

TRANSFORMATION

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27)



Transformation

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Have you ever considered the fact that God's worldview and people's worldview are different? (See Prov 16:25, 21:2; Isa 55:6-11) Popular opinion and religious traditions have influenced everyone except the omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God.

Your reading this indicates that you may have reached a time in your life where you have a teachable spirit and are ready to take a fresh look at the worldview of God. If this is true, you will have fun learning to increase your intimacy and peace with God and others.

Most topics are multifaceted. Though effort has been made to be balanced, certainly not every facet is covered here. This is more of a springboard to stimulate your thinking and motivate you to study the Bible more thoroughly.

You may not agree with everything presented here, but chew on it and keep reading. We welcome your feedback at JesusForKing.com!

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True Worship

Worship defined in Hebrew, Greek, and English:

Old Testament Hebrew

Shachah - To depress, i.e. prostrate (especially reflexive, in homage to royalty or God)

New Testament Greek

Proskuneo - To fawn or crouch to, i.e. (literally or figuratively) prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore)

English

Worship - The reverent love and devotion accorded a deity, an idol, or a sacred object

Old Testament Worship

Fifteen hundred years before Christ, God had Moses build a tabernacle (i.e. tent), and five hundred years later Solomon built a temple in Jerusalem, where the glory of the Lord dwelt. Old Testament worship (*shachah*) consisted of literally bowing down – physical prostration – before the Lord.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. (Ex 40:34-35)

The Jews went up to the House of the Lord to worship the King of kings. Three times each year they were required to do this (see Deut 16), at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and the Feast of Booths.

Some Greeks were among those who were going up to worship at the feast. (John 12:20)

There was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship. (Acts 8:27)

Satan has always desired what belongs to God:

Again, the devil took [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’” (Matt 4:8-10)

Satan has a hard time getting people to worship him directly, so he often uses counterfeits to get people to worship something besides God. He used idols (e.g. statues, graven images) and idol temples in imitation of God’s temple. Many of the idol temples promoted gross immorality to attract a following. God’s prophets tried to bring idolaters to their senses. Isaiah said of an idolater:

Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak... Then it becomes something for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it. Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, “Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire.” But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god.” (Isa 44:14-17)

New Testament Worship

Jesus, who was a Jew, introduced us to New Testament worship (*proskuneo*) in a discussion with a Samaritan woman. The Samaritans did not worship God at the temple in Jerusalem on Mount Zion like the Jews did; they worshiped at a different mountain. The woman said to Jesus:

“Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:20-24)

True worship of the Father is done in spirit. No longer does God dwell in a temple made by human hands where we go to worship Him at certain times. His glory now dwells in the hearts of Christians, where we can truly worship Him all the time in any place. “Such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.”

The Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says: “Heaven is My throne, and earth is the footstool of My feet; what kind of house will you build for Me?” says the Lord, “Or what place is there for My repose? Was it not My hand which made all these things?” (Acts 7:48-50)

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Cor 3:16)

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Cor 6:19-20)

Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (2 Cor 6:16)

When God upgraded worship from physical to spiritual, Satan – in keeping with his counterfeit strategy – also upgraded. He still gets some people to bow down before physical graven images, but more common today is people worshiping gods they create in their imagination. People say things like, “I think god is _____. My god wouldn’t _____.” They’re right. Their god is an

idol of their own making, not the living God of the Bible. Their god cannot save them from the eternal fires of hell any more than a wooden idol can!

Satan's modern idols take many forms: Greed, lust, gluttony, violence, immorality, power, T.V., movie stars, brands, athletes, sports teams, musicians, genres, politicians, and political parties, to name but a few. Just as in the days of old, many modern idols use gross immorality to attract a following. People hold these images in their hearts and their bodies serve them. The god you worship is the god you serve. The image your mind dwells on (worship) is what your body ends up doing (service). But again, these idols can't save anyone!

These men have set up their idols in their hearts and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity. (Ezek 14:3)

That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man. (Mark 7:20-23)

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience. (Col 3:5-6)

This you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Eph 5:1-6)

Whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. (Phil 3:19)

We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain [idols] to a living God, Who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. (Acts 14:15)

An Hour Is Coming and Now Is

Every single person is worshiping in their spirit twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred sixty-five days a year. The only question is: What images are you worshiping? Where is your heart? Where is your mindset? What do you think about throughout your day? What consumes your thoughts? What do you daydream about? The image your mind dwells on is what your body ends up doing. The god you worship is the god you serve.

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rom 8:5-8)

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom 8:9-11)

“The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” Christians are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We no longer bow at a physical temple. We spiritually bow to the King who has been seated on the throne of our heart. We should set our mind on His glorious image continuously.

This is true worship! The alternative is idolatry. This is the difference between life and death. “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.”

If Christ Is in You

God’s plan from the beginning was to deliver us from the power of Satan and to save us from our sins. When we become a Christian, God takes our guilt and nails it to the cross where the price was paid for our sin. He then raises our cleansed spirit and seats it with Him in heaven. At the same time, He clothes it with His Spirit, through which we live by faith in Him. We are now in Him and He is in us.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph 2:4-6)

Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Col 2:12)

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Gal 3:26-27)

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20)

By faith, we are no longer a dirty rotten sinner but a holy and perfect saint:

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith. (Phil 3:8-9)

This righteous image is the grace of God that has been richly lavished upon us. There is no amount of work that we could have done to give ourselves this new image.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? (Rom 6:1-2)

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self 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; for he who has died is freed from sin. (Rom 6:3-7)

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Rom 6:8-11)

No one who abides in Him sins. (1 John 3:6)

Transformation

As we set our mind on His Spirit and abide in His perfect image that dwells within us, it bears fruit: We are transformed. As we truly worship the image of our awesome God, we are conformed to His character. The God you worship is the God you serve.

I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Gal 5:16-25)

What little boy or little girl says that when they grow up they want their life filled with “immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these?” Wouldn’t we all rather have our lives filled with “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?”

You can be transformed and begin bearing the fruit of the Spirit as fast as you want, but there is a time delay before the fruit becomes enduring. The goal is for your automatic response to all that life throws at you to be “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” You must set your mind, which you can begin doing by diligently studying each fruit of the Spirit – its meaning and examples in Scripture. The clearer you can picture the attributes of God, the easier it is to put them into practice.

If instead you put yourself under law by continually reminding yourself not to practice the deeds of the flesh mentioned in the Scripture above, you will fill your mind with images of the very things you don’t want to do. The image your mind dwells on is what your body ends up doing – whether good or evil. Forget your old sinful image and the things you repented of; focus on the new image He has given you.

“The mind set on the flesh does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.” “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

It’s all about your focus – your mindset. Turn from darkness to light. You realize the danger of sin; you formerly experienced its results. You know that Jesus bore your sin on the cross, and now it’s gone. You are now holy. You’ve been given the Holy Spirit. As you fix your mind on the attributes of His Spirit, as described in His word, your life will be transformed and you will overflow with His love. There is no room for those things that are dead and gone.

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Cor 5:14-17)

One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:13-14)

Walk by the Spirit

Proskuneo is most literally translated “worship,” which means to bow. We’ve seen that this must be done with our spirit – we bow our spirit and will to His. *Latreuo* is most literally translated “service.” It is the resulting changed life that comes from worshipping God.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service [*latreuo*]. 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. (Rom 12:1-2)

Be discerning about what you allow into your heart. The world around us will influence and mold us if we let it. It will happen automatically and without any effort on our part. It is just as

relentless as gravity's pull. "Don't be conformed!" Deliberately and intentionally reject it, overcome it, and be transformed by persistently renewing your mind with the word of God. "Such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."

The following passage of Scripture points out several characteristics of Christ. The way to learn what these characteristics look like is by seeing them revealed in His word. As we study the Bible and throughout our daily life, these are the things we should dwell on because these are attributes of God Who dwells in us. The more we discipline our mind to continuously dwell on these things, the more we are transformed!

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. (Phil 4:8)

False Worshipers

Some people don't believe that if you "walk by the Spirit, you will not carry out the desire of the flesh," so they walk by law instead. These religious legalists further entrench the fleshly mindset. They invent their own religious laws, traditions, ceremonies, and physical do's and don'ts. They search the New Testament for things to turn into laws. Their teaching focuses on keeping a set of rules, and they're quick to argue over them. All this keeps their attention fixed on earthly things. It could be called "checklist churchianity" – check off your list every week and you're good!

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) – in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. (Col 2:20-23)

For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. (Phil 3:18-19)

If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. (1 Tim 6:3-6)

We've already seen that true worship is not something you do with your body, it's something you do with your spirit. Under the Old Testament, they went up to the house of the Lord to worship. The New Testament records that the church frequently met together, but it never says they met to "worship." Let's call Bible things by Bible names. False terminology leads to false doctrine.

Jesus said that true worship is in spirit. Worship happens everywhere in everyplace. Everyone is worshipping something – God or idols – all the time. Those who say that worship happens at certain times, in certain places, and in certain ways have missed the mark. Not only can their disciples be physically present during “worship” without worshipping God, but they will be worshipping something the rest of the time as well. And their life will reflect it.

Turn to God

God’s amazing plan from the beginning was to cleanse us and put His Spirit in us, just as the temple was cleansed before His glory filled it. When we turn to Him, He fills us with His glory. We see His glory in us as we look in His word. The more we look, the more we are transformed.

You **turned** to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess 1:9-10)

But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:14-18)

“If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” If His Spirit does not dwell in you, you are not a temple of God and you cannot worship His image in the spirit of your mind because a veil lies over your heart. God has no fellowship with a sinner.

He cleanses us of sin to make us a fit dwelling place for His Holy Spirit. He cleanses the temple before He sends Christ to dwell in it.

Therefore **repent and return**, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you. (Acts 3:19-20)

Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

You cannot worship the true God unless you have turned to Him on His terms and become a temple of His Spirit. You must believe that Jesus is Lord and Christ (i.e. Jehovah and Messiah). You must repent. Biblical repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of behavior. It is understanding and rejecting the destructiveness of sin. You must confess before witnesses that Jesus is Lord and Christ. You must be baptized (i.e. immersed) in water by faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and to receive His Spirit.

When you submit to God by faith in immersion, He performs a miraculous work that cannot be seen with the physical eye. He performs a powerful spiritual operation, removing your old sinful self and replacing it with a new holy one. You are born again when you are raised up out of the water. You are given a new self, a new image, a new Spirit, a new life. The new self-image, created in the likeness of the image of the glory of God, is the grace of Christ.

The power that God exerts in this operation is equivalent to the power He exerted when He raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him on the throne. He raises us up and seats us with Him. He makes us a new creation and fellow heirs with Christ. By faith, this is what He does for us when He raises us from the dead out of the waters of immersion.

Baptism now saves you - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:21)

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. (Eph 1:18-20)

Continual Devotion

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:41-47)

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; also greet the church that is in their house. (Rom 16:3-5)

First century Christians risked their necks for each other in their devotion to Christ. Throughout the book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament, we learn of new Christians hosting the church in their homes and making great sacrifices for their King – far different than the weekly ceremony, entertainment experience, or posh buildings that many people think of as Christianity today. Jesus made it clear that being a Christian involves a daily sacrificial faith walk:

If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross **daily** and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? (Luke 9:23-25)

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed **day by day**. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor 4:16-18)

Grace Is What God Does, Faith Is What We Do

We cannot touch, hear, smell, taste, or see the Spirit of grace Who strengthens us with power in the inner man. Physical senses aren't used for walking by faith and keeping our mindset on the Spirit. It takes deliberate and persistent mental discipline to dwell on the unseen.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor 5:7)

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Heb 11:1)

By faith in the word of God and the power of God, we are conformed to the image of God.

GRACE - God's Riches At Christ's Expense

God lavished upon us the riches of the glory of His grace when He clothed us with Christ. By faith we see with spiritual eyes the new image that has been given to us. This takes continual devotion and daily renewing of our mind. Whatever sacrifices this may require on our part is nothing compared to the sacrifice He made for us. Through this process, our character is transformed and we bear the fruit of His Spirit.

By His workmanship and grace we were made to be holy new creatures. It is the awesome power of God that raised us from the dead and gave us the Holy Spirit. He rescued us from a fallen, sinful race and made us pure and blameless saints, royal heirs of an eternal inheritance.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. (Eph 1:3-8)

To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col 1:27)

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. (Eph 3:16-17)

Where is your mindset? God has blessed each Christian with grace – a holy new image. As we focus on His glory in us and worship our glorious God throughout each day, we are transformed into the image of His Son. The image your mind dwells on is what your body ends up doing.

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Eph 4:23-24)

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. (Rom 13:14)

It is our job to diligently train our mind to think of ourselves as holy new creations of God. This is our faith picture. As you understand that you are a fellow heir with Christ, you will see His glory glimmering throughout the Bible and shining through you. You will be transformed as you realize that the Spirit of power, love, and discipline Who dwelt in Jesus is the same Spirit Who dwells in you.

Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

Imagine! Eternal heirs with Christ! His glorious image is stamped on each Christian. There is no amount of work that we could have done to produce His image in ourselves. God created all the wonders of this world, and they're only temporary. This world has nothing that compares with the new creation we see by looking at Christ, Who is the image of God, in the word of God.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our

hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves. (2 Cor 4:3-7)

And [Jesus] is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Heb 1:3)

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. (Heb 2:10)

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:28-30)

Conformed to the Image of His Son

All who are being saved have turned from darkness to Light. It takes mental discipline to carry out your decision every day. It is easy to slip back into the evil thought patterns on account of which the wrath of God will come. We must continually set our minds on the things of the Spirit. We must renew our minds with His glorious spiritual image throughout each day. Forget worldliness! Flood your mind with the word of God.

For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. (Eph 5:8-10)

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor 10:3-5)

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 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. (Col 3:1-11)

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (Col 3:12-17)

New Affections

As we are conformed to His image, we love others the way He loves us. But everything we put in our mind impacts our thoughts. What kind of images does your music fill your mind with? How about the books and magazines you read? What images do your television, movies, video games, or web sites portray? What do the people you associate with like to talk about?

Imagine a fountain of water trickling into a small bowl which overflows into a bigger bowl below it. Our mind is continually filled like the small bowl is. We always have thoughts going through our head and our senses continually provide input from the world around us. Whatever our mind dwells on overflows into our heart just as the small bowl overflows into the bigger bowl below it. Whatever fills our heart is revealed in our behavior and speech. Difficult circumstances are particularly good at exposing what's in our heart.

For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. (Matt 12:34-35)

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth. (1 Peter 2:21-22)

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. (Heb 13:7)

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Eph 5:1-2)

If we allow our mind to dwell on the desire of the flesh, we will not bear the fruit of the Spirit. If we set our mind on the Spirit, we will not carry out the deeds of the flesh.

Law vs. Faith

Some think that the Old Testament list of physical religious laws was replaced by a New Testament list of physical religious laws. But remember, true worship is not physical, it is

spiritual. You can religiously follow an entire checklist of physical laws, like the Pharisees did, and never worship God. 1500 years of Law produced hypocrisy, not genuine righteousness.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.” Now that no one is justified by the law before God is evident; for, “The righteous man shall live by faith.” (Gal 3:10-11)

For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. (Gal 3:21)

Even laws that are good such as, “Don’t murder, don’t steal, and don’t covet,” can focus your mind on images of the very things you don’t want to do.

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the law; for I would not have known about coveting if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind. (Rom 7:4-8)

Turn to Romans chapter 7 and continue reading verses 9-25 and you’ll see it describe the wretched condition of living under law. It focuses your mind on the flesh. “The mind set on the flesh does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.” “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom 8:1-4)

Law vs. Love

“But if we don’t control people with religious laws, they would be out of control,” the legalist might argue. But he has still missed the point that law cannot control and does not change the heart. You can’t regulate another person’s heart, but you can inspire it.

We love, because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom 13:10)

Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. (Gal 2:16)

Does this mean that we don't serve God with our bodies? Certainly not! The spirit directs the body. Faith produces works. The God you worship is the God you serve. Christianity is all about loving relationships, not meaningless rules imposed by self-appointed religious police. Its focus is on, "How much can I love?" rather than, "How many rules can I keep?"

"It is lawful to do good." (Matt 12:12)

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. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. (Gal 5:13-15)

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:8-10)

We Serve in Newness of the Spirit

The free gift of righteousness comes from God by grace through faith and fixes our mindset on the Spirit. Christ's glory, which dwells within us, should be our daily focus so that His image continually fills our mind. This is what produces practicing righteousness. As a person worships God, he is conformed to the blameless and pure image of Christ. This is our destiny!

Transformation will not happen by keeping religious laws or by mindlessly going through a set of rituals every week. We need to continuously fill and renew our mind with the new image that has been given to us. We must focus on the things we want to do rather than the things we don't want to do. If we are continually telling ourself or others about the things we shouldn't do, it produces images in our minds of the very things we want to forget about and replace.

We should be honest about any destructive habits we have and imagine ourselves as dead to that sin. Imagine the wickedness separated from you and nailed to the cross where Jesus suffered for it. Then replace that picture with a different one. You are alive and glorious, a new creation seated in heaven with Christ, basking in the lovingkindness of the righteous Creator. Imagine the character of Christ in you radiating true love, real joy, everlasting peace, and blessing those around you. You are the light of the world because He shines through you.

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive. (John 7:38-39)

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (John 6:63)

God designed Christianity to transform our character into the character of Christ as described by His word. His plan from ages past was to create a resurrected army to march victoriously forward, conquering in the name of The King (see Ezek 37:1-14). His spiritual revolutionaries are equipped by the workmanship of His Spirit to triumph over sin and Satan so that we might be effective in bringing many people to the knowledge of the truth.

Study, Pray, Memorize, Encourage One Another, and Evangelize

These are all aspects of Christianity that use His word to help us renew our minds and stay upbeat, motivated, and always excited about being transformed into the image of the one true God, Jesus Christ.

The word of God... performs its work in you who believe. (1 Thess 2:13)

Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water **with the word**, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (Eph 5:25-27)

Where do you abide? In other words, where does your mind dwell? What do you think about? Where is your mindset? What do you meditate on? Walk by the Spirit!

Personalizing His word is a powerful transformation booster. Many Scriptures are perfect for this. For example, personalizing Ephesians 5:8-10 causes it to read something like this: “For I was formerly darkness, but now I am Light in the Lord; I walk as a child of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.” You can make this even more powerful by memorizing it and creating a mental anchor such as quoting it every time you look in a mirror.

If in your mind you put on Christ every morning and keep Him on throughout the day, if you imagine the old sinful self violently crucified with Christ and the new self, created in the likeness of the image of God, gloriously resurrected to walk in newness of life, then you will bear the fruit of His Spirit and attain to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. The mind set on the flesh is in rebellion to God. The mind set on Christ has a body that acts like Christ.

Apostles' Teaching

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:41-42)

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now... You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:1-8)

Apostle means *one sent out*. Jesus spent the whole night in prayer before He chose those He was going to send out (see Luke 6:12-13). They were going to be eyewitnesses of all that Jesus did and taught, beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up into heaven (see Acts 1:21-22). After three years of training, on the eve of His crucifixion, He told them:

These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:25-26)

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning. (John 15:26-27)

Before His arrest Jesus prayed for them in the garden:

Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word. (John 17:17-20)

Belief in Jesus is based on many convincing proofs:

1. The eyewitness account of apostles and prophets that they recorded in the New Testament with help from the Holy Spirit (see John 20:30-31).
2. Signs, wonders, various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit which came through the apostles.

3. Fulfilled prophecies of the Messiah, recorded by Old Testament prophets who were inspired by the Holy Spirit centuries in advance, and taught by the apostles.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son. (Heb 1:1-2)

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (Heb 2:1-4)

Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. (Acts 2:43)

In the *Jesus For King* study guide there are many details given about the hundreds of Messianic prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Rev 19:10) It also tells of confessing that Jesus is Lord and Christ before one can enter His kingdom. But did you know that the doors of the kingdom first had to be unlocked before anyone could enter?

Keys of the Kingdom, Baptism With the Holy Spirit

After making the good confession – which is the rock that Jesus’ church is built upon – the apostle Peter was given the keys of the kingdom of heaven:

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (Matt 16:16-19)

Peter used those keys twice, God testifying with him on both occasions by baptism with the Holy Spirit. The first time was when he made the good confession and opened the door of salvation to thousands of Jews on the day of Pentecost, 30 AD, the first time the gospel was preached.

Peter and the other eleven apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:2-5, 2:33) with three signs and wonders: 1) A noise like a violent rushing wind, 2) tongues as of fire resting on each one of them, and 3) speaking with other tongues (i.e. languages).

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them ...
“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:14, 36)

“Those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.” The kingdom began with power in the generation Jesus said it would (see Mark 9:1). The salvation of Israel had come.

Entrance into the kingdom was not opened to the rest of the world until about a decade later. Peter used the keys of the kingdom one more time, accompanied by the same three signs and wonders, when he made the good confession and opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles (i.e. nations other than Jews). This time it was the household of Cornelius that was baptized with the Holy Spirit, just as the apostles had been in the beginning. They were then baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ (see Acts 10:34-11:18).

Signs of a True Apostle, Gifts of the Holy Spirit

What was unique about true apostles? First century Christians received miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit only after the laying on of hands by a true apostle. Recipients of these gifts of the Holy Spirit were in control of their miraculous gifts, whereas baptism with the Holy Spirit was accompanied by signs and wonders which the recipients were not in control of.

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you [by Paul] with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. (2 Cor 12:12)

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. (Acts 19:6)

For this reason I [Paul] remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. (2 Tim 1:6)

There were two reasons for the laying on of hands in the first century church:

1. To bestow miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit; performed by apostles only.
2. To bestow gifts of leadership and responsibility; performed by apostles, prophets, evangelists, elders, and teachers (see *Full Stewardship* study guide).

Miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were always given through the laying on of hands by a true apostle. Careful study of the New Testament reveals this is the only way these gifts were given. Recipients were not able to pass the gifts on to others.

After having the apostles' hands laid on him (see Acts 6:5-6), Philip was able to perform miracles, but he was not able to pass on this gift:

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard

and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. (Acts 8:5-7)

The apostles Peter and John needed to go down to Samaria and lay hands on those who had been baptized in order for them to receive miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. A certain magician saw this and offered the apostles money so that he too could perform the signs of a true apostle (see Acts 8:17-19). His request was denied.

Following is a list of these miraculous gifts (pay special attention to the **bold** words here and in the next quote below that comes from the next chapter in the book of I Corinthians):

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of **knowledge** according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another **prophecy**, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of **tongues**, and to another the interpretation of tongues. (1 Cor 12:4-10)

The Mirror, Perfect Law of Liberty

God testified with the infant church, “both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.” These miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit that were given through the laying on of hands by a true apostle were “done away” as they were replaced with the “perfect.” As the apostles died off, these gifts could no longer be passed on.

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of **prophecy**, they will be done away; if there are **tongues**, they will cease; if there is **knowledge**, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. (1 Cor 13:8-12)

As we look into the mirror (referred to above as “the perfect”), the completed word of God, we can “know fully” what each of them only “knew in part and prophesied in part.” It was the apostles and those with gifts of prophecy and knowledge who completed the perfect.

Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and

abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:19-25)

The word mirror is only used three times in the New Testament and each time it is referring to the completed word of God. If we are going to continually devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching today, it is going to happen by continually looking in the mirror to see "what kind of person we are." We are new creatures, created in Christ Jesus to glorify Him.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:17-18)

The mirror is the completed word of God. As we read, study, learn, memorize, teach, and meditate upon His word, our ways of thinking are replaced with His ways of thinking. Our character is replaced with His character. Beholding His glory in us, supplied by the power He provides, and refined by the circumstances He allows, transforms us into His image.

The Holy Spirit is Who we see in the mirror. He is our new image. We are transformed as the Spirit works together with the completed word of God to mold us into the image of Christ. Our job is to spend as much time as we can looking in the mirror. Scheduling time for daily Bible reading is a good place to start.

Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (2 Peter 1:3)

We have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Peter 1:19-21)

The Scripture Is Entirely Sufficient!

God completed the Scriptures through a rigorous series of checks and balances over a period of 1500 years. His word was written by inspired prophets, established by many convincing proofs, and accepted by other inspired prophets. The apostle Paul's letters make up a good portion of the New Testament Scriptures. Notice that the apostle Peter refers to the writings of Paul as Scripture:

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:14-16)

Inspired prophets were able to determine whether the things written or spoken by other prophets were inspired by God.

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. (1 Cor 14:29-33)

Using the completed word of God, we are able to judge whether things written or spoken today are accurate and true.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:14-17)

Apostles' Pattern and Traditions

Moses' tabernacle was a physical foreshadow of a spiritual reality.

Who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." (Heb 8:5)

God knows how He wants His eternal temple built and He has good reason for each detail given. The church's foundation has been laid.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22)

The apostles and New Testament prophets began a pattern – recorded from Acts 2 onward – that included continual devotion to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer, among other things revealed in the mirror. Nothing revealed after Acts 2 changed this simple pattern. We can follow their example today and hold firmly to their traditions. The apostle Paul wrote of these traditions:

For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. (1 Cor 4:17)

Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. (1 Cor 11:2)

Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. (Phil 3:17)

So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. (2 Thess 2:15)

Countless traditions of men have been invented since the first century by those who are not apostles or prophets. None of them are necessary and they can all be safely rejected. God wants what is best for us and “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”

And [Jesus] said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men. He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.” (Mark 7:6-9)

Would straying from Jesus and His apostles’ teaching, pattern, and traditions really have been an issue in the first century church? Read on:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! (Gal 1:6-9)

But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. (2 Cor 11:3)

We need the apostles’ teaching in order to believe and follow Jesus. Fortunately, we have the completed word of God. The work that was started by Jesus and the apostles continues today. Let’s follow the pattern recorded for us in Scripture with pure and simple continual devotion.

Fellowship

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:41-42)

Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart. (Acts 2:46-47)

The above Scriptures provide the first look inside the New Testament church. Firsts in the Bible are important. They are foundations upon which the rest of the structure is built. Unless other Scriptures say otherwise, you can assume that the way things started is the way they continued.

In the case of “continuing with one mind in the temple,” this went on for some time and provided a platform for reaching and converting large numbers of people from among those who traveled from every nation to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. But the book of Acts goes on to describe how a great persecution arose against the church and it was scattered from Jerusalem. As the gospel spread, preachers like Paul went to synagogues, the marketplace, the Areopagus, the school of Tyrannus, and anywhere else there might be people to share the gospel with.

I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house. (Acts 20:20)

The first Christians in Jerusalem were also “breaking bread from house to house ... taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.” “Three thousand souls” wouldn’t very well be able to break bread together in one house; they did so from house to house. There was apparently a sufficient number of local residents converted who were willing to open their homes and provide hospitality, and many new Christians contributed financially to help with it.

The book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament repeatedly reaffirm that fellowship and breaking bread from house to house are exactly what Christians did as they spread throughout the world, and it doesn’t say this tradition was ever replaced. There are several examples of Christians being commended for being hospitable and hosting the church in their home (e.g. Rom 16:5, 1 Cor 16:19, Col 4:15, Phi 2).

The Greek word that is translated into English as “fellowship” is sometimes translated “contribution” (e.g. financial) and sometimes “sharing” (e.g. the Lord’s Supper). In the next chapter, we’ll focus on the breaking of bread. In this chapter, we’re going to focus on the other things associated with fellowship.

Inside the First Century Church

Whole families met together in each others’ homes for mutual encouragement and edification over a meal. It was highly participatory! Hospitality practiced in a home atmosphere is

conducive to meaningful relationships, authentic spiritual growth, and accountability. Real life happens in homes and children are present, learning right along with everyone else. There were often children present during Jesus' ministry and He didn't want them segregated. For example:

Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."
(Mat 19:13-14)

What else went on in these first Christian homes as they were "taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart?" Day by day they would teach, exhort, pray, sing, encourage, and read Scripture. On the first day of the week, they gathered to break bread, also called the Lord's Supper or love feast.

Jesus said: For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst. (Matt 18:20)

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end. (Heb 3:12-14)

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (Heb 5:12-14)

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Heb 10:23-25)

First century Christians encouraged **one another** day after day. Each man would consider how to stimulate others to love and good deeds so that whenever they assembled, he would be prepared to edify others by praying, teaching, exhorting, singing, encouraging, or reading Scripture. In a large congregation, it appears that up to a dozen or more men would spontaneously take turns edifying the assembled saints:

When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation... Let all things be done for edification... Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the

Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. (1 Cor 14:26-35)

Give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. (1 Tim 4:13)

Above all, keep fervent in your love for **one another**, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies. (1 Peter 4:8-11)

Gifts of Grace

The manifold grace that God gives to each Christian – His image with which we are clothed by faith – manifests itself differently in each individual. We don't lose our uniqueness; we express our personalities with love, joy, and all the other character traits of our Lord, in service to **one another**. Each member of the body of Christ has different strengths and talents to offer.

The new creation is the righteousness of God working with an individual's talent, resulting in a dynamic, effective soldier. Put a team of people like this together, each playing their special roles, and you have the spiritual army of God (see the *Spiritual Warfare* study guide).

Each unique personality is given gifts of grace that radiate the love of God in serving others. If you see a need not being met and wonder why nobody is doing anything about it, you just might have found the gift God has given you! Someone with a different gift may not even be aware that a particular need exists. Your awareness of it may be because you are more sensitive to needs that you have been given the gift of filling.

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom. 12:4-8)

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men..." And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service. (Eph 4:7-13)

What gift have you been given? What role can you see yourself playing in the body? Christ's mission is to seek and save the lost. As He adds parts to His body, it is for the explicit purpose of making the body more effective in getting as many people as possible to heaven. Everything else that happens on earth is of little significance by comparison.

Jesus didn't die on the cross to create a social club for people to dress up every week and play church. He wants His resurrected army to march victoriously forward, overthrowing the power of darkness and bringing multitudes to the knowledge of the truth.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Body Building

For this purpose, the saints need continual training and renewal. You might realize you need to change a behavior for the better, and you may even set your mind to do so and enjoy some initial results. But after a few days or a few weeks, the new mindset can wear off. The old habits try to kick back in. In order for new positive habits to replace old negative habits, we must renew our minds day by day and hour by hour – if we are really serious about transformation.

Fortunately, we have help from the body of Christ and from the strength that God provides. When working together in unity, the body can accomplish a tremendous amount, to the glory of God. A bunch of fleshly-minded, selfish, complaining sinners have no unity and can accomplish little – just as Satan wants. God's purpose is achieved as we study and obey His word and are transformed into His glorious image.

This is why Christ's church is continually devoted to fellowship. If you walk in perfect love, you want to be an encourager and a role model. You help others get their attention fixed where it needs to be. As you make disciples, your new baby Christians need lots of attention. They need help sorting through and overcoming the ugly messes they have made. The entanglement of sin results in wrecked marriages, rebellious children, financial catastrophes, violent outbursts, chaotic communities, etc.

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with **one another**. We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for **one another** and for all people. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thess 5:9-18)

Learn How to Treat One Another

Please realize that there are a lot of challenges involved in trying to motivate and build up the body of Christ. Relationships take work! Sometimes you'll be surprised at who disrupts the unity and teamwork. Some may have been on the righteous road longer than you, but that doesn't

mean they can't stumble. People problems give us the opportunity to express tolerance and patience. Make sure you place the highest expectations on yourself rather than others.

Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard **one another** as more important than yourselves. (Phil 2:1-5)

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with **one another**, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing **one another** with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (Col 3:12-17)

God gives grace – a new righteous image – to each Christian. In order to be transformed into His image, we must believe what God has done and we must renew our minds. Our brethren can help us with this by seeing us and treating us as God does – as a new creation. And we can help our brethren by giving them this same grace – seeing them and treating them as a new creation. Help them see their potential in Christ and be transformed by helping them renew their mind. This can be done through encouraging words, teaching, exhortation, song, etc.

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Cor 5:14-17)

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. (Eph 4:29)

Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. (Col 4:6)

Contributing to the Needs of the Saints, Practicing Hospitality (Rom 12:13)

Scripture records Christians loving **one another** not only with words, but also with actions. Jesus provided the greatest example of all. Whenever He saw people in need, He did whatever was in His power to take care of those needs. This is the example Christians follow. In the examples below, whenever needs were identified, Christians sacrificed whatever was necessary to take care of those needs:

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. (Acts 2:44-45)

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them... For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:32-35)

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me. (1 Cor 16:1-4)

The church is not a business or a building; it is Christians. Individuals own property but the Scripture never says the church owned real estate together.

Disciples of Jesus gave money:

- To support Him and the apostles. Judas was their treasurer and after his death another took his office.
- To the apostles and it “would be distributed to each as any had need.” This enabled new converts visiting Jerusalem from different parts of the world to remain longer.
- To evangelists and elders to support spreading the gospel and shepherding the church.

The New Testament doesn't say Christians must tithe. Tithe means 10% and the Law of Moses required Israelites to give a tithe of their income to the tribe of Levi who had not been given a portion of the promised land as the other tribes had been. Israelites also made many offerings in addition to tithes. Before the Law of Moses, Abraham, the father of the faithful, gave a tithe to Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. It appears that many Christians gave much more than a tithe to fill special needs. These sacrifices are nothing compared to the sacrifice Jesus made for us. Setting aside a tithe in order to have something to share for needs and good deeds is probably a good starting point for devoted Christians.

The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him... Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. (Gal 6:6-10)

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:16-18)

Influences

The power of influence can be seen in a huge way in media-dominated societies. Those who control the mass media manipulate the masses. Beware of the schemes of the devil.

Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Tim 2:22-26)

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:1-4)

You become like those you hang out with. People read, watch, listen to, and surround themselves with those they are comfortable with and those they want to be like. Certain crowds dress and act similarly and use the same manner of speech. The media and people you fill your life with are the people you tend to act like. Idolaters act like their idols, and Christians act like Christ. Use this principle to your advantage, as Satan uses it to his.

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." (1 Cor 15:33)

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 will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Gal 6:7-8)

Good company can have a powerful influence on us as we seek to lay aside bad morals and take on a new identity, a new image. Be transformed by joining with those who are going to heaven, rather than those who are going to hell. Be part of the team that's snatching souls out of the fire.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor 6:14-18)

Breaking of Bread

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:41-42)

Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Cor 10:16-17)

Christ's church in the first century was devoted to meeting frequently for the purpose of edifying the body of Christ. They would study, pray, sing, encourage, share, and exhort. On the first day of the week, or Lord's Day, they gathered together for the breaking of bread – a meal that was also called the Lord's Supper or love feast. This keeps the continual focus on Jesus, Whose image we are being transformed into.

Many things may take place at the assembly on the first day of the week, but the main reason for this particular gathering is to break bread. The Lord's Supper is the centerpiece.

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. (Acts 20:7)

God Created the Seven-Day Week as a Memorial

Have you ever wondered where the seven-day week came from? God created it. In the Law of Moses, God commanded man to rest in his place on the seventh day just as He had rested on the seventh day of creation and He called it the Sabbath.

“The Lord has given you the Sabbath... Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” So the people rested on the seventh day. (Ex 16:29-30)

So the sons of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to celebrate the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. (Ex 31:16)

God never changed His instructions, but after nearly a millennium of frequent unfaithfulness, the ancestors of the Pharisees invented the synagogue and the tradition of gathering there on the Sabbath, replacing God's instruction for every man to celebrate the Sabbath in his place. (For more information about this, see *The Origins of Modern Organized Religion: Pharisees, Sadducees & Synagogues* at Jesus4King.net.)

Today, the seventh day of the week is called Saturday, and the first day of the week is called Sunday. The first day of the week, or Lord's Day, is the day that Jesus rose from the dead.

Christians are not judged by the Law of Moses, but resting one day a week is just as good an idea today as it was then. God made the Sabbath because our body, soul, and spirit need regular,

restful rejuvenation. But the Scripture never says that the Sabbath day was changed to the first day of the week, nor that Christians are required to abstain from work on either day.

Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27)

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day – things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. (Col 2:16-17)

There remains a Sabbath rest [heaven] for the people of God. (Heb 4:9)

Christ's Memorial

The Sabbath was a reminder of the God of creation. The Lord's Supper is a reminder of the God of the new creation. We have been freed from sin through the death that we died with Him and we have been raised up with Him to walk in newness of life. We are no longer slaves to sin!

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. (1 Cor 11:23-26)

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self 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; for he who has died is freed from sin. (Rom 6:3-7)

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20)

The Lord's Supper is not a funeral; Jesus is alive, He raised us up with Him, and now He lives in us! Rejoice! The Lord's Supper is a memorial of the loving sacrifice of our Lord to focus our attention on His action that defined love: He sacrificed Himself for others. The standard for measuring character has been set, and our lives are to mirror it. As we renew our minds with this image of self-denial and self-sacrifice, we are transformed into the same image.

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16)

And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?” (Luke 9:23-25)

Our Passover Memorial

The Jews sacrificed a Passover lamb on the night of the tenth plague upon Egypt, the plague that motivated Pharaoh to let the Israelite slaves go free (see Ex 11-12). The Israelites were instructed to take the blood of the sacrificial lamb and sprinkle it on the door-posts of their houses. The tenth plague took the life of all the firstborn in Egypt, but passed over the houses that had been marked with the blood of the sacrifice.

At the end of time, judgment will pass over those who have the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, our Passover and God’s firstborn, sprinkled on the door-posts of their hearts. Christians look forward to entering an eternal rest, remembering and proclaiming the sacrifice of our Lord until He comes.

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Heb 9:27-28)

After eating the sacrificial lamb, the Israelites packed unleavened bread (i.e. made without yeast or leaven) and hastened out of Egypt to become a free nation. They were instructed to hold a yearly Passover celebration in memory of God’s salvation from Egyptian slavery. It included sacrificing a lamb and eating unleavened bread for seven days. 1500 years later...

On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” ... While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” (Matt 26:17, 26-29)

Christians enjoy a type of Passover celebration every Lord’s Day in memory of the salvation from sin given to us by God. Jesus said He would do this with us in His Father’s kingdom, which is the church. We get to have a love feast with Jesus every week!

The Passover meal included lamb, unleavened bread, and other food items, such as the fruit of the vine (i.e. the juice of grapes, fermented or non-fermented; the New Testament condemns the drunkenness caused by fermented or alcoholic wine because of its destructive effects, so most Christians today use non-fermented grape juice for the Lord’s Supper). Jesus started the Lord’s Supper tradition with unleavened bread, the fruit of the vine, and other food items.

Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Cor 5:7-8)

Clean out the Old Leaven

The book of Acts says the new church began “breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.” As the church and its traditions spread around the world, not everyone who showed up had the same sincerity of heart. This is what Paul was referring to when he said, “Let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” He went on to admonish:

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves. (1 Cor 5:9-13)

Peter and Jude also warned about those who were less than sincere:

They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children. (2 Peter 2:13-14)

These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves. (Jude 1:12)

Examine Yourself and Judge the Body Rightly

Paul instructed the Christians in Corinth to “judge those who are within the church.” In 1 Corinthians chapter 11 he praised them for holding “firmly to the traditions.” Then he reproved them because they were taking their own suppers first instead of waiting and taking the Lord’s Supper together. He implies that you should plan ahead and eat enough at home to be able to wait for the appointed time to celebrate the love feast together with gladness and sincerity of heart.

But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper, for in your eating

each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you. (1 Cor 11:17-22)

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come. (1 Cor 11:27-34)

God judges us because He loves us, and He disciplines us so that we will not be condemned along with the world. Likewise, He expects Christians to “judge those who are within the church,” “remove the wicked man from among yourselves,” and “not even to eat with such a one” (see 1 Cor 5:7-13).

A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. (Gal 5:9-10)

Faithful Christians share the Lord’s Supper together on the first day of every week. We do this because of the love and devotion we have for our Lord, Who paid the price so that we could be made new. It is part of God’s pattern for building up the body of Christ.

Not for Everyone

Israelites under the Old Testament brought their sacrifices to the tabernacle. Christ is the perfect sacrifice and as we eat the bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? (1 Cor 10:18)

We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. (Heb 13:10)

We share in an altar from which they have no right to eat who have not had their hearts sprinkled clean by the blood of Christ’s sacrifice. The Lord’s Supper is for Christians who are in good standing with the body.

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” (John 6:53-54)

Prayer

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:41-42)

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. (Eph 1:18-19)

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:14-21)

Prayer is a powerful part of the transformation process. Prayer may be compared to the accelerator pedal of an automobile. If you want to reach your destination, you have to use it; and if you're eager to get there, you put the pedal to the metal!

Bible reading and prayer are vital to the development and deepening of our relationship with God. To develop a relationship with anyone, you spend time with them, ask questions, and get to know them. You treat them with respect and honor, and you avoid behaviors that are hurtful.

Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. (Isa 59:1-2)

“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil. (Joel 2:12-13)

So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. (Dan 9:3)

Reconciliation

When you are reconciled to God, you begin the process of character transformation which will transform all of your relationships. The first step of reconciliation is forgiveness. We have previously discussed how sinners (non-Christians) get their sins forgiven. The following verses

from 1 John were written to Christians “so that you may not sin.” “If anyone sins,” we need forgiveness and a clean conscience.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 1:9-2:2)

Relationships are so important to God that if our relationship with others is not right, it hinders our relationship with God. If someone has something against us, we are to seek reconciliation (see Matthew 5:21-48). If we have something against someone, we are to do the same.

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. (Matt 6:14-15)

You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)

For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. (1 Peter 3:12)

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. (Rom 12:18)

We have been given the “word of reconciliation.” (2 Cor 5:19) We, of all people, ought to have healthy relationships with one another. If someone refuses to be reconciled to a brother, it is indicative of his relationship with God. Our love for God and those He created demonstrates whether we sincerely want eternal relationships. The only ones who get into heaven are those who genuinely want to be there.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34-35)

We love, because He first loved us. If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. (1 John 4:19-21)

God allows us to grow and transform the true motives of our heart. Time will reveal whether you harbor selfish motives or you honestly seek to love God and others.

He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered. (Prov 21:13)

Many people figure out by the end of their life that the only thing that really mattered was relationships. Unfortunately, many invested most of their energy into things that didn't matter. At the end of your life, what do you want to look back and see? What do you look forward to for eternity?

God knows what life's all about. He created life for this purpose and He gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Do you want to learn how to have healthy relationships with God and others? In the *Full Stewardship* study guide, we talk more about relationships here on earth, but we want to focus here on the most important relationship of all: Our relationship with God.

When Should We Pray?

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (Eph 6:18-20)

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. (Jude 20-21)

Are you usually conscious of someone coming within a few feet of you – into your personal space? Are you usually conscious of the Spirit of God, Whose glorious image dwells inside you? Is your mindset on His Spirit? He is with us everywhere and always. We have access to His ear every minute of every day.

Prayer is a powerful weapon in spiritual warfare, through which we become victors instead of victims. The pull of the world is only as strong as our relationship with God is weak.

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. (1 Peter 4:7)

Praying in the Holy Spirit

Paul suggests three practical ways to keep our mindset on the Spirit:

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, [1] speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; [2] always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and [3] be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (Eph 5:15-21)

It takes mental discipline, but these are three simple ways to continuously fill your mind with His Spirit.

(1) Prayers and praises to God can be sung. Music is powerful and we are directed to harness this power for good. Music fills your mind with images and ideas that are either worldly or spiritual. Choose wisely. Speak “to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”

The song in your heart also impacts those around you through the attitude it cultivates in you. If you find yourself in a situation where you are not able to control what music is being played, you can change the words in your mind to spiritually edifying words that give glory to God.

(2) “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.” (Col 4:2)

An attitude of gratitude toward God is an easy and effective way to keep your mind alert to the life-giving Spirit of God. We have so many blessings to thank God for and being thankful produces peace, joy, and other fruits of the Spirit. In everything you do:

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thess 5:16-18)

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. (1 Tim 4:1-5)

Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. (Heb 13:15)

(3) Consciously and deliberately think about how God wants you to subject yourself to the needs of others in the fear of Christ. This is another practical way of setting your mind on the Spirit of Christ, Whose image you are being transformed into. But this doesn't happen by accident, either.

Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Prov 9:9-10)

We start life as a baby, conscious of almost nothing besides the fact that everyone serves us. It seems like the world revolves around us. This results in what's commonly called man's sin nature. As we grow, conflict arises when expectations begin to be placed on us to serve ourselves and then others. Conflicts escalate when we devise manipulative ways to get what we want from others. If this selfish behavior is not curbed, it results in anger and then violence.

Selfishly trying to get what we want from others is the root of all sin (see Jam 3:14-4:4). Selflessly giving yourself for others is what Christ, Who now lives in us, demonstrated on the cross. We also see how Christ lived in others (in this case, Paul):

In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)

Blessed means happy. Do you believe Jesus? You will be happy if you are a giver rather than a taker. People who never get over the fact that the world doesn't revolve around them are perpetually miserable. Happiness isn't about getting, it's about giving.

You'll find other practical practices in addition to the three above as you flood your mind with His word. I'm going to borrow a phrase from the advertising world (one of the Spirit's competitors) to describe what we're after: Top of mind awareness.

Top of Mind Awareness

We need to continually meditate on the character of Him Who lives in us and ask Him to empower us through His strength, so that we might die to self and live for others.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:4-7)

Jesus said: Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man. (Luke 21:33-36)

Special Time

If you want to develop a close relationship with someone, you set up dates and schedule special times to spend together. God lives in us and is always with us, so we can talk to Him all the time. But we also want to devote special times for really growing close in our relationship with Him.

When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. (Matt 6:5-6)

Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my groaning. Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, for to You I pray. In the morning, O Lord, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch. (Ps 5:1-3)

In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. (Mark 1:35)

The Bible also records special examples of group prayer:

These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (Acts 1:14)

And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. (Acts 12:5-12)

Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. (1 Tim 2:8)

The New Testament church continually devoted themselves to prayer. Special prayer meetings and prayer at other gatherings is evident, in addition to the personal relationship that each believer has with God.

Teach Us to Pray

It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.” (Luke 11:1)

How do we pray? For whom or what should we pray? Are there different types of prayer? The only way to really answer these questions is to get out your concordance and go through all the Scriptures that talk about prayer. You’ll find six general areas of prayer:

1. **Praising** God for what you adore about Him.
2. **Thanking** Him for what He’s done for you.
3. **Confessing** your sins to Him.
4. **Meditating** on His image or character.
5. **Petitioning** Him or making requests for yourself.
6. **Interceding** on behalf of others.

Prayer is communication with God. Read Psalms for examples of written prayers and also to learn a lot about prayer. Prayer can be written, spoken aloud, and sung. God knows our thoughts so we can pray in our mind.

We can pray while lying, sitting, standing, working, playing, etc. We may close our eyes and maybe fold our hands to stay focused during certain times of prayer. We may also bow our heads in a sense of prostration, but God doesn’t require these or any other special physical position. As we talked about in the first chapter, we should consciously and continually prostrate our spirit before His Spirit.

Fasting accompanies very important prayers, as seen throughout the Bible. Fasting is denying nourishment to the physical body to focus on prayer to God. It is amplified communication when something significant is happening.

The following Scriptures are representative of what you’ll find when you do your own study of prayer:

And my tongue shall declare Your righteousness and Your praise all day long. (Ps 35:28)

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. (Ps 146:1-2)

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim 2:1-4)

Praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. (Col 4:3-4)

Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. (2 Thess 3:1-2)

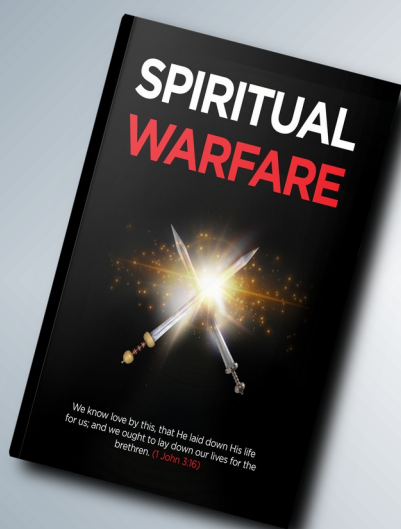
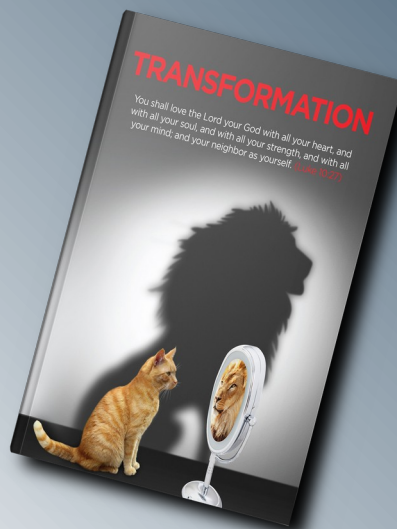
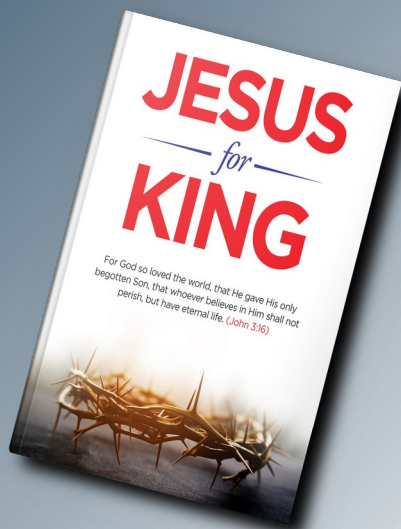
But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (1 John 5:14-15)

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:26-30)

I am Patient
I am Kind
I am Trusting
I am Humble
I act Appropriately
I am Generous
I am Encouraging
I am Forgiving
I rejoice in Righteousness
I rejoice in the Truth
I always Protect
I always Believe
I always Hope
I always Persevere
I am Perfect
I am Love

“Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore
is the fulfillment of the law.” - Romans 13:10



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Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)