

COBWEBS IN THE CHRISTIAN SOUL

And How to Zap The Spider
Who Made Them

Gayla Wood



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**Cobwebs in the Christian Soul
And How to Zap The Spider Who Made Them**

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Advance Copy Reviews*
of
Cobwebs In The Christian Soul
And How to Zap The Spider Who Made Them

**All reviews below were submitted with express permission to be reprinted.*

I have known Gayla Wood for more than ten years and in that time I have found her to be a committed follower of Christ who seeks to live out his will in her everyday life. She is contemplative, intuitive and creative, and those qualities are certainly seen in this book. *Cobwebs ...* is an outgrowth of her journey into the likeness of Christ. As is seen in classes and at other gatherings, her heart is for the people of God to grow in their relationship with him. In this book she brings sound biblical principles to life through creative illustrations, mirroring her savior's penchant for parables. Using them she challenges us to look deep inside and be honest with ourselves and with our God. So much of our world is made up of fluff and façade, but she draws us from those surface things to examine our own processes of thinking regarding personal responsibility and guilt. Before we even have a chance to realize it, her humor has drawn us into an uncomfortable place that we might not have gone otherwise. Using many scriptures as her aid, we are brought face to face with the word of God and its transformative power in the life of a Christian. This is a book filled with advice that many Christians need to read and share with others. I am happily recommending it to others and to you.

TIMOTHY A. BUROW
DEAN OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
PRESIDENT-ELECT SUNSET INTERNATIONAL BIBLE INSTITUTE

Gayla Wood offers a straightforward guide for escaping the cobwebs of sin through prayer and submission to the will of God. She calls us to an honest confrontation of our acts, words, and motivations, and if needed, confession to God and those we have wronged. Healing, forgiveness, and restoration are possible through Christ, the Great Physician.

WOODY WOODROW, MDiv, MA, DMin
AUSTIN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

In the *Airport of Life*, Gayla Wood is one of those committed to easing the travel of those waiting for the plane, and also to actively encouraging others to join in the journey. In this short book, she shares very practical advice, based upon Scripture, on key topics for the trip. From self-analysis, measured against Biblical teaching, to confession, forgiveness and moving on, she gives real life advice from her own study and experiences, and observations from her years as a teacher. This book is well worth the read, but be careful; you might find some of the words convicting!

PHIL PENDERGRAFT, ELDER
WOODLAND WEST CHURCH OF CHRIST
ARLINGTON, TX.

Reading *Cobwebs in the Christian Soul* is like settling in for a conversation with a sister who knows what you need to hear because she has swept the corners of her own soul. Gayla's "Action Steps" are presented in an encouraging manner with an air of expectation. She has confidence in her readers' ability to make things right because God has already done the heavy lifting. The questions at the end of each chapter are ideal for personal reflection or group discussion in a class study.

SANDI WOODROW
LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

Cobwebs in the Christian Soul is a quick and easy read, yet it is a read that is deeply edifying and moves the Christian soul to do some spiritual house cleaning. Gayla Wood writes in a self-professed conversational style that weaves relatable illustrations which beautifully bring out the profound truths of the point she is making. *Cobwebs in the Christian Soul* is well worth reading devotionally or using as a small group study guide.

MIKE AND MAYRA BINGHAM
WOODLAND WEST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN ARLINGTON, TX.
MIKE SERVES AS YOUTH MINISTER.
MAYRA SERVES AS HIS RIGHT HAND.

Relatable analogies and spot-on guidance for Christians to take responsibility and move on from their own and other's mistakes and sins. Concrete Scripture-based examples and thought-provoking questions walk one on a journey of becoming closer to God. Great book for an individual or Bible Study group, whether New Christians or seasoned church members.

LINDA CARRIER
ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALIST
OWNER, GENGREEN E-COMMERCE

Gayla Wood will hold your attention as she guides you on a journey of self-examination and (re)discovery of the roles that Forgiveness, Prayer, and the Church play in our daily walk with God. Written in an easy-to-read conversational style prose with a little lighthearted whimsical humor, you'll be caught off guard to suddenly find yourself in a state of deep intellectual introspection. Based on solid biblical principles, Gayla includes many supporting scriptural references interspersed throughout the text. The end of each chapter includes thought-provoking questions that are suitable for both personal consideration as well as facilitating an interactive group study. I strongly recommend this book regardless of where you are in your journey with Christ; the depth of wisdom found herein will comfort, encourage, and inspire you at every stage along the way.

BERT JOHNSON
PROGRAM PLANNING AND SCHEDULING MANAGER

Cobwebs is a beautifully written, engaging self-help book that will be enjoyed by new Christians as well as those who grew up in the faith. Wood's conversational style makes for a quick read, and it will leave the reader with introspection, forced to take a closer look at his/her own motivations, thoughts, and actions, especially in the face of temptations to minimize sin in one's own life. Her biblically sound and well-documented book addresses

very serious topics with just the right amount of humor, and will leave you anxiously anticipating her next book and rereading this one in the meantime.

LARKA L. TETENS, M.ED.; L.P.C.

TETENS COUNSELING CENTER

ARLINGTON, TEXAS

Fantastic piece of work by a highly talented and strong Christian woman! Gayla Wood's *Cobwebs in the Christian Soul* is a must read, and an excellent addition to your personal bible study library. I would highly recommend this book for your personal and spiritual development.

ROBERT H. TAYLOR

COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR USA/RET

NORTHERN LIGHTS CHURCH OF CHRIST

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

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DEDICATION AND THANKS

*This book is dedicated to my mom, Gail Ellis,
who taught me to pray. She was also the very first person
to ever ask me to write a story.*

*Additionally, I want to thank some people
who are very important to me:*

*My husband, Mark Wood, for believing in my dream to
become a writer, even when I sometimes doubted myself*

*My dad, Cotton Ellis, for being a sounding board and
a constant compass, in seas both rough and calm*

My daughter, Sarah, who whispers wisdom beyond her years

*Sarah's husband Bryan and their children Micah, Easley,
Shepherd, and Paige, for being perpetual blessings
to me and to this family*

*Tim Burow, Woody and Sandi Woodrow, Phil Pendergraft, Mike
and Mayra Bingham, Bert Johnson, Larka Tetens,
and Rob Taylor for writing reviews for this book*

*Mary Jo Cochrum, for offering sage insights about feelings,
forgiveness, and forgetting*

And to my two Linda's...

*-Linda Carrier, thank you for writing a review for this book
and for decades of patiently listening to almost
everything I have ever written.*

*-Linda Malone, you were the first person other than
my parents to ask me to read a whole book out loud to you.*

*Thank you for encouraging me, believing in me,
and for seeing past recent roadblocks when I did not.*

*But MOST IMPORTANTLY, I want to thank my God
who has supplied my every need,
every single day of my life!*

~Gayla

This book is intended to be a general approach to daily Christian Living, but some situations are extremely specific, extremely time-sensitive, and extremely personal. A few items on that list are: Marital Infidelity, Abuse, Addiction, Victimization, and Indecency with/Harm to a Child.

Areas of an extreme and personal nature require the assistance and guidance of professionals. **Please seek immediate assistance if you or others you know are either currently being harmed/victimized or are in danger of being harmed/victimized.**

Greetings to My Christian Siblings,

This book is presented in a straightforward and conversational style. Each chapter is scripturally based. Each concept is simple to understand. The problem-solving action steps regarding the Christian issues discussed here are user-friendly. But I caution you that breaking old habits takes dedication and stamina. These action steps are not for the fainthearted, for they ask us to delve past the surface of our daily interactions and get to the heart of how honest we really are with ourselves, with others, and with our God.

From personal experience, I can state that understanding God's will in my life is often far easier than submitting to His will in my life. Like so many life lessons, I've learned the action steps that you will read about in this book the hard way. They did NOT first appear as I see them today. They appeared as anxiety, sleeplessness, bad dreams, dysfunctional relationships, buckets of tears and diminished health.

Amazingly, when I got right with God, the action steps came into focus.

Like I said, I learned these steps the hard way.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

HEBREWS 12:1 (NIV®)

Sin, like Cobwebs, can easily entangle us. And just like when we walk through an actual cobweb and are then simply overcome with the urgency to get that sticky stuff off our bodies, the spiritual equivalent should occur. When we find that *The Spider* has managed to weave a spiritual cobweb in our soul, we should be overcome with the same urgency to be rid of it immediately. *The Spider* watches in eager anticipation of the chance to drag souls back into his darkness.

I pray that as you read this book, you will find insight and tools to use in your spiritual journey. I pray that it will, in some measure, help equip you to help others in their journeys too. May God bless you richly as you seek His Will.

At the onset, I think it wise to share with you the Christian common-ground statements that are “the givens” in this book. They are as follows:

- **There ARE some Absolute Truths in this world: the first is that God exists!**

(You can argue this all day long if you are so inclined, but you'll only be flappin' your gums. God Exists!)

- **A second Absolute Truth is that Jesus Christ died as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world, was raised from the dead three days later, and ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of God Almighty.**
- **A third Absolute Truth is that the Holy Spirit is sent to dwell within Christians. He comforts us, guides us, and interprets our innermost feelings to God Himself.**
- **A fourth Absolute Truth is that once all of our sins are forgiven, it is only a matter of time until we will sin again. And herein lies the crux of this book—sin happens! *The***

Spider wants to trap us, and he spins various and sundry webs to try to do so. Satan's cobwebs are waiting for us all.

Five Initial Spider-Zapping Steps:

1. Immediately go to God in prayer to ask forgiveness.
(1 John 1:9)
2. Ask forgiveness from those whom we may have negatively impacted. (Matthew 5:23-24)
3. Pray for the strength to avoid sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. (1 Corinthians 10:14)
4. Focus on the scriptures that tell us how to think, speak, and act. (Galatians 5:22-23)
5. Pray for the ability to discern and purposefully follow God's Will. (Colossians 1:9-10)

These five steps are spiritually healthy. They are scripturally based. This is how it is supposed to work.

But sometimes *The Spider's* webs entangle us.

The blood of Christ does continually clean us (1 John 1:7), but sometimes we lose our focus.

Sometimes we neglect our prayers.

Sometimes we just get all wrapped up in *The Spider's* web.

When that happens, we may tend to obsess about how we were wronged or how we woefully wronged someone else. It is significant to note that in such times it is apparent that our minds have been focusing on our yesterdays and our tomorrows, instead of simply looking up to Christ who is our RIGHT NOW.

Precious life energy is wasted by engaging in unworthy mindsets.

Instead of exercising our faith, we can get engaged in fighting the tangles of Satan's webs. Instead of feeling free in Christ, we can feel trapped by *The Spider*.

God-loving Christian people can sometimes just get totally stuck in those webs.

The Spider's webs are sticky like that.

A Christian who is spiderweb-stuck may end up resigned to feeling sin-stained, sullied, and quite adrift from Jesus. Sadly, some folks end up feeling that getting back to righteousness is completely beyond them.

FEELINGS are always legitimate, but the perceptions and information behind our feelings can sometimes be based on one of *The Spiders'* LIES! *The Spider* lies quite often. It's his favorite "GO-TO" move, as well as his most reliable cobweb-slinging trick. He can flick a lie at us faster than lightning! Therefore, if we are not watchful, his lies can clog up our thinking, which can then in turn impact our feelings.

The Bible clearly tells us how to get back to righteousness. The Bible tells us exactly what to do. What I am sharing with you is not new; these ideas are already in The Bible.

Yet in many churches today there are people who feel spiritually miserable because they have been attacked by Satan's Spiritual Spiderwebs.

Here's how it happens: Some wrong word or deed occurs and the next thing you know *The Spider* is attempting to set up housekeeping in your soul. And he always brings his darkness with him; things like hopelessness, anger, misery, isolation, rejection, worthlessness, jealousy, revenge, and apathy.

But we are not of the dark. We are Children of Light.

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.”

EPHESIANS 5:8 (NIV*)

Clearly, Satan wants to alienate us from God, and he is using our own minds to do so.

Because of that, this book is needed.

Because of that, this book was written.

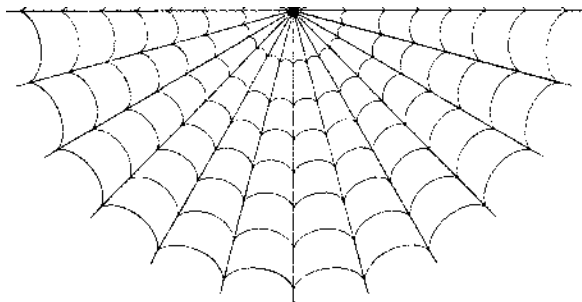
The action steps below indicate what we, as Christians, are supposed to do when we come face to face with our own human errors and find **Cobwebs in the Christian Soul**.

1. Mess Up?
2. ‘Fess Up!
3. Fix It! (Even If You Can’t, God Can!)
4. Move On
5. Live Better=Pray and Study God’s Word
6. Be Actively Engaged in the Church

So there you have it: six simple chapters based on six simple concepts. Let’s get started!

In Him,

Gayla Wood



CHAPTER 1

Your Status Check

MESS UP?

*This chapter is about the Awareness of Messing Up,
also known as experiencing “it”.*

Sometimes you are waiting for **it**, actively looking for **it**, because you know **it** is lurking. You know **it** is coming. And even with all your skills sharpened, somehow **it** still manages to hit you square on the head like an Acme cartoon anvil.

But there are other times when you think all is well. Life is grand. Things are great. And just about that time, **it** slips under the back door as an unseen vapor and starts to materialize. **It** takes a while to materialize before your eyes, but when **it** is fully formed you realize what **it** is; and fear settles in your belly in a hard knot. In this scenario as well, **it** manages to hit you square on the head like an Acme cartoon anvil.

The Awareness of Messing Up and having **it** come after us can be quite scary. Because, as we all know, **it** can take many forms:

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It may be an Accident that Occurred.

It may be a Malicious Intent Revealed.

It may be a Partially True but Mostly False Accusation Endured.

But most commonly, **It** turns out to be that Sudden Guilty Feeling.

Do you remember an event in which one or maybe even both of your parents suddenly bellowed out your whole name? Mine sounded something like this: “Gayla Ray Ellis (*Ellis was my maiden name*), you better get your little hiney-bottom in here quick!”

As an aside, I have never understood why my parents always summoned just my hiney-bottom rather than all of me. Obviously, in order for my hiney-bottom to arrive, the rest of me had to get there too! Right? Or perhaps it was because the hiney-bottom part was really the only part of me that had to be present for the spanking to occur. After all, they knew I was a smart child, so maybe they figured I might go hide my hiney-bottom real good... and with no hiney, there could be no spanking.... and if there was no spanking, they must've feared I'd get away with my heinous childhood crimes against humanity!

Anyway, by the time I could get to wherever “here” was, I was already panicked and wondering what I had done. But this much was always true: by the time me and my *hiney-bottom* arrived, the **It** had already dropped the Acme cartoon anvil on my head.

As a child, I assumed that if one of my parents called me in this fashion, I **MUST HAVE** done something wrong. If their tone and word usage indicated that I was guilty, I **WAS**.

MESS UP?

If the accusation was made, I was inherently guilty because my parents SAID I was.

For some people, that inherently guilty childhood response pattern stays intact for the rest of their lives.

“If someone **said** I did it, I must be guilty.”

The title of this chapter is “**Did I Mess Up?**” and yes, that question is intentional. One of the best spiritual tools you can ever develop is the ability to freeze the moment, disregard whatever potential penalties exist, and honestly answer the question of “**Did I Mess Up?**”

Take a look at these four questions:

1. Are you able to biblically assess your own guilt or innocence in a given situation?
2. Do you thoroughly examine your actions, words, and private motivations in a biblically-based self-assessment process?
3. When the question of whether or not you have Messed Up presents itself, do you always go through a biblically-based self-assessment and examine your own actions, words, and private motivations?
4. Do you just instinctively ALWAYS do what is right?

Let’s see how you scored!

GRADING KEY:

- If you answered YES to all four questions → Congratulations! Welcome to Sainthood! Put this book down! (*And go get a mirror, because I suspect that you will soon be sprouting a Pinocchio nose.*)

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- However, if you answered NO to two or more of these questions → Congratulations! You show honesty and are probably like the rest of us; flawed, but trying. Most of us probably answered “Sometimes” to questions 1 and 2. Like I said, we tend to be flawed but trying.
- However, some folks refuse to self-assess at all costs. This can be for a whole host of reasons ranging anywhere from bull-headed-corn-bread-arrogance to deep-seated-anxiety-laced-issues needing professional help.

Bottom Line: Don't Judge!

We never really know what is going on in the hearts and heads of others.

God Knows.

But We Do Not!!!

At this point I should probably also mention that some folks are all too eager to self-assess, because they hunger for the chance to prove to others that they are *Innocents in a Bad, Bad World* and thus want to completely exonerate themselves of their own guilt in their own eyes and all others' eyes. I have found that these types are often quite gifted at finding inventive word-ways to wiggle out of and avoid personal accountability.

But pish-posh, I digress....

Whatever your score in this little honesty assessment, you have now taken the first step.

You have remembered that guilt and innocence are biblically determinable. You have remembered that God sees our actions, words, and private motivations. And you have remembered that biblical innocence is the goal.

MESS UP?

If you have been accused of “Messing Up,” have examined yourself biblically (*actions, words, and private motivations*), and have found that you come up clean, Praise God.

You are off the hook!

Your task now is to avoid acting cocky and spoiling it.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

PROVERBS 15:1 (NIV*)

- Guard your mouth at this point.
- Guard your actions.
- Guard your private motivations.
- Strive to be a polite, kind, and gracious person regardless of the false accusation.
- Just because you were wrongly accused does NOT give you a license to spew sarcasm.
- Trash talk does NOT bring glory to God.

But what happens when you’ve been accused of “Messing Up,” and after biblically examining your actions, words, and private motivations, you can see that in the grand scheme of things, it is REMOTELY possible that you might be considered by some people to be just a wee tad, *or perhaps better yet, just a skosh, guilty?*

Come on now! Guilt is Guilt!! OWN IT!!!

The Bible points to a two-part answer to this. You need to “Fess Up”:

1. Confess your sin to God and ask for His forgiveness.
2. Confess your sin to the person you offended and ask for her/his forgiveness.

Chapter 1 Questions for Personal Reflection and Analysis:

- A. Did I do something wrong knowingly? Unknowingly?
Accidentally?
- B. Who knows about it?
- C. If I did, how do I feel? (Angry? Guilty? Ashamed? Proud?)
- D. Are my feelings biblically appropriate?
- E. Do others think I am guilty when actually I am innocent?
- F. Please evaluate why and consider options for future encounters.
- G. Do others think I am innocent when I am really guilty?
- H. Please evaluate why and consider options for future encounters.
- I. How do I define *guilt* and *innocence*?
- J. Do I believe in degrees of guilt? Why?
- K. Do I believe in degrees of innocence? Why?
- L. Do I have the correct spirit in this matter?
- M. Do I think God would agree with my assessment of the situation? Why?
- N. What scriptures did you use as you answered these questions?

MESS UP?

Chapter 1 NOTES: