actions, we want nothing to do with anything that may interfere with our addictions! I am guessing inspiration, inter-sharing, and interdependence. EV

Good work Richard, and a good way to evaluate whether your readers are developing along the paths you want. My choices for alternatives are: control—faith, ownership—consecration and stewardship, independence—charity, as in the pure love of Christ. MC

To me, only two alternatives will replace the three you are discussing. They are understanding agency and stewardship. If we understand that God gave us agency to act, within limits, how we will, but He is in control and governs the results, we can learn to understand the limitations on how much control we truly have. Understanding that God owns and governs everything (except our own will), and we merely function as His temporary stewards over everything in life, leads us to acknowledge our own dependence on Him. Perhaps gratitude for agency and our stewardship could be the third alternative, as an outgrowth of humility. SP

I must say that I could not agree more about the Three Deceivers. I see it in myself, although just like anything it did not happen overnight. The obsession with the

Three Deceivers crept up slowly bit by bit. I just hope that I can be a good example to my children because I see the Three Deceivers coming into their lives at such a young age, especially ownership. I know I have contributed to some of this and hope to change it and am (im)patiently waiting for your Three Alternatives. CH

I am looking forward to the Three Alternatives that you are promising to Control, Ownership, and Independence. I have been exploring these issues for many years and finally have given up on the last one but do not have a clear idea of the alternatives yet. I feel I am willing and open to learn to let God be in control and to turn to him for all things. I've finally also realized that it is too painful for me to try and be independent of everyone and everything. I miss the closeness, the love I feel when I let myself need others. PP

You are now ready to for
The Three Alternatives. Turn this book
over and read from the back cover.

*the Three
Alternatives*
