

Introduction

© 2021 Michael Hendricks

Permission is granted to use, copy, modify, and distribute this work for any purpose with or without fee.

This work is provided as-is without any express or implied warranty. In no event is the author liable for any damages arising from this work.

¹ God loves everyone and wants each of us to find joy and satisfaction. ² To help us towards that goal, God gave us reason, conscience, and the ability to choose. ³ Our responsibility is to follow, sincerely, the dictates of our conscience, guided by reason, while respecting the equal privilege of others to do the same.

⁴ We're accountable to God for our choices. ⁵ Each of us can have a personal relationship with God. ⁶ God communicates with each of us as needed, ⁷ and sends messengers to different times, places, and cultures to guide us. Studying the messages that are intended for us can enlighten our understanding.

⁸ God knows the vastness of human diversity. Just as a skilled optometrist prescribes eyeglasses to compensate for a patient's shortcomings, God guides us to a prescription that's optimized for our spiritual growth. Our prescription may differ from, or coincide with, that of our peers. ⁹ Because of this diversity, a community of believers can strengthen and inspire one another.

¹⁰ Details about God's nature and methods are largely a distraction from the proper focus of our lives: a lifelong migration towards joy through our personal choices.

¹¹ While striving to live the principles described above, I felt guided to prayerfully undertake the actions below. The results are for my own benefit and may not benefit others in the same way.

¹² Create a prioritized list of essential commandments to help me focus on what matters most and to resolve conflicts that may arise between those commandments.

This became the Digest of Priorities.

¹³ Write pairs of essential virtues whose opposing demands I must balance in my own life. This became the Digest of Virtues.

¹⁴ Try different methods of prayer, listening carefully to understand which are most effective at strengthening my relationship with God. Codify those practices and observe them faithfully. This became the Digest of Prayer.

¹⁵ Record short stories that God has used to clarify my understanding of certain principles. This became the Digest of Parables.

¹⁶ Study the teachings of those who are widely considered to be messengers of God. Abridge those messages by selecting the most practical and important teachings for guiding my life. This became the Messages. I refer to them as The Message of Moses, The Message of Jesus, etc.