



Living From The Overflow of Christ

BOOK 4

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Living From The Overflow of Christ

Book Four of The Curriculum:

***Living A Transformed Life
In Christ***

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Christ Is Life Ministries

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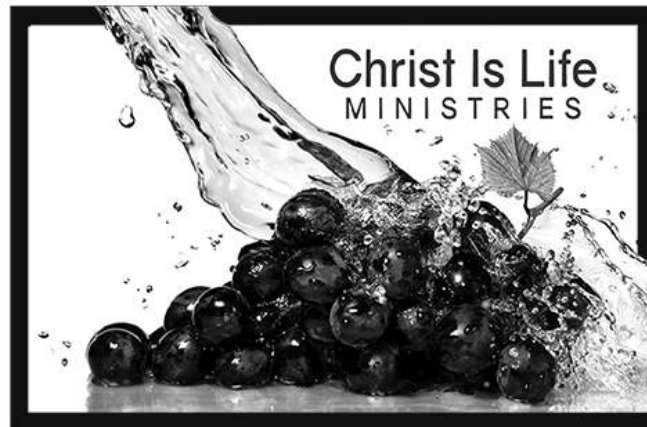
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Living From The Overflow of Christ

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Lesson One

A New You And A New View of Life

DAY ONE

Introduction

Through the first three Books, we have discussed the foundational truth of Christ living His life in us, our true identity in Christ and the transformation of our soul. All of these three studies have primarily focused on what God promises to do IN us as He renews our mind, heals our damaged and lying emotions and moves our wills back to be dependent upon Him. This process results in us personally benefitting as we experience one dimension of the abundant life: we are progressively transformed, and personally partake of God's divine nature as Christ-like attitudes are formed in us.

The key verse for our first three books has been Colossians 1:27:

“...Christ IN you, the hope of glory.”

However, as I have said many times during these studies, God primarily wants to do a work IN us so He can then do His work THROUGH us. In fact, we will find that true abundant living can only be fully experienced when we are transformed to a point where we are willing to give away what God has given to us by loving and serving others. This living for others is the second important dimension of the abundant life. I call this supernatural work through you the “overflow” of what the Holy Spirit has done IN you.

This is what we will be focusing on in this book. Here are two verses to be thinking about as we go through this study.

“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.....(2 Corinthians 5:20)

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.” 2 Corinthians 2:14

In this book, we will expand on our understanding of living from the overflow of Christ in the following areas:

- What an integrated life in Christ look like.
- How the overflow of living from Christ-like attitudes impacts those around us.
- From the overflow, what it looks like to see others through the eyes of Christ.
- What true ministry looks through the supernatural overflow of Christ's life in us.
- What it looks like from the overflow to experience God in deeper and more intimate ways.

Let's begin by looking at the meaning of an integrated life in Christ.

An INTEGRATED Life In Christ

My hope is that you are experiencing God progressively renewing your mind about the meaning of His life and are beginning to see and experience Christ's life permeating every area of your life. This is what I call living an "integrated" life. Let me give you a fuller definition.

An INTEGRATED life is one where Christ's life impacts not only your life personally, but through you He impacts every area of your life including your marriage, your kids, your friends, your workplace, etc.

Too many Christians live "compartmentalized" lives because they either don't know Christ as life or don't know how to apply the Christ-life truths to their lives personally or the other areas of their lives. For you, I trust you are living an integrated life. Here is a foundational verse that refers to an "integrated" life.

"In Him (Christ) we live, and move and have our being..."
Acts 17:28

This verse means that Christ wants to permeate every area of our lives and wants to impact everyone in our lives.

Let's look at the Biblical word "whatever" as another example of an integrated life. The meaning of "whatever" means "in everything." The three verses below show all of our daily activities (working, eating, drinking, words, everything) are all to be brought under submission to Christ and done for God's glory.

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."
1 Corinthians 10:31

"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." *Colossians 3:17*

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." *Colossians 3:23*

Billy Graham once preached the following:

"If Christianity is important at all, it is all-important. If it is anything at all, it is everything. It is either the most vital thing in your life, or it isn't worth bothering with"

Reverend Graham's statement applies whether our daily vocations or tasks encompass being ministers of the gospel, business people, professional athletes, laborers, homemakers, caregivers, students, military or government officials. Christ's dominion applies to any and all roles we may find ourselves in, whether as husbands, wives, parents, bosses, or employees. He is relevant to every component of our lives and we rightfully live as though we live our lives to an audience of One, which in fact we should.

To paraphrase some statements Kenneth Boa writes in his book *Conformed to His Image*:

"Even the most routine tasks of life become ministry when Christ is seen as the unifying center of our lives. When the focus of the hearts is eternal, secular activities become spiritual and the ordinary takes on new dimension. The spiritual life is not limited to personal devotions, spiritual exercises, church activities, and Bible studies. It is nourished by these, but it is lived and expressed in the ordinary and the everyday. It is liberating to see that all things can be done to the glory of God regardless of whether they appear to be elevated or ordinary, spiritual or secular, higher or lower, contemplative or active."

Question: What are some areas of your life where you are still living a compartmentalized Christian life instead of an integrated life?

Engaging God: Ask God to give you the willingness to surrender these compartmentalized areas to Him and to give you revelation as to how He would like to express His Life in and through those areas and every area of your life.

DAY TWO

Moving From Being Self-Focused To Becoming Other's Focused

I trust that as the Lord has been renewing your mind to the truth, your motivation for everything you do is changing. The struggle, as we know, is that our enemies, the flesh, power of sin, Satan and the world are always tempting us to continue focusing our motives and purpose on ourselves and the horizontal aspects of life. Prior to becoming new creations in Christ, the Bible says we were focused on the things of this world:

*"For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but **from the world.**" 1 John 2:16*

Max Lucado in his book *It's Not About Me* writes: *"I believe Satan trains battalions of demons to whisper one question in our ears: 'What are people thinking of you?' Isn't this so true about our culture and about each of us before we were made new creations in Christ? We lived a very me-centered existence. Instead of being focused on God's priorities and His glory, we functioned as if the world revolved around us and that others were there to meet our needs and expectations. Instead of accomplishing objectives that reflected glory back on God, we instead became stealers of God's glory and promoters of self.*

So often our primary priorities and motivations were focused on what the world defines as success. This may have included making as much money as possible, becoming famous or

having status within our sphere of influence, maintaining our physical attractiveness or being athletically superior.

We might have even been driven by negative motivators like the need for acceptance or the fear of failure. Or our purpose may have even casually encompassed sinful things like having as many sexual conquests as possible or feeding some other addictive worldly pleasure or activity.

However, as God begins to renew our minds, He gives us a new center (Christ Himself) and focus that aims to one day hear the “well done” of the Matthew 25 parable:

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”
Matthew 25:23

As our new life in Christ continues to be formed in our soul our purpose, our focus and our motivation will manifest itself in many new ways:

- We will focus more on other’s needs rather than on our own.
- We will become more focused on pleasing God rather than man.
- We will find our desire to serve others greater than our desire to be served by them.

As we mature, we begin to see transformed lives that are integrated in the fullest biblical sense as God restores us to His original creations. It is from this new foundation and view of life that we and others begin to truly experience the overflow of His life through us!

We must always remember that the empowering and equipping for serving God and others can only come from moment by moment dependence on His life. Recall what 2 Peter 1:4 says about your newly reborn human spirit.

*“You have become **partakers of the divine nature**”*

As He progressively brings your soul in line with what is already true in your human spirit, and as He forms new Christ-like attitudes in your soul, there will be an overflow that will be used of the Lord to:

- Be a witness to others.
- To draw others to Christ for salvation or for Christ as Life.

We will explore the application of the overflow of Christ-like attitudes in the next section.

How The Overflow of Christ-Like Attitudes Impacts Others Around You

On the following page are some practical examples of the overflow of living from Christ-like attitudes.

1. PERSONAL WITNESS TO OTHERS

Christ-Like PEACE:

I believe one of the greatest Christ-like attitudes we can experience is Christ's peace. Living from Christ's peace can be very attractive to others. Especially in stressful circumstances.

Example: Let's assume you received a very serious health diagnosis. If you are living with a Christ-like attitude of peace, then those around you can see and experience Christ's peace through you.

Christ-Like CONFIDENCE

As you experience more of the Holy Spirit's transformative work in you, your Christ-confidence will grow. Remember that Christ-confidence is a confidence that comes from believing God is who He says He is and that He will do what He promises to do. As it grows, people will be drawn to Christ through His confidence flowing through you.

Example: What if someone comes to you doubting God's ability to set them free from anxiety. Let's assume you have experienced freedom from your own anxiety. As you encourage them through your testimony, it will be from an attitude of Christ-confidence which encourages them to keep walking by faith in order to be set free themselves. What might be some other ways Christ-confidence might positively impact others around you?

Christ-Like FORGIVENESS:

In many ways, the overflow of a Christ-like attitude of forgiveness can impact those around you because you are not taking ownership of someone else's offenses towards you.

Example: Let's assume you are standing with some friends and one of them makes some ugly or rejecting remark. If you have an attitude of forgiveness, then you won't take ownership of their offense and you won't retaliate. How do you think that might minister to those who are watching your response to your friend's rejection?

2. IN MARRIAGE

Christ-like UNCONDITIONAL LOVE:

In marriage, a Christ-like attitude of unconditional love means that you will love him/her unconditionally regardless of how they treat you.

Example: Assume your spouse is angry because you are not meeting his/her expectations about some area of your marriage. If you respond with unconditional love instead of anger, how might that be helpful in defusing the situation?

DAY THREE

Christ-like ACCEPTANCE:

You can accept your spouse unconditionally no matter how much he/she rejects you because you are living from Christ's acceptance. Remember that living from Christ's acceptance means that you no longer have to take ownership of your spouse's rejection with the result that you can accept them rather than reject them back.

Example: Your spouse makes some rejecting remark towards you. What might be the positive impact on the other spouse if you are exhibiting an attitude of acceptance and not rejecting back?

Christ-Like SELFLESSNESS:

The impact of this Christ-like attitude towards your spouse is enormous and the easiest to see in you if you are living from it. The overflow will be that you will see your spouse and his/her needs and desires as greater than your own.

Example: If from your Christ-like attitude of selflessness, you find yourself doing more and more selfless acts of love and kindness towards your spouse, how do you think that overflow will positively impact your marriage?

3. PARENTING

Christ-Like PATIENCE:

If you have been a parent very long, I don't need to tell you how essential this attitude is in raising your children. Living from Christ's patience is essential in that it will reduce your anger towards your children and gives you a greater ability to discern how to handle specific situations that arise with your children. In what positive ways do you think living from Christ's patience might impact your children?

Christ-Like VALUE/WORTH

Living from a Christ-like attitude of value/worth, allows you to minister to your children in such a way that they will know that they are valued by you. What might be some other benefits to your kids if they see that you are living from Christ's value or worth?

4. AT YOUR JOB

Christ-Like SECURITY:

Living from a Christ-like attitude of security means that you no longer have to find security in your job.

Example: You walk in one day and you are being laid off from your job. Instead of panicking you are living from Christ's security knowing that He will provide. How do you think Christ's security exhibited by Christ's peace through you might minister to your co-workers?

Christ-Like REST:

Living from a Christ-like rest means you do not have to take ownership of the stress of your job. You will not allow any thing or any one at your job to rob you of your rest in Christ.

Example: Let's assume you have some critical deadlines that must be met. Rather than taking ownership of the stress that goes with that, you are living from Christ's rest. How might that minister to your co-workers who might be stressing out over those same deadlines?

Christ-Like Love:

You can unconditionally love co-workers, employees, and bosses regardless of how they treat you. Rather than harboring any anger, frustration, or resentment toward anyone on your job, you will allow Christ to love them through you.

Example: We know there will always be at least one frustrating co-worker, boss, or employee. Rather than rejecting or retaliating, you can love them unconditionally. How might your continual unconditional love towards those in your workplace eventually impact those around you?

5. CIRCUMSTANCES

Christ-Like Security:

Means that you know that God has everything under control. Even when circumstances cause you to feel insecure, you can live from Christ's security.

Example: Let's assume that you lose your home in a fire and you don't have adequate insurance. If you approach this with an attitude of Christ-like security, then the overflow will be a Christ-life confidence that God does indeed have everything under control and will meet your needs. How might that positively impact your spouse or children if they see Christ's security and confidence in you?

Christ-Like Rest:

Means that you can rest regardless of what adversity you may meet. When circumstances cause you to feel anxious or worried, you can choose to live from Christ's rest. How do you think the overflow of your rest in the midst of those adversities might minister to those around you?

Summary

Ultimately a Christ-centered life is a life not lived for ourselves but for others. Jesus, while on this earth, was never about Himself. He was always about others. That is why so many were drawn to Him. In the same way, as you allow Christ-like attitudes to overflow through you, many will see and hopefully be drawn to Christ for salvation and for Life. How wonderful is that?

DAY FOUR

Seeing Others Through The Eyes of Jesus – Part One

Introduction

I believe one of the key Christ-like attitudes that results from our spiritual transformation is "selflessness." This is very personal to me because of my past self-absorption and "me-centered" life which would have never changed had it not been for the Spirit moving my focus from me to others. The more I become free from me, the more I can focus on others. I believe it is the greatest freedom we can experience because we are free from self-focus and are free to see others through the eyes of Christ. Because selflessness is so crucial to our spiritual journey and because it is a

major part of the overflow of Christ through us, I want to spend the rest of this lesson and the next one talking about what it means to see others through the eyes of Christ.

I recently read a book by Mike Mason called *Practicing The Presence of People* (I highly recommend this book) which said that we look at people in one of three ways.

- We look past them.
- We look at them but don't really see beyond the externals.
- We see them through the eyes of Jesus and see their hearts.

The question I ask myself as I read this book is, "How was I looking at those I minister to? Was I just looking at them or actually seeing them with the eyes of Jesus?" How about you? How do you see people? I want to begin by looking at one of our major tendencies when it comes to relating to people.

We Tend To Put People In BOXES

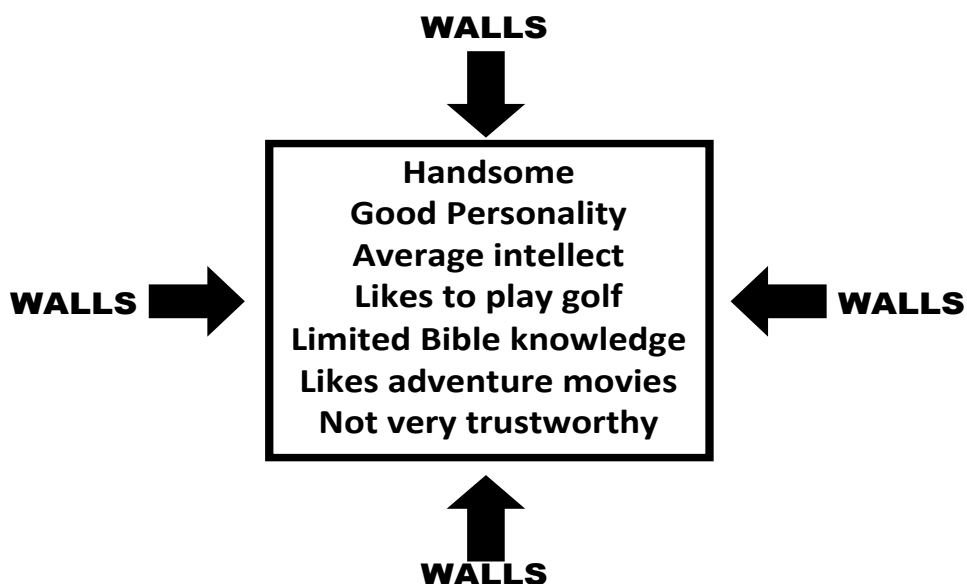
One of the things I have discovered about myself and others is that we tend to put people in "boxes." These boxes are made up of characteristics that we observe about a person. Here is an illustration of some of the characteristics we might put in a box.



Exercise: Think about your spouse, a friend, or a co-worker of yours. When you think about that person, what characteristics would you add to the box?

Based on these characteristics, we start coming to conclusions about people. These conclusions form the walls of the box. Let me illustrate on the following page.

The Walls Are Our CONCLUSIONS



In this illustration, I took each of the characteristics of the previous box and inserted my conclusions. As we construct the walls of the box, we develop patterns of relating to that person based on the conclusions we have come to about them.

Exercise: Think of some people that you know well? What are some of the conclusions you have to come to about them?

What Is The Downside Of Drawing Conclusions About A Person?

1. What if your conclusions about a person are WRONG?

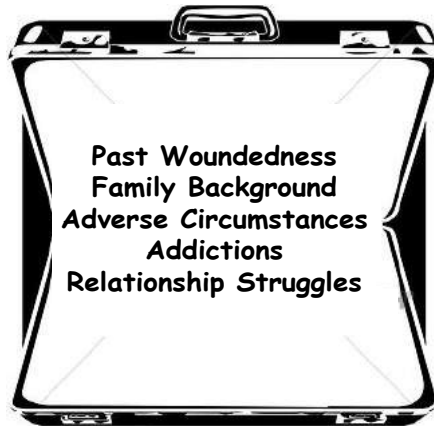
If you have come to the wrong conclusions or you are not reading a person properly, then you will be relating to them unrealistically. As you build the relationship, your wrong conclusions could eventually create misunderstandings, conflict and possibly hinder the depth that you can go in your relationship. Have you ever experienced the negative effects of coming to the wrong conclusions about a person?

2. What if you don't know or don't understand how a person's PAST BAGGAGE is negatively influencing their life?

- a. Past woundedness – caused by rejection, abuse, or traumatic events can seriously impact a person's ability to trust or receive love and acceptance.
- b. Family background – can negatively impact how a person relates to others if they came from a highly dysfunctional family.
- c. Adverse circumstances – such as divorce, abandonment, health struggles, etc. can create hypersensitivities in relating to others.
- d. Addictions – such as pornography, alcohol, or drugs can negatively impact relating to others through such things as anger, verbal and physical abuse, or withdrawal.

- e. Relationship struggles - current or past struggles can impact a person's ability to trust or forgive.

Do You Know A Person's Past Baggage?



We are all carrying baggage of one kind or another. This past baggage unfortunately impacts our hearts, our present circumstances and our relationships. Therefore, it is important to understand that some of your conclusions may not be correct about a person if you don't understand their past woundedness, family background, etc.

Exercise: Think about one relationship that might fit into one of these “past baggage” categories? In what ways has their past baggage negatively impacted your relationship with them?

Evaluating Versus Judging

There is an upside and a downside to the boxes we put people in. The upside to building boxes is what I call **evaluation** while the downside to building boxes results in our **judging** people. Let me explore this a little further.

1. Evaluating

Let me start by defining what I mean by evaluating someone.

***EVALUATING someone means coming to conclusions about
a person WITHOUT judging them.***

Evaluating someone can serve a positive and even a spiritually useful purpose. For example, knowing a person's personality, their Bible knowledge or their likes and dislikes can give you a framework to befriend them, understand them minister to them, and to see them through the eyes of Jesus. Think about this statement for a moment.

“Evaluating a person should lead to valuing them.”

2. Judging

I define judging as:

***Coming to negative conclusions about people which leads to
JUDGING, CRITICIZING, and/or CONDEMNING them.***

Unfortunately, we are all guilty of judging others to one degree or another. What might be some of the reasons why we tend to judge other people? Here are a few reasons I have discovered:

- To elevate or think more highly of ourselves (i.e., pride);
- To feel more secure about ourselves;
- To diminish our own inadequacies and/or
- To feel like we are in control.

Write down any other reasons why you may be tempted to judge others?

The main problem with judging is that it is not only sinful but it results in fleshly responses to a person such as being critical, withdrawing from that person, or not forgiving him/her. In addition, just as evaluating others leads to valuing them, judging them devalues them and robs you of ever seeing them through the eyes of Jesus. By your failure to see another through the eyes of Christ, you won't be able to:

1. See how and where the Holy Spirit is working in a person's life.
2. See the spiritual transformation that may be taking place in someone.
3. See what the Holy Spirit wants to do through you to minister to him/her.

Crossing The Line From Evaluating To Judging

Another temptation we can struggle with is with is when we move from evaluating others to judging them. For example, as I begin to get to know someone I am just evaluating him/her. However, he/she can do or say something that might tempt me to cross the line from evaluating to judging. This is why walking in a moment by moment dependence on the Spirit is crucial because only the Holy Spirit knows where the "line" between evaluating and judging is. He will warn us when we are approaching the line or have crossed it, but only if we are listening to Him. I have illustrated this idea below.

<p>We Have To Be Careful</p> <p>EVALUATING (Valuing)</p>	<p>H O L Y S P I R I T</p>	<p>NOT To Cross The Line</p> <p>JUDGING = SIN (Devaluing)</p>
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DAY FIVE

Judging Someone Can Result In SOULICAL Cataracts

For those of you who are too young to be worrying about cataracts, they are a medical condition in which the natural lens of one or both eyes becomes progressively clouded resulting in blurred vision.

As with physical cataracts, “soulical” cataracts can begin to form as we continue judging someone. This will create a blurred or distorted view of someone because of the judgements we have made about him/her. This is a problem because:

***Looking at others through your SOULICAL cataracts PREVENTS you
from EVER seeing people through the eyes of Christ.***

Looking at someone through soulical cataracts prevents you from:

1. Seeing how and where the Holy Spirit is working in a person’s life.
2. Seeing the spiritual transformation that may be taking place in someone.
3. Seeing what the Holy Spirit wants to do through you to minister to him/her.

Just like condensation building up on your windshield obscures your vision, soulical cataracts prevent you from seeing people through the eyes of Christ.

What It Mean To See Others With The Eyes Of Jesus

1. The Meaning Of The Biblical Word “SEE”

*“And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. **Seeing** their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.” Matthew 9:2*

Here are some of the various meanings of the word “see” in the Bible:

1. to discover.
2. to understand.
3. to pay attention to.
4. to examine.
5. to become acquainted with.
6. to discern or perceive.
7. to focus on.

Read through the list of the definitions of “to see” again and make it more personal by adding the word “people.” (Take your time and think about each definition.) I don't know about you but when I add the word people, “seeing” takes on a much deeper meaning.

How could it change how you see people in general if you could apply these definitions to your relationships?

Engaging God: Begin to apply these definitions to all your relationships.

2. It Is A SUPERNATURAL Seeing

Even though “seeing” has a human connotation, the kind of “seeing” we are talking about is a supernatural, spiritual seeing. To better understand what I mean, let’s look at Job 42:5. Job says this:

*“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But **now my eye sees You.**”*

Leading up to this verse, Job has just gone through a physical and emotional hell in Chapters 1-37. However, I believe the worst part of his ordeal was hearing God tell him who He was versus who Job was not. It took three chapters (38-41) of God’s talking directly to Job for him to “see” what the Lord was trying to tell him. In the first part of this verse, “hearing” meant he had an intellectual understanding of what the Lord was saying but now he had eyes to “see” which meant that Job understood what the Lord was trying to tell him. It was a supernatural seeing/understanding.

As it applies to our study, I define supernaturally sight as this.

***SPIRITUAL sight is produced SUPERNATURALLY by the Holy Spirit so that
you will be able see others through the eyes of Jesus.***

Supernatural sight becomes an experiential reality as we are being transformed. It is nothing we can produce but it is something the Holy Spirit produces in us as we walk in Christ.

How do you think it might change how you “see” people if you were supernaturally examining, focusing on, understanding and/or discerning them?

Engaging God: Begin asking the Lord to give you “spiritual” eyes to see others.

I believe the best way to understand spiritual sight is to look at what Jesus saw in the people He came in contact with.

What Did Jesus See When He Looked At People?

We see the answer in 1 Samuel 16:7;

*“The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but **the Lord looks at the heart.**”*

This is what God instructed Samuel when He chose the young David as His next king. This applies to us because:

***God ALWAYS looks past the externals of a
person and looks at their HEART.***

When Jesus looked past people’s exteriors and saw their hearts, what were some of the things He saw?

- a. People’s needs.
- b. People’s woundedness.
- c. People’s pain.
- d. People’s fears.

Since Christ is in us and we have His discernment, don’t we have the ability to see other’s hearts like He does? Let’s confirm this thought by looking at 1 Corinthians 2:14b-16:

*“.....for **only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.** ¹⁵ Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others. ¹⁶ For, “Who can know the LORD’s thoughts? Who knows enough to teach him?” **But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.**”*

Remember from the identity study that as part of your true identity you have the mind of Christ. This means that you, in Christ, have the same discernment available to you that Jesus has. The struggle for us is that we are tempted to focus on the externals of a person (i.e. looks, personality, IQ, etc.) rather than see their heart.

Let me give you a personal example. There is a gay man who walks for exercise in my neighborhood. We sometimes walk at the same time and cross paths. Before I began to

understand the truths that I am sharing with you, I would walk past him and focus on the fact that he was gay. This led me to judgment and self-righteousness rather than love. It was very subtle but true nevertheless. The Lord asked me to begin looking at this man's heart through His eyes. As I began seeking the Spirit to give me eyes to see his heart, I began to see a man who needed love and grace, not judgment. By my moving from focusing on his outer man to his inner man, I became free to love and have compassion for him.

Mike Mason says this in his book about the heart, "Practicing the presence of people requires listening to the heart. It is from the heart that we relate to people. The heart, not the mind is the binding agent."

Engaging God: Think about a friend or a relative that you have problems relating to. Begin asking the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to look past the externals of their flesh, their irritating traits, etc. and begin seeing them through the eyes of Christ.

What Do We Do With What We Can See?

Why would God give us eyes to see others' needs, pain, self-protection and fears? Certainly not to judge them. God gives us eyes to see the hearts of others in order to **minister** to them.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind." Luke 4:18

Jesus proclaimed in this verse that this was His calling. Think about it. Now that Jesus resides in you does He and can He do these things through you. I firmly believe that as I depend on Him He will heal those that are wounded, give freedom to the captives, and give "spiritual" sight to those who are blinded by false beliefs, unbelief, or there lack of understanding the truth.

Meditate: on this previous paragraph and begin seeking the Lord to accomplish these things through you.

As you grow in Christ and the Spirit sharpens your spiritual eyesight to see people's needs, pain, woundedness, etc., you will discover God's purpose is for you to learn how to minister to people's hearts by speaking His truth to them, encouraging them, and walking with them. Isn't this what Jesus did?

Part of the overflow of our growth in Christ is we will become be less concerned about ourselves and more concerned about others. That is why spiritual growth and a growing spiritual eyesight go hand in hand. Let me end section with the following truth.

God doesn't just want to make us aware of people's needs, pain, etc., He wants to WORK through us to ENCOURAGE, to HEAL, and to TRANSFORM them.

Engaging God: If you struggle with this truth, begin asking the Lord to persuade you of it and ask Him to minister to those around you.

Lesson Two

Seeing Others Through The Eyes of Jesus – Part Two

DAY ONE

The Ultimate Objective Of Seeing Others Through The Eyes of Christ

I believe the ultimate objective of seeing others through the eyes of Christ is summed up in the second of the two greatest commandments.

*“And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. **And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40*

Ultimately, seeing others through the eyes of Christ means

LOVING them with the love of Christ

What does this really mean to love others with the love of Jesus. Let’s begin by looking into the four kinds of love we can have towards others.

To answer these questions let’s look at the three Biblical words for love.

DAY TWO

Three Biblical Words For LOVE

There are many words and meanings for the word “love” in the Bible. Let’s look at three of them. The first word is a Hebrew word for love. The second two are Greek New Testament words for love.

1. **AHAB** — is Hebrew word for love that means love of family.
2. **PHILIA** — is a Greek word for the most general type of love in Scripture, encompassing the human love one has for fellow humans, and the care, respect, and compassion for people in need.

To better understand “philia” love, look at Matthew 10:37.

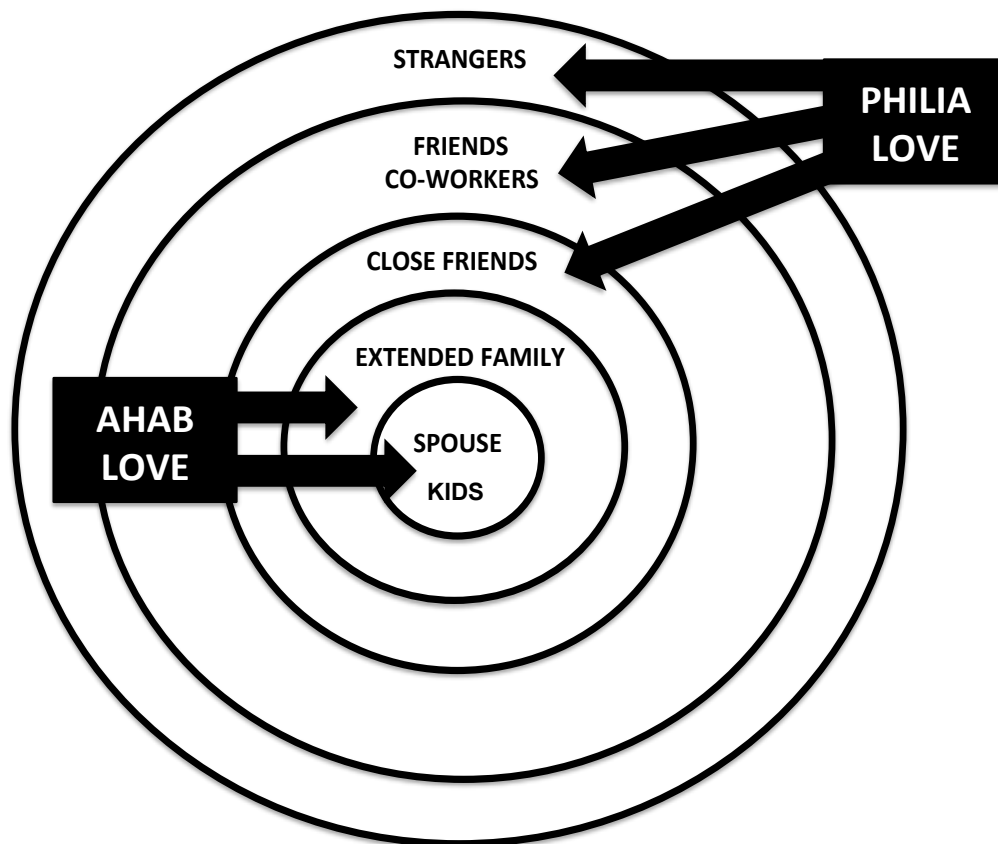
“He who [philia] loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who [philia] loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”

Let's apply these two different forms of love to the different levels of our relationships.

We Experience Different Levels of Relationships.

We all have different levels of relationships. Look at the diagram below that illustrates this. In the inner circle, if you are married, your most personal relationship is your spouse. As you move out from that inner circle, you see that relationships become less personal.

Let's apply the three forms of love we discussed previously to the diagram. "Ahab" love is love for your spouse and family. "Philia" love is a human love that we have for every other relationship.



The key truth that we need to understand about these two forms of love is this:

Ahab and philia love are all SUBJECTIVE and CONDITIONAL.

In other words, these forms of love will vary according to the depth of your relationships and, being human, you will impose conditions on others for you to love them. Look at your relationships in light of these two forms of love. You will see that you express these forms of love in differing degrees based on the depth of each of those relationships. In others words, you have different levels of trust, intimacy, and bonding in relating to others.

For example, you will experience a deeper love for your children than you will for your friends. We even see this with Jesus in His relationships with His disciples. Even though there were twelve disciples, Jesus loved them differently with *philia* love. Jesus had a closer relationship with Peter, James, and John, with John possibly being Jesus's closest friend as we see in John 13:23:

*"There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, **whom Jesus loved.**" John 13:23*

One More Kind of Love: AGAPE Love

***And a second is like it: You shall [agape] love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."** Matthew 22:39-40*

When it comes to the second commandment, the "love" Matthew is talking about is *agape* love. This is the fourth type of love. It is the highest of the four types of love in the Bible.

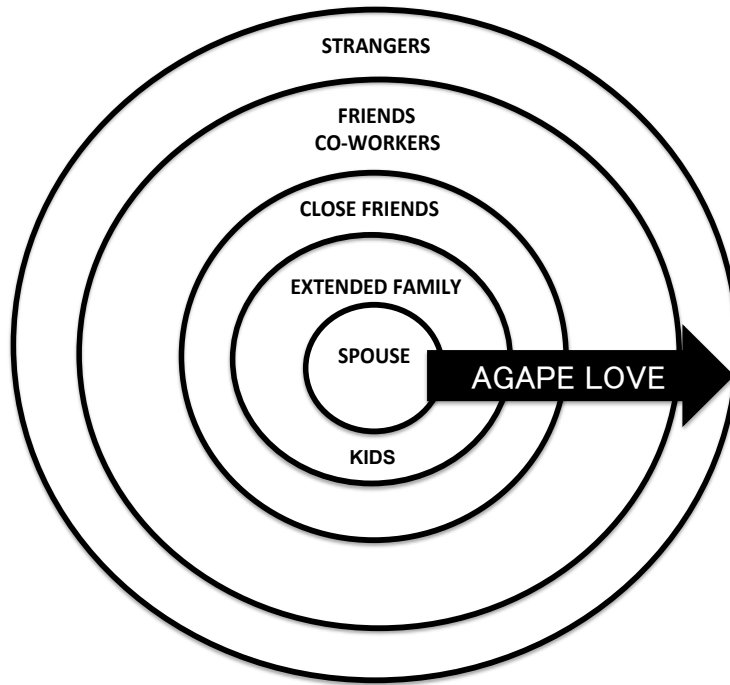
Agape love is the DIVINE love that ONLY comes from God which is His immeasurable, incomparable love for mankind.

Agape love is PERFECT, UNCONDITIONAL, SACRIFICIAL, and SELFLESS.

While we love people differently depending on whether we are exercising *ahab* or *philia* love, it is different with *agape* love.

Loving others with AGAPE love means that REGARDLESS of depth of the relationship you love everyone EQUALLY.

This is illustrated on the following page.



Think about it. When it came to *agape* love did Jesus love the disciples or the little children more than the self-righteous Pharisees? The answer is “no” because *agape* love is perfect, unconditional, and does not play favorites. When it came to *agape* love, Jesus loved the Pharisees, the little children, and His disciples equally.

Do We Have Any Excuses Not To (Agape) Love?

I don't know about you but when it comes to loving others with *agape* love, my flesh comes up with many excuses not to love, especially for those unlovable people in our lives. See if any of the following people fit into your “unlovable” people category;

- Those who have, in the past wounded you or are engaged in wounding you in the present.
- Those who continue to reject or malign you.
- Those who have no interest whatsoever in your life.
- An estranged family member.
- An ex-spouse.
- Those who are always needy and constantly asking you for something.

Let me share with you about one of my relatives who is one of those unlovable people. Jim (not his real name) has held on to every past sin I have ever committed against him (50+ years' worth.) He didn't care for me and made a point of trying to make me feel rejected and worthless at every opportunity. I could go on but you get the picture. Jim was unlovable as far as I was concerned. The question is: Do I have an excuse for not (*agape*) loving this person?

My flesh was screaming “Yes” I have the right not to love Jim. I just wanted to get him out of my life. Then the Lord came along one day and said “What about Jim?” And I said a little sarcastically, “What about him?” The Lord said, “I want you to start (*agape*) loving him.” I said “Why? He is not worthy of my love.” The Lord responded, “Really? Since when do you get to pick and choose whom you love? Aren't you glad I don't do that?”

I knew the Lord had me there so let me share with you how the Spirit convinced me of my need to (agape) love Jim and how He changed my heart. (Note: I didn't hear an audible voice from God. These were thoughts He inserted into my mind.)

How The Spirit Changed My Heart Towards Jim

There was a process the Lord took me through to change my heart towards Jim. This may not be the same process for you but there are some key truths that I believe apply to all of us in loving the unlovable.

Initially, the Spirit reminded me that I contain the fullness of Christ which means I contain all of His *agape* love.

We see this in four passages:

*“...for **God is [agape] love.**” 1 John 4:8*

*“For **in Christ all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form and you have been given fullness in Christ....**”
Colossians 2:9, 10a*

*“and hope does not disappoint, because **the [agape] love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**” Romans 5:5*

*“And **my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**” Philippians 4:19*

First, the Lord revealed to me that since He is love and we contain the fullness of His love in Christ then Christ's agape love has been poured into our hearts. In addition, He will supply all of the agape love we need when it comes to loving others.

Second, the Spirit reminded me that since God loves our unlovable people with agape love, then what right do I have not to love them with that same love.

Third, the Spirit reminded me, Matthew 22:39 is NOT the second great “suggestion.” It is a command. In other words, I had no alternative but to love him. He also reminded me of Luke 6:27;

*“But I say to you who hear, **[agape] love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.**”*

Enemies might seem like a strong word so just insert “unlovable people” for the word “enemies.”

Fourthly, since I was unwilling to love this person, I asked the Lord to give me the willingness to love him.

[**Note:** This may be a real sticking point because your fleshly will could say “no.” If so, keep asking the Spirit to give you the willingness to love this person until you find yourself becoming willing.]

Therefore, over the next six months, I prayed through every one of Jim's phone calls and emails that the Lord would love him through me and that the Lord would change his heart towards me and my heart towards him. The change began when I got an email from Jim thanking me for something I helped him with. Since I have never heard a "thank you" from him, this was the beginning of changed hearts on his part and mine.

At this writing, it has been a year since that email and God has supernaturally transformed our relationship. It truly is a "Red Sea" event because of the depth of hatred Jim had for me for decades and my reciprocal dislike of him. What did I learn from this?

God's love CAN move you to love the MOST unlovable people in your life.

It is supernatural. It is a miracle. Most importantly, it is possible.

Engaging God: Applying this example to your life, think of an unlovable person in your life and begin seeking the Spirit to give you the willingness to love that person. As you do, the Lord will, over time, change your heart towards that person.

DAY THREE

What Are The Major Obstacles To Loving Others?

Obstacle #1 – Self-Life

The main obstacle to loving others is our SELF-LIFE.

We have talked about "self-life" being our flesh, our selfishness, and our lack of being others-focused. In other words, self-life says that the world revolves around me and it is up to me to get my needs met, to be loved and to be thought well of.

Obstacle #2 – Self-Protection

There is another reason why living from our self-life prevents us from loving others and that is self-protection. One of the more profound things Mason says in his book is that loving others and self-protection are mutually exclusive. When I read this, I wasn't sure I agreed with him but the more I sought the Spirit on this issue, the more He convinced me that Mason was right.

Before I go any further let me explain what I mean by self-protection.

SELF-PROTECTION means constructing walls in the soul to try to PREVENT others from HURTING or REJECTING us (again).

No one escapes being a “self-protector” because it is one of the results of the fall of Adam. We were all born self-protectors since we were all born in Adam. It was part of Adam’s DNA that we inherited. Much like Adam and Eve put on fig leaves after the Fall to try to hide their shame, we build walls of self-protection to keep others from getting too close. Why do we protect ourselves?

1. What Is Behind Self-Protection?

I believe the key driver in self-protection is **fear**. Fear and self-protection are like two sides of the same coin. Let’s look at some examples of fear to better understand this.

- Fear of rejection.
- Fear of being hurt (again).
- Fear of failure.
- Fear of being exposed or found out.
- Fear of losing control.

When you look at this list do any of these fears apply to you? What other fears would you add to this list?

If you have experienced any of these fears, would you agree that you tend to protect yourself so that you won’t be rejected, hurt, be exposed (again), or lose control? As a strategy to avoid being hurt, we think we have to build walls of protection. Our fears are the bricks of the walls we are building. The very walls we think will protect us, in fact, imprison us.

These walls IMPRISON us because they PREVENT us from loving others.

Let me share with you a personal story to bear this out. I remember when I was on a retreat with some pastors. I was sitting there one night listening to a lecture when this thought came to my mind, “What if they find out who I really am?” This thought was quickly followed by a second thought, “I will be exposed.” The final thought was “If they find out who I really am, they will reject me.”

The fears of exposure and rejection rose up and rapidly consumed me. My walls of self-protection went up immediately and my plan was to do whatever it took the rest of the retreat not to be exposed. Do you think in the middle of my self-absorbed thoughts that I cared for anyone other than me? I had no capability of loving others because I was too busy figuring out how to protect myself.

Fear blocks responsiveness to others. David Benner, in his book, *Surrender To Love*, said it this way: “Fear interferes with the impulse to love. Energy invested in maintaining safety and comfort always depletes energy available for love of others.”

2. Self-Protection Can Be Conscious or Unconscious.

For most of us, self-protection is so ingrained that we do it subconsciously. Much like breathing, we are not even consciously aware we are doing it. But, there is also a conscious self-protection where we are very aware of what we are doing to defend ourselves against people or circumstances.

3. Ways That We Self-Protect.

a. Avoidance.

We try to avoid people or circumstances that might penetrate our self-protecting walls. If we can't avoid people like our spouses or our co-workers, we try to avoid conversations or situations with them where we might be hurt or exposed.

For example, I knew a married couple who avoided talking about their first baby that was lost at childbirth. Instead of dealing with the pain of the loss, it became the elephant in the room that was never dealt with and it eventually destroyed their marriage.

Do you tend to avoid being hurt, rejected, exposed, etc.? If so, what do you do to try and avoid it?

b. Withdrawal

Following on the heels of avoidance is withdrawal. We withdraw to insure that no one can get close enough to hurt us. We can emotionally withdraw by shutting down our emotions. This is much like breakers in an electrical breaker box that we turn off so that we won't feel anything.

We can also physically withdraw. I met with a husband who told me that every time he perceived there was about to be an argument with his wife, he left the room to avoid being hurt and rejected.

Let me take you back to the retreat I talked about earlier. As these thoughts of exposure and rejection started coming, my next thought was, "I have to get out of here before they find out." I thought my only option was to escape or withdraw from the situation in order to protect myself.

Do you struggle with wanting to withdraw emotionally or physically in order to protect yourself?

c. Being Critical and Judgmental.

You have heard the expression that the best defense is a good offense. One of my favorite offensive (and it was offensive) attitudes was to be critical and judgmental of others. I would find ways in my mind to be critical of others in order to build myself up or to assure myself that I was okay. If I could convince myself that someone was "less than" me, then I could deceive myself into believing this person was not a threat.

My being critical of others was also a way I used to drive that person away before they could hurt or reject me. It was a form of “doing it unto others before they could do it unto me.”

Do you have a tendency to be critical or judgmental as a defense mechanism to protect yourself?

d. Manipulation.

We all are guilty of some form of manipulation. One of the reasons we manipulate is to insure that no one gets close enough to wound or expose us. Manipulation can be like a chess game in that we move the pieces (i.e., people) on the chessboard to specific places to avoid being exposed. We can also manipulate by silence, guilt, or flattery.

In what ways do you find yourself manipulating others to protect yourself?

e. Being In Control.

Another leftover from our Adamic DNA is our desire to be in control. Appealing to that desire to be in control was part of Satan’s ploy with Adam and Eve when he said that they could “be like God” (Genesis 3:4). Being in control and being like God go hand in hand because every time we desire to be in control we are asking God to step aside so we can take over. When it comes to self-protection, we believe that if we can control ourselves, others, and our circumstances, then we will avoid being hurt, rejected, etc.

Control falls into primarily three categories:

1. Controlling others.

We believe that if we can control those around us then they will not be able to hurt, reject us, or expose us. One of the ways we do this is by having “safe” conversations. Safe conversations can include small talk about the weather, sports, or hobbies that deflect those you are talking with from saying something personal that might hurt or expose you.

We also try to control others by keeping them at arm’s length. One of my favorite ways of doing this was by being a people-pleaser. If I could successfully please people, then they would be more likely to accept me and less likely to reject me.

In what ways do you try and control others?

2. Controlling our circumstances/situations.

One of the ways I tried to control the circumstances was to avoid small group Bible studies. Those could be very dangerous because I knew at some point I would be called upon to share how some Biblical truth or book I was reading applied to me. The same would apply to both men’s retreats or couples’ retreats. You couldn’t hide out at events like this for long because sooner or later you would be exposed.

In what ways do you try and control your negative circumstances or situations?

3. Self-control.

We believe this method of controlling is the most effective because trying to control others and circumstances is much more difficult and unpredictable. To keep our thoughts, words, and emotions in check is crucial to staying in control and not letting anyone get near your heart. I see two types of self-controllers: overt and covert.

Overt self-controllers are easy to spot. They really have their guard up and are carefully choosing their words to protect themselves. Perfectionists are an example of overt self-controllers because will try to do everything right to avoid being rejected or seen as inadequate.

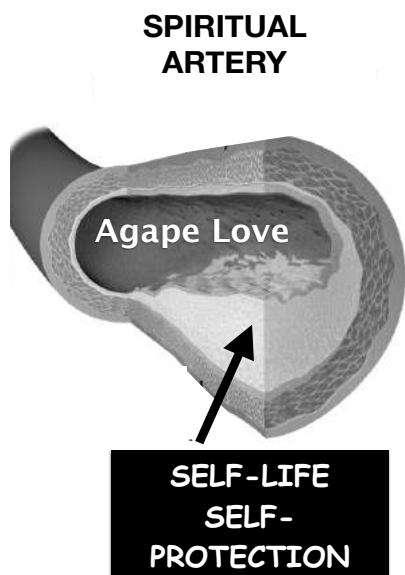
Covert self-controllers are harder to spot because so often they have mastered the art of self-control. They have developed their masks so convincingly that you believe the mask is who they really are. In reality, though, they are using their mask to stay in control. I have seen covert self-controllers come across as sensitive and caring but it is all designed to deflect you away from seeing what is really going on in their heart.

In what ways do you try and control yourself

(Note: You may be saying that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit according to Galatians 5:23. However, since self cannot be in control of self, I distinguish the two by calling the fruit in Galatians, “Christ-control.”)

DAY FOUR

The Plaque On Your “Spiritual” Artery



Imagine plaque in a physical artery. What does the plaque do? It restricts the blood flow. Similar to what plaque does in blocking the flow of blood in a human artery, your self-life and self-protection is the plaque on your “spiritual” artery that blocks the flow of agape love of through you to others.

We know that if physical plaque is not taken care of it expands, cutting off more of the blood flow which could eventually kill us through a stroke or heart attack. In the same way, the plaque on our spiritual artery, if not dealt with, grows with the result it hardens our heart and

continues to choke out our love for others. It is like a slow death that will eventually extinguish our ability to love.

What might be some of the negative effects of not having the plaque of your self-life and self-protection removed from your spiritual artery other than what I have shared?

Why Self-Protection Is A Lie

Let's think about to the identity study and remember these two key truths that prove that we no longer have to try and protect ourselves.

Truth #1 - The self you are protecting is DEAD.

The problem with self-protection is that it is a lie. Why?

The self (self-life) you are protecting was CRUCIFIED with Christ on the cross.

Remember the truth you learned from the identity study in Romans 6:6.

*“knowing this, **that our old self [self-life] was crucified with Him**, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.” Romans 6:6*

What this verse is telling us is that the old self, the one you are trying to protect, has been crucified with Christ. We see this as well in Galatians 2:20a which says, “I [my self-life] am crucified with Christ....”

Based on these two verses, ask yourself these two questions: (1) Why am I trying to protect something that is “dead?” and (2) does a dead man need to protect himself?

This is great news when it comes to self-protection. There is no need to protect your dead self. It needs to protection. Therefore, you are free from the need of self-protection. However, this is just part of the good news.

Truth #2 - You have a NEW self that needs no protecting

Do you remember the other half of knowing your true identity in Christ? In addition to crucifying your old self (identity), God gave you a new self (identity) according to 2 Corinthians 5:17.

*“Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation [new self]. The old [self] has passed away; behold, the new [self] has come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17*

Why is this so important when it comes to self-protection?

***Since your OLD self has been crucified and you now have a NEW IDENTITY
(new self) you no longer have to PROTECT yourself.***

Remember some of the characteristics of your new self: righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21), worthy (Psalm 139:14), accepted (Romans 15:7), unconditionally loved (2 Timothy 1:7). In addition, in Ephesians 2:10, God calls you a “masterpiece.” Let me ask you a question. Is there any need to protect yourself if you see yourself as God’s masterpiece? The truth is that your new self needs to be expressed to others not protected.

Truth #3: - As you grow in your belief that you have a new identity, you become FREE to love YOURSELF and OTHERS.

*“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another.**” Galatians 5:13*

Think about it for a moment. Since you have a new self that doesn’t need protecting, shouldn’t that free you up to love others? The answer is a resounding “yes!” As the Holy Spirit removes that self-protective plaque out of your spiritual artery, the love of Christ will naturally flow more freely through you. Loving others will be effortless.

Let’s go back to the second great commandment which says that you are to love your neighbor as yourself. Misinterpreted, loving yourself can be a problem for two reasons. One is that people can be self-haters and on the other end of the spectrum people can love themselves out of pride or conceit. (Narcissists fall in this category.) What is the truth about loving yourself?

***Since God gave you a NEW self that is holy and righteous and loved
by God, you can love your new self in the SAME way God does.***

Have you ever thought about loving yourself this way? It is true. You have permission to love your new self. God does. As with the rest of the Christian life, learning to love your new self is a process. I can testify personally that the more I love my new self, the more freedom I have to love others. Here again, I am not working at loving others. Rather, I am progressively discovering and loving my new self which opens the floodgate wider to release God’s love for others.

Engaging God: Continue seeking the Lord to reveal to you your new self and give you the willingness to love your new self. As you do, ask the Spirit to reveal how that love of self translates into a love for others.

Boundaries Versus Self-Protection

Before we go further, I think it is important to distinguish between self-protection and boundaries. Establishing healthy boundaries is not self-protection. Healthy boundaries are necessary to protect us from abusive or caustic relationships. Healthy boundaries are also necessary with very needy people who you feel are emotionally “sucking” the life out of you.

Now that we have laid the groundwork for seeing others through Christ's eyes, let's look at some practical applications of these truths.

Engaging God in Order to See Others Through The Eyes of Jesus.

Now that we have a foundation for seeing others through the eyes of Christ, let's look at some practical applications that I hope will help you see and understand these truths that I am sharing. Keep in mind that these steps are not legalistic "how to's" They are simply practical examples to live out the truth.

1. As you look at those around you, ask the Holy Spirit to EXPOSE or REVEAL the boxes you have built around them.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way." Psalm 139:23, 24

"Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart." Psalm 26:2

Begin looking at all your relationships and determine what boxes you may have put others in. While many of them will seem easy to figure out, you will still need to seek the Holy Spirit to expose or reveal people that you may be judging unknowingly.

Example of a step of faith: "Lord, I am asking You to reveal those I have put in boxes unknowingly with the result that I am judging them."

2. Ask the Holy Spirit to RENEW your mind to the truth about how He sees people and begin TEARING DOWN the people boxes.

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
Romans 12:2

Concerning those you have put in boxes, especially those who are closest to you, you will need to draw on the Holy Spirit's power to (1) renew your mind to the truth that God sees them as worthy of love and not judgment, and, (2) begin tearing down the walls of the boxes you have erected.

Example of a step of faith: "Lord, I am asking you to renew my mind to the truth of how you see people's value and give me the willingness to remove the boxes I have built."

3. Seek the Lord to start REMOVING your soulical cataracts so you can begin to SEE people through His eyes.

Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." 2 Kings 6:17

Without engaging God to remove your soulical cataracts, you will continue to be tempted to see others through the distorted lens of comparison and judgment. Therefore, call on Him to let you see others with His eyes.

Example of a step of faith: “Lord, like Elisha, open my eyes that I may see people through Your eyes.”

4. PRACTICE the presence of people

*“And this I pray, that your **love may abound** still more and more in **real knowledge and all discernment.**” Philippians 1:9*

Every personal contact is an opportunity to practice a person’s presence. With everyone you come in contact with:

- Look past the externals.
- Begin asking the Spirit to give you eyes to see into their heart.
- Ask the Lord to BE your discernment.
- Seek the Lord to tell you how you can be an encouragement to them.
- Ask the Lord what He wants to say through you.
- Constantly draw on Christ to agape love this person through you.

5. Seek the Lord to be your WILLINGNESS and DETERMINATION to:

1. Stop judging,
2. Stop comparing yourself to others,
3. Stop protecting yourself,
4. See others as He sees them, and
5. Love others with agape love.

*“For **I am determined** to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. “
1 Corinthians 2:2*

In this verse, Paul is referring to a spiritual determination. So, too, we are to have the same determination when it comes to seeing others through the eyes of Christ. Therefore, as you seek the Lord to transform your heart, you will need to draw on His willingness and His determination to move you away from judging people, self-protection, etc.

Another way of saying this is you will need to be intentional.

***Being INTENTIONAL is a CONSCIOUS and DETERMINED CHOICE to
pursue God and to depend on Him to transform our hearts.***

We can’t be passive when it comes to any area of our spiritual transformation. Our part is to intentionally choose to pursue God to be transformed.

Example of a step of faith: “Lord, I am intentionally seeking You to be my willingness and determination to see others as You see them, to stop protecting myself, and to love others with agape love.”

DAY FIVE

6. When you catch yourself starting to JUDGE someone, engage the Holy Spirit to take that thought CAPTIVE and remind you of the truth.

“We tear down arguments and every arrogant obstacle that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obey Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Every people box that you built started with one thought. As those thoughts were connected and reinforced you drew conclusions about people, warranted or not. To remove the box from a person begins with the next thought. Instead of taking ownership of the next thought that negatively reinforces your judgments of a person, seek the Holy Spirit to take that thought captive.

[**Note:** When Paul says “we” in the passage above, he is referring to your depending on the Holy Spirit’s power to take every thought captive.]

Example of a step of faith: “I am being tempted to judge this person. I am asking You to take that thought captive. Remind me that the only One who has the right to judge is You.”

7. Continue to seek the Holy Spirit to PERSUADE you to believe that you are a NEW CREATION so that you can drop the walls of self-protection.

“... and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.” Colossians 3:10

As your belief that you are a new creation grows, the less you will need to protect yourself. (Remember the “self” you are protecting is dead.) Seek the Lord to continue persuading you that you are holy, righteous, loved, accepted, etc.

Example of a step of faith: “Lord, I know that I am a new creation but I need You to further persuade me that I am who you say I am and that I have Your eyes to see that there is no further need to protect a self that is dead.”

8. Seek the Lord to REPLACE the FEARS that drive your self-protection so that you can LOVE others.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.” 1 John 4:18

Be intentional about seeking the Lord to replace your fears with His love. I call it “holy displacement.” Let me give you an example to explain. If you were to keep pouring clear water into a glass full of dirty water, what would happen? The clear water would eventually displace the dirty water. So, too, as we continue to draw on Christ’s agape love, it will eventually displace your fears.

Example of a step of faith: “Lord, I am asking you to replace my fears with Your agape love. Move me from fearing and self-protecting to loving others.”

9. Ask the Holy Spirit to REVEAL to you where He is changing your thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, and willingness to love others.

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”
Psalm 51:10*

As we take this journey of seeing others through the eyes of Christ, I believe it is vital to ask the Spirit to reveal to you when you have a loving thought versus a judgmental thought or you are seeking to love someone instead of judging. As we depend on Him, He is constantly working to renew our minds, change our hearts and love like He loves. Therefore, ask Him to reveal to you how He is changing you.

Example of a step of faith: “Holy Spirit, I am asking You to show me where You are working in my heart. Reveal to me when I am experiencing a changed thought, belief, or behavior about someone.”

What Will Be the Results As You Begin to See People Through the Eyes of Jesus?

1. You will find yourself no longer judging others based on the boxes you have built.
2. The Lord will remove your soulical cataracts so you will see people as worthy of agape love.
3. You will be taking those judging, condemning, and self-righteous thoughts captive as the Spirit prompts you.
4. You will find yourself looking past the externals and seeing into the hearts of people.
5. As the Holy Spirit persuades you of your new identity, you will be more comfortable in your own skin and less apt to self-protect.
6. The overflow of your transformation will be an increasing love, grace, and compassion towards others.

You Will See The Spiritual Potential In Every Person

By spiritual potential, I mean where others COULD be SPIRITUALLY if they understood, believed and walked in Christ as their LIFE.

It is easy for me to see a person’s potential if he/she is seeking and hungry for the truth. Where I struggle seeing it is with those who are living out of their flesh and resisting God’s working in their lives.

However, God not only sees the here and now but He also sees the spiritual potential in every person regardless of their pursuit of Him or their resistance to Him. God, because of His

omniscience, can see where a person's life could be if he/she chooses to live from Him as his/her Source. He has provided us with many stories about people in His Word as examples.

We see this in God's interactions with the stuttering Moses who felt totally inadequate to lead his people out of Egypt. God saw Abraham's spiritual potential in the midst of his unbelief when he chose to sleep with Hagar. God even saw it with Gideon in spite of his putting out the fleece and being paralyzed with fear when he faced the Midianites.

When it came to Peter, can you imagine how many times Jesus was shaking his head when Peter would utter the craziest things or when he was showing off to the other disciples by walking on the water? Even in those moments, Jesus saw the potential in Peter that we can now see when we read Peter's letters.

I even look back on my life when I was in total despair and having suicidal thoughts. I saw no hope and no future and yet what did God see? Potential. He didn't flinch because He knew that I was at the end of my rope and was about to turn an eternal corner that would change my life forever. Can you look back for a moment and think about a time when you saw little potential for yourself and yet here you are experiencing Life in Christ?

The Lord reminds me of my story as a way of telling me that He wants me (and you) to see the spiritual potential in every person, believer and unbeliever alike. They may not be saved or they may be saved and are resisting God. They may even be rejecting or turning their backs on you. It makes no difference where a person is spiritually because as long as they are alive there is potential and hope.

If we respond to certain people with self-protection or unwillingness to love them because of where they are spiritually, then we disqualify ourselves from being used by the Lord to participate in His transforming work in their lives. You see, God wants to use us to be part of other people's experiencing their potential. He wants us to participate with Him in their transformation. But we cannot do that if we are judging them, rejecting them, or not pursuing them.

As the earthly father ran towards the prodigal son, so our heavenly Father runs toward us. He is not deterred by our resistance or our rejection of Him. He keeps coming because He sees the potential in each one of us. Aren't we glad He does?

Part of my experiencing that potential was God's bringing believers into my life who saw spiritual potential in me. I am forever grateful for them because I shudder to think where I would be without their willingness to invest in my life.

Therefore, seek the Lord to give you eyes to see the potential in every person and be willing to be used of the Lord to see that potential realized. Think about it. You can be used of God to make an eternal investment in another person's life that will change his/her destiny forever.

You Will See People As SPIRITUAL "Diamonds"

*"I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well."
Psalm 139:14.*

The word "fearfully" in this verse means to be astonished or in awe. Could this mean that God sees you and all those He has created as being awesome?

Instead of looking at others and seeing boxes, you will begin to see them as diamonds. What do you see when you look at a diamond? You first see that it is multi-faceted. In addition, not all diamonds are equal. Diamonds have subtle differences in the way they are cut which completely changes their brilliance (white light), fire (rainbow color light) and sparkle. When you look at a diamond in the sunlight, doesn't it vary in its brilliance and sparkle as you examine the different facets of that diamond?

As we begin to see people as "spiritual" diamonds we will see that each person is individually cut by God to reflect His glory through his/her unique personality. God continually cuts and shapes our lives as we are being transformed into becoming lovers of others. Therefore, seeing with the eyes of Jesus means we will see and experience people with the same awe and wonder that God sees us.

Practicing The Presence of People

Mike Mason says this: "The sign that we are practicing the presence of people is that they begin to become infinitely precious to us. The sound of their voice, the look in their eye, the smallest detail of expression and mannerism-everything about those we love is more eloquent and fascinating than the greatest works of art."

What God wants us to do as we see others through the love of Christ is to write our own stories about how God's love through us for others defeats our judgments of them. This is because ultimately this life is about loving others with the unfathomable, unconditional, and eternal love of God, as confirmed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3:

"If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Lesson Three

The Overflow of And Ministry

DAY ONE

Introduction

One of the key issues of the overflow of Christ through you is ministry to others. However, after my personal experience and the experience of so many Christians I have talked to, I believe there have been many misconceptions taught about ministry. That is why I think it is so important to not only look at what ministry looks like in Christ but to clear up some of the misconceptions about ministry.

We Are to Be “DOERS Of The Word”

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” James 1:22

You may have wondered as you have gone through the first three parts of *Living A Transformed Life In Christ* series why we have focused on the “**being**” rather than on the “**doing**” part of the Christian life. Remember that the “being” is about what the Holy Spirit is doing in me to transform me into Christ-likeness. The problem that I have found with most Christians is that they are taught the “doing” of the Christian life apart from understanding the truth about “being.” Here is a key truth about “doing” versus “being.”

The DOING (i.e. ministry) should always flow from the BEING in Christ.

If the “doing” does not flow from the “being” then we will have wrong motivations to minister. (I simply define “being” in Christ is living in a moment by moment dependence on Christ.) It will also produce an obligation to minister. Living from obligation means that you will continually live your Christian life from a checklist of things that you feel you need to do FOR God. Here are some of the things that I was taught that I NEEDED to DO to minister:

- Give to the church.
- Set a godly example as a Christian
- Evangelize the lost.
- Disciple others.

These things are all biblical, but for thirty years as a Christian I did all the things listed above as a “doer” of the word out of obligation. I felt obligated to do them so that God would be pleased with me and so that I could feel my life had value and meaning. The truth is that if ministry is not done from the “being” in Christ then it will be a ministry of obligation. Therefore, let’s look at the truth concerning ministry.

What Is Ministry?

Ministry can simply be defined as:

***What God is accomplishing THROUGH US as the OVERFLOW
of what God is doing IN us.***

We learned in Book One that God is the Source for transforming our lives. The truth is that God is also the Source from Whom we do ministry. Remember that we discussed that the Christian life is not a life that we live FOR God. Rather, it is a life that we live FROM Him. It is the same with ministry.

***Ministry is NOT what we do FOR God. It is the result of what
He does THROUGH us as we live FROM Him.***

Paul confirms this in Romans 15:18:

*“Yet I dare not boast about anything **except what Christ has done THROUGH me, ...”**
Romans 15:18 (Emphasis mine)*

Therefore, just as we live the Christian life FROM God. We also minister FROM Him as well. Another way of saying it is that God does the “doing” by ministering through us. Let’s look at some other misconceptions about ministry and what the truth is regarding those misconceptions.

Other Misconceptions About Ministry

Below are some other misconceptions about ministry:



1. Ministry is only being involved in a specific ministry such as evangelism, feeding the poor, hospital visitation, etc.
2. Ministry is only something that we do. If we are not actively evangelizing, discipling, or helping someone, then we are not ministering.
3. Ministry is only done at certain times. For example, we will do hospital visitations on Wednesday evenings, or we will go to the inner city on Saturday to evangelize.
4. Ministry is only done from our spiritual gifting.

As we go through the rest of this lesson we will discover the truth concerning these misconceptions.

Question: What have you been taught about ministry? Are any of these misconceptions above what you have learned about ministry?

DAY TWO

The Truth About GOOD Works

We read about “good works” throughout the New Testament. Let’s first define a good work:

GOOD WORK

Any work that ORIGINATES from God and is done DEPENDING on God's life and power working through you.

Based on this definition let’s look at some other key truths about good works.

1. God Wants To DO Good Works Through Each of Us

“Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 1 Timothy 6:18

There are good works for each of us that God wants to accomplish through us.

2. God Has Good Works Prepared In ETERNITY PAST For Us To Do

Ephesians 2:10 says:

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Think about it for a moment. Every work that God wants to do through you has already been prepared. These are works that are originated by God and that He wants to accomplish as part of His sovereign plan. Since God has prepared the good works for you and me in eternity past, we do not have to be the Source to come up with good works.

Another key factor is that if all the works for you have been prepared beforehand, you don't need to “create” any new works.

All you need to do is to DISCOVER the works that have been prepared.

The problem I see with many churches as well as individual Christians is that they are creating new works instead of discovering the works God has already prepared.

How do you discover the works God has created for you?

1. Seek God to reveal to you your works.

God primarily reveals His works for you through your thoughts. Therefore, seek the Lord to reveal the specific works He has for you through your thoughts.

2. God can speak through people.

Personally, God has spoken through individuals to point me to His prepared works for me and to point me away from my “created” works. The key is to listen for the Lord’s voice if He is speaking through another person.

3. God speaks through His word.

You probably won’t find a specific work for you in the Bible but I have experienced the Lord applying His word to give me direction to His works.

4. God will speak through circumstances.

For example, I thought I was supposed to work with a particular church but God closed the door when they were not interested in working with me.

The key thing to remember is:

***There is NO need to create new works because ALL the works for you
have ALREADY been created.***

3. Is The Work God’s Work Or Is It Just A Good IDEA

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am THE WAY, the truth, and the life.’” John 14:6

We go back to God as the Source for our good works. If this is true, let me ask you this question:

How many works do you need to come up with?

The answer to the question is NONE! However, what I see in so many churches today is that they feel the need to come up with good ideas or works that need to be done. The problem is that many of their ideas and programs are man-centered and man-orchestrated. What has happened is that a “good idea” becomes “God’s idea” even though God is not in it.

Let me use a personal example to illustrate the point. The focus of our ministry is to point Christians to live from the total sufficiency of Christ. Every day I wake up thinking about how to accomplish this objective. I have a number of good ideas about what to write, what to speak, or how to disciple Christians in living from Christ. However, even though they all may be good ideas, they are not necessarily of God.

The most vivid story to illustrate this is that I thought it was a “good” idea to teach a conference at a church in San Antonio. The church let me use their facility and helped me promote the conference. Everything seemed like it was from God until I was driving to the church that morning to teach. About ten minutes away from the church, the Lord tapped me on the shoulder and said (through my thoughts), “This conference was not My idea.” I quickly moved over to the side of the road and felt very convicted. I asked the Lord if He wanted me to cancel the conference. He said, “No, but just for the record this was not My idea.” In His grace, he allowed me to teach the conference, but it was a very sober reminder that every good idea is not God’s idea.

Therefore, my struggle is not between bad ideas and good ideas. It is having the discernment as to which ideas are from God or which ones are from me. How do we know whether it is our good idea or a God idea?

4. The Holy Spirit Will REVEAL If It Is A Good Idea or A God Idea.



We know that the Holy Spirit can reveal to us through thoughts in our minds the good works He wants to accomplish through us. We see this truth in the following verses.

*“For to us **God revealed them through the Spirit**; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:10*

*“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit who is from God**, so that we may **know the things freely given to us by God**.” 1 Corinthians 2:12*

Therefore, when an idea for ministry comes to mind then we simply have to ask the Spirit if this idea is a “good” idea or a “God” idea. You see the mistake that I made in the story that I previously shared is that I PRESUMED that this conference was one of the “good works” that God had prepared for me. This issue or presuming a good idea is a God idea is one that I have seen many with many church staffs and many other Christians. Therefore the key is to:

SEEK the Holy Spirit to REVEAL to you if your work or idea is from Him.

Do not PRESUME that a “good” idea is a GOD idea.

Engaging God: Get into a “holy habit” of asking the Spirit to reveal to you whether the ideas or works that you have are from Him or not.

5. Good Works Are SUPERNATURAL

Concerning ministry, a supernatural work is one that only God can accomplish for which there is no man-made explanation for. We have talked about supernatural in relationship to our personal transformation but supernatural also refers to the work God does through you. As you depend on Him to do the work through you His supernatural life and power are flowing through you to

transform another person. If it is not a supernatural work of God, it becomes a “dead work” of man. Let’s look at the meaning of a dead work.

6. A Key To Good Works Is ACT Versus ATTITUDE

What I mean by “act” is the good work of ministry that the Lord has prepared for us. We can all do “acts” of ministry such as evangelize, disciple, etc. but the key thing we need to understand is that the ATTITUDE with which we do the work is just as important as the work itself.

All ACTS of ministry are to be done with an ATTITUDE of DEPENDENCE.

We saw in the previous section that a good work is one that is done dependently upon God. Therefore, as you minister insure that you are doing it with an attitude of dependence otherwise it will be a dead work.

What Is A DEAD Work?

*“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from **dead works**...” Hebrews 6:1a*

Let’s define a “dead” work:

***Any work that is NOT ORIGINATED by God or
any work done INDEPENDENTLY of God.***

If any work was not prepared for you in eternity past, then it is a dead work. It can also be a dead work if you are trying to do it in your own strength, using your own intellect, independently of God. This means that if you do not do God’s work depending on His life and power in and through you, then it is a dead work.

Let me give you an example. Let’s say that a pastor prepares all week for his sermon. Let’s also assume that he is being led by the Spirit in preparing his message. However, if the pastor gets up to give his message and does it independently of God, it is a dead work. Even though he may be preaching truth, it is a dead work for him if he is doing it in his own strength. Do you see how subtle a dead work can be? In the case of this pastor, he may be speaking God’s truth, but without the life and power of God flowing through him, it will not be a supernatural work. Since anything independent of God is the flesh, then:

Any work done in the FLESH is a DEAD work.

*“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for **whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.**” Galatians 6:7,8*

If the **source** of your good works is not Christ, then the only other **source** is your FLESH! The deceiving thing about good works done in the flesh is that they can look good to others, but to God they are “dead” works. This is where Christendom really gets tripped up. We are told to go out and “do” good works. It may be to teach Sunday school, or work in the nursery, or minister outside of the church. However, if our flesh is the source for these works, they will dead works instead of eternal works.

What are some of the reasons that we do “good works” in the flesh?

1. We don’t know the truth about good works.
2. To try to earn God’s love, acceptance, and worth.
3. To please others.
4. To be found worthy or valuable in the world’s eyes.
5. To assure us that we are worthy in our own eyes.

What are the results if you minister from the flesh?

1. **No supernatural transformation** will take place in you or through you to those to whom you minister.
2. **Pride and arrogance** when you feel you have met your self-determined goals for ministry.
3. **Pride and arrogance** believing that God is pleased with you even though the ministry you have done has been done independent of Him.
4. **Self-condemnation** when you don’t meet your expectations for ministry or for not meeting what you believe God’s expectations are for you in ministry.
5. **Condemning others** when they don’t respond to your ministry to them.
6. **Frustration** when your ministry does not meet your expectations.
7. **Futility, burn-out, giving up, or trying harder.**

I believe all ministry in the flesh can be summed up in Paul’s words:

*“having a **form of godliness** but denying its power.” 2 Timothy 3:5*

We may do works that look godly but they are really fleshly works because they are not done from the life and power of the Holy Spirit. I compare fleshly works to chocolate covered Alpo. They may look very appealing but when you take that first bite it is really only dog food. Here are some other verses that reveal to us the results of fleshly works.

*“...I know your deeds; you have a **reputation of being alive**, **but you are dead**.” Revelation 3:1b*

*“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must **no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking**.” Ephesians 4:17*

*“**Professing to be wise they became fools**.” Romans 1:21-23*

*“They honor me with their lips, but **their hearts are far from me**.” Matthew 15:8*

DAY THREE

Faith and Works

*“What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 **Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.** 18 But someone may well say, “You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 **But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?** 26 **For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.**” James 2:14-20, 26*

Works are a visible sign to believers and unbelievers alike that we have a viable faith. Dead faith in verse 17 means “inactive” or “useless” faith. This passage means that faith and works go hand in hand. The outflow of faith will be works. If there are no works, it is a useless and inactive faith. He repeats this same principle in verses 20 and 26. (Note: the word “justify” means “to exhibit.” In other words, Abraham and Rahab were not doing works to be saved but were “exhibiting” their faith by their works.)

The point of this entire passage is that faith and works go hand in hand. You can’t have one without the other. This passage of scripture begs the question. **“If faith without works is a worthless faith, are works without faith worthless?”**

By the Way, God Has NOT Called You to Be A Fruit Inspector!

*“....let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus...**”
Hebrews 12: 2*

I simply define a fruit inspector as one who evaluates another Christian’s fruit bearing. I have heard a number of Christians tell me that another person is not saved because they don’t have any spiritual fruit to prove it. The question is: Has God called you to be a fruit inspector? The answer is no. Only God can evaluate and make conclusions about someone else’s fruit. By the way, most fruit inspectors I know are very self-righteous. Last time I checked the Bible I did not see self-righteousness listed as a fruit of the Spirit.

Sometimes we make the mistake of comparing our fruit bearing to someone else’s. Have you ever wondered why Hebrews 12:2 commands us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus? Could one of the reasons be so that you won’t waste your time comparing your fruit with others? When you start comparing your fruit production with others, you will come to one of two conclusions. Either they are not working hard enough, or you are not working hard enough. Either way it is death! Therefore, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, and let God evaluate another person’s fruit production. By not focusing on their production, it allows you to walk in freedom from judging or evaluating others.

Spiritual Gifts and Works

“And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;”
Ephesians 4:11-12

The New Testament has outlined in a number of verses the spiritual gifts that are available to believers. As Romans 12:6 reads, they are given according to God’s will and His grace. We all have been given one or more gifts by the Spirit in order, as Ephesians 4:12 says, to equip the saints and build up the body of Christ. Therefore, part of the works that God has prepared beforehand (Ephesians 2:10) will flow through our spiritual gifting.

How Do We Determine Our Spiritual Gifting?

There are many spiritual gifts tests available but I don’t think we necessarily have to take a test to determine our spiritual gift(s). Spiritual gifts are what flow from us naturally as we are being transformed. For example, does it come naturally to you to encourage someone else? If so, you probably have the gift of encouragement. Do you have a passion for evangelism? If so, you probably have the gift of evangelism. Therefore, look at your passions and desires and there you will most likely discover your spiritual gifts.

Does This Mean That Ministry Can Only Be Done Through Your Spiritual Gifts?

What I hear as an excuse for not ministering in certain ways is that someone says they are not spiritually gifted in that area. However, does not having a particular spiritual gift really let us off the hook? Not really because if the Holy Spirit wants to teach through you or share Christ through you then you don’t have to have the gift of teaching or evangelism for Him to do so. Remember our part is availability. We simply make ourselves available for the Spirit to minister through us in any way He chooses.

KEY POINT

God can do anything through anyone at any time.

The question is: Are you WILLING to let Him do it?

DAY FOUR

Jesus As Our Model For Ministry

We need to look no further than Jesus to understand how God intends for you to minister. Why? Because Jesus said this in John 13:15:

*“For I gave you an **example** that you also should do as I did to you.”*

So let's look at some key truths about Jesus's ministry by answering the following questions:

1. Did Jesus "DO" good works?

*"You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how **He went about doing good**..." Acts 10:38*

As our example, Jesus did accomplish good works. He healed the sick and gave sight to the blind. His ultimate "good work" was to go to the cross for you and me.

2. WHO was the SOURCE of Christ's work?

*"Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and **to accomplish His (the Father's) work.**'" John 4:34 (Parenthesis mine)*

From the beginning of Jesus's ministry we see Him constantly referring to His works as being those from the Father. In other words, Jesus never healed or ministered unless it was a work given to Him by the Father. We see this in other passages in John (John 5:36, 9:4, and 10:32).

3. Jesus was not the INITIATOR of the Father's works

On at least three occasions Jesus tells us that He was not the source or the initiator for His works of ministry. He lived dependent on the Father and simply received the works the Father had for Him. He reveals this in the following verses:

*"Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do **nothing of Himself**, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.'*" John 5:19

*"I can do **nothing on My own initiative**. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."* John 5:30

*"Jesus therefore said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do **nothing on My own initiative**, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.'*" John 8:28

4. WHAT KIND of works were they?

*"And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for **I (Jesus) always do the things that are pleasing to Him (The Father).**"* John 8:29

The works Jesus did were those given to Him by the Father and were pleasing to Him.

5. WHO was doing the works?

*"Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say are not My own, but **my Father who lives in Me does His work through Me.**"* John 14:10

I would like for you to pay very close attention to this verse. Who does Jesus say is doing the work? Is it Jesus or the Father through Jesus? In three passages in John (5:30, 8:28, 12:49) which we previously studied, Jesus says that He did NOTHING on His own initiative. It was the Father

who initiated through Jesus to accomplish His works. Jesus, as God-man, subjected Himself totally to the Father.

The truth is that the FATHER gave sight to the blind, healed the sick, and raised people from the dead THROUGH Jesus.

Good News! Ministry Is NOT About Your Capability

Since God is the Source to accomplish His good works, then He is not depending on your capability to do the work. In all the years of ministry, God has never once asked me if I am capable to minister. He knows better than that. The only question He asks me is: “Are you AVAILABLE for me to work through you?” Therefore, please remember this key truth:

Your part concerning ministry is to be constantly AVAILABLE for God’s CAPABILITY to work through you.

I hope this takes a load off your mind. If it is God’s capability and not yours, then all you have to do is be available. It is interesting that I hear over and over the same reason why Christians don’t minister. They say “I am not capable.” Well, I have some good news for you. You are not capable! Only God is. Therefore, as you are available to Him then He will pour His life and power through you to minister to others.



I liken our part in ministry to being “spiritual” garden hoses. The Holy Spirit takes you, the spiritual hose, wherever He wants and flows His life and power through the hose to others. The result will be a supernatural work in those people that He is ministering to through us. Therefore, seek to be intentionally available moment by moment for whatever ministry the Holy Spirit wants to accomplish through you. You never know when the Lord will bring someone to you that He wants to minister to through you. Are you available?

Ministry Is PARTICIPATING With God In His Work Through You

We see what our part is in participating with God as He does His good works through us through the words of Paul and how he ministered.

*“I always pray with joy in my every prayer for all of you because of your **participation** in the gospel from the first day until now.” Philippians 1:4, 5*

As capable as Paul was, his ministry was done as he depended on Christ’s power to do the work through Him. We see this in the following two verses:

*“That’s why I work and struggle so hard, **depending on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.**” Colossians 1:28 (NLT)*

God worked through Paul’s IQ, giftedness and unique personality as he walked in dependence on God. The same is true of you.

As you depend on/participate with God, then He will work through your IQ, giftedness, and unique personality to produce His work. For example, you are led to teach a small group study. You continue to be led as to what to prepare to teach. You prepare for the study by depending upon God to give you what to share. As you teach, you depend upon the Spirit flowing His life and power through your personality.

***As Christians, we have the greatest privilege of PARTICIPATING with God
as He ministers to others through us.***

DAY FIVE

All You Have To Offer Someone Is Christ IN you

In Colossians 1:27, Paul gives us some great news. Not only for ourselves but also for others we minister to.

*“To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.” Colossians 1:27*

Christ in us is not just for us. Christ in us is also for others because all we truly have to offer someone is the life of Christ flowing through us. You see when you minister to someone they want to know if what you are sharing is working for you. They may not know it consciously but they want to experience Christ’s life in you.

This is exactly what happened when I first heard the Christ-life truths through Ian Thomas. I tell people that it was not only the incredible truths that he was sharing about Christ as our life but it was the life and power through Him that was drawing me to Christ. I tell people that he could have gotten up and read the phone book and I would still have experienced the supernatural life of Christ through him.

As we grow in Christ, more and more people will see and be drawn to the Christ in you. What you are experiencing is what every Christian deep down wants to experience. Therefore, another reason to continue walking by faith is so that you will become more “spiritually attractive” to other Christians.

All you truly have to offer as a minister is Christ IN you.
As you walk by faith, then those that you minister to will experience God's truth,
love, life, and transforming power flowing THROUGH you.

What Is The Overflow of God Doing Good Works Through You?

1. God is GLORIFIED.

*"By this is My **Father glorified**, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."
 John 15:8*

*"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and **glorify your Father** who is in heaven." Matthew 5:16*

2. Your life BEARS WITNESS of Christ.

*"There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came for a witness, that **he might bear witness of the light**, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came that **he might bear witness of the light.**" John. 1:6-8*

3. You will be EQUIPPING the saints.

*"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the **equipping of the saints** for the work of service."
 Ephesians 4:11-12a*

4. You will ENCOURAGE and BUILD UP the body of Christ.

*"...to the **building up of the body of Christ**" Ephesians 4:12b*

*"Therefore **encourage one another and build up one another**, just as you also are doing." 1
 Thessalonians 5:11*

5. Your CHRIST-LIKENESS will be revealed, and Christ will DRAW others to Himself through you.

*".. the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law." Galatians 5:22, 23*

*"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and **manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.**" 2 Corinthians 2:14*

Summary

Jesus made the following statement in John 14:12:

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and **greater works than these he will do**; because I go to the Father."*

You might want to read this again very carefully. What is Jesus saying? I am not sure that I understand the full meaning of what it means that greater works than Christ's we will do. However, I do know that as you allow Christ to live through you, He can radically change other people's lives through you. That sounds like a "greater" work to me. Let me leave this discussion with one final thought.

The greatest privilege that we have as Christians is to PARTICIPATE with God by allowing Him to produce an ETERNAL work through us.

Lesson Four

The Overflow and Christ Building His Church Through You

DAY ONE

Introduction

Now that we have learned some basic truths about ministry I want to make practical application of those truths in this lesson. Before we do, I want to share with you one more key truth about our participation with God in His ministry through us.

Jesus Will Build His Church

Let's look at what Jesus says about His church in Matthew 16:18:

"I will build My church."

The key words in this verse are **"I"** and **"My."** These two words denote that Christ is the Source to build the church and that it is His church. The first question we need to ask is what does it mean that Christ will build His church?

IN You

We know that part of Christ building His church is to bring every person to the saving knowledge of Christ. However, is Christ building His church only about salvation? Let's look one more time at our spiritual destiny.

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."
2 Corinthians 3:18

Since our spiritual destiny is to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, then in addition to salvation, part of Jesus building His church is transforming every Christian into Christ-likeness. In other words:

<p><i>Christ-likeness will be the result of Christ building His church.</i></p>
--

THROUGH You

The good news is that not only is Christ building His church as you are being transformed, He wants to build His church by transforming another person's life THROUGH you. We know this by looking at what Paul said about ministry:

*“to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, **to build up the body of Christ.**”*
Ephesians 4:12b

*“Therefore **encourage one another and build up one another**, just as you also are doing.”* 1
Thessalonians 5:11

These verses and many others point to the truth that God wants to work through every Christian to transform other Christians into the likeness of Christ. Think about what Jesus was called to do while ministering on this earth:

*“..He has sent Me to **heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind...**”* Luke 4:18b

In Luke 4:18, Jesus is telling us what He was called to do in ministry. Let me ask you a question, “If Christ is in you, do you believe that through you He can heal the broken-hearted, give sight to the blind, and set the captives free?” One of the most incredible, supernatural things that I have witnessed in ministry is that God, through me, has transformed the life of another person! God wants you to believe that if you are willing to depend upon Him, He will transform another person’s life through you. Think about it. Because the fullness of God is in you, then through you God can change the direction and destiny of another person’s life. The key to remember is this:

It is not about your capability or the lack thereof that is the issue. It is about you being available for GOD’S capability through you to transform another person.

Paul certainly saw this as a privilege in Ephesians 3:7:

*“By God’s special favor and mighty power, I have been given the wonderful **privilege of serving Him** by spreading this Good News.”* Ephesians 3:7 (New Living Translation)

This privilege was not just for Paul. It is for every believer. Let’s look at some reasons why we struggle with ministering to someone else.

What Are Some Reasons We Struggle With Ministering To Others

1. Fear

The number one reason I believe most Christians struggle with ministering to another person is that they have fears concerning ministry. I would like to look at some of those fears and the truth concerning them.

a. Fear of FAILURE

The Truth: The only reason we feel failure is if we believe on some level that the results of ministry to another person is up to us. However, since God is the cause and effect of transformation then success or failure is up to God and not you. Remember that you are simply the vessel that God chooses to use to work through.

b. Fear of REJECTION

The Truth: The key truth to keep in mind is that if someone is rejecting God's truth that you are sharing with them, then they are rejecting God not you. We tend to take it personally when someone takes issue with the truth that we are sharing or just rejects it outright. However, you and I are just the messengers. God is the One who is producing the transformation.

Also, remember that in your true identity that you are totally accepted and do not have to take ownership of someone else's rejection. In the next section we will discuss why Christians reject God's truth.

2. Not Qualified To Minister

It is normal for those of us who have not been to seminary and Bible school to feel inadequate to share God's truth. We feel that without proper training that we are not qualified. I have a question for you. How trained were the twelve disciples of Jesus? What seminary did they attend? So what qualifies you and me to minister?

***The truth is that the ONLY thing that qualifies us for ministry is
CHRIST in us.***

Think about this verse:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippian 4:13

Could part of the "all things" Paul is talking about be ministry? If Christ is the Source, then ministry has everything to do with what Christ wants to do through you, as opposed to whether or not you are qualified. Let's look at Paul in relationship to all his training. Even though he was one of the greatest Biblical scholars of his day, what did he say about his ministry:

"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power." 1 Corinthians 2:4-6

Even with all of Paul's training, He totally depended on the Spirit and His power through Paul. Therefore, we cannot use lack of seminary training as an excuse not to minister.

DAY TWO

3. Not Having All The Answers

We live in such a performance-based culture that we place a high priority on having not only the answers but having the right answers. Why? Because we don't want to look foolish or it makes us feel inadequate when we don't have the right answers. Let me share a personal note. I have been teaching for several years and what I am finding is that the longer I teach the fewer answers I have. Why do I say that? Because teaching it is not about me having all the answers. It

is about pointing Christians to the One who does. There is only One who has all the answers and that is God Himself.

I get questions I can't answer all the time. However, that is the perfect time to point that person to pursue God for Him to give them answer. Part of learning to be free in Christ is not NEEDING to have all the answers. In addition, I have learned how to say, "I don't know." (By the way it is OK to not know.)

One more thing on this subject. God has used ministry in my life to teach me about my true identity. I used to feel so inadequate because early on in ministering to others I thought I needed to have all the answers but I didn't. It has been through ministry that God is persuading me that I am totally adequate in Christ having or not having answers.

4. It Is Too Much About Us And Not About Christ In Us

If I were to sum up the first three points, it would be that we struggle with ministry because:

***There is more FOCUS on our lack of ability instead of
focusing on CHRIST'S ability in us.***

This is normal because early on in our walk of faith it is more about us and our ability (or lack of it) than about Christ's ability in us. However, as you continue your walk of faith, the overflow of that walk is that you will no longer fear rejection or failure. You will no longer be bothered by the fact that you are not qualified as man determines qualification or that you don't have all the answers.

***As Christ in you INCREASES, and self DECREASES, then
your focus will be on Christ's ability to minister and not yours.***

This is real freedom! Freedom from all of the reasons why we hesitate or struggle with ministering.

Satan's Strategy Concerning Ministry

Threefold strategy of the enemy

1. Keep you from being saved.
2. Keep you from learning and being transformed by the truth that Christ is your Source for life and that you will depend on Christ to live His life in you to be transformed into Christ-likeness.
3. Keep you from ministering Christ as life to others.
4. Keep you from sharing Christ as life with others and allow God through you to set the captives free from their lying beliefs about living the Christian life and transform them into Christ-likeness.

We know from the past studies that Satan and his demons will do everything they can to steal, kill, and destroy your walk in Christ because they want to keep you in bondage to the lie. However an even greater fear is that you will not only be personally transformed but you will be used of God to share Christ as life with others Christians so that He will set them free and transform their lives. Therefore, they will do everything they can to keep you from sharing Christ as life with others. One of their key strategies they use is to keep you focused on the four reasons we just discussed above concerning why we struggle with ministering truth to others.

Satan/demons may insert thoughts into your mind such as: “What makes you qualified to minister? You really are not capable. You will fail and be rejected.” Remember these thoughts come in first person so that you will believe they are your own thoughts and that you will take ownership of them. Therefore:

***Be AWARE that Satan and his demons are always looking for ways to
KEEP you from ministering truth to others.***

The Overflow And Sharing Christ As Life With Others

*“For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is **Jesus Christ.**” 1 Corinthians 3:11*

I do trust that if you have gotten this far in the four part study that God is doing a transforming work in your life. I hope that you are experiencing His life and power in you renewing your mind, healing your emotions, and moving your will to make choices based on His truth. However, I also hope that by now the Lord is moving you to a place where you are sharing the Christ-life truths with others or at least have the desire to do so. Is it possible that God wants to share these truths through you with other Christians to set them free from the bondage to the lies that you were in bondage to? The answer is no doubt, YES He does. Think about the following statement for a moment.

***One of the greatest results of God’s transformation process is that
you will become OTHER’S FOCUSED and you will
have a GROWING desire to share Christ as life with others.***

The very reason I am in ministry is that God has moved me to a place where I can not not share these life-transforming truths with others. As Christ is being produced in you, He is moving you to the same place. This does not mean that you have to have a ministry. It simply means that your desire will grow to be used of the Lord to set the captives free. I have a question for you:

Is it possible that if you step out by faith and be available to minister to others that God could increase your focus on other’s struggles and move you more quickly away from the focus on yourself and your struggles?

What Are The Ways That You Can Share Christ As Life

God is very creative in using you to minister to others. Here are some of those ways:

1. To share one-on-one with other person.
2. To facilitate a small group or Sunday school class.
3. To facilitate a study in your workplace.

The Lord is raising up multipliers who will be available for Him to share these truths. One of the callings of Christ Is Life Ministries is to equip “multipliers” like yourself to share Christ as life in one or more of the ways listed above. This is what I call “intentional” ministry. These are great ways to share Christ as life. However, there are some other ways the Lord can minister through you as well. Let’s look at two of those.

DAY THREE

Another Way To Minister Is Like Jesus Ministered On A Daily Basis

How did Jesus minister? He woke up each morning and made Himself available to the Father for ministry. As He went through the day, He was directed to certain people or people came to Him to be ministered to. Jesus did not have a daily agenda for ministry. He simply went through the day living dependent on the Father to direct Him and minister through Him.

We can look at ministry in the same way. As we go through the day, we can make ourselves available to God to minister Christ as life through us. It could be someone we are directed to minister to or someone that God brings us to be ministered to. This form of ministry is very dynamic in that you will not know what God may have in mind for you in any one day. I know that can be a little scary but you will find yourself more and more seeking Him throughout the day to provide someone who you can share Christ’s life with.

One of the great fears in this type of ministry is: “What am I going to say if God brings a hurting or struggling person to me?” This is a very common fear. However, this fear is born out of our false belief that we have to be the source to come up with the right answer. I am very familiar with this fear every time I disciple a hurting person or couple. I ask myself the same question: “What am I going to say that will make a transforming difference in this person’s life?”

However, I have great news for you. It is not up to you to come up with what to say in the moment. That is God’s job. I have discovered over the years of discipling that I simply have to trust the Spirit to put the thoughts in my mind and the words in my mouth. It is a simple matter of depending on the Lord to speak through you. If you seek the Spirit to do this in the moment you are faced with a person in need, you will be amazed at what will come out of your mouth!

I am in situations every day in which I really don’t know in my finite mind what truth to share in the moment. However, as I seek the Spirit to insert what He wants to say in my mind I continue to be amazed at what He says through me that impacts another person’s life. Therefore:

Simply trust the Holy Spirit to put the thoughts in your mind or the words on your lips when you have the opportunity to minister.

There Is Also The Ministry of BEING

*“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and **manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.**” 2 Corinthians 2:14*

For the most part, we feel that we must be actively talking and sharing God’s truth with others. However, there is another way to minister and I call it the ministry of BEING. Instead of being “overt” ministry, this is “covert” ministry.



Let me give you an example of the ministry of “being.” Let’s assume that you walk into your office tomorrow, and you are not allowed to say the name of Jesus in your workplace. As you go through the day living dependently on Christ, what is it that the Spirit’s power is doing through you even though you are not verbally sharing God’s truth? He is pouring His life, love, grace, etc. through you. He is doing this even when you are not saying a word! You see, ministry does not necessarily have to take place in the seen realm. It can also take place in the unseen realm. In the seen realm “being” seems very passive. However, in the unseen realm the fullness of God’s life and power is pouring through you to others. This is the “sweet aroma” of Christ’s life flowing through you that Paul is referring to in 2 Corinthians 2:14 above.

A great example of the ministry of “being” is in Mark 5:27-29 when the lady touched Jesus’s cloak.

“When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.” Mark 5:27-29

Jesus was not intentionally ministering to her, but His healing power was flowing through Him to heal the woman. The same is true for us. There will be times that we will be overtly ministering, but covertly we are constantly ministering Christ’s life and power as we walk dependently upon Him.

Therefore, look at ministry as being as much COVERT as it is OVERT.

One more thing about the ministry of “being.” You can be very **intentional** about ministering in the unseen and unspoken realm. Here is an example of what I am talking about. Let’s assume that a co-worker struggles with you and he or she is not open about talking about Christ. You can intentionally pray something like this:

“Lord, I know this person has issues with me. I am asking you to reveal your love and grace towards this person. Make yourself irresistible through me.”

Even though you can't minister overtly, you can seek the Spirit to minister covertly to that person through you. Have you ever thought that this kind of covert ministry might be as effective or even more effective than overt ministry?

A Key Question To Ask When Sharing Christ As Life: “How Is What You Believe Working For You?”

When I am sharing Christ as life one of the key questions I always ask is: “How is what you believe about living the Christian life working for you?” I usually follow that question with a few more such as these:

- 4. Are you experiencing consistent victory over the flesh, the power of sin and Satan and the demonic?**
- 5. Are you being set free from the one sin pattern that defeats you the most?**
- 6. Are you being healed from past or present woundedness?**
- 7. Is your life being transformed so that you are thinking, feeling, believing and behaving more like Christ?**

It is through the answers to these questions, that I will know whether a person is living from Christ as their Source or not. I also know that every believer would like to experience victory, freedom, healing and transformation. Aren't these your desires? You see God has not only made these promises, He has put it into our hearts to want these things. Therefore, I ask the question, “How is it working for you?” so that a person will have to come face to face with whether or not what they believe is truly transforming their life.

DAY FOUR

Why Christians Reject Christ As Life

As you feel led to share Christ as life, remember that many people may reject this truth. Why is that? Let me give you a few reasons.

1. They are not ready to hear. In other words, they are not at a point of “neediness” where they have ears to hear the Christ-life truths. Please keep this in mind: If you don't recognize your need then you will have no need for Jesus.
2. Self-righteousness. I have discovered that self-righteous Christians tend to have all the answers and because of their pride and arrogance are not willing to listen to and respond to the Christ-life truths. You see humility says that I need to depend.
3. The flesh will always reject the truth. If a Christian is living their life for the most part from the flesh, then they will tend to reject the truth of Christ as their life.
4. I hear this response often: “I know already know these truths. Tell me something I don't know.” When I hear this response, this person is telling me that they are simply

knowledge seekers. They want to have intellectual knowledge of the truth rather than be transformed by it.

5. Here is another response I hear: “This truth is too passive. Just tell me what to do.” Here again this is our religious-performance flesh talking. This kind of flesh wants rules, checklists, and formulas for living the Christian life. Therefore, they will be resistant to living dependent on Christ as their Source.

What Does Accomplish IN You As He Ministers THROUGH You?

I think it is important to see how God not only does a work through you but He also does a work in you as you minister. Let’s look at some of what God is doing in you:

1. To FURTHER transform your life

The focus of our ministry is on seeking out those who feel led to share the Christ-life truths. We call these folks “multipliers.” What we have discovered from the testimonies of these “multipliers” is that God is transforming their lives as they share these truths with others. Many have shared that God is reinforcing Christ-life truths in them in ways they had not experienced prior to becoming a “multiplier.” Remember this as you are led to minister:

***God will ALWAYS be doing a transforming work IN you as He is doing
a transforming work THROUGH you!***

2. Your God-confidence and spiritual boldness will GROW

Another thing that many of the “multipliers” have shared with me is how much their Christ-confidence grows as God transforms another person through them. Their confidence in God’s power, His faithfulness, and His love for His people. In fact, I have seen in a number of people who are sharing Christ as life an acceleration of their God-confidence.

3. You will have a greater AWE of God as you PARTICIPATE with Him in opening the Red Sea in another person’s heart.

I don’t believe there is any greater experience than watching God open the Red Sea in the heart of another person. When God, through you, begins to set someone free with the truth it does something in you that is very hard to describe. I know that from experience that I have a greater sense of awe of God as He transforms another person through me.

4. It produces in you a greater HUMILITY

As the Lord uses you in transforming the life of another, you will find yourself greatly humbled that God would use you. What a humbling thing it is that God will use you to change the heart and destiny of another person.

5. You will have a greater LOVE and COMPASSION for the body of Christ

I believe another part of how God uses ministry in our lives is to grow our love and compassion for Christians. As the Spirit ministers truth, life, and compassion through you to hurting people, you will find your love and compassion growing for them. Your desire for them to be set free will grow because you don't want them to spend one more day in the bondage to the lies and the soulful pain it is causing them.

DAY FIVE

One More Thing To Know When Sharing Christ As Life

As I have shared Christ as life over the years, I have certain people who want to take issue with the truths that I am teaching. They want to argue or take issue with what you are sharing. You will be tempted to defend God's truth. Please don't fall into that temptation. When someone takes issue with God's truth remember this key truth:

God's truth needs NO defense.

Since God's truth is absolute, then you do not have to defend the truth. What I simply tell those who want to debate or argue the truth is that I will not defend God's truth. I will also challenge them to take their differences or arguments to the Holy Spirit and let Him reveal the truth to them. This diffuses the argument because the burden is now on them to go to the Spirit versus being on you to defend God's truth.

God Will Use Your Suffering and Life Experiences To UNIQUELY Minister To Others

We all have experienced varying degrees of personal suffering in our Christian walk. As I hope you know by now God uses suffering to bring you to greater brokenness and to a greater dependence on Him. However, there is another purpose for suffering in your life. Paul describes that purpose in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

³ *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. ⁴ **He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.** ⁵ *For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ.**

Paul shares that through his suffering he experiences God's comfort and is able to comfort others. I must admit that I am not one who enjoys suffering. However, over the past several years I have had my times of suffering and woundedness. I would not want to go through it again but I can't begin to tell you how many times God has used my suffering to minister to others. I can identify more readily with other's suffering because of mine. It is through what the Lord has taught me through suffering that I can more effectively minister to others. Here are some things the Lord has taught me that I share with hurting believers:

8. God always has a divine purpose in suffering.
9. He is working something "good" in your life through suffering.

10. Suffering is necessary for our brokenness and our transformation.
11. It is through suffering that we experience God's love, grace, and comfort.
12. God allows you to suffer because He knows that one day He will bring someone to you who is suffering in the way you have suffered.

What Are Some Of The Things That God Wants To Do THROUGH You To Build His Church?

1. He wants to draw non-Christians to Himself through you for SALVATION.

"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." John 12:32

2. Through you God wants to draw Christians to Himself as the SOURCE for living life.

"He is the SOURCE of YOUR life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30

3. He wants to give REVELATION, FREEDOM, VICTORY, and HEALING to other Christians through you.

"give sight to the blind, give release to the captives, And heal the brokenhearted." Luke 4:18

4. Through you He wants to reveal His love, grace, goodness and mercy to others.

5. He wants to draw others to Himself for a personal intimate relationship through you.

Ultimately through you God wants to transform His church so that every Christian will fulfill their spiritual destiny of being transformed into Christ-likeness.

"My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you." Galatians 4:19

Lesson Five

Walking With God

Entering Into His Rest

DAY ONE

Introduction

As you know, the first three books of the *Living A Transformed Life In Christ* study have been focused on what it looks like to live in moment by moment dependence on God. As a result, God promises to fulfill your spiritual destiny by transforming your soul into Christ-likeness. I trust you have been experiencing the transformation that God promises. The question I have for you at this point is:

***Is transformation of your soul the ULTIMATE objective of God's
PLAN for your Christian walk?***

For many of us when we first started our Christ-life walk we could identify with David's desires in Psalm 51.

¹ *Have mercy on **me**, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of **my** sins.*

² *Wash **me** clean from my guilt. Purify **me** from my sin.*

³ *For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts **me** day and night.*

⁷ *Purify **me** from **my** sins, and **I** will be clean; wash **me**, and **I** will be whiter than snow.*

⁸ *Oh, give **me** back my joy again; you have broken **me**—now let **me** rejoice.*

⁹ *Don't keep looking at **my** sins. Remove the stain of **my** guilt.*

¹⁰ *Create in **me** a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within **me**."*

What do we see in these verses. We see David seeking God to do a work in his heart. (I trust you have been doing the same thing as you have gone through the first three studies.) Look at the words that I underlined and put in bold face type. Who is the focus of these verses? David is. David is seeking God to work in his life. However, if transformation is God's ultimate objective then the Christ-life journey ends up being about "me." Therefore, I believe we must take another look at scripture to better understand what I believe is God's ultimate objective in our walk of faith.

Is it possible that transformation is simply the means to the end? The end being: intimacy with God. Let me say it like this:

I believe the ULTIMATE purpose for God creating you and living in you is to draw you into a DEEP, PERSONAL and INTIMATE relationship with Himself.

When we begin our journey of dependence on God, our tendency is to seek what the Lord offers and promises us.

*“He is a **rewarder** of those who **seek HIM**.” Hebrews 11:6*

We seek the reward (i.e. transformation) as a higher priority than seeking THE Rewarder. This is natural because we begin our journey very self-focused with the idea that I want for “me” the victory, freedom, healing, transformation that God promises. However, our objective should be to seek Him.

*“...If you **seek HIM**, He will let you find Him....” 1 Chronicles 28:9*

Let’s look at some scriptures that bear this out:

*“God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family **by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ**. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure.” Ephesians 1:4 (NLT)*

In this verse, Paul is telling us that God wants to bring us to Himself through Christ for the purpose of intimacy. In other words, as we live from Christ as our Source then God’s ultimate objective is to bring us to Himself for intimacy with Himself.

Another very meaningful passage to me about intimacy with God is found in John 17:23 when Jesus was praying to the Father.

*“I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent Me and that **You love them as much as You love Me**.” John 17:23*

I don’t think there can be any greater affirmation of God’s desire for intimacy than John 17:23. Think of it for a moment. The Lord is saying that the Father loves you as much as He loves His Son, Jesus.

Paul also reveals very personally in Philippians 3:8 where the Lord has brought Him concerning intimacy with God. I have quoted this verse from the Amplified Bible.

*“I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the **priceless privilege, the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him....**” (Emphasis mine)*

I believe what Paul is saying here is that nothing compares (including spiritual transformation) with knowing Jesus deeply and intimately. I like the word “progressively” in this translation because I believe there is a spiritual progression that leads to intimacy with the Lord.

DAY TWO

What Does SPIRITUAL PROGRESSION Look Like?

What you have been learning in the first three books has been what I call a spiritual progression. Let me sum up this progression:

Book One - God is our Source and we are to live from Him as our Source to experience His promises of victory, healing and transformation.

Book Two – Knowing our true identity in Christ and learning to live from that identity.

Book Three – God's process of transforming our soul: renewing of our mind, healing of our damaged emotions and moving us from unwillingness to willingness.

Why was I led to take you down this particular progression and not start the study with understanding our intimacy with God? For some of us, receiving God's love and loving God may be difficult because it can be very difficult to love someone you don't trust. Therefore, if you have a difficult time trusting God then I believe you are going to have a difficult time loving God and receiving His love. Another way of saying this is, if you doubt God then it follows that you will doubt His love for you.

Early on in my walk in Christ, I was not sure God was for me or that He was a good God. Theologically, I knew these things were true but experientially I had great doubts with the result that I didn't really trust Him. In one sense, I wanted God to prove Himself trustworthy. The only way to find out was to start walking by faith and see if God would really do what He promises to do. As I began to experience transformation His promises of freedom, victory, and healing, my trust in Him began to build. This growing trust built a Christ-confidence in Him and His abilities. As my Christ-confidence grew, I eventually was able to know and believe that God loves me with the result that I could receive His love.

If this is true for you, then you may have to first walk in dependence on God long enough to experience His transforming power and work which will produce a greater trust in Him. Trust will build a greater Christ-confidence with the result that the Lord is using it to persuade you of His love for you. Ultimately, as we reach a greater level of trust we will be able to receive God's love and love Him in return. On the following page is a diagram that will illustrate what I have just shared.

Walk of Dependence



Experience Transformation



Builds Trust



Produces Christ-Confidence



Loving God - Receiving His Love

Let me say at this point that this may not be the spiritual progression for you but it is why I have felt led to focus on our intimacy with God as part of Book Four and not earlier. However, I do trust that by this point that you are growing in your trust and Christ-confidence which can only lead to intimacy with God.

Meditate: on your spiritual progression. Are you experiencing a growing trust and Christ-confidence as a result of your spiritual transformation? Do you feel that is leading you to a greater love for God and receiving God's love?

Where Is God Taking Us

In addition to giving and receiving love God is moving us to a place where David came to in Psalm 63:1-8. Notice the words I have put in bold face type.

*"O God, **You** are my God, earnestly I seek **You**; my soul thirsts for **You**, my body longs for **You**, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

*² I have seen **You** in the sanctuary and beheld **Your** power and **Your** glory.*

*³ Because **Your** love is better than life, my lips will glorify **You**.*

*⁴ I will praise **You** as long as I live, and in **Your** name I will lift up my hands.*

*⁵ My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise **You**.*

*⁶ On my bed I remember **You**; I think of **You** through the watches of the night.*

*⁷ Because **You** are my help, I sing in the shadow of **Your** wings.*

*⁸ My soul clings to **You**; **Your** right hand upholds me."*

Do you see the focus by David in this Psalm versus Psalm 51 that we read previously? The focus is on the Lord. It is no longer about what God can do for David. Rather, it is about thanking and praising Him for who He is.

***God is moving you in your spiritual journey to a place where You will
WANT GOD MORE THAN you want what you can receive from Him.***

DAY THREE

It Is Crucial In Our Walk With God To Build A HISTORY With God

***One of the keys to developing a deeper relationship with God is
to BUILD a HISTORY with God.***

As we continue walking with God and building a history with Him, the result will be a deeper relationship with Him. In addition to a deeper relationship, you will experience the following as a result of your continuing history with God.

1. Your God-confidence will grow.

We have talked in previous parts of this study about how our God-confidence grows as we continue our walk of faith. Without it, we will eventually turn back to putting confidence in ourselves to live life. However, I would like to look at some specific ways in which your God-confidence will grow.

a. Confidence in His ability and willingness to transform your life.

We know that our theological God is able and willing because His word tells us this. However, if we are not being set free or being transformed on our timetable then there is a tendency to doubt God's ability and/or willingness. What we learn through the transformation process is that He truly is able and eternally more willing than we are to make His transformation promises an experiential reality in our lives.

b. Confidence that God is FOR you.

I think early on in our walk of faith we are not totally convinced that God is for us even though His word tell us this. The reason being is that we as humans have our own definition of what it means that God is for us and God has His. One of the key things about transformation is that we must walk by faith through difficult times in order for us to see that no matter whether God caused or allowed a situation in our lives that we learn that He truly is for us.

Let me give you a personal example. When I was struggling with my chronic fatigue syndrome, I felt that if God were really for me that He would remove it. However, He did not remove it. Instead, He used and is using this chronic health condition to transform me and create a greater dependence on Him. It was only as I realized why He did not remove the problem that I understood that He really knows what is best for me. Therefore, as I have eyes to see why God is allowing this condition to continue my confidence grows and I can see He really is for me.

c. Confidence that He loves you.

As we mentioned in the previous lesson, we all struggle on some level with God's love. Primarily, because we define love as humans and God's love transcends our human definition. However, as we experience changes within, our confidence will grow that He love us. Part of the reason why is that we will have a greater revelation of the height and length and depth of His love.

2. Your trust in God will grow.

This is a key point because like human relationships it is hard, if not impossible, to have an intimate relationship with someone you don't trust. It is no different with God. On some level we tend to say: "Lord, prove to me You are really trustworthy." God understands all the reasons for our distrust. Therefore, if you seek Him, He will transform your life with the result that your trust in Him will grow. As in human relationships, the more we get to know and experience God the more our trust in Him will increase.

3. Your faith in Him will increase while your unhealthy fear of Him will decrease.

"By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions." Hebrews 11:33

Part of building a spiritual history based on the truth is that our faith in God will increase as our "unhealthy" fear of God decreases. As humans we tend to have an unhealthy fear of God because we are not totally convinced He is good, is for us, etc. However, as we develop this history then we will experience a growing faith and a diminishing unhealthy fear. Our fear will become a healthy one in that we will be in awe and wonder of how God is working in our lives.

I would encourage you to read Hebrews 11 to see how these Old Testament saints walked by faith because of the history they developed with God.

4. You will see your adversity through God's purposes for your life.

"My ears had heard of you before, but now my eyes have seen you." Job 42:5

I work with many hurting people. Until they believe and experience what God is truly about in their pain then they may see their adversity as God punishing them or that He is indifferent to their pain and suffering. Without walking long enough by faith to see what God is doing in and through us in adversity then we will never see it through God's eyes. I don't think we will ever come to "enjoy" the pain (I can assure you I haven't.), but we will understand why it is necessary for our spiritual growth.

This is what happened to Job when he said "now my eyes have seen you." Job finally figured out what God was trying to accomplish in Job's life through his suffering. This is where God wants to take all of us. He wants us to have "spiritual" eyes to see how He is using pain and suffering to give us victory, freedom, healing and transformation.

5. You will find yourself more and more being stunned, overwhelmed, and in awe of this loving, gracious, and merciful God that lives within you.

This is the part of abundant living. As you seek God, experience His transformation in your life, and come to understand the truth about God then you will find yourself being stunned and more in awe of God. He truly is an awesome God. As you begin to experience this, you will know that you are in the hands of a loving, gracious, and merciful God.

Examples of The Importance Of Building A History With God

Whenever we get into conflict or some adversity, in our humanity, we tend to cry out for relief from the situation. We want the conflict to subside because no one wants to feel the pain that arises out of these circumstances. However, if we have a history with God we will draw on that history in times of adversity to go through it with God-confidence. Let's look at two, what I call, "But God" experiences to further illustrate.

1. David's "But God" Experience

To better understand this point, let's look at David's "but God" experience in Psalm 13. The first four verses describe the pain going on in David's soul.

- ¹ *"O LORD, how long will you forget me? Forever?
How long will you look the other way?"*
- ² *How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand?"*
- ³ *Turn and answer me, O LORD my God!
Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.*
- ⁴ *Don't let my enemies gloat, saying, "We have defeated him!"
Don't let them rejoice at my downfall."*

In these first four verses we see that David is in real pain. He is focused on himself and is doubting God. He is wondering where God is in the midst of his turmoil. Have you ever felt that way before? I am sure we all have. However, the good news is that this Psalm does not stop in verse 4. In fact the next word we are about to read is the key to the whole Psalm.

- ⁵ ***BUT I have trusted in Your lovingkindness;***
- ⁶ *My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.*
- ⁷ *I will sing to the LORD, Because **He** has dealt bountifully with me.*

We see the key word in this whole passage is the word **BUT**. Even though David is in this terrible situation and the pain is very real, what he says is "but (God.)" Verse 5 tells us that David has experienced many times lovingkindness of God. In verse 6 David is telling us that he rejoices in the salvation of the Lord because He has delivered David many times from adversity. In verse 7, David says that he will sing to the Lord because of God's grace and mercy towards him in the past.

2. Paul's "But God" Experience

Let me share an example of how God used Paul's circumstances and relationships to bring him to the point of BUT GOD. Look at Paul's dilemma in 2 Corinthians 1:8:

⁸ *We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. **We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it.***"

There is no doubt that Paul is in dire straights when he says that they were "crushed and overwhelmed" beyond their ability to endure. It sounds like they are at the end of their rope. Have you been there before? However, let's look at the purpose of Paul's situation in verses 9, 10:

⁹ *In fact, we expected to die. **BUT** as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead.*

¹⁰ *And he did rescue us from mortal danger, and he will rescue us again. **We have placed our confidence in him, and he will continue to rescue us.***"

Here again we see the key word BUT to understand how God was using Paul's suffering to not depend on himself but to learn to depend on God. Because of Paul's history with God, he knew there was a divine purpose in him going through his ordeal.

Therefore, it is crucial to build a history with God so that when you are in the midst of adversity, you can say "But God."

Engaging God: Seek God to move you to the place in your situation where you can say: "Lord I am in great pain BUT I will continue to trust you."

DAY FOUR

Entering Into God's Rest

We Were Designed For REST

*"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you **REST**. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

Matthew 11:28, 29 (Emphasis mine)



*And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you **REST**."*
Exodus 33:14

What kind of rest is Jesus talking about? This is more than a physical rest. Rather, it is a "soulical" rest. A supernatural rest that only Christ can provide. This rest is a part of the overflow of our abiding in Christ.

One of the key signs of transformation is experiencing Christ's rest. I have shared with you before that we were not designed to carry any stress. Just imagine holding a piece of cellophane and dropping a bowling ball on it. You know what happens next. The cellophane was not designed to carry that weight. You and I are the cellophane and ALL our stress is like bowling balls. God never intended for man to be able to handle any form of stress. That is why one of the most important "faith" words is ENTRUST. God offers a way of escape. That way is THE WAY: Christ. Our part is to continually entrust everything or everyone who is causing stress in our lives to the Lord. What He offers in return is rest.

1. We can rest in God's SOVEREIGNTY and CONTROL.

*"And the **Lord gave them rest on every side**, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand." Joshua 21:44*

I believe we are at great unrest because we have not learned how to rest in God's sovereignty and control. It takes a tremendous amount of energy to try and take God's place. It creates tension and turmoil in the soul such as anxiety, fear, and worry. However, your rest in God will grow because you are being persuaded that God REALLY is in control and you do not have to worry, be anxious, or try to manage the outcome.

2. You can rest in knowing that NOTHING will hinder God's purposes in your life.

*"The **Lord will accomplish what concerns me**; Your lovingkindness, O Lord, is everlasting . . ." Psalm 138:8*

The greatest examples of this truth are the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. His death appeared to be the biggest defeat of all time, but God was simply accomplishing His plan through the actions of men. It was, in fact, the greatest victory. For you this means that no one or nothing can thwart God's plan for your life. You can rest in the fact that God will accomplish His purposes of spiritual transformation and a deeper intimacy with Him.

3. We can rest when we QUIT trying to figure God out

*"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are **My ways higher than your ways. And My thoughts than your thoughts.**" Isaiah 55:9*

I wonder how much time we waste trying to figure God out. I know I have wasted countless hours doing just that. I ask questions such as: "Why did God allow this to happen or why won't he give me an answer (now!)?" The truth my friends is that we are finite creatures who were and never will figure God out. It is futile to spend any time there. All we need to know about God is in His word. Beyond that, we simply need to "trust" not "try" to understand.

4. We can rest because we have HOPE.

*"Then you would trust, because there is **hope**; And you would look around and **rest securely.**" Job 11:18*

Remember that hope in the New Testament means "confident expectation." We don't have the hope that the world offers. We have a guaranteed hope by God Himself. No matter what we face in life, we can face it with a confident expectation that God will work whatever situation we face

for our divine good. We can rest in the hope that no matter the extent of our failures, God will restore us. Hope and rest go hand in hand.

DAY FIVE

Reasons Why Don't We Rest

What separates us from the unbelievers is that we can enter into a supernatural, divine rest that is not available to non-Christians. However, I see many Christians are taking ownership of their stress and living in the unrest that non-Christians live. Here are some reasons why:

1. Busyness

“One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.”

Ecclesiastes 4:6

When we get caught up in the “busyness” of life, it robs us of our rest. This does not mean that we are not to be busy. However, busyness apart from Christ leads to turmoil in the soul. We may not admit that we are busy but simply take an inventory of your life.

Question: Take an inventory of your daily life. Are you resting in the in the midst of your busyness? If not, what might your busyness being robbing you of in addition to rest?

Engaging God: Seek God to expose the areas of your life where your busyness is robbing you of your rest.

2. We want to be in control

The fleshly quest of man starting in the Garden of Eden after the Fall was to be in control. It is a part of our fleshly DNA. However, trying to be in control will always rob of us our rest in Christ.

Question: Examine your life. Can you identify the areas of your life that you are trying to control? What are those areas robbing you of?

Engaging God: Seek God to expose the areas of your life where your busyness is robbing you of your rest.

3. Living in our flesh creates unrest

As we have discussed, living in the flesh will cause “soulical” stress on your thinking and emotions. The result will be misery of the soul. (i.e. worry, anxiety, fear, frustration, etc.)

We Must Be DILIGENT To Enter God's Rest

*"Therefore let us **be diligent to enter that rest**, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience." Hebrews 4:11*

Doesn't this sound like a paradox. We must be diligent to enter into God's rest. What the Hebrews writer is saying that entering God's rest has to be intentional. It is not automatic for us because we live in a stress filled body and world. Diligence connotes work. What are some examples of what it looks like to be intentional about entering into God's rest? Intentionally seek to walk dependent on Christ. Intentionally seek the Spirit to take every thought captive. Intentionally seek God as our Source for every issue we face in life.

The Overflow and God's Rest

Can you imagine how attractive your life would be if everyone around you is losing their heads but you? What if you were one of those losing your head and you saw someone at perfect rest. Wouldn't that make you just a little curious as to why they are not in the state you and everyone else is? As we walk more and more in God's rest, we find ourselves:

- 13. Resting while others are being overcome by their struggles.
- 14. Resting while others are fretting about the government, their job, etc.
- 15. Resting in the midst of what used to trouble you.

As you enter into a greater rest, your life will become more and more attractive. People will want to know why you are at rest. Especially if you are going through a very difficult time. Therefore, be ready to give an account of why you are resting.

Lesson Six

The Overflow and Growing Into A Deeper Intimacy With God

DAY ONE

Introduction

What is God's ultimate purpose in you living Life in Christ?

God's ultimate purpose is to draw you into a deeper INTIMACY with Himself.

I hope by this point that this is not new news to you because you and I were designed and created for intimacy with God. I am sure you have thought about the moment you die and in the next moment you are face to face with Jesus. I believe He is going to take us in His arms and with great enthusiasm will say, "Welcome home!" It is at that moment that we will fully understand how much God loves us. The problem is that for many believers they are not going to realize until they die that they were created for intimacy. This is why God is in the process of transforming us in order to draw us into this love relationship. You see, God does not want us to wait until we die. He wants us to know, realize, and experience His love today. This moment and every moment.

Where are you on this idea of intimacy with God? Do you know it? Do you believe it? Are you walking in it? I pray you are on the journey to greater intimacy and I hope that this lesson will help you on that journey. I want to begin by talking about key truths about the love of God for you.

God's Love

1. God In His Very Essence IS Love.

"God is love" 1 John 4:16

A light bulb can only emit light. Its essence determines its function. It was designed to emit light, and that is the source of its function. This is its makeup. So too with God. 1 John 4:16 says that God is love. It is His essence. Therefore, God by His very nature loves you because love is who He is.

Question: How might believing this truth positively impact your walk with God?

2. God's Love Is UNCONDITIONAL

Many Christians struggle with the truth that God unconditionally loves them. The reason is that as humans we cannot and do not love one another unconditionally. Therefore, it is difficult to grasp that God unconditionally loves us and that His love is unchanging. We see His unchanging love in Micah 7:18:

*“Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in **unchanging love**.”*

David calls it **unfailing** love in Psalm 25:6:

*“Remember, O Lord, **your unfailing love** and compassion, which you have shown from long ages past.”*

*“Praise the Lord, for he has shown me the wonders of **His unfailing love**...” Psalm 3:21*

What does it mean that God loves you unconditionally?

1. God's love does not change toward you based upon what you do (or do not do).
2. Even if you decide to walk away from God, He still loves you.
3. When you are angry, upset, or frustrated with God, He still loves you.
4. Even when you sin, God loves you. (Remember that He does not condone sin, but that does not change His love for you.)
5. Think of your worst enemy. God loves them unconditionally as well.

Key Point: I wanted to add to the truth that even when you sin, God loves you. When you do sin, however it does affect your relationship with Him. Notice I said that it affects your relationship with Him, not His love for you.

Let me give you an example. Let's assume a happily married couple had a serious argument. They both selfishly were standing there ground. Obviously as long as they don't resolve the issue it will negatively impact their relationship. They still are married but until repentance takes place the harmony of the relationship is impacted. The same with God. When you sin, you cut off His life flowing in and through you. You are still in union with Him but the harmony of the relationship has been impacted. Therefore, when you are convicted of sin, repent of that sin and the harmony of your relationship is immediately restored.

Question: How might believing this truth positively impact your walk with God?

Engaging God: If you struggle with believing that God unconditionally loves you, ask Him to begin renewing your mind to the truth that He does unconditionally love you.

God's love toward you is NOT affected by whether or not you love Him, trust Him, or believe in Him. It is based solely upon His essence.

3. God Has Loved You For An ETERNITY!

*“Long ago, even before He made the world, God **loved** us (you) and **chose** us (you) in Christ...”*
Ephesians 1:4 (NLT)

The truth according to this scripture is that God has loved you for an eternity. His love for you stretches from eternity past through the present and to eternity future. Can you imagine God’s anticipation and excitement of you being born so that you could experience the unconditional love that He has loved you with for an eternity?

God’s love for you is so great in that at conception there were approximately 500 million possible genetic combinations, and God chose YOU to be born.

Question: How might believing this truth positively impact your walk with God?

DAY TWO

4. You Can NEVER Be Separated From God’s Love

*“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, **will be able to separate us from the love of God** that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38, 39*

Some Christians believe that they can do something to lose their salvation or can do something to separate themselves from God’s love. That “something” usually comes in the form of sin. However, that is why God died for your sin so that sin is no longer a barrier to His love. Romans 8:38, 39 destroys that lie. There is NOTHING that you can do (or not do) to separate you from His love. Therefore, you can never lose your salvation or His love for you.

Question: How might believing this truth positively impact your walk with God?

Engaging God: If you believe that there is something that you can do to make God stop loving you, ask Him to destroy that lie and to replace it with the truth that there is NOTHING that you can do (or not do) to stop Him from loving you. If you struggle with the security of your salvation, meditate on these verses and ask God to begin persuading you that you can’t ever be separated from His love and that you can never lose your salvation.

5. God Loves You As A PERFECT Father Would Love

*“And He was saying, ‘**Abba!** Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt.’” Mark 14:36*

We all have (or had) imperfect fathers (and mothers). The problem is that we are all still searching for a perfect father. God is the answer to that search. God is your perfect “abba” which translated means “daddy.” As Jesus referred to the Father as “Daddy,” you are invited to do the same. You can come to God as a loving daddy who is waiting with outstretched arms to pour His love into your life.

Question: How might believing this truth positively impact your walk with God?

Engaging God: If you did not have a good father figure, then it may be difficult to understand just how much your heavenly Father loves you. Begin seeking God to reveal to you the truth that He is the perfect “Abba” that you have been looking for.

6. God is PURSUING You With His Love

*“Surely, goodness and **unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life.**” Psalm 23:6*

Psalm 23:6 tells you that God’s love toward you is not passive. He is actively pursuing you with His love every moment of your life. He will not stop until He has totally captured you with His love. When I think of a pursuing love, I think of when I was dating my wife. I was pursuing her intentionally and intensely with my love. Eternally more than we can pursue someone with our love, God is pursuing you with His love. His greatest desire is that He wants you to understand and experience His love in full measure (Ephesians 3:16-19).

A key point to remember is that even when you have turned your back on God, or are wallowing in a prodigal pigpen, or are running from Him, He is pursuing you with His love. Imagine for a moment the God of the universe seeking you out to love no matter where you are (or are not) spiritually or what you have done. What a difference it would make if we could only understand the magnitude of God’s desire to love and be loved by us.

Question: How might believing this truth positively impact your walk with God?

Meditate: on Psalm 23:6

Engaging God: Ask God to renew your mind to the truth that He is pursuing you non-stop with His love.

Because of His Love He is Interested In EVERY Detail Of Your Life

I have had a number of people over the years tell me that they don’t believe God is interested in the small or insignificant details of their lives. I have heard such statements as: “God doesn’t really care about where we live” or “God is not interested in which fly rod I buy.” Sometimes we use these statements as an excuse to not seek His will.

However, most people say these things because they don’t really believe that God has bigger issues to deal with than what kind of fly rod you buy. The truth is that God is very interested in

every detail of your life. Look at Psalm 139:1-3 which confirms this:

“O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.” Psalm 139:1-3.

Remember that the eternal God lives within you and part of the reason God did that was to let you know that He knows and cares about every detail in your life because of His love for you. Think of it. God is really interested in the fly rod you buy!

***Because of His love for you God cares and wants to be involved in
EVERY detail of your life.***

Because Of His Love God ENJOYS Being With You

It was some time ago that I found myself struggling in ministry. I did not know the source of the struggle. So after I shared my struggle with a good friend, he began sharing this story.

He said that as a younger man he would be washing his car and his three kids would come out to help him. The problem was that they weren't any taller than the tires. All they could do is pick up a sponge and throw a little soap and water on the car.

My friend was the one who was really washing the car but the greater purpose than getting the car washed is that he was enjoying spending time with his kids and they were enjoying being with their dad. He said it is the same thing with God. God just enjoys hanging out with you. We see this in Zephaniah 3:17

*“The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; **He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.**”*

I hope you have read this passage before. It is very powerful. Think about it. The Lord enjoys YOU and He is singing over YOU at this very moment. It may be hard to imagine that God loves to be with you but is it possible that one of the reasons He put Himself in union with you is to be with you every moment? Think about the following statement.

***EVERY moment of EVERY day God ENJOYS being with you and
He is taking you to the place where you will ENJOY HIM.***

Enjoyment is a two way street. He enjoys you and His desire is for you to enjoy Him. Are you?

Engaging God: Go back and read through Zephaniah 3:17 very slowly and just let the Lord persuade you that He enjoys being with you every moment and that enjoys you so much that He breaks out in singing over you.

DAY THREE

Living From Our Union (Divine Center) With God

Another key element of the overflow of Christ in us is to experience and enjoy living from our union with Christ. Here are some verses that reveal our union in Christ.

*“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because **we are united with Christ**.” Ephesians 1:3*

*“But now **you have been united with Christ Jesus**. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:13*

We remember from these verses that we have been united with Christ in our human spirit. I call living from our union with God in our human spirit living from our “divine center.” What do you remember about our human spirit? First of all, at salvation, the old human spirit that was dead to sin and alive to God was crucified. (Romans 6:6) In addition to God crucifying our old human spirit, He gave us a new human spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17) that is dead to sin and alive to God.

It is through our human spirit that we receive revelation from the Spirit about His word and about Himself. It is through our human spirit that we discern God’s will for our lives. However, I believe the most important thing about living from our union in Christ is that it is the place to know God intimately.

Our divine center is designed to be a safe and secure place to live. Here are some verses that bear this out.

*“For You are **my hiding place**; You protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory.” Psalm 32:7*

*“The LORD is **my rock**, **my fortress** and **my deliverer**; my God is **my rock**, in whom I take refuge. He is **my shield** and the horn of my salvation, **my stronghold**.” Psalm 18:2*

*“¹The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. ²He lets me rest in **green meadows**; he leads me beside **peaceful streams**.” Psalm 23:1-2*

I hope you can see the application of these verses to living from your union with Christ. What about living from the soul? We know that the soul is in the process of being transformed. That is the good news. The bad news is that between our thought life, our emotions, the influence of the flesh, power of sin and Satan on the soul that it our soul is like a roller coaster.

It can be positive and negatively influenced by circumstances and relationships. Sometimes the soul can be a safe place but there are times when you would just like to get out of your soul because of all the turmoil you are experiencing. I call the soul the “wild card” because of it’s instability.

On the other hand, living from our union in Christ will always be a quiet, steady, and stable place to live. It is also from the divine center that we experience a deep, abiding presence of the

Lord and grow into a deeper relationship with Him.

Part Of The Overflow Is Communing With God

*“I have set the Lord **continually** before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.” Psalm 16:8*

Another wonderful part of the overflow is my growing desire to commune with God moment by moment. My communion with Him is no longer about setting certain times with Him. I want to interact with Him, seek Him, and listen to Him all throughout the day. Think about a person that you really enjoy being with. (If you are married, I hope that person is your spouse.)

You enjoy their conversation and the way that they listen and affirm you. It is the same way with God. Remember what we said previously that eternally more than you enjoy being with Him, He enjoys being with you. He wants to commune with you and is moving you to a place where your greatest ongoing desire is to commune with Him.

Engaging God: Seek to commune with God all during the day. Ask Him to bring Himself to your mind as you go through the day.

A. Communing Involves Spending Time ALONE With God

Why is being alone with Him necessary? Let me use my marriage as an example. How can I know my wife intimately unless we spend personal time together? If the radio or TV was always on or we were always around a group of people, it would be impossible to get to know one another intimately. It is the same with the Lord. He wants us to spend that time with Him to get to know Him. This thought may help you see the importance of this truth.

One of God's GREATEST desires is to spend time ALONE with you.

Is this one of your greatest desires?

Engaging God: If you feel that you are too busy to spend time alone with God, ask Him to show you that there is no greater priority in life than setting aside time alone with Him. Seek Him to give you a willingness to make that a priority and a necessity.

1. Living From The Overflow Creates A DESIRE To Spend Time With The Lord

As the Lord began to transform me, the overflow of the transformation was that my quiet time went from being an obligation and a seminary class to becoming a desire and an experience of the Spirit of God. Another way of saying it is that quiet time went from being a “have to” to being a “want to.” What was the difference? When I discovered that spending time with the Lord was for the purpose of “experiencing” God rather than studying about Him, the obligation was replaced by the desire to be with Him.

Now, instead of me determining what I want to read, I ask the Spirit to show me what He wants me to read in scripture or in a book. Sometimes He will take me to a specific scripture. If

He doesn't, then I will start reading the Bible and the Spirit will sometimes lead me to another passage.

In addition I ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to me something personal about what I am reading. I ask Him to give me personal application as well. Instead of my reading and study being an intellectual exercise, it is an experience of the Holy Spirit flowing in and through my mind as I participate with Him..

Engaging God: As you read and study the Bible, intentionally ask the Holy Spirit to give you greater revelation and personal application for what you are reading.

2. Look At Your Time With The Lord As PARTICIPATING With Him

Another way of describing a quiet time is that it is a time of participating with God. Remember that I have said many times that the Christian life is not a life of **imitation**. Rather, it is a life of **participation** with God.

Think about this for a moment. If you feel led to have a quiet time, then God has something He wants to reveal to you during that time with Him. Therefore, look at your quiet time as coming to the Lord and participating with Him and His agenda. A way to put it into words is: "Lord, I am coming to You to see what You want to reveal to me today." This may change the whole way that you look at your time with the Lord.

3. Being Alone With God Includes STILLNESS

*"Be **STILL** and **KNOW** that I am God"*
Psalms 46:10

When I see this verse it begs the question: "If we are NOT still, can we still know God?" I believe this passage is very clear that stillness is required to know God. We can learn about God through His word, prayer, etc. However, to know God intimately we at some point learn to be still.

There is a book by a woman named Jeanne Guyon called "*Experiencing The Depths of Jesus Christ*." In it, she focuses on spending time in God's presence. There are at least three things we can do in God's presence. We can pray, we can listen, and we can rest in His presence. This may be a foreign topic for you but one that I believe is necessary for deeper intimacy and transformation.

What do I mean by "resting" in God's presence? To put it simply, it is finding a quiet place to sit in His presence. Resting in God's presence does not include talking or even listening to God. It is a matter of receiving from God in stillness. This is part of what is meant in Psalm 46:10 by being still and "knowing." We can know God in a number of ways such as through His truth, through pastors and teachers, through prayer, and through listening. But I believe that there is even a deeper knowing of God that can only come through stillness. I say this because I have read about other believer's experience, talked to others who have experienced this deeper knowing, and I have experienced it myself.

It is difficult how to put into words what I have experienced but I know that God has done a deeper work of transformation and given me a greater freedom through being still before Him. This stillness or resting in God's presence is difficult for many people to understand because we

are not talking or necessarily listening for God to say something to us.

DAY FOUR

4. Early On What You May Encounter In Your Stillness Before God

a. “Soulical ADD”

If you choose to do this, I would recommend that you start out just spending a few minutes in a quiet place. You will initially find yourself thinking two minutes is an eternity. You will experience several thoughts going through your mind non-stop. This is because even though your body is at rest, your mind is not. I call this “soulical ADD.” We jump from one thought to another and then find ourselves not focusing on God. We get frustrated because we cannot hold our attention for more than a few seconds. This is normal when you first begin to spend time with the Lord.

One way that you can begin to settle your mind is to focus on a word or a scripture. Every time you find your mind wandering just bring that word or scripture to mind. You might even start with Psalm 46:10. As your soul gets quieter, you will find yourself hearing more clearly from the Lord. It is a practice that will take time but as it becomes a “holy habit” then one of your greatest priorities will be to spend time in stillness before the Lord.

Engaging God: If you find your mind wandering in your quiet time, seek God to bring you back to focusing on Him.

b. Frustration

When we can’t focus on the Lord with our wandering minds we can tend to become frustrated. If you feel that frustration coming up, simply entrust the frustration to the Lord and ask Him to give you His peace. Early on you may have to be more intentional about entrusting your frustration to Him. However, at some point you will find yourself becoming more consistently focused on Him. Remember that you may get frustrated with your lack of focus on Him during your times with Him but He never gets frustrated with you. Why? Because you made the choice to spend time with Him.

Final Thought: Is It Possible That God Wants To Be With You Regardless

Have you thought about the fact that even though you may have trouble focusing on the Lord that He is pleased that you would spend time with Him. He knows that you may not be able to focus but He is enjoying you in spite of your soulical ADD and frustration.

Let me end this section with this question. Why is there no greater priority than spending time with God?

***Because spending time simply being in His presence is
one of the deepest acts of intimacy with God.***

B. Communing With God Involves LISTENING

1. Does God Still Speak?

Many Christians confess to me that they spend very little time listening to God. I do understand. However, do you believe God has something to say to you concerning all that you face in life? Look at these verses and draw your own conclusions.

*“He wakens me morning by morning, **wakens my ear to listen** like one being taught.”
Isaiah 50:4*

*“for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. **Today, if you hear his voice**, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah.....” Psalm 95:7-8a*

*“I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. **They will listen to my voice**, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.” John 10:16*

*“Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone **hears My voice** and opens the door I will come in and eat with him and he with me.” Revelation 3:20*

I believe it is safe to say that God wants speak to each one of us. However, learning to hear from God requires practice. Use the example of driving a standard transmission car. In the beginning it is difficult but soon you can work the clutch and shift gears smoothly and effortlessly. The more practice we have concerning listening to God the more effortlessly it will become to listen to Him.

Let’s look at some of the ways God uses to speak to us.

2. Some Of The Various Ways God Speaks To Us

a. Through His Word

God speaks to us through various means. The foundation of how God speaks to us is through His Word. As we read and meditate on the truths of the Bible, God reveals to us His truth. As I meditate on God’s word I ask the Holy Spirit to give me revelation of what I am reading. When the Spirit does reveal something to me personally, I get what I call an “Oh I see.” I simply define an “Oh I see” that as the Lord supernaturally making a scripture personal to me.

b. Through Your Thoughts



The Holy Spirit is working non-stop through your thoughts to reveal the origin of your thoughts and to let you know whether or not those thoughts are the truth or a lie. The Holy Spirit also convicts you when you end up taking ownership of a fleshly thought and commit sin(s) as a result. He is revealing to you the thoughts that you need to entrust to Him for Him to take captive. The Holy Spirit is also guiding and directing your life every moment. He inserts thoughts into your mind as a way of revealing His will for you. This is the most common way that I hear the Lord.

c. Through People

It amazes me how God can be speaking through another person and I at some point realize that it is God talking to me. Have you ever sat in church and thought that the pastor's message was written just for you. It is like he was reading your mail.

God can use people to reveal His will or His truth to you. Many times God has spoken through my wife and close friends to reveal to me if I am moving in God's will and direction or if what I am thinking is from God or not. God can and will speak through spouses, friends, co-workers and yes, even little children.

Engaging God: When you listen to someone, be asking the Lord if He is speaking through them to you. Ask Him to give you ears to hear His voice through another person.

d. Through Circumstances

God uses positive and negative circumstances to speak to us. For example, you are about to purchase a home, but before you make a down payment, you lose your job. God could be telling you through that circumstance to not buy that house.

3. Can God Speak Audibly?



Yes, God can speak audibly. I know folks that have heard an audible word from God. I must say that I have never heard an audible voice even though there are times that I felt like I did because the thought was so "loud" in my mind. It would be a lot easier if God did speak in an audible voice but you may go through your entire life not hearing God speaking audibly.

4. You May Be Spiritually Hard of Hearing Early On

Early on in my spiritual walk I was "hard of hearing" when it came to listening to the Lord. It was a little frustrating because I felt like sometimes I was straining to hear but could not detect the Spirit's voice. However, as I have logged more time in walking with the Lord my "spiritual" hearing continues to improve. Similar to having a hearing aid, the volume with which to hear His voice tends to increase as I grow deeper in my walk God.

The good news is that God's voice will become clearer and clearer as you closer with Him. The problem is that many folks are hoping that they hear from God even though they are not walking with Him by faith.

There are no SHORTCUTS when it comes to hearing God.

Only as you walk with Him continuously will His voice

grow louder and clearer.

5. Hearing God To Know His Will

I get several calls from Christians asking me to tell them what God's will is concerning a decision that needs to be made. As much as I would like to tell them God's will, most of the time I have no idea what God's will is for them. However, I always encourage them to go to God and hear from Him. I want to spend a few minutes on this subject because it is so crucial to our relationship with Him and to knowing what His will is for us.

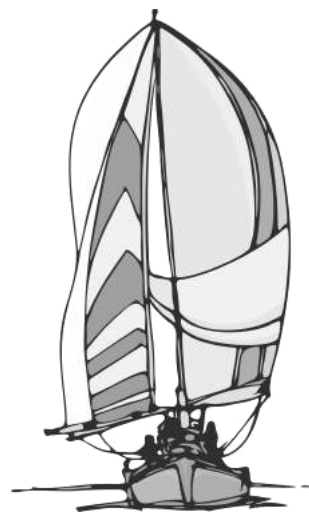
DAY FIVE

6. What Might Be Some Of The Results If I Continue To Not Hear From God?

Christians many times share with me that they are truly seeking God for an answer to a specific request. They continue seeking God and are waiting on an answer, but they either can't hear God, or He has not spoken. The question then becomes, "What do I do since I have not heard from God?" It is at this point that you have several options.

One option is that you decide to take matters into your "fleshly" hands and step out and do something independently of God. Secondly, you continue waiting to hear from God. Thirdly, you step out on faith and move in a direction that you believe is the right one. The key to this option is to continue listening as you walk by faith in the direction that you think is right. You then continue to be open to a change of direction from the Spirit as you move forward.

An analogy might be to imagine yourself being in a sailboat. The Holy Spirit is the wind that moves the sails and is also the spiritual rudder that moves you in the direction that He desires. Your part is to let the Spirit be your "divine" energy and to guide you. The temptation will be to take control of the rudder. This is where you get into trouble. You feel that God is not answering soon enough or does not care, so Satan or the flesh says, "Grab the rudder and steer in the direction that you want." However, if you keep your hands off of the rudder and keep living by faith, then you are depending upon the Spirit to guide you.



We believe that we need to always be hearing from God in order to know His direction, will, and purpose. However, many times you may not hear from God because He is simply wanting you to walk by faith and know by faith that He will redirect your steps if necessary. What God is teaching us when we don't hear from Him is faith.

Let me give you an example. My wife and I were asked by a mission director to go to Ecuador to minister to missionaries there. We both started seeking the Lord, but we did not receive a "yes" or "no" answer. We continued to walk by faith and yet still did not hear from God. On the last day to buy the discount airline tickets we had still not heard from the Lord, but we bought the tickets with an attitude of dependence.

We told the Lord that even though we bought the tickets that He could say "No" prior to the plane departing, and we would then not go. The truth is that we never heard God's voice concerning whether or not He wanted us to go. Only when we got back home did the Lord reveal that what He was trying to teach us that making a decision by faith was more important than hearing a specific answer

C. Communing With God Involves MEDITATION

1. Meditation On God's Word.

*"My eyes are awake throughout the night watches that I may **meditate on Your word.**"*

Psalm 119:148

You have seen throughout this study that I have asked you to meditate on certain scriptures and truths. I hope by this point that you are seeing the value of meditating on God's word. The desire to spend time in meditation will be part of the overflow of Christ living in you. I trust that through that meditation that the Spirit will take you from head knowledge to revelation of His word. I also trust that through meditation that your relationship with Him will grow stronger and more intimate.

2. Meditation On God Himself

*"When I remember You on my bed, **I meditate on You** in the night watches." Psalm 63:6*

Meditation is not only for meditating on God's word but more importantly God wants you to meditate on Himself. Look at how David meditated on God in Psalms 8: 1:

"O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens!"

As you read through the Psalms, you will see how David and others meditate on the glorious splendor of God Himself. As you meditate on God through these Psalms, thank and praise Him for who He is and what He has done in your life.

Conclusion

This brings us to the end of this book. I trust it has given you deeper insight into what it means to live from the overflow of Christ whether it is overflow of seeing others through the eyes of Christ, ministering to them from the overflow or developing a deeper intimacy with God as a result of the overflow. I want to end this four book discipleship course with two reminders.

1. Remember The ONE Thing That Is Necessary

*"38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.' 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but **only one thing is necessary**, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'" Luke 10:38-42*

When Jesus says that "only one thing is necessary," I believe we need to pay close attention. We first learn from Jesus's response to Martha that doing something FOR Jesus was not the "one thing." Martha was busy and distracted by focusing on herself and what she was doing for the Lord. What is the one thing that is necessary?

The ONE THING that is NECESSARY is to constantly be focused on JESUS.

Another way of saying it is to be constantly at Jesus' feet. What does it mean to be at Jesus' feet? First and foremost, it is living in a moment by moment dependence on Him. In addition, it is listening to Him, receiving from Him and being willing to respond to what He wants for your life. Ultimately, I believe we stay at Jesus' feet to experience a deeper intimacy with Him. Like Mary, we should desire intimacy with the Lord more than anything.

2. Jesus IS Enough

*"For from Him and through Him and to Him are **all things**..." Romans 11:36*

*"...the fullness of Him **who fills all in all**." Ephesians 1:23*

*"...**My grace is sufficient** for you..." 2 Corinthians 12:9*

Think about 2 Corinthians 12:9. Since Christ is the source for grace then we can safely reword this verse to say that "Jesus is sufficient for you." In other words, Jesus is all you need because He is enough.

I was talking to a counselor friend of mine and was relating some of my personal struggles. She patiently listened and when I was through speaking, there was silence for a few moments. Then she said very lovingly "Apparently, Jesus is **not** enough."

I must admit that her words felt like a dagger through my heart for a few moments. Why did she say that? Because I was subtly trying to find life outside of Christ. The Spirit revealed (exposed) that I was trying to find some identity, value and worth in ministry instead of Christ. What is the truth? Because I have all of those things in Christ I don't need to look for them in ministry or any place else.

Where Christ is taking all of us in our journey is to the place where He IS enough. We will be tempted from time to time to go to some "fleshly" far country and try to find life. However, the Lord is gracious enough to not let us find life in anything or anyone outside of Himself.

Therefore, I pray that all that you have learned through these four books have deepened your dependence on Christ and your intimacy with Him. I pray that these truths are transforming your thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors. I hope you can look back to when you began learning these truths and see a different person. You are on an amazing journey that will feel like a roller coaster at times but the key thing to remember is that you know that Jesus, your "divine" benchmark, is the one to go back to. Therefore, in the words of Paul,

PRESS ON!

Press on because there is so much more to learn and experience in Christ.

APPENDIX

God Will Not Give You MAPQUEST!

*“A man’s heart plans his way, but **the Lord directs his steps.**” Proverbs 16:9*



I think that you are like me in that you would like your Christian journey to be like Mapquest. We know that the spiritual destination is to be transformed into Christ-likeness. What we want is a spiritual Mapquest that tells us the route we are going to take and how long it will take to get there.

The truth is that our Christian walk is more like a GPS than Mapquest in that GPS only gives you the next turn to make. God is your “divine” GPS who will direct your steps. We will only get the next step not the next three or four steps. Early on we will struggle with not knowing the next several steps. This is primarily due to that fact that we want to be in control. However, we will learn over time to be satisfied with just knowing the next step.

The Journey IS The Destination.

There is a tendency in our Christian journey to reach a place where we have arrived at being tranformed. This is an illusion because transformation is a life-long process. However, what a difference it would make if the journey IS the destination.



What I mean is that by every step of faith that you take, you are “arriving” at a new level of transformation. From the last step of faith until this one, your mind is more renewed, the healing of your woundedness is increased, and your more free than the previous step. It is a difficult concept because we all want to reach a spiritual goal of being totally free, totally victorious and totally transformed. However, the Christian life is NOT about reaching spiritual goals. It is about a continuing journey of dependence, transformation, and intimacy with

God. So roll down the window, smell the roses, and enjoy the journey. The presumption is that we have a next moment. Jesus says: “I AM

The Walk of Faith Is Perplexing. Learn To REST In Your Perplexity.

I had been in ministry for about nine years, and I discovered that the more I ministered the Christ-life truths, the more perplexed I got about why people and pastors were not receptive to the Christ-life truths. I could not understand why married couples on the brink of divorce failed to take hold of the truths that would set them free. I could not figure out why Christians wanted to live in their prodigal pigpens versus becoming radically transformed.



You will feel the same about your Christian walk. You will be perplexed by what God is doing or is not doing. You will want to know “why” something happened or did not happen. You will be perplexed about why it may be taking so long to be transformed in an area of your life. You are in good company because the apostle Paul was perplexed as well when he said in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9,

*“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; **perplexed, but not despairing**; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”*

In my perplexity, I went to the Lord and asked him what the purpose of my perplexity was. He communicated to me that I would be perplexed for the rest of my life. He said that perplexity creates a need for dependence upon Him with the result that I could rest in my perplexity. What this means for us is that when it comes to God’s work in our lives, we will stay perplexed. We will try to figure out what God is doing but it will only make us more perplexed. Therefore, let your perplexity created by your walk of faith take you to a greater dependence upon Him. As you do, you will begin to rest in your perplexity and realize that God is in control and that He knows what He has purposed for your life.

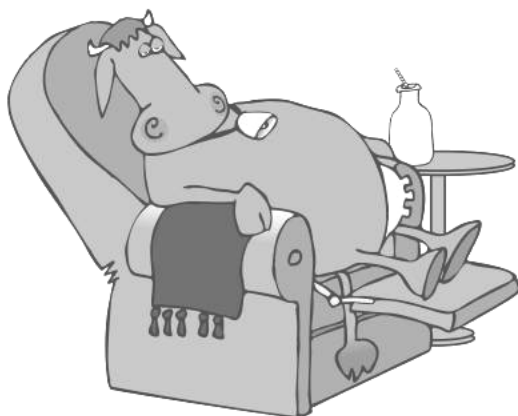
PERPLEXITY creates a need for DEPENDENCE, which will result in REST.

One final thought on this subject. The military has an expression called “need to know.” The point is that if you need to know something they will tell you. Otherwise, you don’t need to know. It is the same with God. If you need to know something from God, He will tell you. Otherwise, simply trust Him that He knows and it is not important for you to know.

Engaging God: If you experience perplexity in your Christian walk, seek God in greater dependence so that you will experience a greater rest in your perplexity.

There Will Be The Temptation To Get Into A Soulical La-Z-Boy.

*“I **press on** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*
Philippians 3:14



As I have said before, knowledge of the truth is important, but knowledge without revelation will never lead to transformation. However, there is another temptation that you will have along your journey. As you learn more and experience more about Christ living in you, there will be a temptation to get in your soulical La-Z-Boy and be satisfied with where you are in your Christian walk.

The problem is that the moment that you get into that La-Z-Boy is the moment when you start losing your spiritual momentum. As that happens, you will be an easy target for your flesh, the power of sin, and Satan/demons. When you are tempted in this area, remember the words of Paul in Philippians 3:14 when he says, “**I press on.**” It is crucial to always press on and to never succumb to the soulical La-Z-Boy.

Engaging God: Ask God to reveal to you when you are sitting in your soulful La-Z-Boy, and ask Him to give you the desire to press on in your walk with Him.

Engaging God: Ask God to remind you when you are in the pain, suffering, conflict, or brokenness that He is working a “divine good” out of the situation.

You Will Learn To EMBRACE The “Thorns” That You Want Removed.



As I have shared with you, I have a chronic health condition called chronic fatigue. It used to create hours of fatigue where I could not move, think, or function. I would cry out to God for Him to remove the thorn. I was prayed over, anointed with oil, and had everything done to me for healing. I even got to a place where I said, “Let’s make a deal. You heal me, and I will serve you.” My friends, it has been over thirty years since I said that, and so far I have not been healed.

Was God punishing me through this “thorn” of fatigue? It seemed like it at the time. However, as I look back over these past several years, I see the divine good that has come out of it. It would take too long to describe to you the many ways that God has not only used my thorn for my good but how He has used it to encourage others and to transform their lives.

You may have a “thorn” in your life. It may be a person, circumstance, or health condition. Know with confidence that if it is not removed, God is using it for divine good. Therefore:

Learn to EMBRACE the thorn that you want God to remove.

Engaging God: Ask God to reveal to you the purpose of your “thorn.” If He does not reveal that to you, ask Him to give you the desire to embrace the thorn versus getting it removed..

God Will Create A Greater “Environment” Of Christ.

As we grow in our relationship with Christ, God is creating in us and around us an “environment” of Christ. The best analogy that I can think of to relate this concept is when I was “in love” with my then future wife. I could not get her off my mind. I ate, drank, slept, and worked with her on my mind. She was never far from my thoughts. This is where Christ is taking us on our walk of faith. Not only is He transforming us, but He is also creating an environment where He will be more and more on our minds and in our hearts as we grow in our faith walk..

Let me use “The Line” analogy to explain. In your human spirit you are in union with God. You can’t be any closer to God than you are now in your human spirit. However, the awareness of God’s presence grows as you walk by faith. You will have a greater sense of His presence, an ongoing desire to think about Him, and a greater willingness to respond to His will and purpose in your life.

Growing Awareness of God's Presence

UNION WITH GOD

SPIRIT

SOUL

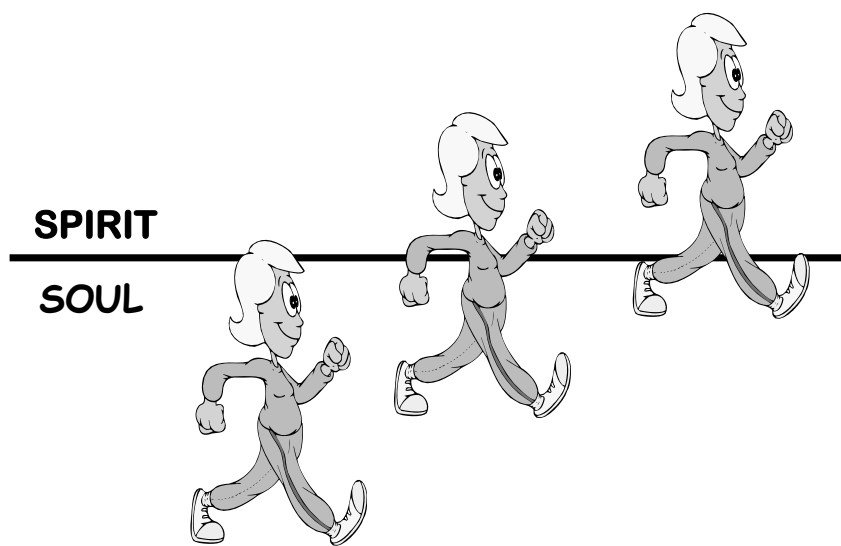


The longer your walk of faith, the greater the ENVIRONMENT of Christ.

Living Above "The Line" Will Become A Greater Reality To You.

As you will see in the diagram below, we initially spend more of our time early on in our walk of faith living below "The Line" in our soul. However, as we continue to walk by faith we will find ourselves spending more of our time above "The Line." Eventually we will come to a place where the spirit realm of faith is a greater reality to us than the soul realm of our experience. The truth is that we have to live in our soul and our spirit simultaneously. As we mature in our faith, the unseen realm of faith will grow to become more real than the seen realm of feelings and experiences.

Living In Your Spirit Will Become A Greater Reality



Let me give you an example to illustrate. Let's assume that you believe and feel that you are an unforgiving person because you can't seem to forgive yourself or someone else. As you walk by faith, God begins to renew your mind to the truth that in your true identity you are a forgiving person. Early on in your walk, your beliefs and feelings of unforgiveness are stronger than God's truth. However, as you continue walking by faith, and God renews your mind, you will begin to find yourself choosing to forgive. At some point along the journey, you will be so persuaded of the truth that your desire will be to forgive instantaneously and completely.

At some point in your walk of faith you will find the unseen, faith realm in your spirit to be a greater REALITY than the seen, experiential realm in your soul.

God Is Moving Us From A Self-Focused To A CHRIST-FOCUSED Filter.

God is moving you from living from a "self-focused" filter to living from a "Christ-focused filter." Let's look at some of the contrasts between a self-focused and a Christ-focused filter:

Self- Focused Filter

"I can live the Christian life independent of Christ."

"I can transform myself."

"In this struggle, my only option is to try to resolve it or just cope with it."

"This situation is hopeless."

"I can't possibly forgive this person for what they did."

"Why is this happening to me?"

"I want to give up on my walk of faith."

Christ-Focused Filter

"I am totally dependent on Christ to live His life in and through me."

"Only the Holy Spirit can transform me."

"In this struggle, my only option is to draw on Christ's wisdom, peace, patience, etc."

"My hope (Christ-confidence) is in Christ."

"I can forgive them because of who I am as a forgiving person in my true identity."

"There is a divine purpose for what I am going through."

"If I give up, my only option will be to go back to my flesh."

You will find as you spend more time in your walk of faith that you will be living more and more from a Christ-filter. You will find yourself in difficult if not impossible situations but instead of going to your intellect or flesh for the answer, God's truth will kick in, and you will be thinking with the "mind of Christ" and making choices based on His truth.

As you develop a CHRIST-FOCUSED filter, you will begin to see

everything in your life with the SPIRITUAL eyes of Christ.

Eventually you will realize that this is about Christ and Christ alone.

“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” Philippians 3:7, 8

Summary Of The Four Part Study

We are almost at the end of the four part study titled *Living A Transformed Life In Christ*. I want to spend a few minutes encapsulating what we have learned through these four parts before we end the study.

Part One - Living Life From A New Source

6. Only Christ in us can live the Christian life.
7. God put the fullness of Himself and His life and power in us to transform us into Christ-likeness.
8. This work of transformation is a supernatural work.
9. Our part in God's process is dependence/faith.
10. There will be an ongoing fight of faith.

Part Two - Do You Know Your True Identity?

11. God crucified your old identity, which was made up of your false beliefs.
12. He gave you a new identity in Christ.
13. God is in the process of transforming you so that you live from your true identity.

Part Three - Being Transformed

14. God is in the process of renewing your mind to believe His truth.
15. There will be an ongoing battle in your mind as you face resistance from the flesh, the power of sin, and Satan and his demonic forces.
16. God promises to heal your damaged emotions so that they will line up with the truth.
17. God's desire is to transform your will so that you will choose to live from your Christ-likeness.
18. God loves you enough that He will bring the “all things” into your life to move you from unwillingness to willingness to be in union with Him.

Part Four - Living From The Overflow of Christ

19. Living from the overflow of Christ will produce Christ-like attitudes.
20. As we are being transformed, we will come to see God as He really is.
21. As we experience supernatural changes, our Christ-confidence in God will grow.
22. Ministry and eternal good works will be the overflow of living from Christ.

23. God wants to transform the lives of other people through you.

Where Do I Go From Here?

You have just finished Book Four of the four part discipleship series called ***Living A Transformed Live In Christ***. I have several other studies available to you on our website. If you are interested please go to the Store section of our website which is www.christislifeministries.com The following are some additional studies that we offer:

- **The Key To A Christ-Centered Marriage**
- **Living As A Real Man In Christ**
- **Living From Christ In The Workplace**

You can purchase them online or email your order to our email address below. Or, you can download these materials for free and reproduce as many copies as you would like.

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(8-1-18)