



# Biblical Transformation

*The Renewed Mind*

Grace 4 You Ministries, Inc.

Stephen F. Shober

# BIBLICAL TRANSFORMATION

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[www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com)

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# Acknowledgements

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Several individuals helped in the preparation of this Bible study guide by reviewing specific sections of the text and offering contributions. Indeed, their contributions resulted in a study guide that is greatly improved, with clearer insights into the Word of God. Their input allows us all to share in their wisdom--gained from godly experience, biblical study, and professional training. These individuals are all strong believers and devoted to Christ; they certainly are capable of thinking outside common religious constraints. The final product has profited greatly from their input, and the author cannot thank these individuals enough for their careful and thoughtful comments. So, a special note of appreciation goes to: Joyce Lee, Robert Lee, Carol Duit Brader, George Brader, and Suzanne Weiss.

## **Professional Services**

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## Dedications

I would like to dedicate this study guide to my wife and daughters: Ruth (wife); Tamara, Tabitha, and Terah (daughters). A husband/father cannot properly state the impact of his family in shaping his thoughts, affording alternative perspectives, and creating a better understanding the Word of God. I also dedicate this to my grandchildren (Christian, Trinity, and Aleah). My grandchildren may never see or read this study guide, but I trust the truth of it will be ingrained in them and they will live it. Succeeding generations reveal the flow of God's grace and truth down through the ages. It is so comforting to see an ardent love for the Lord in my children and grandchildren. May each of you continue to remember the Lord in everything you do in life, acknowledging Him in all your ways. The Lord has blessed me with a wonderful family and each is devoted to Christ. They bring praise and encouragement, and I humbly say, "Thank you Lord."

I would also like to dedicate this study guide to my parents, Arthur (deceased) and Avis. Thank you for raising me in a home where the things of the Lord were paramount. Parents that model Christ-likeness are rare, I have been blessed.

## Overview

"Renewal of the mind is the Great Physician's prescription for the troubled soul."  
(Theren E. Wedmind)

Many Christians feel stuck in life, as though they were going through the motions, spinning their wheels, but accomplishing nothing. Others feel controlled by their pasts or in bondage to their own emotional baggage. God does not intend for our lives to be like this, that is, life was not meant to be a roller coaster ride (which takes us up, down, and twists us around) and our only option is to sit there with no control. God clearly teaches that He wants to take us out of the condition in which He saved us. The Lord wants to deliver us from our own dysfunctional and misguided minds by renewing them, and in the process our lives will be transformed. Then we will be able to think and act as the new person we are in Christ; life will have purpose and control will flow from within us.

After we believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, Romans 12:1-2 teaches the need to become a transformed person through the renewal of the mind. It may be surprising, but the transformation process will reveal answers to some of life's most important questions, e.g., "What is God's will for my life? How can I live a godly life?" This study is designed to help each person gain insight into God's answers for such questions. Yes, you can know God's will for your life, and it is learned on a journey with our Lord as He renews your mind.

Transformation is the metamorphoses of our minds (a change in form). It changes the expressions of the old life and nature for the new nature each believer has. Indeed, it is a whole new manner of life. Being renewed in the spirit of our minds is the only way to put off the biblical old man and to put on the new man. In the Age of Grace (today), the Holy Spirit first creates heavenly desires in our minds then empowers our lives to realize those desires. This requires adjustment on our parts to the indwelling

presence of the Spirit and then maintaining attitudes of cooperation and dependence upon Him. The degree to which we are transformed is the degree to which we are conformed to Christ; and the degree to which we avoid being conformed to the world.

This study will delve into intimacy with Christ and how we can pour our hearts out to Him, revealing our deepest, darkest thoughts and desires (even those we cannot share with another human) without fear of rejection. Intimacy also means He can pour-out His heart into us, and in the process we begin to see ourselves for whom we really are. Thus, intimacy creates an awareness of ourselves, and that awareness recognizes an imperative need--the need to be transformed.

Who we really are deep inside, is defined by entities such as character, attitude, conscience, values, etc. These reside in the deeper recesses of the soul, in the central core of our being. They can be deeply scarred by the events of life, sin, self, false concepts..., and these scars are often created early in life. Thus, our scarred souls (minds) carry the baggage of our pasts, the emotional pain of our lives, and the thinking characteristic of the non-regenerated mind. Our dilemma is: we are powerless to do anything about these scars (which are like scratches on a CD/DVD) and we can't function correctly with them. Resolving this dilemma is the Lord's work, and that is what mind renewal accomplishes. This is why the Holy Spirit works in the deepest parts of our minds, that is, to reach the inner, core issues of life. Renewal of the mind is the Great Physician's prescription for the troubled soul. This is where miracles are performed in our lives.

For many people, salvation and transformation are considered essentially the same thing. For many others (this may be the conventional view), transformation is something that takes place in a believer's life automatically, much like the spiritual blessings we receive the moment we are saved. This study will help clarify misunderstandings on what transformation is and how it takes place. It may be a shock to some, but transformation is not part of our salvation, nor is it something that automatically takes place because we are saved.

The creation account in Genesis helps us understand that each person is composed of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. God has a plan for each of these parts, and that plan existed even before creation began. In the Age of Grace, His eternal plan is: salvation for our spirits, transformation for our souls (minds), and glorification for our bodies--in that order. Once we are saved, we are a new creation in Christ with a restored spiritual relationship with God (we are reconciled to Him). However, we still have our old minds, with all the false concepts, twisted values, and deranged

attitudes. How can we function properly as a Christian if we still are controlled by our old minds? We need renewed minds that are conformable to that of Christ; then we can think, behave, and exhibit values in accordance with God's will. Of course, we will receive our glorified bodies later when we are taken to Heaven.

The good news is that the Holy Spirit does the actual transformation; it is a process that takes place during the entire course of our lives. Upon faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit enters our lives, and searches out the deepest recesses of our minds. He takes residence in the core of our being, and then begins to work in our lives. As the Spirit works, He changes us, starting from those deepest recesses and working outward. As previously mentioned, what resides in that core area are a person's: conscience, character, attitude, values, will, desires, emotions, etc. As the Spirit works in these areas, our minds are renewed and we are transformed in the process. The gunk of our past, the emotional baggage, the pride and self righteousness, the toxic memories, the negative thoughts that control our lives..., are all transformed through His power. In their place the Spirit produces His fruit, which is exactly what we need (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...). Transformation is the process by which we acquire godly fruit in our lives, and a mind that conforms to that of Christ.

The thing that is critically important to know is that we do not get a renewed mind just by praying, asking, or believing. It is not something that takes place automatically nor is it given upon request. Thus we are commanded to be transformed, meaning we have a role in it. It is our choice if we want to be transformed or live with our old minds. Our roles in the transformation process are what this study guide primarily discusses. While God (in the form of the Holy Spirit) does the actual renewal, the degree we consistently cooperate with Him (our role) is the degree to which renewal takes place. However, cooperation is more than saying, "Go ahead Lord, change me." Cooperation requires we pray, plan ahead, study the Word, yield, take positive steps, walk in obedience.... As we begin the transformation journey, there are many things that will surely occur. We need to know how to prepare for them so that the transformation process is more effective and rewarding; also, we will not be surprised by things that would otherwise sidetrack us.

The main feature of this study guide is working through several examples of common transformational issues. Examples are given on how to address being overweight, fear, negative thoughts, and depression. This study will show how to develop transformational plans (simple plans to assure that we do our parts). A transformational plan has to consider how we get from the thought of doing something, to making it a true desire in



our hearts, then to making preparations to accomplish what we desire, and finally to putting it all into action with the intent of accomplishing it with a passion. To accomplish our desires it is necessary to know our weapons/tools in this battle with Satan and our old minds (which do not want to be changed). The reader will learn how to address common issues in life, learn his/her role, and come to understand what the Spirit will do.

We Christians realize there are many factors in life which influence our mental and physical health, those factors can be dramatically impacted by transformation. Stress, emotional bondage, and negative thinking are prime factors related to our physical and mental health. As the Lord renews our minds, He eliminates (or diminishes) the scars of our emotional past, and helps us overcome negative thinking. Stress can be brought under control by getting our thoughts and emotions under the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. There are toxic emotions and health destroying attitudes that have to be recognized and addressed in the Christian life. The good news is we are not left powerless, those health destroying things can be replaced and changed. The fruit that the Spirit produces within us are healing for both the mind and body. However, transformation is not necessarily easy, in fact it is generally a struggle, just as a chrysalis struggles to become a butterfly. But, the results speak for themselves.

Harmful thoughts and emotions are discussed in this study so that the reader can know what they are and the harm they cause. There is only one solution, and that is provided by renewal of our minds. It is of utmost importance to know the Spirit's work promotes overall health by quelling the release of harmful stress hormones and creating internal peace.

A critical part of this study is understanding the Judgment Seat of Christ. The rewards a Christian receives at that Judgment are often confused and not well understood, so this topic is discussed in a way to assure understanding. Our rewards may not be what we have been led to believe. It is not what we have not done that is important (touch not, taste not, do not do that) but what we have accomplished with our renewed minds. It is the renewed mind that creates the works and mental qualities that will be praised by the Lord and result in a reward.

The liberty and freedom we have in Christ are fascinating; this study reveals what liberty and freedom are, and how we can lose them. Our freedom/liberty is assured to us by Christ and the empowering Holy Spirit; but we can lose them when we lose connection with our Head (Christ). Invariably, loss of connection will cause us to slip

into bondage to laws and regulations of human origin. When we lose connection, we are no longer in touch with the source of our freedom and we fail to thrive in the Christian life. Not only is there a loss of liberty/freedom, but there is an inexorable turn-around in our transformation. The Spirit's accomplishments will experience a transformation reversal, in which a person reverts to things seemingly right and good from the perspective of a non-transformed mind. Thus, the fruit in us (produced by the Holy Spirit) is replaced by emotional feelings, and when they fail to have the desired effect there may be further regression, to the point of seeking carnal pleasure. Keeping our connection with our Head is critical if we are to live a God-honoring life. We learn transformation is not an option, it is required to prove to ourselves and others God's good and perfect will.

## Note to Readers

This Bible study guide is intended to be used for personal study/devotions, adult Bible studies, and presentations. The content is also of vital importance for teenagers; of course, it is necessary for parents and youth group leaders to adjust the presentation level to that of the intended group.

There are questions (called Your Thoughts) which are designed to draw the reader into the study in a deeper manner than reading alone can afford. Your Thoughts are designed to help assure the content of the study is being properly understood and that practical applications can be made. Many times Your Thoughts do not have a specific answer because they will be based upon your opinion or specific thoughts; for these, no responses are given for you to consider at the end of the lesson. However, for those which are not opinion-based, or specific to the person, some thoughts are presented for your consideration at the end of each lesson.

Quotes of pertinence to the topic are presented at various locations in the lessons. If the quote's "author" is shown in parenthesis, such as (Noton Estone), that is a pseudonym and is really an applicable biblical phrase; but, written without regard to correct word division (the real author being that of this study guide).

Much of the information presented in this study is relatively new in nature. It is my prayer that new information (or a difference in approach) will help create understanding and open minds as to what is involved in the matter of transformation. The in-depth approach will hopefully advance personal understanding of the Scripture and enhance the overall teaching on this important biblical topic.

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# BIBLICAL TRANSFORMATION

# The Renewed Mind

## Lesson 1

### God's Plans for You

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"*  
(Romans 12:1-2)

### Purpose of Study

It is not necessarily easy to understanding what the Bible means when it speaks of transformation and renewal of the mind. This study will explain what God has in mind for each person based upon His love and grace, and that it is something to be desired by all of us. God's care of His own is seen in His carefully crafted plan which assures that our body, soul (mind), and spirit are each redeemed by the Almighty in due time. In a nutshell, God's plan is to first save us, then transform our minds, and finally give us glorified bodies. We can be assured that when God speaks of renewal of the mind that He is not referring to some form of mystic mind control; but instead, providing divine help to make our minds more Christ-like.

To understand His plan, we have to understand how we were designed and what God's overall plan is for all human beings. Having faith in Christ as our personal Savior is the first step desired by God, and then the process of transformation can begin. This process goes on our entire lives and is shepherded by the Holy Spirit within each believer. However, transformation is not automatically done in our lives; it is a cooperative venture with the Spirit and that means we too have certain responsibilities.

The Holy Spirit indwells believers at the time they have faith in Jesus Christ. The Spirit takes residence within the deepest core of our beings and fills the void in each person which whispers, perhaps even screams, "something is missing." The Spirit provides that "something" in our unceasing quest for authenticity and meaning in life. The Spirit begins to work from the depths of our beings and works outward, satisfying the earnest longings of our souls and spirits. The deeper parts where the Spirit primarily works are our human spirits and our souls (basically our minds). We will see how He begins to work in the deep recesses of our lives to renew our minds; thereby changing our wants, desires, character, consciences, values, etc.

None of these changes are done against our wills, indeed, we must constantly and intentionally follow the Lord's leading in all of this. Over time, the Spirit produces His fruit in our lives, and that fruit replaces the gunk and misery of our old selves. His fruit are mentioned in **Galatians 5:22-23a**, "**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.**" His virtues and character are produced within us, this is what renews our minds and transforms our lives so that we can think and behave as the new creations we are in Christ.

Transformation of the human mind is much like the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly; an incredible journey of struggle, discovery, and reward. However if we are to become Christ-like in our lives, this is the way He has designed and the only way it can be accomplished. As we come to understand what transformation truly is, we can only stand back in awe of our Lord's plans for us and for what He intends to accomplish in our lives.

Perhaps a little story will help make this more comprehensible. A pastor held up an orange and asked some young boys and girls, "If I squeezed this orange what will come out?" They all said, "Orange juice." "But I want grape juice," he replied. "If I pray sincerely and really believe with all my heart, then I will get grape juice, right?" he responded. The kids laughed at such a silly thing. So he took it to the next level, "But if I truly believe, God promised that whatever we ask in prayer will be given to us, and that we could even move mountains, so surely I can get grape juice out of this orange." The kids held firm to their belief that only orange juice would come out (as a side note, isn't it interesting how an honest child can get closer to the truth than some adults who play the "religion" game). Finally the pastor asked, "Why won't I get grape juice if I pray sincerely, after all, nothing is impossible with God?" A youngster answered, "You will get orange juice every time because that's what's in it."

The question is, when we are squeezed by the events of life, what will come out of us? When hard times and frustrations occur in life (when squeezed), and they always do, the non-transformed Christian may respond by cursing, criticism, outbursts, blaming, anger, shouting, denial, pouting, doubting God, etc. These are characteristics of a person that needs biblical help. Even refined non-Christians often display a more temperate response.

God's plan is to make our minds new (transform them), so what comes out when we are squeezed "is what is in us." If godly virtues/fruit are in us, then they will be manifest. Understanding what transformation is, and how it occurs, are the purposes of this study. His virtues and fruit can become part of the central core of who we are, and that is what transformation is all about.

It seems even a child knows that you will only get out that which is within. Unfortunately, adult Christians have been desensitized to what is obvious, pushing it to the back of their minds. Perhaps we need a bit of childhood honesty with ourselves. We often believe that somehow we can get something out of us that just is not there. Some replace what is obvious with a default belief (a belief used as an alternative when we won't admit the truth). Default beliefs are generally based upon the notion that human rules and regulations will bring about the needed changes within us (by self-improvement, neglect of the body, or self-imposed religion). Often this law-based belief is masked with an air of spirituality, but it is devoid of biblical support. It presupposes that we are left to struggle through life with the same "old mind" we had before being saved, unless we change it. This will invariably lead to frustration and confusion because self-improvement and human rules cannot do what only God can. Only God (all three persons) can transform our mind and make us new on the inside, and He has a clear plan to accomplish this.

We often think that salvation is all God has purposed for the believer, and this is understandable since salvation and transformation are often viewed as the same thing and used interchangeably. However, salvation and transformation are two distinct and separate things; salvation is primarily spiritual while transformation relates to the mind. When we are saved God will not automatically, instantaneously, make everything in our minds (or lives) just perfect and wonderful. He does however, have a plan to transform us (over time) by renewing our minds so that we can live according to the perfect will of God.

Christians generally want to follow Romans 12:1; they do not want to be conformed to the world. However, if we are not transformed by the Holy Spirit, we will be inclined to achieve this by doing it the only way we know how--by imposing human ordinances on ourselves and others. Such ordinances supposedly prevent conformance and are well known, " **'Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,'** " (Col. 2:21). Such an outlook is diametrically opposed to what constitutes non-conformance, because the Scripture continues, "**...according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh**" (Col. 2:22b-23). We cannot naturally know what prevents conformance to the world or what fosters godly values except they are developed within us from above. So, our human wisdom seems ever so spiritual but in reality goes right back to a law-based approach of solving a problem, a method shown over and over in the Bible not to work.

### **Your Thoughts**

1.1 What is the difference between salvation and transformation? \_\_\_\_\_

1.2 Some people impose human ordinances (rules) upon themselves and others such as: do not eat, drink, or do some things. Are such rules of any value in transforming our minds? \_\_\_\_\_

Transformation is such an important topic that it has to be given prominence in our lives and in our teaching. One of the first things to note is that transformation is not something automatically accomplished in our lives by God when we are saved. Thus, in order to understand transformation comprehensively, it is first incumbent upon us to see how it fits into God's eternal plan. This study will consider His desire for those who are saved and other important elements involved in each Christian's life.

This study will present the topic of transformation a little differently than what may be customary, but hopefully that will advance our understanding. May each reader be led by the Lord to a better understanding of transformation and to take the next step in their spiritual journey with Christ.

## **Introduction**

### **The Next Step**

Wherever you are in life, whoever you think you are, there is always a next step. To some people this is a frightening prospect because there is comfort in the status quo. There is always a measure of security in what a person's present life holds, even if that life is not all that good (the unknown is more frightening). To others the idea of a next step is exhilarating because it presents a change from the present, an opportunity for change that could be wonderful. If you are an unbeliever, your next step may be allowing yourself to be exposed to the Word of God. If you have an inner conviction that you need to have a relationship with God, then having faith in Christ leads to salvation, which is your next step. If you are saved then your next step would certainly be ..., wait a minute, isn't salvation the ultimate goal of the Christian life?

Salvation begins a new, personal relationship with God (all three persons of the Godhead). This study presents the next step(s) after placing your faith in Him, i.e., maturing spiritually and being transformed by the renewing of the mind. While the main emphasis of this series



is on transformation, it is so closely intertwined with spiritual maturity that the two often get wrapped together in our discussions.

Our relationship with the Almighty has to mature over time, just as human relationships mature and change over time. We do not relate to an adult son/daughter the same way we did when he/she was a child. A static relationship would be considered a dysfunctional relationship. Similarly, we have to wonder if we become dysfunctional Christians if we are content to be saved and that is all we ever want. The Bible teaches that all through our lives God wants our relationship with Him to grow because being a Christian is ever changing and always maturing. There is so much to learn about a maturing relationship and a renewed mind (transformation) that no amount of discussion could adequately do the job; thankfully, the Lord will reveal to each person that relies upon Him, what needs to be known and addressed in life.

Salvation is the first step every person must take. It is what makes a person a Christian and it begins a new life with Christ. It is the most important step in any person's life. However, there are many desired growth steps after that (during our time here on this earth). These growth steps help us mature spiritually so that we are drawn closer to Him and can serve Him better.

This Bible study guide will explore in a general sense what the Bible says are desired next steps for every believer; interestingly, it is not so much one step as a series of steps all through a person's life. In each person's life there are specific steps that the Lord will reveal in His time and manner. All these steps amount to what the Bible calls transformation, a process of the Spirit of God changing us from the inside into a new form--ultimately transforming our entire lives.

The change being discussed is not a change in the external matters of your life (situation, circumstances, wealth, health, or people). It is a change in you, a restructuring of your mind and heart. This next step in life is exciting in that it is accomplished by the Holy Spirit working in your life. The Holy Spirit has no desire to harm you, but to make you more like Christ each day.

**Your Thoughts**

1.3 Does the thought of the Holy Spirit changing you from within make you feel uncomfortable or do you find it exciting? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

1.4 In your own words, what would a dysfunctional relationship with the Lord be like? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Stuck on First**

Sports analogies are often over-used and certainly lack in many respects, so please bear along. In the game of baseball the object is to score a point for your team by hitting the ball and getting to home plate. In order to get to home plate it is necessary to first get to bases one, two, three, and then finally home. There seems to be a sense in the Christian community today that getting to first base is what the Christian baseball game is all about (final goal). In this analogy, getting to first base is equivalent to becoming saved. The weakness of this analogy is that even if you never get past first base you will still get to eventually go home (Heaven). However, in your lifetime, if you miss the other bases you will miss many of the opportunities God desires for you. Neither will you meet the expectations of what could be accomplished in your life as far as ministry to others.

In this analogy first base is salvation, and home plate is the ultimate goal of reaching Heaven; what then are bases two and three? In baseball, getting to the next bases can be dependent upon the play of others to help you advance; however, in the Christian life you and the Lord are the two who control the advancement. So do not get over-satisfied with where or who you are; do not get stuck at any particular point in life, and do not hold to any specific frame of mind because God has plans to change you. This includes even those mature in age and in the understanding of the Word. Life will generally get worse if we allow ourselves to get stuck on first.

The concept of not getting stuck seems obvious but in reality it is subtle and not easily recognized in one's self. Perhaps its subtlety lies in the fact that everyone (even a person who vehemently resist the work of the Holy Spirit) goes through some measure of transformation--few, if any, get totally stuck. However, some degree of getting stuck is the most common Christian experience. This occurs in our personal lives and it occurs in ministries. In the latter case, many ministries today (whether written, spoken, personal) present sound teaching concentrating on the fundamentals of the faith, but rarely go beyond those fundamentals. Some mature Christians have developed a keen lack of sensitivity to the imbalance in such ministries and accept it as long as new people are being reached. They become satisfied with an exposition of the same thing over and over, as long as it hits some of the trigger points and buzz words of the group being addressed. The goal of this Bible study guide is to help each of us not to get stuck, but to advance as the Lord wishes, and to see the need to keep moving ahead in the Christian life.

## **Longing for More**

All ministries (and our personal lives) have to make sure the heart of the hearer is being nurtured in a way that the longing of the heart (human spirit) is being met. Seekers of Christ need spiritual baby food, which is only proper. Seekers need to know the basics of God, the Bible, sin, the purpose of Christ's death, and the plan of redemption. Every Christian ministry should have some messages devoted to seekers. However, how does a mature

Christian grow in faith if that is all the exposure to the Word they receive? In each of our lives there is the constant need to truly grow in Christ and to guard against substituting human performance and entertainment as our only exposure to the Word. The Word is so deep and so marvelously rich we can feast on it forever, devouring every word, without ever tolerating less.

There is a clear lack of teaching of the entire Word of God and teaching it in a manner consistent with what God has revealed as specific for today in the Age of Grace (alternatively called the Dispensation of Grace or Church Age). Believers go to church but are not being fed in a way that really delves into the Word. They get a confusing mixture of teachings meant for Israel with that meant for the Church the Body of Christ. There are a growing number of mature Christians that feel they are doing the right thing by attending church, but in the back of their minds they wonder if they are just spinning their wheels. They feel neglected, and that they are not being ministered to in a way that reaches the core of their being. These believers have come to realize that if they are to take the next steps in Christ, it will have to be as a result of personal or group Bible study. Perhaps that is the way the Lord always intended.

Tozer recognized this condition years ago and noted, "There is today no lack of Bible teachers to set forth correctly the principles or the doctrines of Christ, but too many of these seem satisfied to teach the fundamentals of the faith year after year, strangely unaware that there is in their ministry no manifest Presence, nor anything unusual in their personal lives. They minister constantly to believers who feel within their breast a longing which their teaching simply does not satisfy."<sup>1</sup> If Christians come to know God's plan for transforming and maturing each believer, they will be able to have the longing in their hearts filled (and get off of first base).

### Your Thoughts

1.5 What has been most helpful in your life for continued growth in Christ?

1.6 The longing of the heart for more of the Lord is common. Have you, or do you have, that longing? \_\_\_\_\_

1.7 What would you recommend as ways to satisfy that longing? \_\_\_\_\_

## Concluding Comments

Most Christians have a strong desire to follow Romans 12:1-2. In order to follow these verses it is necessary to understand we were created with a body, soul, and spirit, (1 Thes. 5:23). In God's plan for us, He first wants to save us then to transform us by renewing our minds. Thus, He is very interested in not only saving us but helping us mature spiritually and to experience new minds that exhibit His value and fruit (love, joy, peace, patience, etc.). It is very important that we do not get stuck in life thinking that we are saved and now have to struggle through life with the same old mind we had before being saved. It is the renewed mind that conforms us to Christ and that is what keeps us from being conformed to the world. His transforming power is liberating and exciting; what a marvelous Lord we serve.

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<sup>1</sup>(Tozer, A. W.; "*The Pursuit of GOD*;" WingSpread Publishers, Camp Hill Pennsylvania, ISBN: 978-1-60066-054-2, First WingSpread Publishers Edition 2007, page 8).

### **Please consider these responses to "Your Thoughts"**

- 1.1. Salvation is an act of God which saves a person from his/her sin; it is spiritual. Transformation is a process of God which is brought about by the renewal of the mind.
- 1.2. They are of no value.

## Lesson 2

### Specific Plan for Each Person

*"The first and greatest punishment of the sinner is the conscience of sin."*

Lucius Annaeus Seneca  
Roman philosopher (4 BC - 65 AD )

*"Strange is our situation here upon Earth.  
Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why,  
Yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose."*  
Albert Einstein

#### God's Design of Humans

God created humans in His image, and to some degree, being created in His image includes being made with three aspects, or parts, just as He is three. Thus, the triune God created humans with three aspects: body, soul and spirit. The Scripture confirms this, **"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes. 5:23)**. Each aspect has specific functions and needs; thankfully, God has a plan for each (according to His knowledge of the intricacies of His handiwork).

Before we can discuss God's overall plan for all humans we have to better understand God's design of human beings. When we understand who we are, at least how God designed us, we can then better understand His plans for us.

In Genesis Chapter 1, God uses the word "created" three times, on days one, five, and six. This is not something to be overlooked. Each time the word created is used God brought something new into the world that had never existed before; thus, He created it for the first time and out of nothing. On day one He created all the material and energy (the known and unknown dark matter and energy) of the universe. He created it out of nothing by the word of His mouth. Then on days two, three, and four, He fashioned, formed, and made things out of all the "stuff" created on day one. Our physical bodies are made of that stuff created on day one. Then on day five, He uses the word created again because He brought something into existence that never existed before, an unseen thing called the soul (self-awareness). On day six He uses the word created because He again brought into the world something that had never existed before, an invisible but very real entity, the human spirit (God-aware-

ness). So, we see our three aspects relate directly to the Creation of the universe in Genesis chapter one, and we see how carefully and wisely the Scripture is written in every detail.

### How the Creation Days Relate to our Design

<u>Day</u>	<u>God Created</u>	<u>Relates to Our</u>
One	the physical universe	body
Five	higher animal life	soul
Six	humans	spirit

To review this matter of our creation:

- Our body is the visible, material, physical part of who we are. It is not eternal and will die. We will be given a new, eternal, glorified body when Christ returns.
- In general terms, **the soul is that part of us that is self-conscious** (aware of "self" and relates to the world around us). The human soul is invisible and eternal, it is what we would call the mind. The human mind is not the brain, which is the physical organ which makes thinking (a mind activity) possible. The higher animals have a soul/mind so they are aware of themselves; however, their souls are not eternal.
- **The spirit is that part of us that is God-conscious** (aware of God and the need for a relationship with Him). The human spirit is not the same as the Holy Spirit. The human spirit is invisible and eternal. The human spirit is what makes us distinct from the animals and unique in all of creation. No other creature has a spirit so they have no concept of God. Our spirits recognize there is a God and cause a desire within us to have a relationship with Him (that desire can be somewhat "turned off" early in life by wrong teaching and many other factors). If this is all new to you, or confusing, it will be discussed in more detail later. Our spirits make us aware of sin and its consequences, ultimately creating the desire for a relationship with God.

In most contemporary teaching, the human soul and spirit are often treated as one; so it is easy to see why there is confusion. From Scripture it seems clear God expects us to at least understand the basics of our design, that is, what our constituent parts/aspects are. Thus, we need to know the basics of what relates to the soul and what pertains to the spirit. Making those distinctions can be difficult (even beyond what the average person wants to hear). The Scripture attests to the fact there is difficulty knowing what is of the soul and what is of the spirit, but also assures us He knows and has taken this into account, **"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, ... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"** (Hebrews 4:12).

From the testimony of Scripture we realize that matters of the soul and spirit are sometimes so closely intertwined that we often cannot distinguish them (we will see this more later).

However, they are understandable enough that we can grasp the basics. What we cannot honestly understand, He does. So we must be sensitive to this issue but mostly rely upon Him to point out and make clear what is needed in our lives.

### Your Thoughts

2.1. In your own words, define the human soul: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2.2. In your own words, define the human spirit: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### God's Plans

God had a plan fully worked out in His mind before creation began, knowing full well how His special creation (humans) would behave. His plan was established based upon His truth, love, grace, holiness, etc., and was not the result of having to adjust to us. God's plan for us was no afterthought or alternative (as though His original plan failed). He created each of us with three aspects (body, soul, spirit) and had a plan to take care of each of those aspects in a special way. First, He wants to save us, then to transform us by renewing our minds, and finally to give us a glorified body in the future.

It is exciting to know the simple truth that God wants to save us and then renewing our minds (transforming us). This means He wants to work in our lives moment by moment so we can have renewed minds that think and reason in a godly manner; minds which have the character traits and values of our Lord, and which exhibit the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, etc.). It is very important that we do not get stuck thinking that once we are saved that is pretty much all there is to the Christian life. God does not intend that we struggle through life with the same old mind we had before being saved. It is the renewed mind that conforms us to Christ and that is what keeps us from being conformed to the world. His transforming power is liberating and exciting.

His plan for each of us can be summarized as shown below. It is essential to grasp the time-sequence of these three events. Salvation is primarily spiritual in nature (but it affects every aspect of our being) and it occurs in an instant, upon belief in Christ as Savior. Transformation is not instantaneous, but a process that takes place our entire lives. The renewing of the mind is a step-by-step process led and guided by the Holy Spirit. You must cooperate in this process or the Spirit will be quenched. This is how God (all three persons) speaks to us today (not audibly or visibly, but silently working in the heart and mind). Finally,

His plan for our body will be realized in the future when we are taken to Heaven and given a new glorified body.

1. **Salvation for our spirit**
2. **Transformation for our soul**
3. **Glorification for our body**

### **Salvation for Our Spirit**

As stated before, God has a specific plan for each aspect of our being, i.e., for our body, soul, and spirit. Clearly any designer would plan things thoroughly and well in advance of beginning any project. Similarly, God's plan was developed in full before He created anything. Part of His plan was to keep something a secret, for if it were known ahead of time the plan would not work. The Age of Grace (the Age in which we live) was the secret (called the mystery in the Bible) in His eternal plan. Had our Age been known ahead of time then the powers of darkness would not have crucified Christ, and without His death no one could ever be saved (1 Cor. 2:7-10).

At just the right time, He revealed that mystery and that has been an under-appreciated blessing to all humans around the world (Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:25-26, Rom. 16:25-26). It has been a blessing because in our Age, God is pouring out His grace: He saves us by His grace through faith alone, blesses us with all spiritual blessings in Heaven, indwells us, and transforms our minds. Certainly Christ's death, which is central to our salvation, was planned from before the foundation of the world (1 Pt. 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8). He knew the initial perfect, sinless state would not last long, and that sin would break our relationship with Him.

From the divine perspective, an intrinsic part of creation is the need for salvation, i.e., if our relationship with Him were to be restored, then He would also have to be the Savior of mankind. Thus, He would have to provide the way in which we could be brought back into a right relationship with Him (which, for this study guide, is equivalent to the terms: regeneration, redeemed, born-again, recreated, reconciled, new creation, salvation, saved...). Salvation is God's plan for our spirit and it has a profound impact upon every aspect of who we are (because body, soul, and spirit are all united in one being).

When a person believes that he/she is a sinner and that Christ died to pay for his/her sins (a personal understanding that He did it for me) then that person becomes saved. **"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).** Salvation is based upon a personal belief, it is not a corporate or church matter. That means we have to realize we are sinners, our sins have already condemned us to death (Hell), and that Christ paid for our sins which we accept by faith (belief). Salvation is then granted to us by God's grace; we



do not deserve it because we believe, but that is what grace is about. **"For He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21, parentheses added)**. Belief is what He asks from us, and with the slightest faith on our part He dispenses His grace—in floods. We can never earn or ever pay God back; it is a gift to us based upon His love for us.

Salvation is an instantaneous act of God that recreates, regenerates, and saves us spiritually the moment we believe. Instantaneous means it is not something that takes any amount of time (as though God were waiting for us to accomplish some spiritual works, or give up some sin, or meet some standard of good behavior). It is complete and we do not get some now and some latter, we get it all at once. Not only is it instantaneous and complete, it is based upon an act of God, whereby He dispenses His grace. Upon what does He dispense His grace? Upon child-like faith in Christ as our Savior. This act of God cannot be undone by us, for example, if we have a period of unbelief or commit a sin or live in sin. The omniscient God knew full well how we would behave in the future, before He saved us. Furthermore, this act of God will not be undone by God (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 4:30). Thus, we have a salvation that is secure and that will last for all eternity.

### Your Thoughts

- 2.3. Is your salvation kept secure based upon your faithfulness to Him, or God's actions? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.4. Read Rom. 8:35-39, what can separate us from the love of God? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.5. Read Eph. 4:30. The believer is "sealed until the day of redemption," which means God has placed a seal upon your salvation. So, if a true Christian commits a terrible crime is he/she still saved? \_\_\_\_\_

Salvation is accomplished totally by God. We are incapable of doing anything about our "dead spiritual" condition, so God does it all by His grace. Salvation is more complex than we are capable of understanding. The good thing is we do not have to understand what all takes place when we are saved, that understanding and realization occur over many years of Bible study and walking with the Lord. However, we accrue all sorts of spiritual blessings we have no clue exist. These blessings are inherent in Salvation and each believer receives these blessings the instant he/she is saved.

Interestingly, we get all the spiritual blessing "ahead of time," that is, before one would think we would get them according to biblical prophecy. According to prophecy, Israel should first be converted then the Word should go to the rest of the world. However, we live in a special

age of blessings being poured out ahead of Israel's conversion. Our Age of Grace (Church Age or Dispensation of Grace) was kept secret in God's mind from the very beginning and then revealed to the Apostle Paul after Israel rejected the Messiah and the Holy Spirit. Thus, in our Age the spiritual blessings promised to Israel are given to us ahead of Israel's conversion (which will take place during the Tribulation and that is yet future) (Rom. 11:26-29; Ezek. 16:60-63, 36:24-36).

Our spiritual blessings obviously relate specifically to our spirit. Many are found in Ephesians 1 and 2 and include: accepted, belonging, redeemed, etc. A person can be saved (which is a spiritual blessing) and have virtually no concept of the other blessings they have in Christ; we gain an appreciation for them as we mature in Christ and understand His Word better. It is understanding them that brings joy, comfort, closeness, and intimacy with the Lord. These blessings tie in directly with spiritual maturity, which relates to salvation and transformation. Please note, we do not get Israel's physical blessings, such as, an earthly land or earthly Kingdom, but her spiritual blessings.

Another spiritual blessing is we are baptized into Christ the moment we believe, **"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13)**. The Apostle Paul was mostly concerned about this sort of spiritual baptism because it is very real, even though unseen. Not only is it real; it is very much part of our salvation. Here is how it works: once we believe that Christ died for our sins, God by His grace saves us. That salvation is brought about by a work of the Holy Spirit, Who baptizes us into Christ--a baptism made without hands (Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 2:12).

Baptism is a confusing topic but in the general sense it means to "identify," as when a piece of cloth is dipped (baptized) into a dye, the cloth becomes identified with the dye<sup>2</sup>. So the dye and the cloth are one (in color). When we are spiritually baptized into Christ, we are made one with Him and become identified with the blood of the Lamb, and that blood was shed for payment for our sins--our sins are thus forgiven. In fact, we are so completely identified with Christ that His death became our death, His burial became ours (in a spiritual sense), and His resurrection became ours (such that God sees us seated in Heaven right now, Eph. 2:6). All that Christ accomplished to fulfill the law and to satisfy God the Father, is appropriated to us. When God now looks at us, He sees us robed in Christ's righteousness (which is far different than our actual earthly condition, but God sees what will be our eternal condition in Heaven and treats us that way).

When we trust in Christ we become a new creation, **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17)**. Our "old man" is crucified with Christ and we are free from sin and made alive

unto Him—a new life begins for us (Rom. 6:6). We become new in a spiritual sense, but our soul (mind) and body remain as they were. Thus, God has a desire to renew (transform) our minds so that they correspond with our new spiritual nature. We do not automatically get a renewed mind any more than we get a new body when we are saved. There is an old story of a man who got in a fight and one of his ears was sliced off. The question is, if he got saved, would he get a new ear? Obviously the body is not in view in 2 Corinthians 5:17, nor is the soul.

### Your Thoughts

2.6. Why is the Age of Grace so special? \_\_\_\_\_

2.7. Why doesn't our salvation depend upon some steps of obedience or works, after all, they were required in all other ages? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Transformation (including maturation) for Our Soul

This study will say that transformation applies to the mind, which also means soul; these two words will be used interchangeably. In Lesson 1 the words body, soul, and spirit were defined. In relation to our topic, the Scripture uses those three terms and also uses other related words, such as, mind and heart. This study cannot get embroiled in word studies or terminology because that would detract from the main topic of transformation. So, it is necessary to keep the wording true to Scripture and to keep it as simple as possible to maintain the flow of thought. The words "mind and soul" seem to portray similar meanings in the Word, and the words "spirit and heart" generally have similar meanings. In this study, mind and soul will mean the same thing and heart and spirit will mean the same thing. However, there does seem to be considerable overlap in what the terms mind and heart mean. Even Scripture attests to the fact that grasping the nuances in meaning of words and the functions those words represent can get confusing. For example, the words soul and spirit can represent functions that get so close to each other we cannot distinguish between the two words, Hebrews 4:12.

His plan for the believer's mind is to renew it, to make it completely new, thereby transforming the entire life. Living a sanctified life (holy and God-pleasing) is based upon this renewal; that is, upon the Holy Spirit producing His character, will, values, and desires in our hearts. Ultimately, we see that His grace is seen not only in salvation but in every aspect and at all times in our lives. His power within us helps assure what mankind so desperately seeks--a sound mind. **"...and be renewed in the spirit of your mind"(Ephesians 4:23).**

Maturing in Christ fills the longing of the soul for more of God; it provides the realization of the divine Presence (beyond the mere knowledge of this doctrinal truth). Maturation involves love, closeness, openness, and intimacy with the Lord--these will be discussed in more detail in lesson 3. Maturation and transformation are so closely related they are hard to distinguish. Indeed, maturation is in some respects a spiritual issue and in some respects it relates to the soul. In either case, when a person is saved and the Lord is transforming his/her life, that person will also be growing in Christ, and vice versa. Because maturation is intertwined with transformation, it is almost impossible to separate. For the most part it will be included in transformation in this study.

### Your Thoughts

2.8. What does it mean to you to have a sound mind? \_\_\_\_\_

2.9. Have you had a longing in your soul for something more? Describe what that is like.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Glorification for Our Body

His plan for the believer's body is to give us a glorified body in the future, at the Rapture. The Rapture is the event that ends our Age and is the secret coming of Jesus Christ to take His own out of the world. There are no signs or wonders preceding it, so no one knows when it will occur--it can't even be predicted. We do know it will occur before the terrible events which begin at the start of the seven-year Tribulation. If we die before the Rapture, our souls and spirits go to be with the Lord, while our bodies lie in the grave (1 Cor. 15:50-57). At the Rapture the bodies of the deceased in Christ will be raised incorruptible and made new. At that time the new body is reunited with the soul and spirit of that believer, to forever live with the Lord. Those who are still alive when He comes will have all three parts go to be at home with Him at the Rapture.

During this life, He provides for our bodies in countless ways, which we most likely do not sufficiently recognize. However, it is our new glorified bodies that show His plan for this aspect of our being. Our new bodies will be perfect: all disease, deformity, etc., removed. We do not know what exactly we will look like, but it seems we will be able to recognize each other. For example, at the Transfiguration of Christ (Matt. 17:2), Moses and Elijah were there with glorified bodies and the three apostles recognized them; how could they recognize them when they had never seen them physically? Were they told these were Moses and Elijah, or did they recognize them based upon other factors, say their characters, which were men-

tioned in the Bible? This study guide will not delve into glorification, other than to make this brief mention that it is part of God's overall, complete package of provisions for His own.

"We humans are a spiritual being in a physical body with a mind (soul) to do what the Holy Spirit teaches." <sup>3</sup>

In order to help the reader not get lost in the details of this study, we will again resort to our baseball analogy. Here are what the various bases would represent in our spiritual life. Maturation and transformation overlap greatly, so do not think that maturation is required before transformation can begin. We must be keenly aware that after salvation our maturation and transformation occur simultaneously as ongoing processes in our lives. It is as though we were on bases two and three at the same time (it is admittedly a weak analogy).

Analogy of Baseball and God's Plan for Us

First base ---- Salvation  
Second base ---- Maturation  
Third base ---- Transformation  
Home plate (base) ---- Glorification

## Concluding Comments

God developed a plan for creating the universe and putting humans in it before creation began. Creation of the universe began His plan. We learn that God had planned to provide for our salvation before the world began. In the account of creation in Genesis, we note that He uses the word "create" in a profound manner, giving us a better idea of who we are. We are a special creation by God with a body, soul, and spirit. The human spirit is that part of us which is God-conscious (aware of God) and no animal has a spirit, not one. Our spirit creates in us an awareness of God and the need for a relationship with Him. Our souls are basically equivalent to our minds. God's plan from the beginning was to provide for our salvation (spiritual), to transform our minds, and to give us a glorified bodies when we are taken to Heaven. Our entire lives can be transformation by the renewal of our minds, which the Holy Spirit will do if we cooperate with Him. Transformation is a life-long process and is brought about by the renewal of our minds. The renewed mind has the traits of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is a sound mind, and when we are squeezed by the trials of life what comes out of us is

what is in us--Christ-like values and traits. The Age of Grace, our age, was a secret in God's eternal plan until revealed to the Apostle Paul. Our Age is so special because we are saved by God's grace through faith alone, all people are on an equal basis, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Heaven, and we are made one with Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>Baker, Charles F.; *A Dispensational Theology*; Grace Bible College Publication; Grand Rapids, Michigan 49509; 1972; ISBN 0-912340-01-0.

<sup>2</sup>Vogel, H.C.A.; *The Nature Doctor*; Keats Publishing; 1991.

**Please consider these responses to “Your Thoughts”**

2.3. God's actions

2.4. Nothing

2.5. Yes

2.6. We are blessed ahead of time, saved by grace through faith alone, saved apart from Israel's acceptance of Christ.

2.7. We rely upon the finished work of Christ, it has all been done for us.

## Lesson 3

# Freedom & Spiritual Maturation

*"Since love grows within you, so beauty grows. For love is the beauty of the soul."*

Saint Augustine

*First, the Spirit of God must begin working on the mind of the natural man, enabling him to see himself as he is,..., Second, the truth of the Gospel of God's*

*Grace must be impressed upon the mind of the natural man, ..."*<sup>1</sup>

Ernest R Campbell

### Freedom

Ronald Reagan said, "*Freedom is one of the deepest and noblest aspirations of the human spirit.*" We all crave freedom in one form or the other so it is an important topic to mention at this time. God's plan is to entirely set each person free (body, soul, and spirit) and that means freedom from the penalty and power of sin. He buys us back (redeems us) from the slavery of sin in this life and frees us of its penalty (death) in the next. True freedom only comes from the Lord, it springs from salvation, maturation, transformation, glorification, ....

We crave freedom and it has been bought for the believer by Jesus Christ. **"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"** (Gal. 4:4-5). The Greek word for redeem is *exagorazo*. Notice the central, main word is *agora*, which is a meeting place, open market, gathering place, etc. You are familiar with the word *agoraphobia* which is the fear of public gatherings. The market place was a place where slaves were sold and bought. *Ex* is a prefix meaning *out*. The specific meaning of *exagorazo* is to buy a slave out of the market in view of giving the person their freedom.<sup>2</sup>

Freedom of speech, worship, association, etc., are civil liberties/freedoms for which most people are willing to die. The loss of freedom (slavery, as an example) makes us cringe at the deprivation of those humans who deny this essential human need for the sake of money or power. As wonderful as these civil liberties are, they pale in comparison to the freedom we acquire when we are redeemed by Christ.

Salvation provides freedom from the penalty of sin. Our glorified body will free us from decrepitude and our many ailments. The longing of every soul is to be free from the present

power of sin in our lives; transformation provides deliverance from that bondage. The renewed mind transforms our thoughts, values, and emotions so they need not hold us in bondage to their errant control and detestable strongholds. We can be free spiritually and mentally for the first time. Recall these Bible verses dealing with freedom.

**"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, ..." (Gal. 5:1a)**

Standing fast in the liberty we have is impossible unless our minds are in intimate connection with the Head (of the spiritual body of believers, Jesus Christ). The non-transformed mind cannot stand fast because it does not know what is expected; it is like a child who does not know what is acceptable behavior. When we lose connection with our Head, we will revert to some form of legalism or other obsession. That is not all, we will actually think that legalism is correct and godly. We replace true spirituality with pseudo religious concepts of what we think God would like. In reality, it is the process of transformation which God uses to implant His thoughts and desires in the heart and mind of the believer. This issue will be discussed in a future lesson but the concept of being free and standing in our liberty are two of most profound concepts on earth. John 8:36 makes it so clear, " **'Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.'** "

John Newton penned the words of the song *Amazing Grace*. He clearly portrays the conversion of the sinner when he wrote, "I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see" If you want a touching example of being made free in Christ, have people come before your church with a sign saying, "I once was \_\_\_\_\_," and then have them flip the sign over to read what they are now, "but now I am \_\_\_\_\_." These should not be messages from those who are "playing a role" but real people who actually lived the events shown. Examples:

I was rejected but now am accepted

- was addict but now am clean
- was an alcoholic but now have living waters
- was a prostitute but now am loved
- was broken but now am whole
- was bitter but now am finding His joy
- was an orphan but now am God's child
- was abused but now am protected
- was an abuser but now have compassion



### Your Thoughts

3.1. Fill in these lines for your life:

Y I once was \_\_\_\_\_, but now am \_\_\_\_\_.

Y I once was \_\_\_\_\_, but now am \_\_\_\_\_.

3.2. You have been set free from sin by faith in Jesus Christ, what could possibly make you want to go back to the slavery of legalism (following religious laws)?

\_\_\_\_\_.

### Spiritual Maturation

This lesson will be used to consider spiritual maturation; to show what spiritual maturation is and how it relates to salvation and transformation. This lesson is a lead-in to the rest of this study because it shows how spiritual maturation reveals to us who we are, and that revelation reveals our need for transformation. The topics of love, closeness, openness, and intimacy will be considered in this lesson (albeit there are many more), as a means of relating this important topic to our study. All the items in this lesson apply to our earthly relationships and our interactions with the Lord. For the rest of this study, spiritual maturity will be included under the general topic of transformation; this one lesson will provide the required exposure to its incredible importance.

Spiritual maturation is the process of growing closer and more intimate with the Lord. As we get more intimate with Him, we get to see ourselves for who we really are, and when we do, we understand why we need a transformed mind. Thus, maturation is discussed at this time to show how the Lord directs our minds so that we see the need for a renewed mind, and in the process, we are drawn closer to Him. As we mature in Christ, we become more intimate with Him, our searching spirit finds joy and the presence of the Lord. We are compelled to seek ways to honor Him, and one way is be increasingly conformed to His image.

### Biblical Love

One of the cornerstones of spiritual maturation is love. The Bible describes true love (*agape*), **"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things"** (1 Cor. 13:4-7). It is true love that helps satiate the believer's longing for a more personal and intimate relationship with Christ.

True love is tolerant and does not easily get upset. Love realizes any relationship will have misunderstandings and unplanned occurrences (it even understands we all have a bad day

now and then). Love does not get angry, but recognizes there will be unexpected conflicts; getting through those conflicts in a godly manner is the issue. Love compels forgiveness which is absolutely essential for a maturing relationship. It does not make someone "suffer a little" in order to earn forgiveness (Eph. 4:2, 4:32). If you have true love, you just let them "off the hook" even if they do not deserve it. "... **bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.**" (Col. 3:13).

True love is kind at all times. It does not try to find ways to "pay the other person back" for hurting you. Romans 12:17 says, "**Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.**" It rejoices in truth and hopes for the best (is optimistic) because it sees the good in others. It is a realistic love that desires the best for the other person; thus, true love builds relationships. It is not controlling or demanding. It looks upon the heart (faith, character, and values) of the saved person, not on the outward appearance (Rom. 5:8, 12:10-19). True love vivifies our relationship with God, i.e., makes a vigorous spiritual life.

True love is not negative, selfish, or proud. It does not pout, scream, "give the silent treatment," or behave inappropriately. When people display true love they do not have the need "to be right" and to spend time proving it. Working hard at proving you are/were right only destroys relationships (because it also proves the other person is wrong). True love builds the other person up with encouragement and comfort, it does not tear others down. It is not God's will for you to keep a record (or list) of things others do wrong so you can remind them of those wrongs later; this is hurtful and destroys trust. Notice how the Lord has treated you and apply that to others (Rom. 12:16; 1 Thes. 4:18).

**"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection"** (Col. 3:14).

#### **Your Thoughts**

3.3. True love means not keeping a list of wrong things the other person has done in order to use it against them in the future. Discuss, or record, how harmful and destructive such a list can be. \_\_\_\_\_.

3.4. Do either love or forgiveness allow you to keep such a list? \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **Closeness**

We will now consider how some interactions (with each other and the Lord) impact our lives. When you are close to someone you are as aware of that person as you are of yourself.<sup>3</sup> You are as sensitive to his/her thoughts, feelings, needs, dreams, as you are to your own. That

person is as important to you as you are to yourself. You listen without objection even if you do not totally agree. This is closeness. Closeness only occurs when you accept another just as he/she is, just as Christ accepted you. **"To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved (Jesus Christ)"** (Eph. 1:6, parenthesis added). Recall, He accepts you for who you are, and does so while you are a sinner (Rom. 5:8). He does not demand anything from you to be accepted. The believer is closer to Him than is possible with any human; that is, you are in Him and He is in you.

Closeness means *giving up some parts of yourself to help you be more aware of the other*. That is what Romans 12:1 teaches, **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."** God wants us to present our bodies (here meaning body, soul, and spirit) as a living sacrifice for Him. When you are close to Christ, you are willing to give up your wishes and plans to be more aware of His. With closeness, it is not about you as much as it is about Him. However, no one can use closeness to manipulate another, to change them into what he/she wants. The idea is to accept them for who they are in order to enhance the relationship. Christ accepts us for who we are.

Being close to the Lord means we have to listen to Him and put His desires first in our lives. With God it is especially important to recognize He alone has the answers, He alone can provide help, and He alone affords the comfort and direction we need. So be sensitive to His leading and you can be confident He wants to listen to you.

We are completely known by Him. However, we can grow to know Him more each day, **"to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God"** (Eph. 3:19). When we begin to know the Lord for Who He is and what He is doing in our lives, our love begins to mature. This maturity helps us experience God's fullness (all that God is, and has for the believer).

### **Openness**

Openness means we can be ourselves without fear of the other person getting upset (we can "open-up"). This is important with God because that means we can tell Him the pains, fears, and dark thoughts in the deepest parts of our hearts. He is patient to listen to your every need, dream, and desire. You can reveal things that are so secret or shameful you cannot share them with any other person. He will not punish you for being open but will instead help you. He wants this openness from you because it prepares you for a maturing relationship. You can discuss the fears you have, the immoral thoughts that come into your mind, the doubts you may have about Him. Pour your heart out to Him, but please be respectful when doing so. Any time day or night, He cares and wants to hear from you, **"... casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you"** (1 Pt. 5:7). Hearing from you can be through prayer or just the thoughts you have in your mind as you think about the things of God. He is always

there to comfort and help you. **"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 understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"** (Phil. 4:6-7).

### Your Thoughts

3.5. Have you ever had a friend or relative you could not be open with because you could not express what you believe, for fear they would get upset? Does such a person accept you for who you really are? \_\_\_\_\_.

3.6. Expressing your inner self to the Lord helps you see what? \_\_\_\_\_.

(3.6. see next paragraph)

Being open with the Lord draws you closer to Him; pour your heart out and know He is listening, and will not hold anything against you. Being open means acknowledging your sins, doubts, hopes, wishes, and fears to Him. Actually, He already knows everything in your mind, but once you express it to the Lord, then you begin to see the need for Him to transform your life (to improve your relationship). Being open draws you closer to Him, because you trust Him enough to reveal the secrets of your heart--the good part is that He is listening and wants to help. So, you can be one hundred percent open with Him. This openness allows you to reveal your darkest secrets and your wildest imaginations.

### Intimacy

When two people are close, you get to know the other person when you are together. When two people are open the other person gets to know you when you are together. So, being close and open with another person will help ensure you develop a good personal relationship. Developing a relationship is important, and it is important that the relationship matures and grows. Growth is brought about by intimacy. When two people are intimate they are also aware of themselves; thus, I know myself when we are together, and you know yourself.\* I can be totally myself without stopping you from being yourself. We each can be totally open with each other without fear of the other getting upset or hurt. We bring the best out in each other and through our relationship we aspire to be a better person. **"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers"** (Eph. 4:29).

\*(Note: To some the idea of knowing yourself brings up all sorts of objections, such as Jer. 17:9. When we are speaking of our maturing relationship with God, He enables us to see

ourselves. We are not discussing human self-sufficiency, or self-discovery here, but a divine interaction which enables us to see ourselves as God does.)

We see that intimacy is the condition that creates true maturation in a relationship. When two people, or you and God, are together you know the other person, the other knows you, and each of you knows yourself. Obviously, the "I AM THAT I AM" would not be God if He did not always know His true self. Intimacy does not just maintain a relationship, it creates it in true form and advances it bringing joy to both parties.

**Getting to Know Each Other**

<u>When you are</u>	<u>This awareness results</u>
Close .....	you know the other person
Open .....	the other person knows you
Intimate .....	you and the other person know yourselves

As we mature in Christ we get to see ourselves for who we really are, and when we do, we understand why we need a transformed mind. When we are aware of our true selves, we see the need for help to make us more like Christ. As we see our need, we will desire to have Him transform our minds because we will realize that how we think is what we are. That is what the analogy of the orange in Lesson 1 teaches, i.e., what comes out is what is in us. Thus, we need to get something better in our mind. As we allow the Lord to change our minds we see how there is victory over sin and how we can walk worthy of the Lord (Eph. 4:1).

There is personal surrender as we put Him first in our lives. Personal surrender means we are willing to give up our goals and desires to follow Him. This all comes about as we present our entire being to Him and ask Him to use it for His glory. The Bible says, "**...that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service**" (Rom. 12:1b). A living sacrifice means to give ourselves to Him (alive, holy, and willingly).

**Your Thoughts**

3.7. With God, closeness allows you to know Him, which is good. Openness lets you pour your heart out to Him, also good. Why is intimacy with the Lord good?

\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

3.8. Do you suppose that God does not automatically transform us (whether we want to be or not) because we would not see the need and thus resent it?

\_\_\_\_\_.

## Concluding Applications

God's plan is to give us freedom from sin (its present power and the future penalty). He does this by buying us out of the market place of sin and setting us free. We are no longer held hostage to sin's control or its bondage. By being renewed in our minds we can have one of the deepest longings of the soul--our freedom. When the Son sets us free, we are free indeed!

The issues of love, closeness, openness, and intimacy discussed in this lesson apply to human relationships as well as with God. These issues enable you to accept the other person for who he/she is, not who you wish him/her to be, or into whom you hope to change him/her. Male-female relationships and marriages often fail because one or both parties cannot accept the other for who they really are. When you accept each other this way, you will forgive them of wrongs against you. Forgiveness means you will not hold against them what they did wrong, you will not make them pay for it (get even), and you will move on as though nothing happened. This will encourage each other and make your relationship something that builds you both up, not tears you down. Of course, real-life relationships may not be as clear cut as stated, so apologies, extra concern, etc., are needed. (Note: an abusive person cannot excuse continued abuse on the basis the abused person needs to forgive them.)

Thus, true love enables people to be themselves, accept each other as they are, and erases fear of the other's anger. True love sets the stage for transformation (next lesson). As your relationship matures, God reveals your inadequacies to you so that He can move you to the next level of maturity. **"Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you"** (Phil. 3:15). As we cooperate in God's leading, He will renew your mind which transforms your life.

The following chart summarizes God's plan for us (as taught in the first three lessons). Please take the time to understand it thoroughly.

### God's Plan for Humans

<u>Aspect</u>	<u>God's Plan</u>	<u>When it Occurs</u>	<u>How Long it Takes</u>	<u>Who Does It*</u>
Spirit	Salvation	Upon Belief	Instantaneous Act	Godhead
Soul	Transformation	This life	Lifetime Process	Holy Spirit
Body	Glorification	Future--next life	Instantaneous Act	God/Christ

\* The term Godhead refers to all three members of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Actually, the Godhead is involved in all the events above, but sometimes one seems to be more prominently mentioned in Scripture.

Where are spiritual maturation and spiritual blessings in the chart above? Parts are in salvation and parts in transformation (remember, it is hard to know where to place them). We have discussed both spiritual blessings and maturation; now for simplicity's sake and for better understanding, we must limit our discussion to salvation, transformation, and glorification. Understanding these three topics will help us all see how the deepest yearnings of the soul are fulfilled by the Almighty.

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<sup>1</sup>Campbell, Ernest R.; *Colossians & Philemon*; Canyonview Press, Silverton, OR 97381-9535, 1982; page 59.

<sup>2</sup>Vine, W. E.; *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Fleming H Revell Company; Old Tappan, NJ; 1966.

<sup>3</sup>Malone, Thomas & Patrick; *The Art of Intimacy*, Simon & Schuster, 1987.

**Please consider these responses to “Your Thoughts”**

3.2. If you become disconnected from Christ, legalism is a common consequence.

3.4. In normally functioning human relationships both love and forgiveness nullify the list; however, in dysfunctional relationships [such as sexual abuse as a child] the abused should eventually forgive but some record of the past may be needed for self-protection and civil justice.

3.5. No, and you will see this prevents intimacy.

3.6. see next paragraph

3.7. It helps you to be aware of yourself, and God can use this self-awareness to help you see areas in your life needing growth/change. This allows you to see the need for His transforming power in your life.

3.8. This would seem to be true, but it is never so stated in Scripture.

## Lesson 4

### God's Instruction for our Souls

*"What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the Master calls a butterfly."*

Richard Bach

*"Diseases of the soul are more dangerous and more numerous than those of the body."*

Marcus Tullius Cicero, Roman Philosopher (106-43 BC)

The key verse for this study will be studied more closely in this lesson. The examination of this verse will be less of a Greek exegesis than an interpretive analyses related to practical, daily-life. **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"** (Romans 12:1-2).

#### **The Status of Many Believers**

Have you ever heard someone say something like this, "I can't help it, that is just how I am--it's how God made me." This placid, seemingly serene outlook may be appropriate at times, but it can also be used as an excuse for any number of personal deficiencies or odd behaviors. Unfortunately, it may also be a way of indirectly blaming God for a person's character flaws. Certainly no one really wants to directly blame God since that is clearly inappropriate. The dilemma most of us face is that we do not want to blame God, nor do we want to admit to our own deficiencies. To solve our dilemma, so we think, we saying something like, "That is how God made me." It seems to be cute, accepting, self depreciating, and a way of recognizing a deficiency. However, this may be a flippant remark which disavows any responsibility or control over how we act or who we are. It is a way of deflecting personal responsibility by placing causality upon the Lord. The real secret is that such a statement announces to everyone that the person has not allowed God to work in his/her life to correct such matters.

Another excuse for not taking ownership of our behaviors is that we are victims of destiny, as though God has predetermined our character traits and we must accept it. While it is true



God has predestined many things, He is the One instructing us not to be held captive by our present condition, but to be transformed. Our view of destiny is not to be that of one who has given up (cowardly resignation); but one who bravely hopes in all things (1 Cor. 13:7), knowing that God can and will change us.

It is exciting to know we do not have to be held captive or dominated by personal deficiencies and inadequacies. God certainly accepts us just as we are for salvation, but His earnest desire is not to leave us the way He finds us. His desire after salvation is to start changing us from the inside, that is, to transform us from the depths of our being (changing how we think which modifies our actions). The emphasis should not be who we are, but who we could be by the grace of God. As the Lord transforms us deep inside our minds, we can see that our ways of thinking are being renewed. This renewal changes our soul, and we begin to think and act like the new person we are spiritually in Christ. We acquire new minds and that truly changes who we are. The Lord knows this change is needed if we are to be like Christ. Otherwise, we will retain deceitful hearts and minds like the man in Proverbs 23:7, who says one thing but believes another. **"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. 'Eat and drink!' He says to you, But his heart is not with you."**

### **Heavenly Instructions**

The word **transformed** in Romans 12:2 is the Greek word *metamorphosis* (meta means change or transfer, morph means form); thus, transformed means **a change in form**. The idea is to change into another form, to transfigure. We commonly use the word metamorphosis (transformation) to describe the change of a rather unattractive chrysalis (larva) into a beautiful butterfly. Christ's transfiguration in Mark 9:2-13 was a metamorphosis. Christ's transfiguration was rapid, just as our body will be changed rapidly when Christ comes. However, our minds' transformation is a renewal process--a life-long process. Transformation, or if you prefer morphing, is an internal and real "change in form" of our minds by the Holy Spirit. This renewed mind then leads us to live, think, and reason in a godly manner.

As mentioned previously, in many Christian circles the biblical word transformation is equated or confused with salvation. Unbelievers are told if they place their faith in Christ that He will transform them--that is salvation. Faith is the key for receiving God's grace which saves/regenerates, but that is certainly not transformation. Transformation results from the renewal of our minds which is a process that begins after salvation and proceeds for the rest of our earthly lives. The degree we are transformed in this life is related to the degree we please Him and experience the power of God in our lives.

A believer's mind has to be changed in such a way that the old nature with its values, beliefs, and practices is replaced by that which conforms to the mind of Christ. We are not genetically programmed nor are we capable of transforming ourselves. In addition, there is

no indication that God will do it automatically for us, nor will He force it upon us. The Word teaches He will renew our minds, and this occurs as we allow Him to work in our lives and cooperate with Him in the process (this is walking in the Spirit).

“Believers are commanded to change [if you prefer, exchange] the expressions of the old life and nature for that of the new nature which indwells every Christian. This is done by the renewing of the mind by the Holy Spirit. 'Renewing' means 'a complete change for the better' effected by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).”<sup>1</sup> Not only does a renewed mind change us in the depth of our being, but we will be able to grasp, at last, what the good, acceptable (well pleasing), and perfect (complete) will of God is. We will see it is exactly what we need in our lives. “...**but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God**” (Rom. 12:2). Ultimately His will in our lives will prove to you, family, church, society, even the angels in Heaven (Ephesians 3:10) that the perfect will of God is a gracious provision for our mental and spiritual well being.

### Your Thoughts

4.1. Transformation proves the will of God is what? \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_.

4.2. In Ephesians 3:10 the manifold wisdom of God is being made known to the heavenly hosts by the Church (body of believers in the Age of Grace). The heavenly hosts (angels, cherubim, etc.) previously had no clue of this special Age, but now they are learning what God is doing through us. Transformation is an integral part of what they are getting to know. How does this impact your thinking? \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### Renewed in Mind

We become a new creation, a new creature, when we are saved, 2 Cor. 5:17. What has occurred spiritually is assured by God and is considered a reality in Scripture. However, that reality is not exactly in accordance with how we feel or what is happening on this earth. Salvation gives us a new position of being "in Christ" and being seated in Heaven next to Him. We have been taken out of Adam and placed into Christ. This is called positional truth (it is completely true in the spiritual realm and relates to our standing, our position in Christ). However, until He takes us home we will struggle through this life; this is a practical truth (your practical reality does not yet match your position in Heaven). So, what is spiritually true now is called positional truth, what your life is right now on earth is based upon practical

\*The phrase in brackets was added by the author

truth. God's desire is that our practical lives are lived commensurate, in accordance, with our heavenly position. We are thus to follow this teaching, **"...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness"** (Eph. 4:22-24). We are to reckon (make true in daily practice) this blessed truth, **"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord"** (Rom. 6:11).

Many sincere Christians struggle trying to understand positional truth and practical truth, as seen in Ephesians 4:22-24 (above). The whole matter may be illustrated by taking off and putting on a garment, say a jacket. Our old jackets have the words: looser, coward, cheat, drunk, drug addict, murderer, prostitute, etc., engraved in bold letters on them. No matter what we try to do to our old image, the stigma or our former lives are written for everyone to see. It is not only what everyone else sees, it is what we believe about ourselves. Those words are the mental baggage we carry and which incite the painful emotions we experience as we try to survive. When we trust in Christ, we are given new spiritual jackets with the words, "Righteous in Christ." When God looks upon a believer, He sees only the new jacket, and the person robed in it. That is all He sees because He sees the eternal, positional truth. While we are here on earth, we generally see our old, former jackets (practical truth), even though we aspire to make the new ones visible (not easily seen by others who lack spiritual eyes). Slowly but surely as we are transformed, people can get glimpses of our new spiritual jackets. The inexorable, relentless transformation of the believer's mind is what reveals the new jacket to ourselves and others.

When we are saved our "old man" (who we were before being saved) is crucified with Christ and then we are raised again in newness of life--this is all in the spiritual realm. On the other hand, transformation does not recreate us, it rearranges our minds and makes them function in a new way. The old man in principle is dead and the new man created in Christ Jesus is alive. In present reality, we are to live as though the old man were dead and new man alive, but you can be sure they war against each other for control of your mind (Rom. 7:19-25). The only way to put off the old man and put on the new man is by being renewed in the spirit of one's mind (transformation). The spirit of the mind is a reference to our mental attitude, state of mind, or disposition with respect to God and spiritual realities.<sup>2</sup> Renewal of the mind is accomplished by the Holy Spirit influencing our spirit.

Transformation is not to be confused with thinking our mind was once good and we just have to get back to that time, or tweek a few things to make it conform to Christ. Such a thought is tantamount to saying our old mind had significant value; instead, God is saying that we have a profligate mind which must be renewed in total. When we were very young, our minds may have been minimally tarnished by the world, but even then they were tainted. By the time

we are just a few years old, the indelible graffiti of this world and the deep etchings of false ideas (how men are to treat women, how families interact, what is just, what is right, respect for life, putting self first, etc.) have irreparably scarred our minds. No, taking back an infected, defiled mind is not God's plan. What is envisioned is erasing the scars, removing the graffiti, and modifying the wrong concepts in order to produce a renewed mind. It is in this manner that the Christian ethos is revealed. It is in this manner that the fruit of the Spirit is produced in our lives. We previously hid our true identity behind the false veneer of religious dictums, egalitarian thoughts, and worldly disguises. Now for the first time, we are blessed with the fecundity (from the Spirit) to produce the fruit He desires.

W.E. Vine refers to this renewal as, *"...the adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God, which is designed to have a transforming effect upon the life ... the Roman passage stresses the willing response on the part of the believer."*<sup>3</sup> Wuest elucidates further by stating that Paul is in effect saying, *"Change your outward expression from that which you had before salvation, an expression which came from your totally depraved nature and was representative of it, to an expression which comes from your regenerated inner being and is representative of it ... accomplished through the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who when definitely, and intelligently, and habitually yielded to puts sin out of the believer's life and produces His own fruit. He does that by controlling the mental processes of the believer."*<sup>4</sup>

As a transformed child of God, we are able to show our true spiritual pedigree.

**Your Thoughts**

4.3. Showing a spiritual pedigree, what is that? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Why Renewal is Needed

Please consider these reasons why we must each be morphed:

- To overcome the defacing of His image due to sin.
- Our minds are polluted from the fall, world, and our own choices - we need mental detoxification, mind renewal, reprogramming, and the mind of Christ.
- We need a new mind to go along with our new position (standing) in Christ.
- We need a new value system, desires, and goals--His. (Philippians 2:13)
- Renewal of our minds removes negative thinking a prime source of mental and physical illness.<sup>5</sup>
- To put off the old man (sin oriented, self-centered, defensive behavior, unable to admit being wrong, anger, moodiness, etc.). (Ephesians 4:22)
- To put on the new man. (Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24)
- To remove the overwhelming burden of thinking our performance is the measure of our standing or acceptance with the Lord.
- Mental baggage (hidden in the deep recesses of our minds) holds us down and keeps us captive to the past; we have to get rid of it.

### Your Thoughts

4.4. Which of the reasons given above ( for why we must be transformed) is most precious to you (or add your own)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4.5. Does your performance in some way affect your position in Christ or being accepted by Him?

4.6. What mental baggage do you carry? (How to help get rid of it will be studied in a future lesson.) \_\_\_\_\_

4.7. If negative thinking (even if the events are true) dominates your life, what do you think such thinking will do to your physical and mental health? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Two additional reasons for renewal are discussed below--information and conformance. These two have been separated from the listing above because they are common and seem so innocuous that we often do not recognize how insidious they really are.

### Smarter and Better

As noted above, the two "sneaky" things that we may not recognize as candidates for renewal are information and conformance (legalistic conformance, as opposed to conformance to the

world). These two make a person seem smart and godly by virtue of their appearance of spirituality. While they entirely miss the biblical directive, they give an outward manifestation that can be used to cover up the lack of true renewal. John Ortberg says, "If we do not become changed from the inside-out--if we don't morph--we will be tempted to find external methods to satisfy our needs to feel that we're different from those outside the faith."<sup>6</sup> If we do not allow ourselves to be transformed, we will settle for being informed (ever learning, II Timothy 3:7) or conformed to something other than Christ. It is here we Christians must be careful not to fall into one of the adversary's clever schemes, that is, the belief that by not conforming to the world (being separated) we are obeying Romans 12.

Ortberg mentions being informed or conformed can be substitutes for true transformation. Being informed can really be a method of trying to escape from what God wants in a person's life (recall Jonah found reasons to try to escape God's will, but it did not work). Being well informed (which includes the mere intellectual study of the Word) only makes a person more intellectual and aware of cutting-edge events; these are far from transformation. Neither external methods nor intellectual facts can replace transformation, the true internal enlightenment of the soul.

Legalistic conformance (to man-made rules of do's and don'ts) results in a person being against what the world offers. This type of conformity (to religious rules) is seen as non-conformance to the world. Indeed it is not conformance to the world, but merely conformance to something other than Christ. Unfortunately, that only makes a person a non-conformist. Non-conformity is not transformation. Non-conformity can result in a person being a cranky, belligerent, isolationist; this is not God's desire. Transformation is a personal matter between each of us and the Holy Spirit, and as the Lord produces His mind in us, we are compelled from our hearts not to be conformed to the world. Transformation produces the desired non-conformance, not vice versa!

Perhaps an illustration will help clarify this matter of conforming to the world and transformation. If your boss said to you, "An emergency requires that you quickly go to the warehouse; do not walk but take the company car." The whole idea is to get there quickly, taking the car is the solution. However, if you were to get hung-up on the "not walking" part of the instructions then you might think that skipping is an acceptable way to get there. However, the boss' emphasis was on what to do, not on what not to do. While skipping conforms to the instruction not to walk, it does not meet the boss' desire. The boss wants you there as quickly as possible. If you follow all that the boss said then things will go correctly because taking the car resolves any issues as to how to get there. In our case, the Lord's emphasis is on transformation, which results in conformance to Christ. Transformation is what He desires (like getting to the warehouse), but if one gets obsessed with not conforming to the world (corresponding to not walking) then the goal is not met.

Non-conformity does not transform us, but transformation will conform us to Christ so that correct behavior flows from our innermost being.

The degree to which we are transformed is the degree we are conformed to Christ, this averts conformance to the world.

Pure non-conformists can end life mean-spirited and negative owing to the fact precious little transformation has taken place; what has occurred instead is a preoccupation with being against the world. This is the trap of, "I don't drink, dance, cuss, smoke, chew, or run around with those who do." This legalism trap results in spiritual elitism and pride (those who are legalist would deny this of course). However, not doing these things is merely an outward conformance to the external things of life (things others can see). The niggling absence of fruit of the Spirit is a negative testimony to others; in addition, there is no inner joy since life is based upon performance measures (but one can never be good enough). As a Christian today, God is interested in your inner-self. He is concerned about your heart and mind, i.e., your character, desires, motives, values, goodness, etc. These internal factors have a profound impact upon your entire life. The externals of life are hardly what God is talking about with transformation; they may make a person refined and cultured or they may make a person proud and judgmental, but either way the soul has not been touched by God. The external matters of our lives are to be an outgrowth (a reflection) of our transformed minds, minds directed by the Holy Spirit.

### Your Thoughts

4.8. What is a negative testimony?

\_\_\_\_\_.

4.9. Can you give examples in your life (or that you have observed) in which a person gets hung-up on "the rules," not the freedom we have in Christ? \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.



Concerning what has been presented, someone may say, "Well, if that's right then a Christian can do anything he/she wants." Correct, that is what grace and liberty presume. We know from the Law (of the Old Testament) that the necessary conformance to God's desires does not come from any law but from grace. While the biblical Law points out our sin, it has no power to affect a change in our behavior. However, under grace the Holy Spirit indwells us and guides us by His power. It comes down to the age-old question, do we want to live by laws (which our old nature deems the correct way) or do we want to trust the Holy Spirit to work in each person according to His wisdom. The issue can be alternatively stated: **do we want to allow the Holy Spirit to direct us from within, or do we want to be guided by our own nature which God has clearly told us is corrupt and bereft of spiritual direction?**

As Christ renews our minds, that impacts what we will want to do and how we think. Transformation produces the God-desired behavior, not following some legal standards. In our Age of Grace, it is the inward working of the Holy Spirit which the Apostle Paul teaches is God's plan for our souls. It is the indwelling Spirit that guides us in a godly manner, not external rules. Thus, we find a renewed mind is the only way we can serve the Lord in the best possible manner. Transformation produces the changes in the mind that God desires, these changes work outwardly to change our entire lives. The freedom we have today does not mean we will want to satisfy every earthly desire, but that we have an internal freedom to no longer be enslaved by our desires.

You may wonder, if we are led by the Holy Spirit, will we all think, act, and believe exactly the same? This is what is envisioned as a goal of legalism, i.e., to get us all to think and do the same. This makes sense in a legal system because it helps us spot the "less spiritual" than ourselves, and it creates the performance based concept of serving God. Even if legalism and transformation end up convicting a person of the same thing, it is done in a completely different manner -- the former by coercion and the latter by the Holy Spirit. The transformed mind rejoices in the liberty we all have. That liberty allows for us all to think and act as guided by the Spirit. After all, we are different members of the body of Christ and we do not expect the foot to behave the same as the eye.

It is commonly believed that Roman 12:2 gives us two commands: 1) not to conform to the world and 2) to be transformed. There is no "and" between the two phrases (implying two things); there is a "but," which indicates the Lord is instructing us to do one of two things. We have the choice of either conforming to the world or of having a renewed mind conforming to that of Christ. The choice of a renewed mind avoids the other. The legalists love to teach there are two items here for our obedience and then they come up with a list of do's and don'ts to measure non-conformance to the world. This is missing point entirely. Ideally, under grace, transformation creates a mind that has no interest in conformance to the world. In practical terms, our earthly struggle is often the fight between the world and



Christ for our mind's attention and we want to make sure the transformation side is always winning the battle.

### Your Thoughts

- 4.10. Select which of these three options best describes Romans 12:2.
- Non-conformance and transformation are two separate commands.
  - Transformation leads to non-conformance, so there is one basic command.
  - Non-conformance leads to transformation, so there is one basic command.

Self-transformation attempts are useless. Just as we cannot save ourselves (He has to do it all for us), we cannot transform ourselves; however, He will do it for us as we yield to Him. It is the process of growing spiritually (with ups and downs), of growing in grace, with the goal of continually being conformed to the mind of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>Brock, Robert; "The Commands of Christ for Christian Living;" Exposition press; 1997

<sup>2</sup>Henricksen, William; Galatians and Ephesians; Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1982).

<sup>3</sup>Vine, W. E.; "An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words;" Fleming H. Revell Company; 1966

<sup>4</sup>Wuest; Wuest's Word Studies;" William Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI; 1980 Reprinted 1980.

<sup>5</sup>Morter, Ted M.; Cell Health and Wellness; Lifetime Books, Inc.; 1992

<sup>6</sup>Ortberg, John; The Life You've Always Wanted; Zondervan Publishing House, 1997

### Please consider these responses to "Your Thoughts"

4.1. good, acceptable, perfect

4.2. It should make us all want to do whatever He asks so we are a testimony to the heavenly hosts.

4.3. We were in God's plan before the world was created, we are bought by the blood of Christ, we belong to Him, we are a new creation, and He has transformed our mind so we think and act as His blood line.

4.5. God accepts us totally and independently of our performance; our position/standing is completely based upon being in Christ (saved).

4.7 Negative thinking will destroy your mental and physical health; this is discussed in a future lesson.

4.8. A positive testimony entices others to want to know more about God, a negative testimony actually drives them away from the truth.

4.10. The middle option is best.

## Lesson 5

### • A New Manner of Life

*"...the evil nature is not eradicated. That remains in the believer until death (1 John 1:8). Its power is broken, and it has no more power over the believer than he allows it to have."*<sup>1</sup>

Kenneth S. Wuest

*"Today, the power of the indwelling Spirit is revealed by the internal changes produced in the heart and mind, leading to the production of spiritual fruit."*

(Praya L. Soforme)

*"...it is exceedingly important that we know the seat of the natural man's problems; it is in the sphere of his mind...."*<sup>2</sup>

Ernest R. Campbell

#### **Purpose of Transformation**

We are privileged to live in the Age of Grace because in this Age we are recipients of spiritual blessings and opportunities that those in other ages could only have hoped to receive. In addition to our spiritual blessings, we have blessings and opportunities related to our soul, i.e., the provisions God has made to transform our minds. These were not seen in previous ages (or only in ethereal form) and are characteristics of our Age of Grace. The present Age was committed to the Apostle Paul, and the very nature of "grace" seen in our Age gives birth to a new revelation with respect to our Christian walk. Chafer emphasizes,

"God has a purpose under grace, for a whole new manner of life for the believer," that is:<sup>3</sup>

- ÿ Adjustment of our lives to the indwelling-presence of the Holy Spirit and of maintaining an unbroken attitude of dependence on that Spirit.
- ÿ The law could work no change in the heart/mind, nor can our attempts to keep rules, only the Spirit can do this.
- ÿ Under grace, God proposes by the Spirit to first create the heavenly motives and desires, and then by the same Spirit, to empower the life through the Word unto the full realization of those desires (Phil. 2:13).
- ÿ So it may be seen that grace is not a way of escaping obedience to God, it is the only possible way in which true obedience can be secured.

## Your Thoughts

5.1. Please review the four bullet points above based upon the work of Lewis Sperry Chafer. These are powerful statements and worthy of study. God's plan is very thorough and more than we could have imagined. Please comment on how these bullet points help you see how God is working in your life. \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

The story in Lesson 1 (about the pastor and orange) is repeated here for the purpose of a reminder. A pastor held up an orange and asked some young boys and girls, "If I squeezed this orange what will come out?" They all said, "Orange juice." "But I want grape juice," he replied. "If I pray sincerely and really believe with all my heart, then I will get grape juice, right?" he responded. The kids laughed at such a silly thing. So he took it to the next level, "But if I truly believe, God promised that a believer could move mountains, so surely I can get grape juice out of this orange." The kids held firm to their belief that only orange juice would come out. Finally the pastor asked, "Why won't I get grape juice if I pray sincerely, after all, nothing is impossible with God?" A youngster answered, "You will get orange juice every time because that's what's in it."

What is truly inside is what will come out when we are squeezed by the events of life. If our minds are not renewed, if they are not transformed, what will come out is what is in us naturally, things like: cursing, addictive behavior, bitterness, revenge, arrogance, pride, or emotional outbursts. If we allow the Lord to transform our minds (renew them), His fruit is produced in our minds; then what will come out will be love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22). **"... for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth"** (Eph. 5:9).

### What Morphing Is

Believers should embrace and clearly understand transformation (morphing).

- **It is a lifelong process of God.** Transformation is a slow, gradual process of renewal from the inside out. Since it is a process, it is not something that is instantaneous (like an act, gift, or miracle of God). Transformation's process goes on in our minds as long as we are on this earth. It is a never ending process that daily transforms the believer to be more like Christ.
- **It results in His fruit growing in us** (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:9). **"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God"** (Phil. 1:11). It is an on-going process in our lives in which the Spirit produces

characteristics, traits, values, etc., which harmonize with those of Christ. These fruit are what make us Christ-like and help us walk in the Spirit.

- **It is not a gift.** A gift is acquired in a complete form all at one time. Transformation is not complete all at once, or at any one time. Instead, it is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, requiring cooperation and effort on our part. In this regard, it helps to understand that generally a spiritual gift and an act of God go together (example: salvation); whereas, spiritual fruit and a process of God go together (examples: love, joy, peace). We could say a gift is the act of planting the seed and the fruit is the process by which a seed is transformed into fruit. In our lives, the gift of salvation creates a new spirit within us, we are born again spiritually, a new creation in Christ. When we are transformed, the same mind is there but it is slowly modified, enlightened, and renewed--perhaps we could say reprogrammed. There are toys called "transformers" which are good examples; you can twist the parts around and turn the toy to look and act like something altogether new, e.g., a car can be turned into a soldier or into a plane. The same parts are used but put into a new arrangement to work in an altogether new manner. Likewise in transformation, our mind is rearranged by God to finally think and process information properly, in the manner designed by God.
- **The Holy Spirit does the transforming.** The passive voice (Greek) in Romans 12:2 means we have to cooperate with Him (listening, yielding, relying, submitting, learning, praying, studying, obeying, ...). We cannot do it ourselves and He will not force it upon us, thus it is a cooperative venture.
- **We do not get a renewed mind by just praying, asking, or believing.** We have responsibilities (part of the cooperative venture) which will be mentioned later. There are no shortcuts or quick and easy ways for becoming spiritually mature.
- **Fruit grow slowly.** Growth requires: nurturing (Word, prayer, obedience, ...), cultivation (weed removal, i.e., those old things in our lives that choke out our new life in Christ), watering (worship and praise), fertile ground (a mind receptive and hungry), pruning (some strategic removal of "self" so that we can be closer to the Vine and produce better fruit), and pest removal (Ephesians 6, spiritual warfare).

### Your Thoughts

5.2. A spiritual gift, e.g., speaking in tongues, was given in the Bible in an instant. It was complete and immediately functional (just like giving a present to someone). They did not go to language school or study to speak in tongues; they did not pray or beg the Lord for a spiritual manifestation (Acts 2:3-4). When the Lord decided to give a gift to someone they got it in-full and it was immediately useable. How does this differ from a process of God? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Where and How Renewal Takes Place

Two figures will be used to help illustrate schematically where and how this important ministry of the Holy Spirit takes place. Figure 5.1, gives a generalized schematic of our three aspects (body, soul, and spirit), the Holy Spirit, and the direction of transformation. However, if we are to really understand this issue we have to go deeper as shown in Figure 5.2. In Figure 5.2, some of the common biblical words (spirit, soul, mind, and heart) are incorporated into this study, showing the overlapping activities and approximate functional areas of these various terms. Concerning the soul and spirit, Hebrews 4:12 indicates they can be so much alike, so interconnected in their nature and activities, that only the word of God can discern the difference between them.

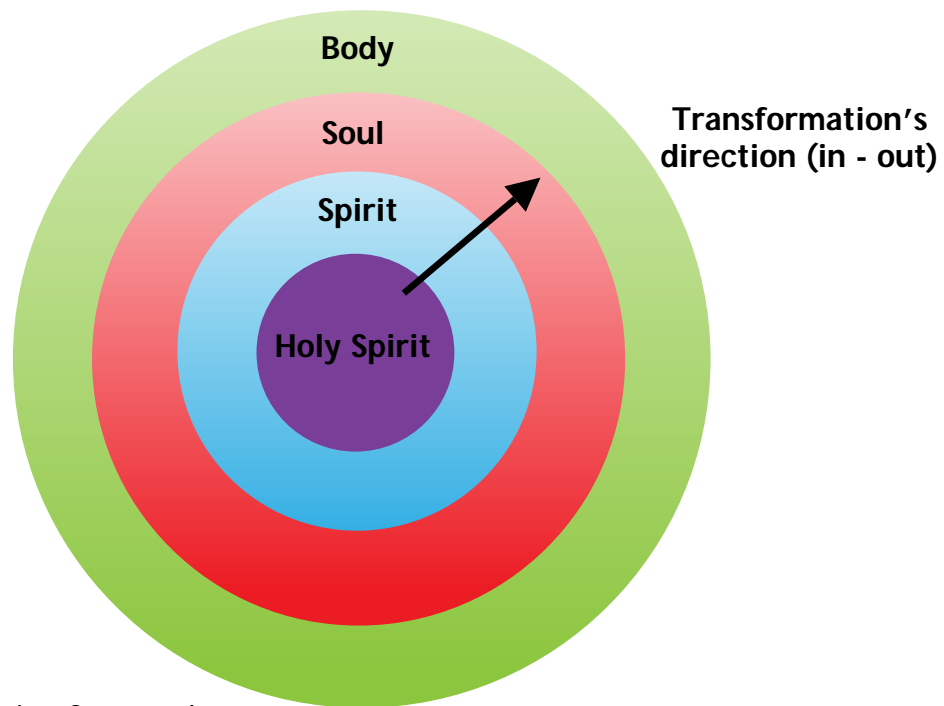


Figure 5.1. Schematic of our makeup.

In Figure 5.1., the four circles represent our entire being (person). On the outside is our temporary house (our body), next deeper down into our being is our soul (mind), and further into the deeper parts of our being (our core) is our spirit (heart). The most inner circle would be a black hole (devoid of God) for the unsaved, but for the believer the Holy Spirit comes into that void and fills this most important part of our being. In time past (including the Gospels), the Spirit worked from the outside to create changes within the person. But now, in this dispensation, the Holy Spirit is within the person and works outward; a much more effective means for assuring a Godly demeanor. He works from the deepest recesses of our being; working outward, transforming our minds and lives in the process.

With the Holy Spirit in the core, His truth and light enters the black hole and the human spirit becomes aware of our intrinsic self-centeredness. There is a realization of sin, the wages of sin, the hopelessness of no way out of death (eternal separation from God), and the reality of God's forgiveness and unconditional love.

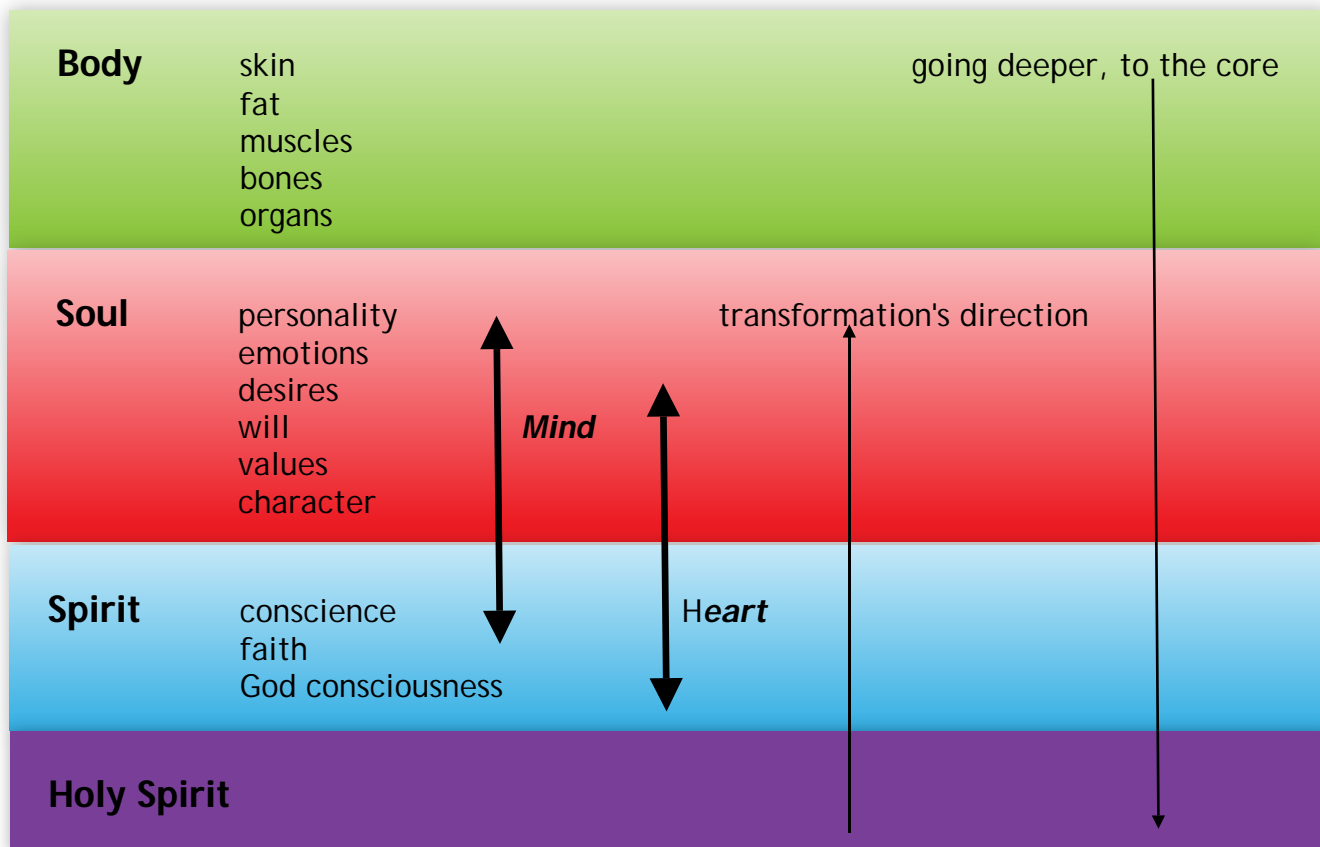


Figure 5.2. A detailed look at our structure and how it relates to biblical terms.

Figure 5.2. is an up-close, detailed view of that presented in Figure 5.1. The various parts of our composition and common biblical terminology are shown. We could be compared to an onion, with many layers, one after the other. Each layer going deeper into our essential being. The outer layers represent each person's body parts, the next layers represent the soul, then the layers of the spirit, and finally (at our central core) the Holy Spirit. The approximate locations of the mind and heart are shown. It is readily acknowledged that it is hard to know exactly where all Scriptural terms fit into Figure 5.2., so recognition is given to considerable overlap between the mind and heart.

Considering our soul, things like personality and emotions are farthest from the core while character and value system are more central. The Spirit works in all these areas and little (if any) specific discussion of the various layers is made in the Bible. However, it is consistent with God's plan to suggest that renewal of the mind may emphasize the deeper issues since they are most important to our lives. Also, since the Holy Spirit is within us, and

works from the inside-outward, it is reasonable to suggest the inner core areas are most crucial in the transformation process. When the deeper core areas are transformed, the inner-self is renewed. The renewal of the deeper issues makes it possible for the beneficial effects of that renewal to flow to all the other areas of the mind. This flow is based upon the fact the outer layers of the mind are dependent on (built upon) the inner layers and as those inner layers are renewed there is of necessity a corresponding outflow of benefits. Thus, as our character, values, and desires are renewed, that renewal will have a profound impact upon our emotions and personality. A trickle down, or cascade, of benefits flows from each step of renewal to the rest the mind. So even if the Spirit is working primarily in one area, all other areas benefit from the renewal.

Note: in some people there are serious problems (cases of personality disorders, diseases, or emotional disturbances) that affect areas seemingly distant from the core. In such cases, the Lord certainly knows the best way to proceed with transformation, and it may not be as described here. There does not seem to be much biblical teaching in this specific area, and the author readily admits to a lack of understanding, preventing the clear direction some will want. It would be easy, but perhaps misleading, to suggest that such cases will be resolved through the renewal process under discussion. Certainly every problem benefits from prayer and God's provisions, but some of these cases seem beyond the scope of this discussion. Romans 12:1-2 is referring to Christians that are capable of participating in the renewal process (intentionally, understandingly, and cognitively), but many with serious mental disorders or diseases cannot participate for one reason or another. Thus, this passage may have limited application to those with diseases, mental retardation, dementia, etc. Clearly, some mental disorders are due to chemical imbalances or diseases of the brain, so it is good to seek professional medical and/or mental health care. Even if there is not a disease or chemical imbalance, profession mental health care should not be considered fighting against God; especially when such care is Christian-based and recognizes God's interactions on behalf of His saints. God does work in mysterious ways and that precludes our understanding of those ways. Faith comes into play as we seek God's wisdom and mercy for such problems.

As the Holy Spirit works, He is primarily interested in the most important areas of our existence, i.e., our spirits and the deeper parts of our souls. The deeper matters of the spirit (God consciousness, faith, conscience) are addressed with salvation. Matters of the mind are addressed in transformation, and the deeper areas of the mind contain the core issues of life. In Figure 5.2., starting at the deepest issues of our mind and going outward, the order is somewhat like this: conscience, character, value system, will, desires, and so forth.

### Your Thoughts

5.3. Please familiarize yourself with the intrinsic parts of our minds (souls) in Figure 5.2. There are many things not shown, like cognitive function, because they are not alluded to in Scripture. Considering the items shown, how would their correct functioning change your life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

He renews our core functions and creates fruit in our lives; for example, a person may develop the fruit of joy (character issue). However, inner joy may not appear as a "happy face" because happiness is a matter of our emotions and personality (how we interact with the outside world, our persona). Personality and emotions are further out (from the core) and they will certainly benefit from the Spirit's work in the deeper areas of our minds. The way the Spirit works in each of our lives is different, and based upon His knowledge of what has to be done to make a person more Christ-like. If a person's emotions are deeply scarred or controlling his/her life, it is possible the emotional area would be a prime target for renewal. The same with some personality matters.

Inner joy was mentioned above, other examples of His transforming power are seen when a person's value system is changed from pro-choice to pro-life or when a person's desires are changed over time (such that addictive behavior is overcome). Godly convictions, conscience, and behavior are created through a renewed mind and this allows us to put on the biblical new man. "... **and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him**" (Col. 3:10).

The Spirit is needed to transform us because we are incapable to affect any change on our own. As an example, consider your character, which comes from the depths and recesses of your being. Your character is different than your personality, your personality is your outward manifestation to the world around you. Your character looks inward, it feels our hurt and joy, it arranges your inner value system, and it develops your motivations. Character is the foundation upon which your personality acts, so as character is renewed it automatically impacts the personality. Your character has some very basic needs, and these needs are generally established early in life and are based upon your first and most primitive experiences. The word for character originally meant, "to carve, engrave, scratch, or cut grooves."<sup>4</sup> It comprises the deepest imprints (grooves) in a person, and these grooves are not easily changed. For most people, these early-formed imprints are



permanently engraved into their being. Those grooves that are in error are the "scars of life" that cause many people mental health problems their whole lives.

We need Divine help to remove (or at least to reduce) the scars of our lives. Our scars are like scratches in a phonographic record or CD, every time our lives come to the scratch they cannot play the recording correctly. A record/CD with a scratch jumps around but never plays the right sound. So too with our lives; our grooves, implanted from youth, prevent us from thinking and acting correctly. Correcting the grooves or scratches is impossible for us, but it can be done through the power of the Holy Spirit, Who resides in our central cores. If done through self-effort we may well make matters worse, like trying to fix the scratches on a CD by using sandpaper to get rid of them. If we try to correct these problems it is like picking our character scabs and creating even worse permanent scars. We must depend upon Him to make us new from the inside-out to remove (or reduce) the scars (character grooves) of the past; otherwise, they will control us and hold us captive our entire lives. To be clear, those scars (as ugly as they may be) can be modified (plastic surgery may be an apt analogy) to the point they no longer control our present lives, even if not totally removed. They may come to the surface now and then, but the renewal process means they will not continually dominate our lives. This offers us a new manner of life that is beyond all we can imagine.

### Your Thoughts

5.4. What are some of the grooves that have been cut into your character with which the Spirit has helped you, or for which you seek His care? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5.5. If you have tried to get rid of past negative memories or change who you are deep inside, are you now ready to let the Holy Spirit do this work? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Where Transformation Takes Place

The parts of our make-up that take place in the transformation process are briefly explained below. In Figure 5.2., God consciousness, faith, and conscience are shown to be matters of the spirit. The degree they are involved in transformation is not clear, since they are certainly involved in salvation. It would be reasonable to believe that our conscience is part of transformation (close to, or part of, the soul). The order shown below starts with the conscience and the deepest layers of the soul and proceeds outward (inside to outside) to the personality.

**1. Conscience:** what we believe is good and bad (2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Tim. 1:19, 3:9, 4:2).

**2. Character:** who we really are deep inside (morals, attitude, our personhood, concepts of justice, ideas of correct behavior, a critical part of the biblical inner-man) (Eph. 3:16-17; Prov. 26:22).

**3. Value system:** what we believe is true, right, honest (Phil. 4:8).

**4. Will and Desire:** what we wish and plan, our goals and purpose in life (Phil. 2:13).

**5. Emotions:** how we feel about things, people's actions, and the circumstances of life.

**6. Personality:** how we appear to those around us, our outward expression. Our personality is far from our core, but it will certainly benefit from the transformation and modification of items 1-5 (a cascading effect which touches the personality).

### Your Thoughts

5.6. Consider the six items above, which, in general, comprise the deeper things of your soul. The Lord wants to work in these areas of your life. Why would anyone resist this? \_\_\_\_\_.

### How the Holy Spirit Works

The following three items are useful in helping us understand the transformation process better. His power is seen in our transformed heart and mind, not in the physical-external things of life (Phil. 4:13; Eph. 3:16-20; 1 Tim. 1:8, 3:5, 3:10-12). The transformation of our minds is:

**1. In-Out:** The Spirit's main emphasis is most likely on the central core issues, working from the inside toward the outside. This means the most crucial factors are addressed early in the process. This concept teaches us where (core issues) and how (in-out) transformation primarily takes place, but that does not preclude the Spirit working in any or all areas, or even working in the reverse order if the situation requires it. In this life, the goal of the Holy Spirit is to transform the entire mind of the believer and He knows how that has to be accomplished in each person's life. Again, the Spirit's emphasis may be to morph the deeper areas of our minds (conscience, character, values, etc.) and work outward, but individual needs may require a different approach--as only He would know.

**2. Top-down:** God will work from the inner workings of our minds to the more outward expressions of our minds. The parts of our minds that most impact our lives in a spiritual or deep soulful sense are referred to as the "top" priority parts. The parts of our minds that are of lower impact are referred to as the "down" parts. The top-down terminology is not all that

important, it is merely an attempt to create a mental picture of the Spirit's activity, i.e., working top-down (higher priority to lower priority). When the top priority parts are renewed there is the flow of benefits that go to the lower parts. This top-down discussion is basically the same as the in-out discussion above, just considered from a little different perspective.

**3. Reverse Order:** God created the physical world first, then the soulish world and finally the human spirit. We are brought back into a right relationship with God in a reverse order, i.e., we are born again spiritually, transformed in our minds, and then glorified physically (1 Cor. 15:45-46).

Please notice that the order in which the Holy Spirit works is in direct correlation with where the Holy Spirit resides. His presence is deep within us, in the very central core of our beings. This is Christ in us, in the form of the Holy Spirit (Who is one with Christ). The believer today is said to be in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:6), which means we have been united with Him by God's grace so that everything He accomplished is imputed to us. We have the righteousness of Christ put to our account and that is how God sees us, i.e., complete in Him and already seated in Heaven. We are spiritually baptized into Him (1 Cor. 12:13) upon belief, and that baptism makes us one with Christ. He is in us, and we are in Him.

The dwelling of the Holy Spirit today is far different than in past dispensations (ages). In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit only came upon (sometimes within) certain people, but it was not an abiding presence; thus, David prayed "**Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me**" (Psa. 51:11). In the Gospels, the Holy Spirit came upon believers which is not the same as being within the believer.<sup>5</sup> When the Holy Spirit was upon people it was an external presence, and concomitant with it were external experiences, such as: tongues, dancing cloves of fire, prophecies, healings, etc. In John 14:16 the Spirit was promised to come beside the believer and was called the Helper or Comforter (Helper is *parakletos*, which means one called alongside). The position of being alongside is far different than being within the believer. In the Gospels and Acts, when it is said the Spirit was upon the believer, that means He was on the outside of the believer, i.e., the same as alongside. When the Spirit was upon the believers they displayed visible, observable, gifts and powers that corresponded to His external presence.

In the Age of Grace the Spirit takes up residence within us, not on or alongside. The indwelling Spirit will not leave us. "... **in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory**" (Eph. 1:13b-14). Notice the Spirit is our seal, the guarantee of our salvation until we go home to Heaven. He is guaranteed not to leave us until then. We do not have to pray as David did because the Spirit will stay with the believer; there is no reason to doubt God's Word on this, especially since it is so

consistent with what He is doing in our Age. This in itself should provide great comfort and assurance for each person today. However, some dismay because they do not have the "power and signs" displayed by the early believers, and indeed they should not. Today, the power of the indwelling Spirit is revealed by the internal changes produced in the heart and mind, leading to the production of spiritual fruit (which are not seen, but observable by the spiritually minded). These internal changes and the fruit produced is what transformation is all about; transformation is a characteristic truth of our Age (not seen in other ages), and is something we should value as a special gift of God for his saints.

### Your Thoughts

5.7. Transformation changes you deep inside. It changes who you are in the core of your being. It does not give you special experiential gifts or powers which you can show others as a sign of God in you. Instead of special sign gifts or powers, you will have special fruit, as Galatians 5:22 mentions (not observable, but new mental attributes which will be obvious in your life). Why is the fruit of the Spirit superior to the sign gifts of the Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Transformation helps us in this life and also enables us to receive rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Rewards will differ depending which of our attitudes, desires, and works are judged worthy of reward. We can be sure we will gain rewards based upon our renewed minds which will have the desires and aspirations of the Lord. It is the renewed mind that enables us to gain rewards in Heaven. The topic of rewards at the Judgment seat of Christ will be discussed more fully in Lesson 12.

**You will become as conformed to the world as your controlling natural desires, as transformed as your renewed aspirations.**

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<sup>1</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S.; *Wuest's Word Studies*; volume 1; Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502; 1980; page 205.

<sup>2</sup> Campbell, Ernest R.; *Colossians & Philemon*; Canyonview Press, Silverton, OR 97381-9535, 1982; page 59.

<sup>3</sup> Chafer, Lewis Sperry; *Grace*; Zondervan Publishing House; 1979.

<sup>4</sup> Malone, Thomas & Patrick; *The Art of Intimacy*, Simon & Schuster, 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Cline, Karl; *The Holy Spirit ON or IN, What Is The Difference*; P.O. Box 376, Richland, PA 17087.

### Answers to **Your Thoughts**

5.2. A process of God takes time and there is no concept of it ever being complete or given all at once. It is an ongoing activity directed by the Lord; we are involved in the way He prescribes.

5.6. Some possible reasons: fear that God may change a person into something not wanted, fear of the unknown, He may ask you to do something you do not want to do, you may have to give up something you really like ....

5.7. God's perfect plan unfolded during the various ages. We live in the Age of Grace in which the full and perfect plan has been revealed, the ultimate plan. Spiritual sign gifts (in the Gospels and early church) were intended to be a sign to unbelieving Israel to repent, and to show the early church that God was behind what was happening. Spiritual fruit not only demonstrates to you and others that God is working in your life, but they also change who you are--for the better.

## Lesson 6

### Preparing for the Journey

*Whence and where to, stranger?*

Homeric greeting

*"How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these."*

George Washington Carver

Lessons 7,8 and 9 will go into specific details on the renewal process. Those lessons will show there are ways to address renewal that are effective, that there are common pitfalls, and that there are tools the Lord has given us in the Word that we should put to use. This Lesson (6) is necessary to prepare the reader for the life-long journey ahead by providing practical helps that will guide you. The journey of transformation is not necessarily easy and it has frustrations along the way. It is the journey He has planned and will guide; it can go into places we did not know existed. None of us could have even dreamed of such a journey. Where did we start and where will we end?

### Truths that Guide

Listed below are five truths each journeying pilgrim should expect to occur, and we should accept them as part of God's process in the renewal of the mind. Knowing these in advance can help prepare and even make your life-long journey easier.

#### **Accept Thorns**

This section will begin with an apropos story to set the stage for further discussion. We can all learn a good spiritual lesson by a boy who observed a chrysalis transforming into a butterfly. The boy saw the struggling chrysalis trying to get out of the cocoon and wondered why it had to struggle so hard, why did God make it so difficult for so long, wasn't there an easier way? Finally, in desperation, the boy intervened to ease the struggle. He took his pocketknife and carefully cut the cocoon open so the struggling creature could get out. It did, it wiggled out and the boy was delighted with his heroic efforts. Then the chrysalis fell to the ground, writhing and struggling because it could not fly--its wings were not sufficient-

ly developed. Eventually the chrysalis died. The boy then realized that the cocoon he saw as a hindrance and an obstacle was instead life sustaining and allowed the chrysalis time to develop into a butterfly. The struggle was a necessary part of life and his well intended shortcuts only had detrimental effects. For the butterfly to fly required metamorphosis, and that entailed struggle and time.

The story above is a good analogy of what God does in our minds as He transforms them. Transformation takes time and may not be easy. Observation of others and abundant Scriptural references suggest it is hardly an inexorable march, for we can be persuaded to stop or deviate on the route. We too have to struggle to get from our past lives to that envisioned by God. It is the struggle itself that helps the butterfly to develop and mature it's wings, blood vessels, and nervous system. Our transformation may involve struggles, but they are meant to help us mature from our old self (larva) into the new person (butterfly) God intends for us.

Usually each step in morphing involves some level of apprehension. There will likely be some doubt, a measure of un-comfortableness with the unknown, and some reluctance to again be exposed to pain or rejection. God uses struggles and trials to mature us; they are our cross of suffering. We must accept the fact there will be many discouragements and even doubts, but they should not deter us from further growth. The Apostle Paul learned (and advises us) to take pleasure in persecutions and infirmities, "**...that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**" (2 Cor. 12:9b-10).

To be sure, sufferings and trails are an integral part of transformation, just as a chrysalis struggles to become a beautiful butterfly. There are generally no specific starting and ending points, and we often wonder if any renewal is actually taking place during the time of struggle. Thus during transformation, we may not be aware of what God is teaching us until later when we can reflect upon it. We may think we learned nothing in the process because we don't know if we are any better equipped to handle a future transformation or difficulty in life. However, we know the actual process of renewal, including the equipping for it, comes from above. For future sufferings and trials, it would seem consistent with Scripture to say the Lord will provide "afresh" what is need (or will enable us to recall what we learned in the past). The one lesson we do learn is that we must rely upon Him and trust His actions in every facet of our lives. In fact, our not knowing if we can handle a future trial may be what allows God's strength to be made perfect in our weakness (because in our weakness we are more prone to walk by faith).

Here is what a fellow Christian said relative to a renewal event in her life: "What struck me as a mental health professional was the recognition of myself having recently experienced an

actual diagnosable mental disorder, and then realizing through that suffering how uncontrollable one's obsessive thinking becomes in spite of trying to plug in all the spiritual power one can muster. Looking back, I know that "renewal" did occur *through* the suffering but it certainly wasn't evident at the time and the scary thing is that I can't be sure I will be any better equipped spiritually to handle that SAME level of imbalance of my brain chemicals should such occur again. That's where trust and submission come into the picture which, in

### Your Thoughts

6.1. In the paragraph above, do you suppose the Lord equips people through transformative events in ways that may not be consciously recognized but that quickly come from deep within when required in the future?

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### Expect Spiritual Advancement

As we press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, we are reminded that God will reveal our weaknesses and incorrect mind patterns to us. **Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind"** (Phil. 3:15-16). Thus, we should let our level of spiritual attainment be our guide for further advancement. We are not to get stuck at some level and think we "have arrived" and cannot mature more. Our imperfections will be revealed to us by the Holy Spirit so that we may continue to grow and be more complete (not sinless, but a well rounded Christian). Maturity versus infancy is the issue; God wants to continually transform us so we become more and more conformed to Christ. All through our lives God wants us to live according to the level of maturity we have reached, but to realize there is always a next step.

### Rejoice in the Refiner's Touch

God loves us just the way we are, but refuses to leave us that way. He wants us to be like Christ. We love babies just as they are and we do not stop loving them when they dirty their diapers. That is their nature, but we want to help them grow and get beyond that stage of life; indeed that is our goal. We want a baby to mature and act like a child and eventually an adult. Similarly, God loves us regardless of our sin and how we act. However, He refuses to leave us that way, instead desiring to transform us into His image (2 Cor. 3:18). We do not want to be spiritual babies for too long.



In biblical times a refiner took metal ore and heated it to melt the metal so it could be separated from the rock (dross). The refiner's job was to make something precious out of something common and of little value. Purification of the metal is the main goal, and that purification is brought about by extreme heat. In corresponding fashion, God will purify the nation of Israel in the future when He drives them through the heat of the Tribulation, and in the process refines them. In the trials of the Tribulation that nation will finally realize and accept Christ as the Messiah. **"I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested"** (Zech. 13:9). Thus, the Lord will refine them much like a metal refiner, i.e., by the use of heat of the Tribulation.

Our Refiner will not use the heat of the Tribulation to refine us, which is a wonderful and comforting truth. He will refine us now, in quiet and inexplicable ways, through the renewal of our minds. The process is based upon love and compassion, a process we fail to appreciate as a treasure from God. This is God's grace reaching us in a very practical way, in a way that has a divine influence upon our lives.

The Divine influence upon our lives is a product of God's grace. God's grace is His free favor and kindness to us (which is not merited or repayable), in addition, that grace has a divine influence upon our hearts and minds. God's grace first saves a person and then continues to influence him/her through the indwelling Spirit. The Spirit, working in grace, begins to influence a person's heart (spirit) and mind (soul), teaching His truth and bringing about individual changes in each of us. Each person will need to be renewed in different areas and perhaps different ways. Again, this inner transformation by the Spirit is not accompanied by miraculous powers, gifts, or experiences but by something ineffably happening within us. This quiet working has a profound impact upon our lives, which one might expect from a divine influence. While He does not display His presence in an outward, observable manner, He does provide us inner assurance and peace. You will experience a significant change in your life, implicit with the working of the Almighty.

### Your Thoughts

6.2. It has been said that a Christian is actually a person in whom Christ is happening, what does that mean? \_\_\_\_\_.

### New Light and Truth Demand Change

Transformation enables us to mentally accept the concept that a "reasonable service" for our Lord is to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, Romans 12:1. If you have to give up former ways, habits, or addictions, He will first change your desires and then give you the willpower

to do it--change becomes easier than originally thought. As we commit to a new way of life, it will (over time) become a natural way of life. Change/sacrifice is what God asks, and is a ministry of the Holy Spirit that we should not quench.

### **Stretch Forward**

In Philippians 3:12-14 Paul uses a race runner's analogy. In a race, the runner's speed is slackened by looking backward to those behind; the runner may even stumble by looking back. So too the Christian's onward progress is hindered by looking back to the past. Paul is saying the past may be full of regrets, pain, or things that were really great, but it can never catch up or pass us; it will always be behind us. The past, whether bad or good, can hold us captive and prevent future advancement. Forgetting the past means to not let it dominate our present emotions and lives. If things have been made right with those involved, we should forget about the past and stretch forward to the things ahead, like a runner leans toward the finish line. You cannot run the race looking backward.

## **Outcome of Transformation**

Transformation results in a closer walk and intimacy with Christ. Intimacy allows us to be ourselves without fear of disapproval. Thus, I can pour my heart out to Him without fear of His disappointment and He can pour Himself into me without my resistance or fear. A transformed mind thinks something like this:

**Lord, my desire is to have an intimate relationship with you, with the goal of pleasing you in every aspect of my life. Your Spirit will renew me from within, but may I always be mindful of my role and thankful for the power you provide to be faithful. May I recognize the spiritual advancements you make in my life and may they provide encouragement during the times of struggles and temptations. In this life-long journey, may the love of Christ abound and may I be filled with the knowledge of your will.**

In addition to a closer walk and intimacy, transformation creates something else that is talked about extensively in the world but poorly understood--empowerment. Empowerment basically means "within power." With the indwelling Spirit, it is clear where that power emanates. The world talks about empowerment and how some business scheme, a political bill, or an academic opportunity will create empowerment. To some degree this may be true; but real, true, lasting empowerment comes from the Lord. Such empowerment actuates and provides us with the ability to perform what He desires in our lives. We can think, behave, and serve as He wishes because we are given the power to do so, but this requires cooperation with Him.

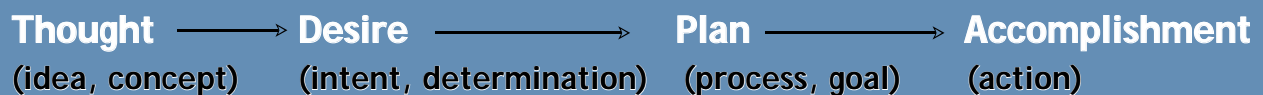
As His fruit begins growing in our minds, our lives displays more and more Christ-likeness, and our lives reflect the fruit of growing in grace. We are empowered to glorify God.

### Your Thoughts

6.3. It may be that you want the Lord to transform you, but are very hesitant because you do not think you have the willpower to do it. Does it help you make that decision now that you know the Spirit empowers you from within so that you can accomplish what He wishes? \_\_\_\_\_.

### Practical Help

Christians want to rely upon the Lord and know they should not try to do what only He can. In addition, they realize a cooperative venture with the Lord means they cannot sit back and wait for the Lord to do something He clearly asks of us. Thus, the dilemma in the transformation process is differentiating His role from ours. We would like it if we could pray, cast it all upon Him, and then just wait for a divine miracle to happen. This would absolve us of any responsibility and if the Lord does not resolve the problem, it sure isn't our fault, in fact, it must be His will. That is just not what the Scripture teaches. We should be clear-minded on this matter and assume our responsibility in the transformation process. If we want our minds to be transformed then we must recognize some important issues that promote transformation.



First, we can have the thought of accomplishing something; this is the conceptual stage that involves our wills, it takes place in our minds. The first step is easy, it requires no real effort or commitment on our part. But then we must move to the next step, which is to move the thought from our minds to making it a true, heart-felt desire. Moving the thought to a heart-felt desire is promoted if we verbalize it (say it). Verbalization may seem unnecessary, but it is very helpful to express our desires to others (God, people, and self) because that tends to establish it in our hearts. Indeed, this may be the hardest step because anyone can have the idea to improve, but to actually, deep down, commit to improving is not easy.

A true desire means we will do what is needed and that may mean giving up things we like. Our old habits are like bait on a hook, the bait is so good to eat (for a fish) but the hook of sin really hurts. We can get caught in the dilemma (Romans 7) of knowing the sin is wrong, yet loving it (which is true of addictions, thought patterns, and attitudes). To give up something we love is what God expects, **"...that you present your bodies a living sacrifice..."** (Rom. 12:1). When we love the sin, we may want to change on a superficial level, but really deep down we lack the desire to really change. This is where we play the adult "religion" game (like trying to get grape juice out of an orange by praying) and try to dump the whole thing on God. We do this because deep down we do not really want to do anything about our problems. The power of the Holy Spirit is there to do the job, but we lack the desire to fully participate.

Once we have verbalized our desires, then we move to the planning stage (establishing the process which will assure we meet our desires). The planning stage establishes the process which will lead to our desired goals: what will be done, how it will be done, and when. The plan express the desire in a way that action can be taken. The plan can be quite simple or complex, it depends on the person and the issue. The plan has to be realistic, and having measureable actions and a timeline is very helpful. For example, if you want to lose weight, the plan cannot be to lose 50 pounds by next year (that is the desire). The plan has to lay out how you will get that done. The plan has to get into the details of what foods you will eat, how much of them, how much exercise, what will you do to prevent "emotional" snacking, etc.

The final stage is to take action to accomplish the plan. A person must have a passion about accomplishing it, if that does not exist, the sincerity of the desire is in doubt (sort of a lukewarm desire). You had a thought, you verbalized it, you planned it out, now you have to actually do it. In most cases the Lord's help is needed to give you the willpower, but you cannot let a weak will be your excuse for failure. In time, even your desires will change so that doing something that seems impossible now will become much more desirous.

There is a biblical basis for the process noted above. Note how similar the four steps above are to what God did for us so that we could be "in Christ." First, He developed the concept in His mind (thought it all out before the foundation of the world). Second, He had a vehement desire to accomplish it, even verbalized it (**"...let us make man in our own image..."**). Third, He planned the whole process of Christ's death and the life thereafter (that plan including keeping some things secret in order for the plan to work perfectly, 1 Cor. 2:7-10). And finally, He passionately put it all into action and directed the process.

### **Expressing Our Desires**

One thing that can hinder transformation is our perspective on life. How we view life (events, people, circumstances) can subconsciously drive our intent and desire. It has been shown that we have best results when we view a situation from the positive, rather than from the

negative. If viewed from the negative, there is often a break in the process between Desire and Plan. God puts the thought in the mind, the person translates that into what seems an honorable desire, but Satan (or our own minds) finds a way to subvert the process, resulting in little transformation. The example below may help clarify this.

A person may say, "I hate being so bitter." This is viewing an area of concern from the negative perspective. It seems right because it dislikes what God dislikes, how can that be wrong? While it is not wrong, it will not advance transformation. The problem with this view is that the expressed desire is to hate bitterness, so in order for this person to hate being bitter, they must be bitter. The plan follows the desire, so the plan in this case will revolve around how to hate being bitter. Unfortunately, in order to continue to hate one's bitterness a person must stay bitter. It seems absurd at first, but such views inadvertently and subconsciously set a person up for failure. In this case, the person tends to get hung-up on hating bitterness rather than getting over it. They can find solace in the fact they dislike what God does, but they end up being just partially obedient and not appropriating God's provision for victory. The plan has to be based upon a positive desire, if not, the plan is doomed to fail because it is bereft of a plan to accomplish anything. A person has to view and state their desire positively, "With God's help, I will be kind and patient." Once we have thought it out and verbalized being kind and patient, then plans to accomplish this can begin and the person can passionately practice achieving those plans. This can then lead to true transformation, the Lord does the work in our minds, but we must be intimately involved by cooperating in every step.

The person above must make cooperation with the Lord a moment-by-moment issue. Cooperation requires searching for Scripture that applies to the situation, confronting the situation constructively, making no provisions to continue to sin, repenting (immediately stopping wrong behavior and acknowledging the sin), and practicing replacing bitterness with the things noted in Philippians 4:8. A specific formulaic approach for success in overcoming each problem area of life cannot be given because it is the work of the Holy Spirit and may be different in each person's life. What works for one may not work for another, this is His domain. Again, there are no short cuts, and each person must search the Scripture daily for help and insights, while also searching for strongholds in their lives that have to be brought into obedience to the Lord.

## Your Thoughts

- 6.4. How should a person verbalize his/her desire concerning a temper problem?
- I wish I did not have a bad temper.
  - I will be longsuffering with the help of God.
  - Lord make me as patient as Jesus Christ.
- 6.5. How should a person state a marital problem?
- My spouse and I have irreconcilable differences.
  - Lord help my spouse to change, then by God's grace I will try to live with him/her.
  - Christ can make something beautiful out of the ashes of our marriage and I will make that my top priority.
- 6.6. Consider this approach for any issue, say, being overweight. Which is best?
- I will lose 30 pounds by next year, Lord grant me the willpower.
  - Lord, I believe it is a sin to be fat, please help me to be thin.
  - I detest my present weight, You alone can change me since nothing is impossible with God.

All desires are based upon the unwavering fact that the Holy Spirit will have to shepherd the whole process and provide in remarkable ways. However, when stating your desire do not take the "I" out of it (thinking it certainly must be more spiritual to lay it all upon the Lord). The I shows that you realize you have to do something. You have a direct responsibility in all this. You have to have an honest, internal desire to cooperate in the transformation, not just a desire for Him to do something to you. In addition, try to avoid the "I want to" phrases ("I want to lose 20 pounds") but verbalize your determination as an honest desire/goal ("I will lose 20 pounds").

### The Causes of Failure

1) Perhaps the area of failure most commonly experienced with believers is a break in the chain between Thought and Desire. If we have a sin problem, let's say an addiction, it is easy to see why there is a break. In fact, it may not even be an addiction but a life-style that requires a change, i.e., constantly putting-down one's spouse, having to have the last word in every discussion, or the need to be right above all else, the need to control others, etc. We can hate the sin (thought) and confess it to the Lord, but a true desire must be a desire to give up the addiction/life-style. This is where it is hard. Yes, my addiction is wrong; yes, I hate it; yes, I wish it were not true in my life. However, the true desire and petition to God for deliverance has to include the actual, heart-felt desire to get rid of it.

If you are addicted to sugar, a true desire to give up sugar (except on rare occasions) is not easy. Giving up on excess alcohol, pornography, gambling, control, need to be right, right to be angry, etc., is something that is unbearable even though you know it is wrong. The prospect of not participating in something from which you get release and enjoyment is hard. Not only is it hard in the short term, but the prospect of giving it up forever is almost unthinkable. This is where you have to take a step of obedience in faith, the Lord will then help you in His way, which may be turning the joy you now find inherent in your problem area into something you will despise. The Lord can change minds and the things we like in the wink of an eye, or it may be a long process; either way, we must have faith that He will provide what is needed in the whole matter. As an example, a newly saved legislator once told an audience she went to bed believing in a woman's right to choose and woke up believing in the right to life. She had no idea this would happen, but it made giving-up a treasured belief very easy. Such dramatic changes may be rare but they do occur in all of us.

2) It may seem that if God steps in and changes our desires, it could be a scary prospect and that may cause some to step back from transformation. "If I am a control freak will God make me a door mat (someone others can walk all over)," "If I lust after the opposite sex will He make me so I don't even like the opposite sex," "If I love sugar will He give me diabetes so I can't enjoy sweets?" In our rational minds, when we are thinking clearly, we know this is not the case, and that God is only looking out for our benefit, not more harm. Learning to trust Him in this stage of transformation is a big step and will require faith. Perhaps a good starting point is to ask Him to give you the assurance that you can do this (with His help) and to have the determination to carry it out with a passion.

3) If you have wrestled with a problem(s) for decades, do not look at who you are today and get down on yourself. You can hate what you have become, but that does not mean you should hate yourself. Hate the sin but not yourself, they are separate items. The problem is that you are not living as the new person you are in Christ. All of us have the need for a renewed mind; God did not say that this applied to only some people. For anyone who has come to dislike certain things in his/her life, that person should realize, "That is not who I really am in Christ, that is what I've allowed myself to become." Some who were saved at a young age realize when they were young they were joyful, they were not addicted to anything, they were patient, etc. Somehow, somewhere in life, something changed within them--imperceptibly perhaps, but certainly for the worse. To be caught in such a situation is not disconsolate because there is a way out.

4) There is another transformed being involved in this whole matter; Satan, who transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). He is always at work and his deception is subtle. He presents the good (the bait) but fails to make known the consequences (the hook). An angel of light does not lurk in the dark seedy areas of debauchery (bars and brothels), but in



religious realms which portray the appearance of godliness. He is the one primarily responsible for who you may have become.

5) Phobias (irrational and undesired fears), anxiety attacks, etc., are fearful things in many people's lives. These are a different sort of problem than has been discussed. It would be no sacrifice, but a welcomed relief to get rid of them. We have no desire to think about them; we want to forget them, but can't. They are scratched deep in our psyche and control us. These problems have to be presented to the Lord, especially since they are generally a subconscious matter. The cause and solution for such problems do not seem to be the topic of Romans 12:1-2. There are Scriptures which apply to these matters, and professional health care is proper since the cause may be chemical, hormonal, physiological.... Certainly the transformation process has application, but please know these are different problems than what our text is addressing.

6) Each step of maturity brought about by transformation of the mind helps assure the next steps of spiritual growth are Godly in origin. The renewed mind can then correctly express the desire, plan for change, and passionately pursue the action to reach the goal. However, all too often we quench the Holy Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:19) by finding excuses for not allowing the Holy Spirit to work fully in our lives, e.g., "All men lust," "A bad temper runs in the family," "I just cannot love my spouse." How sad, how inexcusable! He commands us not to have this mind-set and has created a way that He can accomplish needed change from the very core of our beings. The Lord's heart must ache for the person who has been a Christian for years and has preferred to retain the mind of the old nature, or who thinks following some set of rules (often disguised as separation from the world) is transformation. This compromised holiness is the precursor to a compromised life, with less impact and service than desired.

### Your Thoughts

6.7. Can you think of other causes of failure, especially any you have personally experienced? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Gateways to the Mind

Gateway drugs are reported to be those which, with one or just a few uses, will lead a person down the road to more and more use and eventual addiction. Similarly there are putative gateway events in many people's lives which have the same downward spiral. Thus, you may have been exposed to pornography as a youth and it may have captured you. You may have



had a job that was just more than you could bear and alcohol provided temporary relief. Your husband may be such a jerk you thought you had the right to be bitter. Such events cannot always be prevented and sometime are inadvertent; but how to keep them from becoming a stronghold in your life is the issue. Once they are there, once you have been exposed to the gateway event, transformation is the only answer. There is pleasure in sin for a season (Heb. 11:25) and giving up that pleasure is a challenge. Falling into a wrong life style has a strong mental component and is surprisingly simple, getting back out is a struggle only Satan can relish.

The truth is, and you know this, your job or family did not make you an alcoholic; slowly you found solace and relief in alcohol and now it is a problem. Your wife did not make you a porn addict, it was your own mind that was enticed. Your marriage did not make you bitter, you chose to be bitter because you thought you had that right under the circumstances. In the chart below, a few real-life events are shown (whether they include a gateway event varies with the individual) and the resulting consequences reveal how those events capture our minds and make us a slave. How to prevent them and how to overcome them is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The common events include examples of that event in parentheses, what may result without our cognizance is also shown.

<u>Event</u>	<u>What May Result</u>
situational (stress)	addictions and/or mental problems
circumstantial (bad marriage)	can lead to anger and bitterness
natural desires (sexual)	leads to pleasure in porn, infidelity, and lust
personal choice (deceit)	leads to lying, cheating, and health problems
unknown factors (life events)	fear, perhaps anxiety and phobias
abuse (sexual, physical)	hate, shame, and fear

### Your Thoughts

- 6.8. Can you recall a gateway event(s) in your life which had a negative impact upon you? \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6.9. What have you learned so far that may help you get back to whom you wish to be? \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Please consider these responses to “Your Thoughts”

- 6.1. This seems to be the case and many can testify to this effect.  
 6.2. Christ, in the person of the Holy Spirit, lives within the believer and is actively changing thoughts, behaviors, attitudes, desires, etc. This ongoing process "is happening." Similarly, God's grace has an ongoing influence upon our hearts and minds every day of our lives.  
 6.3. b  
 6.4. c  
 6.5. a

## Lesson 7

### Working Through an Example

*"We have met the enemy and he is us."*

Comic strip character Pogo, by Walt Kelly, April 22, 1970

*"In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life:  
it goes on."*

Robert Frost

#### **Our Tools**

Lessons 7, 8, and 9 will give examples of how to put all that has been presented thus far into a transformation (renewal) plan to help assure you prepare and participate wisely in the transformation process. In all matters requiring transformation, feeding on the Word is essential; that is the primary means by which the Lord can speak to us so that we know what His will is and know our part in the transformation process. The Lord gives us weapons to help in the transformation process because we are in a warfare against Satan and our own minds. These are spiritual and soulish weapons, which could be referred to as tools, directions, or admonitions. However, these weapons are far different than any other weapon we know.

The normal weapons with which we are familiar are used for hunting or self protection. The spiritual/soulish weapons the Lord gives us are truly unique. They are used against the worst enemy we will ever face, our own non-regenerated mind, i.e., our old selves. Salvation changes us spiritually but now our soul/mind has to be changed. What has occurred spiritually is real, but now it has to be made real in our daily lives and in our minds; this is what transformation does. The Lord gives us many weapons for the war within as we struggle with our "old minds." Certainly Satan has had a hand in all this, owing to the fact our old minds, with their pre-salvation way of thinking and operating, are mostly the result of his baneful influence.

Six of the weapons are listed below. Certainly there are more and your study of the Word will allow the Spirit to bring them to your attention. These weapons are called "mighty in God," which means these weapons are very powerful because He ordained them and works through them for our benefit. The Scripture reads, **"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and**

**every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled."** (2 Cor. 10:4-6). Other weapons are also found in the Bible, so do not think this list is complete or exclusive.

**1. Weapon 1: Know sin.** You have to recognize and admit if your problem is a sin. If it is then confess it to the Lord, that is, acknowledge it is a sin. If you are saved you are already forgiven for this sin, God does not hold each of our sins against us until we ask for forgiveness (He is not one bit parsimonious in forgiving, all the believer's sins are forgiven, even those in the future). (Note: 1 John 1:9 refers to the unsaved, it is not saying Christians must confess their sins in order to be forgiven). However, acknowledging the sin (even though forgiven) makes it clear in your mind it is wrong, and it enhances your relationship with Him. Since you are already forgiven, and once you have acknowledged your failures, it will make you want to follow the Forgiver's directions in Romans 12.

**2. Weapon 2: Break-down strongholds in your mind.** These strongholds are the former ways (of the old you) of reasoning, thinking, judgments, arguments, and theories. These are wrong ideas that have been implanted and that control your life and thoughts. Too often the past strongholds come back to recapture our minds and lead them captive again.

**3. Weapon 3: Bring every thought and purpose into captivity to the obedience of Christ.** This is a willingness to allow the Lord to capture every thought and purpose in your life and change it. This will take determination on your part to allow that change to take place.

**4. Weapon 4: Have a readiness to avenge/change behavior.** He will create in you a desire to avenge or change and behavior that is not in line with His desire.

**5. Weapon 5: Make no provisions for the flesh** (Rom. 13:14). This is so simple to understand but so hard to do. Too often we have the "provision" close at hand, just in case we need it during a time of weakness. However, if you can't get to the provision (because you made it unavailable), then you may be able to pass the hour of temptation successfully.

**6. Weapon 6: Forget the past** (Phil. 3:13). This verse is not suggesting you will forget everything in your past. It will be a terrible struggle but you must not allow yourself to think about any past event that causes you emotional upheaval, whether that event was true or not. If you were treated wrongly as a child, whoever did it was wrong. But that person can still control you as an adult if you think about the past and get upset. You will have to put past events behind you and move on. You cannot allow yourself to think of them for one second. The moment the thought of hurtful past events comes into your mind you have to be prepared to change the thought. Eventually, as you are transformed, that event will still remain in your memory but that memory will not elicit an emotional response nor will it control our life any longer. You will be able to recall it without the emotional upheaval, it will be just a memory (not the present day reliving of the pain and sorrow).

These tools (and those in the rest of Scripture) are effective and sufficient amid every event in life. Thus, it is unprofitable to argue that God has not given us appropriate Scriptural direction to triumph. It would be profoundly disrespectful of God to suggest our lives cannot be changed, and thus we cannot build them upon a firm foundation. Paul went through more than we can imagine, yet he finished his course well (and without excuses). From Paul's life we grasp the depth and breadth of Christian suffering, while at the same time we see how a person in Christ can triumph over tribulation. Here is a partial delineation of Paul's sufferings (2 Cor. 6:4-5, 8-10):

- patience, afflictions, necessities, distress
- imprisonment, tumults, labors, watching, fastings
- honor and dishonor, evil report and good report, as deceivers yet true
- as unknown yet known, as dying but alive, as chastened yet not killed
- as sorrowful yet rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things

We can find no excuses. Paul had afflictions, lack of what may be thought as necessary, and had constant stress. He was in jail, in constant fear of his life, and battered about by the tumultuous events of life. He was lied about, his character impugned, and blatant false reports about him were part of life. He was full of sorrow yet could rejoice; he had virtually nothing in this life yet presented the gift of life to many; he considered himself a wealthy man in Christ in spite of earthly poverty. Notice how he suffered events that were very similar to what Christ endured--both lives teaching us what the Christian's life entails.

Reminder--some of your basic weapons are:

- 1: Know sin.
- 2: Break-down strongholds in your mind.
- 3: Bring every thought and purpose into captivity to the obedience to Christ.
- 4: Have a readiness to avenge/change behavior.

### **Your Thoughts**

7.1. What are some of the strongholds in your mind? \_\_\_\_\_

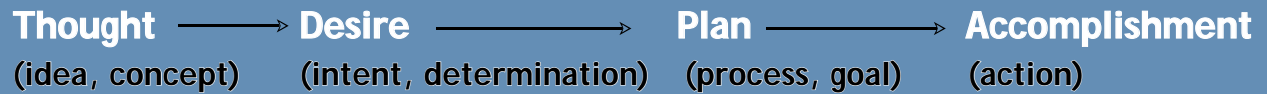
\_\_\_\_\_

7.2. Can you think of other weapons God has given us to use in our warfare? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Review of the Process

In Lessons 5 and 6, the **four stages** for getting from the thought of something to actually getting it done were presented. They are:



This order of events is confirmed in 2 Cor. 8:10-11, where Paul says, **"And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion...."** Thus, if there was an initial thought (willingness), then begin to do it, and then bring it to completion. The point to be made is the road from initial thought or idea to the final accomplishment can be very difficult. As an example, we may think it would be good to be thinner, but unless we have a true desire to do something about it (to make the sacrifice of not eating and not pleasing our pallet) then the chances for success are very poor.

A person has to have a sincere, honest thought and desire to do something about his/her problem. Transformation is not a pray-and-let-God-do-it-all process, it takes willpower and determination on our parts. While God is the essential part of the whole process, the responsibilities He gives to us must be accomplished by us. We cannot fool Him into thinking we are super-spiritual by casing it all at His feet.

Your plan will have to contain what you will do, when, how, etc. As you try to carry out the plan and follow the Word in your actions, the Lord will be working in your life. Make no mistake, the majority of the change will result from the Holy Spirit's work in your mind, but He will not do what He clearly tells you to do. With the Plan in place, then you can put it into action with a passion.

## Exercise in Solving a Problem

What follows is merely a teaching example, it is not the only way (or the best) to solve this, or any, problem--it is just a guide. The example below deals with a problem that may seem to be a physical problem. You may wonder why a physical problem is in a study dealing with transformation of the mind. First, it serves as an easy example so the reader can concentrate on the process of tackling any problem. Second, this is such a common problem that the example gives real-life help. Finally, the matter of weight is often more a mind matter than physical, the body being only a manifestation of something deeper in the mind (either as the cause or related to the solution of the problem).

### Stage 1: The Thought

The thought comes into your mind that you are overweight and must do something about it. The thought may come from the Lord, a multitude of other sources, the medical system, or your own conscience. You may state this as, "I am fat," "I have a sugar addiction," etc.

We must recognize any addiction is a sin because the mind (at times) is not controlled by Christ (weapon 1). Do not try to minimize this by thinking, "I love sweets and can't give them up" or "Everyone is overweight these days." Confess this as a sin, say the same thing about it as the Lord would. If anything is controlling your behavior, causing physical and/or mental disease, presenting pain, interfering with work, or harming relationships, it very well may have a basis in some form of mental sin.

You must seek the Lord through prayer, study of the Word, and meditation of the Word (think about how to apply it to your situation). Acknowledge the problem to the Lord and ask His help in overcoming it. But also commit to Him you desire to follow through as He guides you. The issue at this point has not been resolved, and it will not automatically be resolved; stage 1 merely puts your mind in tune with the Transformer.

### Stage 2: Your Desire

State your desire as a determination. It must be stated in the positive, and there are numerous ways to state it. Here are some examples: **"By God's grace I will adopt a healthy lifestyle,"** or **"I will lose 30 pounds by next year and Lord I need your help."** Notice, you must not set your mind upon being fat or kicking a sugar addiction, but on the goal of a changed life. You can't fool God, you have to mean this in your heart. You will need His help to create in you a true desire (determination) to move forward because most sin has an addictive effect, which provides pleasure, and it is hard to give that up. You have to be willing to take-up the cross of not eating some of the things you love. This is where you have to be honest with yourself and God, knowing full well it will not be easy. Cheating is easy.

Consider this, you may not have the right desire (determination) if you are thinking it sure would be nice not to be addicted to sugar; the fact is you are addicted and now you have work to do. You have to have the determination to not eat certain foods, it will be very difficult. This is much like an alcoholic addiction, you have to want to get over it and realize you will undergo trials in the process.

#### Your Thoughts

7.3. Why is it best to state your desire in the first person (I, my)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Now get into the Word; none of us can overestimate how He will use it, but He will. Maybe you will not see anything that directly refers to your problem and find that frustrating. However, getting the Word of God in your mind allows the Spirit to use it in unforeseen ways, ways beyond our understanding. You will find comfort and encouragement from the Word, which you will constantly need. Being in the Word guides your mind in matters of obedience and godly desires. His action will be seen more in the area of creating a new will and desire in your mind, and as this occurs the desire for overeating and wrong food choices should slowly fade.

Make no provisions for the flesh (weapon 5). This can be really tough. You have to plan ahead so that you can avoid some people or situations that will tempt you to "take just a little." There are places which specialize in things you cannot eat: like donut shops, fast food restaurants, and the worst of all--church pot lucks and sweet tables. Such places have to be off your list of places to go, at least until you are on the road to recovery and even then you must be on guard (obviously church itself is an exception, but avoid the tables of sweets and pot lucks). You must make every effort to get the foods you are addicted to out of your house (pastries, chips, soda, candy, ice cream, etc.), this will be hard because the rest of the family may not have your problem. This also means not having a hidden stash of stuff to resort to when you have a craving to devour your pet foods. You must do your best to not have those foods around, so that in a case of momentary weakness you cannot resort to them. In their place you must have the good food choices readily available. Have some vegetables cleaned, cut-up, and ready to eat in the refrigerator, so if you have a weak moment you can grab them instead of the bad foods.

### **Your Thoughts**

7.4. You will have to make your desire known to your friends, ask them to help you and to not entice you to do what you should not do. If your friends make fun or reject your desire, what should you do? \_\_\_\_\_.

Do not quench the Holy Spirit's leading (I Thes. 5:19). He will guide you into knowing you have to get certain things out of the house. He will guide you into thinking you can accomplish this, so do not let that leading be negated. He will guide you in countless ways, just be in tune and do not disobey His subtle but powerful leading.

Break down fortresses that can cause you to fail (weapon 2). These are the towers of strength that defend the past, the past that got you into this mess. Remember, your best thinking got you here, now it is time to do it His way. The fortresses that have to be broken down are old ways of thinking which are bereft of true spiritual wisdom, for example:



- Typical thoughts may be of past failures to change your lifestyle and memories of them may create a cogent argument to give up easily now.
- A fortress may be the "tried and true" technique of somehow blaming someone else for your predicament. After all, if you lack willpower or determination it is due to something in your past or someone else's fault.
- A non-transformed mind can find ways to justify a wrong lifestyle; it can make it "reasonable" to resort to excess eating (or eating harmful foods). One example is to eat when emotionally upset, as a form of pacification.
- A stronghold can be the idea that if you pray about this and believe, God will do it all; this seemingly plausible reasoning absolves you of any responsibility.

There is no end of how our minds can justify the most absurd beliefs and behaviors; these are fortresses that guard against mind renewal and they must be pulled down.

Bring all thoughts into obedience (weapon 3). As you start on this journey in sincerity He will begin the transformation process. As the fruit of the Spirit are produced in your life, you may notice a change in the way you think: marked departures from the values you once held dear, a mind more directed toward Christ, and a heartfelt desire to flee from the past. You will have small victories that will encourage you to move ahead. You will also experience defeats and must not allow that to result in disobedience to the Lord.

"Wisdom does not show itself so much in precept as in life - in firmness of mind and a mastery of appetite. It teaches us to do as well as to talk; and to make our words and actions all of a color."  
Lucius Annaeus Seneca

The desire to adopt a new lifestyle to reduce your weight will cause some suffering; perhaps this is suffering you brought upon yourself through disobedience, or it may actually be suffering for the cause of Christ. We may have been conditioned to think that suffering for Christ has to do with missionaries being burned at the stake or having people making fun of us because of our faith. In this case, He wants us to be transformed and this requires a significant change in lifestyle. This change will incur unpleasant adaptations, an essential part of allowing Him to redirect your mind. These adaptations are a form of suffering for the Lord because it is something He wants. Adaptations are things like: not going to certain places you really like, not seeing people you like because they will chide you or guide you in wrong ways, not eating things you love, getting up early for exercise.... While some degree of suffering is an inherent part of the restoration of your mind, the peaceable fruit of the Holy Spirit is well worth it.



The Holy Spirit produces the fruit in your life; however, fruit does not grow quickly nor mature easily. In the case of adopting a new lifestyle, two fruit of the Spirit you will especially need are temperance and moderation. [Note: in Galatians 5:22 the word fruit is singular; similar to a clump of grapes--one clump, many grapes.] Each person must assure he/she augments fruit growth, as is required in this a cooperative venture. The development of the fruit of the Spirit seems to follow the order of natural fruit. Thus, rain is required for natural fruit (say grapes or apples) to develop into edible form. In the spiritual realm, rain is the equivalent of worship and study of the Word. Here are a few things that help produce natural fruit and the equivalent spiritual factors are shown in parentheses.

- a. rain or watering (worship, praise, study of Word)
- b. nurturing (Word, prayer, obedience)
- c. cultivation (removal of strongholds in the mind that choke-out your life in Christ)
- d. fertile ground (an earnest desire with a receptive mind, willingness to allow the Spirit to work, obedience)
- e. pruning (strategic removal of self in order to be closer to the Vine, lead thoughts captive)
- f. pest removal (Eph. 6, spiritual warfare)

### **Stage 3: The Plan**

You must have a realistic plan; learn about sugar addictions, read books on this topic, seek advice from professionals, etc. Then learn about a lifestyle that is healthy, what food do healthy people eat and what is recommended by true experts? Do not think you will lose 30 pounds in a few weeks, or that once you lose some weight you can go back to your former ways. This is the suffering you must endure, that is, the realization you are on a path of a lifestyle change and you cannot go back, if you do, you will end up worse-off than when you started. The renewed mind will not want to go back, but a partially renewed mind and the flesh are weak.

Make it your decision to eat smaller amounts, to eat the right foods, and to get plenty of exercise; however, try to avoid the "diet trend of the day." Thus, avoid the diet plans that are hyped and are popular--they generally have serious drawbacks. It is not the purpose of this study to provide or suggest dietary information; nevertheless, for the sake of those using this guide, at the end of this study guide there are time-proven ideal proportions for a good diet (alterations for various illnesses may pertain). Please see Addendum at the end of this Study Guide.

In a nutshell: 65% of one's diet (more if already ill) should be vegetables (mostly) and fruit (half of the vegetables and fruit should be raw). The remaining 35% should be composed of other food products, but consume small amounts of meat and very little cheese. Drink a lot

of pure water, but be very restrictive of fruit juices (because of the high sugar content), soda, processed foods....

#### **Stage 4: The Accomplishment**

Now once on the road to kicking the habit, you have to avenge, correct, any disobedience (weapon 4). This may require a realistic adjustment to your plan, so you can be obedient. This is the step that demonstrates your passion. You must say in your heart, " I must do this, and I can do it."

#### **Your Thoughts**

7.5. Congratulations, you have gotten through an exercise in solving a transformational issue. Now you need to address a problem(s) or issue in your life. What is that issue?  
\_\_\_\_\_.

7.6. Why was an exercise in solving a problem even needed, after all, doesn't the Spirit do the transforming? \_\_\_\_\_.

## Summary of the Process for Transformational Accomplishment

The four stages are:

1. **Thought** (idea, concept)
2. **Desire** (intent, determination)
3. **Plan** (process, goals)
4. **Accomplishment** (doing it, action)

Remember, negative views cause a break in the process. So, think and express yourself positively: "With God's help, I will...." Plan how to do this; it will take work, study, and insight. Then put it into action with a passion.

The Bible teaches that getting from the desire to completion (accomplishment) can be a hard road, "...**but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as *there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have***" (2 Cor. 8:11).

Some of your basic weapons are:

- 1: Know sin.
- 2: Break-down strongholds in your mind.
- 3: Bring every thought and purpose into captivity to the obedience to Christ.
- 4: Have a readiness to avenge/change behavior.
- 5: Make no provisions for the flesh
- 6: Forget the past

## Summary of the Exercise Above

1. **Thought:** I am overweight (or, I have a sugar addiction)
  - a. Recognize any addiction is a sin, your mind (at times) is not controlled by Christ (weapon 1).
  - b. Pray and acknowledge the problem. It will not be automatically resolved by praying; you need to acknowledge the need for Divine help and recognize this physical problem is controlled by the mind. (weapon 2)
2. **Desire:** By God's grace I will change my lifestyle to a healthy way of living. (or, Lord guide me to be diligent in losing 30 pounds by the end of this year.)
  - a. State it positively (remember weapon 3 when doing this).
  - b. Do not leave yourself ways to get out of what you are saying. You must be sincere. You can always adjust the desire later if absolutely necessary (weapon 4)
3. **Plan:** This is the part that really takes work. Your actual plan will have to establish ways to eat, how much, types of food and drink, exercise, supplements, etc. This cannot be taught in this lesson. Some things to remember are:
  - a. Get into the Word daily. You cannot overestimate how He will use it.
  - b. Make no provisions for the flesh (no secret stashes of food, do not go to places where you will "slip-up," let your friends know you can't do the things you did before, etc.) (weapon 5)
  - c. Do not quench Holy Spirit's leading (I Thes. 5:19).
  - d. Break down fortresses (past failures and negative thoughts of how you cannot do this, do not let former habits and ways of thinking cause you to fail) (weapon 2)
  - e. Bring all thoughts into obedience (do not allow yourself to think you can cheat on this, do not let yourself think food is a reward. Do not allow yourself to use food for an emotional crutch, focus your mind on a correct lifestyle, make sure you consider the need for exercise, keep focused on Christ, flee former habits and concentrate on this plan) (weapons 3 and 6).
  - f. Be willing to suffer; moderation/temperance on this venture may be a challenge, but God is there to help.
  - g. Remind yourself that a fruit of Holy Spirit is temperance (just what you want). Also, spiritual fruit develop slowly and require:
    - i. nurturing (Word, prayer, obedience, ...)
    - ii. cultivation (removal of strongholds in the mind that choke-out your life in Christ)
    - iii. watering (worship and praise)
    - iv. fertile ground (a desire, with a mind receptive and hungry)
    - v. pruning (strategic removal of self in order to be closer to the Vine, lead thoughts captive)
    - vi. pest removal (Eph. 6, spiritual warfare)
  - h. avenge/correct disobedience (weapon 4)
4. **Accomplishment** (make it work with a passion and have a "can do" attitude).

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**Please consider these responses to “Your Thoughts”**

7.2. Eph. 6:11-18, gives defensive and offensive weapons for our spiritual warfare.

7.3. Stating your desire in the first person shows you realize that you have a direct, personal involvement in this whole matter. You cannot just dump in on God and expect Him to do it all or just pray and claim you have done your part.

7.4. Your friends may want to be supportive, but their actions will often conflict with your needs. They may want to go to a place that will tempt you (or they may tempt you) to "cheat" just a little. Have a dogged, unrelenting determination to carry out your plan. You may have to avoid certain friends for awhile, but kindly explain to them that you have a problem and have made a commitment to the Lord and you must follow through with it.

7.6. Yes, the Spirit does the transforming; but you have to habitually and consistently cooperate with Him in the process. This exercise helps you get into the right frame of mind, to know and do your part

## Lesson 8

# Learning Through Others

*"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."*

Albert Einstein

*"Character is higher than intellect. A great soul will be strong to live as well as think."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

In Lesson 7, a suggested format for a personal transformational plan was presented. To be perfectly clear, there is no specific format, process, or plan in the Bible. A transformational plan is helpful because each of us can have a good thought, even an honest desire, but lack understanding on how to bring them to fruition. What is presented in this study is designed to give the reader ideas on how transformation works, and to show how we can logically get from the thought of something to actually accomplishing it.

We do not have to develop a written plan, but such a plan helps get our minds thinking correctly and set on the right path. The suggested format synthesizes what has been taught in a concise manner, hopefully stimulating our thinking and making it clear that transformation requires action on our parts. If we are going to do what the Lord asks of us, and do it with the intention of succeeding, we have to think it through and make specific, concrete plans--that is what the transformational plans attempt to accomplish.

We will now consider two transformation plans. One plan is from a person who truly believes in Jesus Christ and wants to live in accordance with His will; this plan deals with negative thinking. The second plan is a composite, made from various plans of Christians; this plan deals with the topic of fear. A composite plan is used to protect the privacy of individuals and to help the reader see various strengths and weaknesses of common plans.



### Personal Transformational Plan for Negativity

**Thought:** "I tend to look at my problems instead of looking to the Lord."

**Desire:** "With God's help, I will look to God with trust and hope, rather than look at my problems with worry and fear. I'll remind myself that I am a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-21)."

**Plan:** "Knowing negative thinking is a sin (an idol) because I'm not putting God first:

- a. I'll pray; 'Lord, with your help, I'll put you first today by getting into your Word in the morning and meditating on what You have to say.'
- b. I'll also begin to journal my quiet times, using the following questions from my Bible reading:
  - i. Lord, who are You?
  - ii. What would You have me to do?
- c. I'll make no provision for the flesh by recognizing how the Devil uses people, memories, and incidents to push my buttons and send me back into negative thinking. I'll use verses such as: Phil. 4:4-8; Eph. 5:19-20; Isa. 41:10; Psa. 37:4-7.
- d. With the Spirit's help, I'll remove strongholds with spiritual warfare using prayers, hymns, and Bible verses, especially Eph. 6:10-18; Isa. 61:3; Joel 2:32; (also read the book \_\_\_\_\_ *(title not given here)*).
- e. I'll read books to enlighten my mind and my spirit, such as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ *(Christian books, titles not given here)*."

**Accomplishment:** "I will trust in the Lord with all my heart and seek a positive perspective in life."

#### Comments

This person grasps the general concept of what has to be done to help assure renewal of the mind with respect to negative thinking. The Desire statement is well crafted. The strong reliance upon the Word is commendable. Searching for information from reliable authors is also a good step. Journaling was a creative idea and can be used to focus attention on key verses and how they apply. The reliance upon prayer is great.

This person demonstrates that a good plan can be very short. An interesting thing related to this plan is that the main points can easily be put on cards or sticky notes and placed in conspicuous places as a constant reminder. This plan lends itself to revision as the Lord guides the process of transformation. Generally, any plan has to be reviewed and updated as

the Lord works in a person's life. He is changing you from within, so any plan has to be updated to reflect those changes. Updating acknowledges what the Lord has done in a person's life and shows a continuing desire to adapt to divine morphing.

This Plan addresses the issue of past memories, which are very detrimental because they are a key factor in negative thinking. The Plan seems to recognize that with negative thinking (as with most problems) there is a tendency to make it the Lord's job to correct the problem. As a reminder (not a comment on this plan), you must be the one to bring every thought into captivity and you must determine what to do when negative thinking does occur (yes, the Lord will help you, but you must take an active role).

A fruit of the Spirit is peace, which is diametrically opposed to negative thinking since such thinking destroys peace. As this person's transformation progresses, it would be good to consider in an updated Plan how to nurture, cultivate, and encourage the growth of this and other needed fruit (as seen at the end of Lesson 7).

The strong statement (in Accomplishment) showing a determination to truly accomplish this task is great. Without it the person would have left room to wiggle out of this if the going gets tough.

### Your Thoughts

8.1. What is your evaluation of this plan? \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

8.2. If this were your friend, how could you help this person? \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

8.3. Would you expect this person to experience significant transformation in his/her life (following this plan)? \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.



## Composite Transformational Plan for Fear

**Thought:** "My mind is not controlled by Christ, but by my fears."

**Desire:** "With Your help, I will not fear but live with a peace-of-mind that reflects the confidence and security I have in Christ."

**Plan:**

1. "Weapons 1 and 2: It may be that fear is not always a sin, but it is a stronghold in my life. I have to do something to address this problem, so I will get into the Word and study it to find what the Lord says concerning living in peace and in security. I will surround myself with verses, thoughts, and reminders of Christ-generated peace, acceptance, security, and confidence.
2. Weapon 3: When fears come into my mind, I must immediately bring them into captivity and replace them with the truths of God's word, with prayer, etc.
3. Weapon 4: When I recognize unreasonable fear, I will immediately pray and ask the Lord to help me. I will not allow myself to retain that thought and will replace it with something from the Word. I will try to avoid the circumstances that create such fears.
4. Weapon 5: Making no provision for the flesh scares me. Whenever I do something, I fear it is not enough, others will criticize me, that punishment or loss is appropriate, etc. For me, this can lead to isolation! If I don't do anything, I won't be afraid! It seems that fear is my worst fear ('The only thing to fear is fear itself.').
5. Weapon 6: When past failures take control of my mind, when my fears are irrational, I must cut them off. My fear of \_\_\_\_\_ (a person, but not named here), will be addressed by telling him/her the truth and avoiding him/her if he/she persists in causing me pain."

**Accomplishment:** "Identifying the issue is half the battle, now I must get to work and conduct the battle with the intention of winning."

### Comments

Fear is a very broad topic and includes fear of punishment, disappointing someone, not being prepared, the unknown, physical harm, criticism/failure, "what ifs," rejection, retaliation, disasters/threats, loss, betrayal, and loss of control. A child's early-life impressions have a profound influence on the fears of adulthood. Remember, the original word for character (which is deep in our soul) is derived from the root word meaning "cutting into." Each person's character is impressed or imprinted by childhood events, which cut grooves and make strong impressions. As a coin or seal, we bear the image corresponding to that which impressed or cut our character early in life.

Our religious, family, and social rearing have significant impacts on how we view Scriptural truth. Thus, grasping the concept of being complete in Christ may be very hard for those taught early in life that you get what you deserve, i.e., life is based upon personal performance. A person may think they grasp the vicarious suffering and the substitutionary death of Christ, yet deep down they always fear it is up to them to be worthy of salvation. Once some of the false impressions in our deepest core are removed, the work of Christ on our behalf can be viewed as a treasure of inestimable value.

While this was a composite plan, it represents a person who has fears deeply ingrained in his/her inner core from youth (punishment, rejection, loss, criticism, etc.). These ingrained fears are deeply etched into this person's character and continue to torture him/her. This person has to be pitied for his/her perspective and truly needs to experience transformation.

The Desire is fairly well stated and gets into what is desired (peace); it does not concentrate on what is not wanted (fear). When there is a problem with fear, it is hard for us to get control of our minds. What is needed is trust, confidence, peace, and assurance. These are the type of verses this person has to dwell upon and make part of his/her inner-core beliefs, so that God can use them to erase the false impressions and provide what is truly needed in this person's life.

The reliance on Scripture is good. However, we must always be on guard because we can inadvertently use Scripture to avoid personal responsibility. In addition, we can use the Word to sound spiritual, in essence, hiding behind it.

There is a lack of interest in reading reliable authors on how to overcome fear. There are many good Christian books to help a person understand what a balanced life entails. Such books would help this person recognize that everyone's expectations cannot be met (an identified fear), and if a person does his/her best that has to be acceptable to him/herself and others.

The statement about bringing every thought into captivity is good. In all plans we have to guard against a deep seated desire to not really want transformation. Transformation means change, and that can be fearful. Rather than change, people sometimes want to stay in their present state in order to get pity, to ask others to pray for them, or justify something else that is wrong in their lives. Living with fears may be miserable, but may seem to this person as a better alternative than trying to overcome it and to fail in the process (remember fear of failure is one of the fears).

Great wisdom and spiritual understanding are needed if anyone were to come along side this person to help, any suggestions may be viewed as criticism--further rejection of someone

who just cannot "measure-up." The concept of not measuring-up is most likely the product of this person's mind, as a result of his/her early Christian rearing.

The Accomplishment statement clearly reflects a desire to change. This person needs to set his/her mind on what it means to be accepted by Christ, to be overwhelmed with His care and mercy, to realize what it means to be secure and complete in Christ, to grasp what freedom really means, and to recall that our lives in Christ reside in His faithfulness not our performance.

### Your Thoughts

- 8.4. What is your evaluation of this plan? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8.5. If this were your friend, how could you help this person? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8.6. Do you really think our fears can be transformed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Addenda: Some things that Prevent Us from Succeeding

Here is a reminder of some attitudes and thought patterns that prevent successful mind renewal.

- We may think that praying is enough, and poof, we will be transformed (transformation is a cooperative venture that goes on our whole lives).
- We have been taught it is spiritual to think we can just, "Let go and let God." However, in some issues we are instructed to put on the yoke, strain forward, run the race, endure hardship.... There are some things God does entirely (salvation) and other things He says we must cooperate and do our part (transformation).
- We can think that if we are not conformed to the world (I don't drink, dance, smoke, cuss, chew ...), that must make us right with God and transformed (it actually works in reverse).
- We may believe that God is sovereign and in total control of our lives (sovereignty does not shift the duty He has given us back onto Him).
- We often believe, "This is the way God made me," so I must accept it (true to a point, but God always expects spiritual growth, maturation, and transformation).
- We mistakenly believe that because we trust in Christ and have committed our lives to Him, that we have done all we can.

- We can quench the Holy Spirit, i.e., He leads, gives us direction, and works in our conscience, but we do our best to find ways for not following Him.
- We find excuses: a) all men lust, b) it runs in the family, c) I just cannot love my spouse, d) if you only knew how I have been wronged in life, etc.

### Your Thoughts

8.7. What are some other things that prevent us from succeeding? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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Please consider these responses to **Your Thoughts**

8.2. Remember such a friend in prayer and accept them as they are. Pray that you may be encouraging and comforting, then plan how to do this. Primarily be a friend who is there for them and who models Christ-likeness. Guard carefully against being perceived as preaching to them or having a sanctimonious attitude. Subtly mention (at an appropriate time) how you found some fruit of the Spirit was just what you needed during a similar time in your life. Spiritual wisdom should prevent you from, "beating this person over the head with Scripture" or acting as if you were better than they. You can offer to be an accountability partner if the topic comes up. Search for things this person has done that have been a blessing to you or others, and then let them know this. This person needs to know he/she matters, has value, and that his/her life positively impacts others.

8.3. This person, years later, is doing well and seems to have significant victory in this area of life.

8.5. All in 8.2. apply, but extra caution is needed to make sure you are not perceived as being critical or judgmental--that would just create a deeper fear of failure and fear of disappointing others.

8.6. Yes, fears are generally created in our character and this is an area in which the Lord will definitely work.

## Lesson 9

# Transformation and Depression

*"Precious memories are the fabric of our lives, unpleasant memories are the baggage."  
(Mindre N. Ewal)*

*"I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on the earth. Whether I shall ever be better I can not tell; I awfully forebode I shall not. To remain as I am is impossible; I must die or be better, it appears to me."  
Abraham Lincoln*

This lesson deals with the spiritual and soulish (mental) aspects of depression. Please know that there are many other causes of depression which are not discussed (like hormonal imbalance, nutrition, chemical imbalances, circumstances, etc.). The issues not discussed may or may not be the major cause of any specific person's depression. This lesson must restrict itself to transformation's role (in matters of the soul and spirit) related to achieving improved mental health.

Depression often has a mental-spiritual component. The mental-spiritual component of depression is a chicken or egg issue, i.e., does the mental-spiritual aspect cause depression or does depression cause a mental-spiritual shift? Either way, spiritual and mental factors can certainly be an integral part of the recovery process. Many Christians seem to be ignorant of the strong hold our thoughts have on our entire lives. Thankfully the Scripture is replete with information on this topic, and a thoughtful approach to this topic may help believers come to a fuller understanding of the Word.

Lesson 9 will provide a brief discussion of mental baggage, negative thinking, and deadly memories. These are followed by an example transformational plan for depression. Addressing depression through transformation of the mind will foster better mental health (more related information will be found in the next lessons).

### **Background Information**

Depression occurs in many people, from youth to older adults. Most people have times when they feel sad or "down" because of events in their lives. However, the temporary feelings of gloom can linger long after the event and cause a major depression. A major depression

results in an overpoweringly sad mood, a change in appetite, a feeling life has no enjoyment, problems with sleeping (too much or can't sleep), fatigue, problems concentrating, being easily irritated, a negative cloud of despair, and suicidal thoughts. Although it is never called depression in the Bible, many characters may have suffered from it: David (Psa. 61:2, 77:2-3), Elijah (I Kings 19:4), Jeremiah (Jer. 8:18-9:26), even Paul (II Cor. 1:8, 7:5-6).

We must not conclude that depression is caused by sin, it may or may not be. Many times depression is the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain, and that is no more a sin than having a heart problem, diabetes, or suffering dehydration. Again, the chemical imbalance may be due to physiological causes, soulish issues, or spiritual issues. Chemical imbalances can generally be treated by a health care professional and anyone with depression is encouraged to seek professional help (you may want to consider trying the natural route first, using nutritional and herbal remedies which often are very effective, but generally have fewer side effects than pharmaceutical drugs). A chemical imbalance means the physical brain is missing something that should be there, this causes unbearable gloom and despair. Taking something to restore that balance (natural or pharmaceutical) is not resorting to a "feel good drug;" it is an attempt to feel normal again.

Depression can be caused by a spiritual problem, but it should not be automatically assumed to be the case. An example of a spiritual problem is a person who lives year after year with hate and bitterness in his/her heart (rather than forgiving someone). Such a person has two problems, they have stuffed their emotions (held them in and let them fester), and they have not practiced forgiveness. Depression in this case is a sin because the person has not been forgiving. No matter what the cause, the depressed person generally feels worthless, hopeless, and helpless (this will be discussed in Lesson 12).

### Your Thoughts

9.1. What really hurts a Christian with depression is others assume he/she has a spiritual problem. Have you judged others this way? \_\_\_\_\_

9.2. Telling a depressed person to be happy is like telling a downing person to swim (that's the whole point, they have tried and can't). What would be a good thing to tell a depressed person? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

(9.2. this is answered below in, "What You Can Do")

## Depression is a Feeling

The thing to remember is that depression is how a person feels, not what is real or true. It is often said to be a mood disorder. You can know and love the Lord, walk in His truth, yet feel like all joy has been lost. You can try your best not to worry, be confident that if you die you will go to Heaven, do all the right things, go to bed feeling all is well, but wake up in the morning with a feeling of overwhelming dread. What happens that our minds can go from feeling all is well to deadly sorrow overnight? It may be just the opposite at times, that is, we can go from dread to a feeling that all is well for no known reason. We should know that depression is not necessarily the lack of understanding the Lord, or His provisions, or His grace. It is how one feels, and those feelings often have nothing to do with reality--that is because they can be due to a chemical imbalance. A chemical imbalance means the brain cannot transmit signals correctly because the needed neurotransmitters are lacking (neurotransmitters help carry messages throughout the brain, the most common one is serotonin).

If a person's pancreas does not produce enough insulin he/she will have diabetes. The person will become physically sick and mentally confused unless she/he eats correctly and takes needed medicine (regardless if they trust in the Lord or not). Depression is very similar. If the brain (a physical organ) does not have sufficient neurotransmitters the result is a depressed mood. What makes depression so miserable for a Christian (or anyone) is they do not want to feel that way, yet they do. How a person feels (mood) is not necessarily a function of what a person believes; it is generally a chemical imbalance, just like diabetes. Depression is a very lonely and scary place, a place where Christians have to learn to be of help to others.

### Your Thoughts

9.3. Can a person love the Lord, have no hidden sin, have good thought patterns, and still have a headache? \_\_\_\_\_. Now consider that the same holds true for depression.

## Double Whammy

When a person feels emotionally down (depressed) and another person hurts them even more, that is a double whammy.<sup>1</sup> The common double whammy is telling a depressed person the problem is due to hidden sin (this happens too often in writing and from the pulpit). The depressed person is in mental anguish and needs help from another, only to receive nothing but more pain in the form of criticism, put-downs, accusations, etc. Certainly, we can all find some sin in another, and we can see bad choices in life. Guess what, we all have those issues,

but we are not all depressed. Instead of adding insult to injury, we Christians have to learn how to comfort and encourage those with depression.

### **What You Can Do**

Here are some things you can do that may be of some help to those suffering from depression. What works best for a particular person has a lot to do with his/her specific case, so you will want to adjust and modify what is written below according to that specific case.

- Comfort them, confirm their worth, tell them you love them, let them know they can get through this. Your instructions are: "**Therefore if *there is any consolation* (encouragement) **in Christ, if any comfort of love ... fulfill my joy by being likeminded....**" (Phil. 2:1-2, parenthesis added).**
- Suggest reading the Bible together; do not pick-out verses you think they need (this would be you trying to preach to them). Instead, read a chapter(s) or whole book with them, like Philippians or Colossians (this allows the Lord to speak to them through the Word). It is impossible to over-estimate the comfort and consolation that results from hearing the Word. "**Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation** (to urge on)..." (1 Tim. 4:13, parenthesis added). The Spirit of God speaks to us through the Word, so it is the best medicine.
- Pray with them. Hearing another person pray for you is very encouraging and gives hope.
- Saying "be happy" or "all things work together for good" may seem right, but they are very hurtful and of little value. More than anything, the person wants to be happy and already knows Romans 8:28 (which is true, but its use at this time may demonstrate a lack spiritual wisdom on your part). This is akin to telling a drowning person to swim, a bit late and not well timed. So instead of using trite expressions or using Scripture you think applies, ask how you can help (Eccl. 4:10).
- It is not your duty to judge another, or to try to solve their problems. So, do not accuse the person of sin, imply wrong behavior, or play "if you had only" games. Just be there with/for them, and let them talk. If his/her talk is constantly negative (how they have been wronged or bad memories), subtly change the subject. You may have to be the one to show how to have a positive outlook and to model correct behavior--walk the talk.
- If a person is in a presumed hopeless situation (like an abusive relationship with no way out) discuss ways to get professional help or seek trusted counsel from someone who has experience in this matter.
- Think of a time when you were down, what did you learn that would help others (2 Cor. 1:4-5).



## Your Thoughts

9.4. Discuss other ways you can inadvertently hurt someone with depression (or how you have been hurt); then comment on ways to come along side someone suffering from depression. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Dangers of Negative Thinking and Mental Baggage**

This section on negative thinking and mental baggage may seem out of place. However, how a person thinks and the mental baggage they carry are of profound importance, since either one can lead to depression or exacerbate its' gloom. So it does not matter if they caused the depression or are the result of it (often both apply), they will be staunch obstacles to recovery unless addressed. Getting negative thinking and our past baggage under the transforming power of the Holy Spirit is paramount for achieving mental health.

In Lesson 4, we discussed that one reason for mind renewal is our mental baggage (hidden in the deep recesses of our minds) holds us down and keeps us captive to the past. That baggage is a tremendous weight on our backs and we must get rid of it. Since the dangers of our mental baggage are so profound, one would think it would be an integral part of Christian teaching; surprisingly, that is rarely a cogent part of biblical discussions or teachings.

This story will help show how our memories control the present, even our futures. A woman saw a very large and powerful elephant at a circus; it was restrained by a small chain. The woman knew the elephant could easily break the chain if it wanted, but every time the elephant came to the end of the chain it just stopped and did not even try to break free. She asked the trainer why this powerful elephant was restrained by such a small chain. The trainer said that the chain was the same one that was used when the elephant was little, and at that time the elephant tried and tried to break it but could not. So the elephant learned at that time that it could not break the chain, and still remembers that. "You see," said the trainer, "It is not the chain that holds the elephant captive but his memories." Sadly, this is true for many of us, our memories hold us captive, and we do not experience the freedom that is ours in Christ.

Many people believe they have escaped their sorrowful past only to find it comes back with a vengeance later in life. The emotions attached to past memories are powerful, these memories become the baggage of our lives, holding us captive and unable to move forward. God is fully aware of this matter and relays indispensable information on how to overcome past sorrow and pain, indeed anything that holds us captive. How to get rid of such baggage

(or at least reduce it to the point it does not control your life) is one of the main purposes of this study guide. Precious memories are the fabric of our lives, unpleasant memories are the baggage.

The author often gets letters, calls, and emails from believers who have had a miserable past. The accounts go on and on about a terrible childhood, physical abuse, sexual abuse, depression, wrong treatment, unfaithful friends/spouses, bad parents, alcohol and drug abuse.... Indeed, some people seem to have been dealt a very poor hand in life, some have created much of it themselves. Sometimes the past is composed of good things that no longer exist (careers, fame, health, family, friends, wealth); these can also be negative when viewed from the perspective of having lost them. The negative memories of the past, when ruminated about (thought about over and over in one's mind), will only consume a person emotionally and physically. These memories create pain and mental illness as they fester in the mind (like a thorn in the flesh). Negative thinking about the past feeds our hostility, bitterness, and sense of loss. In addition, it releases stress hormones that will surely destroy our health.

### **Your Thoughts**

9.5. Negative thinking is incredibly hard to avoid. Many times something of great importance has been lost, or in some way a person has been treated totally wrong. So the truth is you have suffered loss, hurt, and needless pain by others. Why does thinking about such things harm you now? \_\_\_\_\_.

(You have not been presented this information yet, but it may be helpful to think about it.)

It is easy to say we can take our baggage to the Cross and leave it there, but what does that really mean? As spiritual as this may sound, does it really work that way for all things in our lives? Certainly, when we are unsaved, we can come to the Cross and lay all our sin baggage there, since He promises to forgive that sin (past, present, and future sins). Thus, for salvation we bring our sins to the Cross and leave them there. There are many other cares and situations in life for which we are powerless to do anything; or we do not understand what is happening; or we are at the end of our rope and have no strength left to deal with them. These types of cares should be cast upon Him (1 Pt. 5:7), and in faith trust Him to handle them and give us peace in the process. However when it comes to transformation of the mind, the Scriptural position is that we have a part and that does not allow us to cast our negative thinking patterns and mental baggage upon Him and then walk away thinking we have done all we can. We must present ourselves a living sacrifice, willing to do what is expected, that is why transformational plans can be helpful. In God's overall plan for us, we

can see that Jesus Christ is in the business of redeeming us from the eternal consequences of sin. He is also in the business of buying back our minds (redeeming us in the present) by slowly transforming them into minds that conform to His. In this manner, He is redeeming our lives from ongoing despair, hopelessness, and self-loathing. **"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is"** (Eph. 5:15-16).

It is often said, "The Cross redeems our past and the resurrection redeems our present."

Since we cannot do anything about the past, we need a new way of viewing it or getting it behind us because constant negative thinking is like cancer of the soul; it is a sure formula for actual mental or physical illness. That is why we are instructed in Philippians 3:13-14 to put it behind us (forget about the past) and look forward to the finish line. This is easier said than done; however, the Scripture is not silent on this matter and gives us guidance.

If we wallow in the negative events of our past and do not allow transformation, then the past will continue to be our present, and future.

In an effort to relieve the pain of the past and in order to foster healing, many people have tried forgiving those who have offended them. Often they are disappointed, stating that forgiveness doesn't work because they still remember the pain of the past and people still treat them the same. Forgiveness does not mean we will forget the past; only God can forget such things. Forgiveness on our part does not change the past, or others for that matter; what it does is release us from the stranglehold the past has on our present lives. Thus, it creates in us a new perspective that allows us to move forward in life. Forgiveness creates a condition in which the memories of the past do not continue to control us emotionally—so a memory of the past does not create sorrow, hostility or tears. In this regard, a Christian friend or therapist using scriptural principles may be used by the Lord to help a person see and interpret the past and themselves differently. It is better to forgive past injustice than

to let it fester into bitterness\* that tarnishes the rest of our lives. Our future in Christ can be very different, provided we allow Him to make the truth, **"...all things are become new"** (2 Cor. 5:17), part of our daily lives.

For clarification purposes, forgiveness and forgetting the past relate to our minds; however, other civil, legal, and family responsibilities still remain. One can bring their mind into obedience and experience a new way of thinking, this has the effect of walking away from the past. However, one should not think that means they can walk away from earthly responsibilities as a result of the past: debts, child support, criminal activities, and similar responsibilities must still be addressed.

When our minds are held captive there is no joy. Our minds can be held captive by our past, any form of mental baggage, additions, fears, anxiety, self importance, pride... Renewal of the mind allows the Lord to remove that which holds our minds captive and restore our joy. Consider this biblical example: after the first destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, many Jews were forced into Babylonian exile where they lamented, **"By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion. We hung our harps Upon the willows in the midst of it. For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, And those who plundered us requested mirth, Saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion' "** (Psalms 137:1-3). This text reveals an eternal principle, i.e., when in captivity there is no relief from sorrow. Hanging the harps on the willows is very symbolic for it makes two things clear: 1) the harps that normally brought joy could no longer do so, thus they were hung-up and 2) the willow trees (the bark contains salicylic acid, the precursor of aspirin) could not blunt their pain. (Note: from that time the graceful tree is reported to have become known as the weeping willow.<sup>2</sup>) In similar fashion, our past, problems, addictions, etc., can hold us captive and nothing in this world will relieve the pain or sorrow-only Christ can.

There is no joy while our minds are held captive to anything but Christ.

### **Deadly Memories**

The human brain does not distinguish between a present upsetting event (a misunderstanding with a friend) and a negative memory. The stress reaction is the same (the stress-health

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\* It has been noted by some health professionals that bitterness has a negative influence on a person's gall bladder and anger negatively influences a person's liver. Over time both of these will lead to physical as well as mental illness.

connection will be considered in Lesson 10). In fact, if a person keeps obsessing about an upsetting memory, day after day, then the stress reaction occurs more quickly each time. If a person allows the same negative thoughts and emotions to have room in her/his mind, eventually even a brief thought of the event brings back all the negative emotions and related stress. When past negative memories are thought about over and over for a long period of time, the constant stress can be one reason why disease occurs years later. In order to protect our minds and bodies, the Lord instructs us, "**...do not let the sun go down on your wrath**" (Eph. 4:26). We have to make a conscious effort to not hold-on to negative memories, they are deadly. We are told not to let the sun go down (or in plain language, get over it) on our wrath (or any negative emotion). If we do not let the negative go, but allow it to occupy our minds, it will eventually destroy us. So God tells us to make a practice of getting such events behind us, to make it a habit to forgive, and to not let the day end with our minds still upset about someone or something.

### Your Thoughts

9.6. Letting go of the past and deadly memories makes perfect sense; but is God telling us to try to get rid of all memories, even the good ones? \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

### Transformational Plan Dealing with Depression

The issue is, "I am depressed." What follows is merely a generalized, teaching example; it is very unlikely it is appropriate for any specific case, certainly it is not the only way to address this issue. Each person will have to develop their own guide on how to address this problem.

#### Stage 1: The Thought

The thought that you are blue, down, or depressed comes into your mind very easily because you are living in a world of despair. Remember, your depression may be related to a neurotransmitter imbalance; it is best to seek a health care professional as you start to work through this issue.

Search your life and ask the Lord to reveal any sin in your life, then remember that in your plan. Two examples of sin that can lead to depression are a Christian living with someone out of marriage or having an extramarital affair. If you are living a secret life with known sin (you may enjoy that sin or it may be an addiction which you now abhor), that sin will eat you up. Such sin can easily lead to depression, a consequence of guilt, lying, deception, a double life, shame.... If your depression stems from childhood abuse (sexual, emotional, or physical) that

was not your sin, but you may still carry the stigma or emotional scars of that sin, as though it were your fault. These examples of sin (yours, or those of others which directly affect you) show how sin can enter into this issue.

At times your mind may race out of control, and you will wish you could get it under control. This lack of control does not mean you are losing your mind or that you are undergoing Satanic attack. Chemical imbalances and neurotransmitter pathways in the brain can cause such events; this will change over time, so do not get discouraged thinking the Lord is not at work.

You must seek the Lord through prayer, study of the Word, and meditation on the Word (think about how to apply it to your situation). Acknowledge the problem to the Lord and seek His help in overcoming it. But also commit to Him you desire to follow through as He guides you.

### **Stage 2: Your Desire**

State your desire as a determination. It must be stated in the positive, i.e., "By God's grace I will achieve full mental health." Notice, you must not allow yourself to think you can just commit this to the Lord and that is all that has to be done. You will need His help to develop a true desire and this is where you have to be honest with yourself and God. You will have to deal with negative thinking, deadly memories, and mental baggage. It may be that those things are what you actually enjoy, that is, you may enjoy thinking about how you have been treated wrongly in the past because that justifies how you feel now. Unfortunately, such thinking will only dig you deeper into the pit of depression. As you crawl back out, healing is taking place.

The comfort of Scripture cannot be overstated. God will use the Word to help you in ways you never dreamed possible and work in your mind beyond your understanding. You will need comfort and encouragement from the Word and the Lord because that is your one true refuge--He is the one you can reveal everything to without fear.

Have a willingness (determination) to break down fortresses that can cause you to fail (weapon 2). These are the towers of strength that defend the past ways (thinking about the negative events of the past, entertaining negative thoughts, thinking about past injustices or losses, wishing things were different, etc.).

### **Stage 3: The Plan**

You must have a realistic plan: learn about depression and seek advice from professionals.

A very key aspect of your plan will be to bring all thoughts into obedience (weapon 3), as discussed earlier in this lesson.

As you start on this journey with a sincere desire, He will begin the transformation process. As the fruit(s) of the Spirit is produced in your life, and as He renews your mind, you may notice a change in the way you think; your mind will be more clear, and concentration will be easier. You will have small victories that will encourage you to move ahead. You will also experience defeats and must not allow that to result in disobedience to the Lord.

You absolutely must include in your plan weapon 6 (forgetting the past). That was discussed earlier, but you will have to have a plan and determination to change the negative thoughts of the past to something else, immediately. This will be a struggle at first, but in time those bad thoughts will slowly recede from the place of prominence they once held in your mind. The best thing is to have Bible verses written out that you can read over and over if needed, until those thoughts are beaten back.

#### **Stage 4: The Accomplishment**

Please remember to correct (or avenge) any disobedience (weapon 4). This may require a realistic adjustment to your plan, so you can be obedient. This is the step that demonstrates your passion. You must say in your heart, "I will do this because He will lead me through--**He is my true and only sufficiency.**"

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<sup>1</sup>Shober, Steve; Grace 4 You Ministries, Inc.; Lesson 15, "*Being Misunderstood (part 2)--Adding Insult to Injury*;" [www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com); 2012.

<sup>2</sup>Castleman, Michael; *The Healing Herbs*; Rodale Press; Emmaus, Pennsylvania; 1991.

Please consider these responses to **Your Thoughts**

9.3. Of course.

9.5. The neurotransmitter balance in the brain can be adversely altered by such thinking, causing depression. The mere thought of past hurts releases stress hormones in great amounts and these hormones become very harmful to the physical body and mental processes; the mind gets stuck on negative thought patterns and cannot see the good in life or seek ways out of the situation.

9.6. Negative memories have a negative effect on our health, mental and physical. We will learn in the next lesson that positive memories have a positive effect upon our health; so the Lord does not suggest they have to be forgotten.



## Lesson 10

# The Stress-Health Connection

## \*Insights into Transformation's Need\*

*"The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another."*

William James

*"Every stress leaves an indelible scar, and the organism pays for its survival after a stressful situation by becoming a little older."*

Hans Selye

### **Stress and the Mind-Body Linkage**

The mind and the body are strongly linked. How we think deep in our minds has a lot to do with who we are. In addition, how we think and feel in our minds about things will have a direct effect on how we feel physically. If we harbor harmful emotions and use non-biblical ways of thinking, we will likely experience poor health. This is because certain thoughts and emotions release hormones (strong chemicals that in even tiny amounts exert a powerful influence on your body). These hormones are designed to protect and help us. However, if they are overused and constantly in our body they can trigger diseases. Thus, we can now see the strong link between our minds and our mental and physical health. God is concerned with both.

Our hormones are produced in tiny amounts and act as messengers in the blood stream. These messengers tell various parts of the body to perform needed functions. Some hormones are called stress hormones and their purpose is to help during times of danger, that is, they are emergency hormones that help us survive (to be either extra strong or super fast). The stress hormones create powerful, rapid reactions in the body and mind. However if these hormones are always present in the body, they will cause great harm and illness.

We were wonderfully designed by the Creator (Psa. 139:14), but we must remember to respect that design. We are designed so these hormones can help us during times of danger. If a person were confronted by an angry pit bull, God has designed the body to marvelously respond in a split-second, it is called the "fight or flight" response. At the sight of the pit bull the mind signals the adrenal glands to instantly releases hormones that prepare our bodies to fight, or run away as fast as possible. It is these hormones that have enabled people to do extraordinary things, like lift a car off a child trapped beneath it. These hormones are



designed to be used very rarely and for only a very short time. If they are constantly present it makes our bodies "think" there is constant danger; this is very stressful to our bodies. A simple analogy is water: in moderate amounts it is very healthy, but way too much and we can drown in it. Many Christians are suffering poor health and nagging problems because they are "drowning" in their own hormones.

The persistent presence of stress hormones in high levels causes mental pressure and tension, they cause us to be "up tight." While stress itself is not always bad, it is what happens when our bodies keep releasing these hormones long after the actual danger is past. Constant stress! These hormones can harm us if they are out of balance with our design. It is this constant stress that causes many diseases. There is evidence that some 75-90% of visits to a doctor are the result of stress related problems.<sup>1</sup> The perpetual release of stress hormones breaks the mind and body. Thankfully, the Scripture has much to say in relation to this for God's words promote health, **"For they (God's words) are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh"** (Prov. 4:22, parenthesis added).

The two main stress hormones are adrenaline (also called epinephrine) and cortisol. They are called stress hormones because stress (real or imaginary) causes their release from the adrenal glands. The whole body quickly responds to them. These hormones are great when used as God designed. When they are in our system in high amounts for too long, bad things begin to happen. It does not matter if the stress is considered a good type (like performing in a play) or the bad type (an attacking dog), both release the same hormones and the body reacts the same way.

When in a threatening situation, your nervous system responds by releasing a flood of stress hormones. These hormones prepare your body and mind for emergency action. Your heart pounds faster, muscles tighten, blood pressure rises, breathing gets faster, and senses become sharper. During the emergency, the blood flow to the less needed areas (digestive tract and skin) gets less so that extra blood can be sent to the most needed areas (muscles and senses). These changes increase your strength and endurance while preparing you to either fight or run from the danger. If a person is about to be attacked, digestion is not as important as having extra strong muscles. Less blood flow to the skin is designed to reduce bleeding due to an injury.

Stress hormones are wonderful, when used as God designed. Stress is a normal and desired response to events that threaten or upset us. It occurs whether the danger is real or imaginary, the body and mind perceive either threat as real. So, if a person is alone at night and sees a spooky shadow (which is really only the shadow of a tree branch), the stress response will be the same as if the person were in real danger. The stress response is one of

God's ways of protecting us. It helps maintain focus, provides extra energy, and heightens senses. The stress response has saved many lives and is responsible for some heroic acts. The stress response also helps you rise to meet challenges. Stress is what keeps you on your toes during an important event, it sharpens your focus when attempting an important task, and it helps you prepare for critical coming events rather than relaxing. However, beyond a certain point, when the stress hormones are always present, stress stops being helpful and starts being hurtful.

### Your Thoughts

10.1. Why do you think stress hormones eventually harm our bodies and minds?

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(10.1. answered in the next section, but good to think about at this point.)

### What Stress Can Do to You

Stress is not the only factor in causing illness, but it can be a major factor. Some common problems resulting from constant stress are: digestive problems, heart disease, early aging, sleep disorders, obesity, skin problems, memory loss, inability to concentrate, feeling overwhelmed, early aging, depression, aches and pains, frequent colds, addictions, and nervous habits (nail biting, pacing, twitching). Stress leads to chronic fatigue and the inability to cope. If you have several of these factors, then it is especially important to pay attention to this lesson.

Why do these bad things happen as a result of prolonged stress? Because long periods of reduced blood flow to certain areas (those not needed for an emergency) results in substandard functioning of those areas—the blood flow is not adequate for good health. Commonly reported problems are gastro-intestinal issues, poor digestion, early aging, skin problems, etc. Constant preparation to fight or flee causes constant increased blood pressure and flow; thus, the heart and other critical organs/systems are overworked and wear out faster. Constant stress causes mental angst, worry, anxiety, sleep problems, and eating disorders. We become overwhelmed and our lives begins to break down.

Other things besides our thinking and emotions can cause stress-related health issues. Food and drink choices, job problems, interviews, exams, other people, chemicals in our environment, etc., also stress our bodies, but they are outside the scope of this study.

## Your Thoughts

10.2. Did God intentionally design us so that our own hormones would harm us?

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### Emotions and Thoughts That Harm or Heal

Beside real danger, our thoughts and emotions also release stress hormones. It is the negative emotions (anger, bitterness, envy, hatred, guilt, shame...) (Eph. 4:31), and the negative thinking (I'm stupid, everyone hates me, everyone treats me wrong...) that release stress hormones. The positive emotions (love, joy, peace, satisfaction...) (Gal. 5:22-23), and positive thinking (things are good, God loves me, I have a heavenly home...) do not cause harm; in fact, they tend to be healing. When we get our thinking and emotions in line with God's desire, then the harmful stress hormones are not released. This explains why God instructs us in Philippians 4:8 to think about positive things that are: true, honest, just, pure, good, virtuous, and praise worthy.

Even negative thinking about past failures or wrongs releases these hormones. Our mind does not distinguish a present painful situation from one that happened years ago. Just thinking about a previous deep emotional hurt can cause the body to respond as if that hurt were happening at that moment. The longer we let our mind dwell on old hurts and wounds, the more we develop a habit of negative thinking which quickly releases stress hormones. This habit of negative thinking is why a person often develops a disease months, or even years, after a severe life crisis (such as being raped, loss of a job, death of a relative or friend, divorce...).

"It's not stress that kills us,  
it is our reaction to it."

Hans Selye

The Lord Jesus Christ (while on earth) taught the need to express emotions in an honest manner, and the Apostle Paul deals extensively with harmful emotions and thoughts. In Ecclesiastes 3:4, the Lord makes it clear there is a time to cry, a time to laugh, a time to mourn.... In all ages there has been a need to handle our emotions correctly.

### Your Thoughts

10.3. It is critically important to grasp the concepts noted above. Which of these can cause the release of stress hormones:

- a) An actual, present danger.
- b) An imaginary danger.
- c) Memory of an event that was traumatic.
- d) Thoughts of an unpleasant time in your life that are long past but still cause you to get emotionally upset.

### Transformation's Prescription

It is always wise to avoid excessive stress and certainly to take action when you are overwhelmed by what is happening in your life. If you have several of the problems associated with stress (see above, "What Stress Can Do to You"), then follow the Lord's leading so you can reduce it. That means taking charge of this portion of your life and getting control of your thoughts and emotions. It also means not letting your schedule and the way you deal with problems control you. You can get off the roller-coaster! Here are some common things we all should follow.

**1. Positive Thoughts and Emotions.** Our emotions (how we feel about people and events), and our thoughts (the things we think), are the key factors related to stress. Negative emotions and negative thoughts create a huge release of stress hormones. Positive emotions and thoughts do not release stress hormones, just the opposite, they tend to be healing (as verified by the Word).

Stress occurs whether the danger is real or imaginary, the mind does not differentiate between the two--both are real in the mind. Many of the things we worry about or that occupy our minds are imaginary, but that makes no difference, stress hormones are released anyway. Similarly, our minds may be occupied with something that is true but negative (like being mistreated in some way); it does not matter if the negative thought is true or false, the stress reaction is the same. Thinking about being mistreated will not change the facts, it will only hurt a person in the long-run.

The good news is that positive emotions and thoughts do not release stress hormones. So instead of negative thinking you must take serious steps to think on the right things. Philippians 4:8 tells us to think about the things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. This was not written because it is "good Christian talk," but because God knows

how harmful negative thinking is, **"A merry heart does good, like medicine, But a broken spirit dries the bones"** (Prov. 17:22). In addition, **"Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones"** (Prov. 16:24). Thankfully, God's purpose in transformation will help us think properly. Remember, positive thoughts and emotions actually promote good health; they are God's medicine.

Contrarily, negative thoughts lead to negative emotions (anger, envy, hostility, despair, or fear). So, each of us has to develop a habit of changing our thoughts to something positive. The Bible teaches us to capture the bad thoughts and make them obedient to what Christ would expect, **"...bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"** (2 Cor.10:5b). That means we must not allow ourselves to think negatively for long, the consequences are too serious. The moment we find ourselves thinking negatively, and that includes thinking about even the true things that upset us, we have to get rid of that thought (capture it) and replace it with something positive.

### Your Thoughts

10.4. Our reaction to something that was said about us can be more harmful than what was actually said. "Fuming" over what was said (constantly thinking about it) creates a constantly stressed condition, i.e., the long-term stress situation. Such thinking captures the mind and creates harmful negative emotions (anger, bitterness, and revenge). Thus, our a reaction to an event is the thing that actually causes the long term health problems, not the actual event. Search your heart, do you have such reactions in your life?\_\_\_\_\_.

**2. Recognize Who Controls.** The good thing is you can tell Him your most inner problems and fears, those you never could admit to any other human, not even your closest friend. The Scripture says, **"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication** (to humbly ask), **with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God** (Phil. 4:6, parenthesis added). As you commit your problems to Him in prayer, it helps you because you can share your burdens with Him. He lifts the load of your problems off your back and assures you of His presence. You can rely upon the Lord to guide and direct you, but that does not mean you can sit back and do nothing; you must do what is instructed in the Word. Also, for some problems it is wise to seek professional help, asking for His direction in the whole matter.

It is a relief to know you can tell Him all your fears, because fear and anxiety (feeling of terrible uneasiness) cause harm. All people have some fears and worries, but they should not control your life (because your life is in His hands). You may not see the way out of your dilemma, but He certainly does. The Lord will provide in ways you do not understand or even know about. He gives you exactly what is needed, even though you may not ask for it. He may not change the circumstances or people in your life (that is what we want). Instead, He gives something beyond understanding, **"...and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"** (Phil. 4:7). Here is what is so amazing, the Lord provides inner peace which guards your heart and mind, regardless of what is going on in your life. This is an inexplicable peace--a peace that provides comfort and security in ways never dreamed possible. This is the peace which gives victory over circumstances, this is a peace which is real and exactly what is needed when suffering fear or anxiety.

**3. Treat your body well.** Experts agree that getting regular exercise helps people manage stress; it provides a way to use up the energy resulting from excess stress hormones. Exercise should be in moderation, excessive or compulsive exercise can contribute to stress. Eat a well balanced diet high in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. A diet of whole foods, not processed or fast foods (chips, cookies, candy, French fries, soda, donuts, pizza...), will help your body and mind have the right fuel to function at its best. It's easy when you're stressed-out to eat on the run and eat junk or fast food. However under stressful conditions, the body needs vitamins and minerals more than ever. Some people may turn to substance abuse as a way to ease tension, making the mistake of thinking alcohol or drugs temporarily lift the stress. They are addictive and eventually promote more stress.

**4. Relax, study, and meditate.** You can't completely eliminate stress from your life, but you can control how much it affects you. It is important to take time to have fun and relax. You will find it is relaxing to study and meditate upon (think about) the Bible (Psa. 63; I Tim 4:15). King David found that when he could not sleep because of worries that it was good to think about the Lord, **"When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. Because You have been my help..."** (Psa. 63:6-7a). Soothing music and being alone are very helpful in reducing stress. Turn off your electronic devices and be silent with the Lord.

### Your Thoughts

10.5. Someone said something very hurtful to you, what should you do?

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## Eaten Alive

The Scripture says, "**Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, Than a fatted calf with hatred**" (Prov. 15:17). In other words, it is better to eat a simple meal where there is love, than a banquet under severe emotional stress. Proverbs 17:1 further exemplifies this truth, "**Better is a dry morsel with quietness, Than a house full of feasting *with strife*.**" There is a consistent theme (a principle) in the Bible about negative emotions and how they have a detrimental effect on us, i.e., upon eating, indeed, on life in general. Simple meals in a peaceful environment (which calms the mind) are far better for our health than eating the best foods in a stressful environment. Recognizing this, it is important to quiet our minds (put aside the harmful emotions and thoughts) before we eat, so that our food can digest properly. If the situation does not allow for quieting the mind, it may be best to avoid eating (temporarily).

In the book, "*Deadly Emotions*," Dr. Colbert notes, "The perpetual release of the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol can sear the body in a way that is similar to acid searing metal."<sup>2</sup> Imagine acid searing or eating away solid metal; that is the picture we should have of negative emotions. They can "eat us up." The emotions that are most damaging include rage, anger, worry, frustration, fear, grief, and guilt. It becomes easier and easier to see why the Scripture is full of verses dealing with positive thoughts and emotions. A constant state of stress destroys our health, one of the ways it does so is by not allowing our bodies to properly digest what we eat.

### Your Thoughts

10.6. A big meal will sit "like a rock" in a person's stomach if he/she eats while very upset. Why? \_\_\_\_\_.

10.7. We often pray before eating, asking the Lord to bless the food to our health. However, our health is not just determined by the food we eat but also by our own minds. How can we quiet our minds before eating so that the food can be digested and assimilated properly in order to promote health? \_\_\_\_\_.

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<sup>1</sup>Colbert, Don, M.D.; *Deadly Emotions*; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN; 2003

<sup>2</sup>Colbert, Don, M.D.; *Deadly Emotions*; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN; 2003

**Please consider these responses to "Your Thoughts"**

10.2. He designed our bodies to follow His natural laws. If we break those laws we suffer the consequences. For example, if we drop a brick over our toes, God's natural law of gravity will cause it to fall on them. Stress hormones are designed to help us in times of trouble, but their misuse can harm us, whether we know about it or not the natural laws are in action. He provides teaching which prevents that misuse, resulting in Christ-like thoughts and emotions that help prevent stress related illness, Prov. 4:23, 16:24.

10.3. All of the cases shown release stress hormones. It is important to remember that c) and d) can be just as dangerous as the others, in fact, they can become long-term stressors that destroy health.

10.5. Take it to the Lord in prayer, calm down and then talk to the person, see if forgiveness is needed, bring your thoughts into captivity, do not let this control your life, get your mind on positive things, do not hang-on to it....

10.6. The body has directed its energies away from digestion in response to stress. Digestion cannot take place. Funny thing, no one has this problem because of great joy or peace.

10.7. Pray and ask for His help in clearing your mind of stressful emotions and thoughts. You will then have to be willing to put the thoughts aside and not let them have control, a stronghold, in your life. It may be good to not eat until your mind is quieted. Certainly reading the Word will quiet the mind.



## Lesson 11

### Thoughts and Emotions Control our Health

*"Bitterness only hurts one's self. If you hate, you will give them your heart and mind. Don't give those two things away."*

Nelson Mandela

*"...reasons do not produce bitterness. Attitudes do."*

Don Colbert

When the Israelites came out of Egypt there were two aspects to their national redemption, coming out (of Egypt) and going in (to the Promised land). That was not an easy process. As believers in Christ, we see our spiritual redemption also has two aspects, coming out of Adam and being placed into Christ (Rom. 5:12-19). This is a very easy thing for us, since it is all done by God. It has to be done completely by Him because we are powerless to do it on our own. Then the not-so-easy process of transformation begins in which we have to do something, and that something involves work, suffering, giving-up, hardship.... This lesson will consider some of the many things that must be addressed in our lives, through His inner working and grace, if we are to ever be a transformed person.

#### **Correct Thinking**

In many cases, we are our own worst enemy (similar to Pogo's words in Lesson 7; but now, "I have met the enemy and it is me."). Our negative thoughts, our wrong ideas of what is true, and our distorted views of life often cause us more problems (mentally and physically) than anything else. We all have to guard our minds about how we think because it is easy to get in the trap of thinking, "I can't do anything right, life is unfair, life should be easy but it is not, and people don't treat me right."

The truth is: life is not fair, it is not easy, and people will treat us wrong. We should accept this as a fact right from the start. Just look at biblical characters and you will see times of great sorrow and difficulty, especially for our Savior. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Tim. 3:12, **"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."** Suffering is something we are told will occur, and we should expect it. There is no reason to expect an easy life on earth; however, God has assured us He will get us through the hard times, provided a home for us in Heaven, and that the unfairness of this life will be rewarded in the next (2 Tim 2:12).

In our minds we have to learn to think positively. There are always good things in life, and these are the things we have to let control our thoughts. Instead of getting down on ourselves for a mistake, we should think, "I may have made a mistake this time, but I can do a lot of things very well." Instead of thinking, "No one loves me," we should remember the love of Christ and those who indeed do love us. People will treat us wrong, do not let your mind dwell on those events and people. So instead of, "Everyone treats me like dirt," think about those who do treat you well and how you can treat others correctly.

As we read and memorize Philippians 4:8, it becomes clear the thinking described there is intended to provide spiritual and mental health. **"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things."** Certainly this verse does not require all thoughts to be about the Bible (but very much so); they can be about other good, pure, honest, lovely things. Sometimes just thinking and planning how we can change our predicament, or how we can help others will get our minds off our problems. Most people need a hobby, activity, a good friend(s), or a church care/growth/support group to help fill their minds with thoughts and things other than their own problems. It is the positive thinking that will slowly rid our minds of negative thoughts, and all the doubts and despair that come with those thoughts.

Thankfully, we have support and do not walk through life alone. Always remember that God is with you and will walk with you through the trials, He is right there with you all the time. Three (of many) verses that are of great comfort and assurance are:

- Phil. 4:13, **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."** This does not mean you will be able to run 100 miles per hour. It means He will strengthen you to get through any problem or difficulty, in a way you could not imagine.
- Phil. 4:19, **"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."** He may not give you all you want, but all you need.
- Eph. 3:20, **"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us..."** This does not mean He will take away your problems in life, it means He will provide the grace to help you get through them as a victor in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14).

### Your Thoughts

11.1. Since we can't change past negative events by constantly thinking about them, what should we be doing? \_\_\_\_\_.

## Transforming the Attitudes that Upset Us

Our attitude is our way of thinking or feeling about events and people. In the Bible, Esther faced rejection just as we do. She was an orphan, living with relatives in a foreign land. That in itself would be enough to make a normal person sad or act out in poor behavior, but she did not. She was selected to be involved in the king's contest to find a queen; she had no choice about it. Instead of bitterness and whining, she exhibited an attitude of faith over fear of rejection or what may happen in the future. She was ultimately chosen as queen and obtained grace and favor from the king because she was not demanding and had a good attitude (Est. 2:17). One day, in order to save her people from death, she dared approach the king unannounced. God used her daring, in fact, her whole life, in ways she had no idea existed. She always chose to be content and to not get upset over her plight. Because of her attitude of dependence upon God, she saved her people (Jews) from sure death.

*"The longer I live the more convinced I become that life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we respond to it. ...the single most significant decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my choice of attitude. It is more important than my past, my education, my bankroll, my successes or failures, fame or pain, what other people think of me or say about me, my circumstances, or my position. Attitude keeps me going or cripples my progress.... When my attitudes are right, there's no barrier too high, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme, no challenge too great for me."  
(Charles Swindoll in, "Strengthening Your Grip")*

From Esther's life we learn that our attitudes affect how we behave (good attitudes turn to good behavior, and vice versa). If someone else's anger, lies, rage, infidelity, etc., directly impact you then you may have cause to be stressed. However, the general case is that no one makes us upset (negative emotions). Instead, getting upset is our own reaction to a situation and our own choice (we cannot blame others). You may have been through some hard times, heartbreaking rejection, suffered unspeakable pain, or may have been treated like dirt. However, no person and no event can take away who you are on the inside, unless you allow that to happen. Events and people cannot make you respond in a negative way; you have the choice of how to respond. It is your choice how to respond to life's trials; you respond as you determine in your heart and mind (you cannot blame someone else by saying they made you respond that way).

### Your Thoughts

11.2. A person's attitude is part of his/her character (Lesson 5). Attitude is an area close to our core and is a target area of the Holy Spirit. It impacts nearly every aspect of life. The hope (confident expectation) we have as believers should cause us to have a good attitude, why? \_\_\_\_\_.

God wants us to have constructive and positive attitudes, with the desire to move forward in life. That means getting hurtful events behind us (getting them out of our minds), "**...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead**" (Phil 3:13b). This means we cannot dwell on the past and cannot let past hurts control our present lives (even if those past events are true). Our attitudes have to reflect the fact that God is gracious and has something great in store for us in the future. The believer is Christ's son/daughter and should have full confidence in Him--reaching forward in faith to what He has in store (Eph. 3:20). As you reach forward, be confident that no one or no thing can take away your salvation.

### Your Thoughts

11.3. In Phil. 3:13b (above), Paul is saying you cannot run a race looking backward. Similarly, you cannot live your life by looking back at the past. You can't change the past. Constantly looking back will only create negative emotions which will destroy your health and relationships. What does it mean to reach, "forward to those things which are ahead"? \_\_\_\_\_.

### Don't Give Your Health Away

Nelson Mandela learned that it is a terrible mistake to give your health away. How can you possibly do that? Well, by bitterness and hate you can give your physical and emotional health away. The person who is the target of your negative emotions feels nothing, but you are destroyed from within by your own thoughts and emotions. By negative thoughts and emotions you give your own life away by choosing a path that leads to poor health and misery. Refuse to give away your health, whether emotional or physical. Instead, chose to follow God's will and see how He will lead you into realms unknown.

Clearly, God's desire for each of us is to walk as His dear child. He makes it very clear what thought patterns, attitudes, and emotions lead to good health. "**Let all bitterness, wrath,**

**anger, clamor (loud quarreling), and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you"** (Eph. 4:31-32, parenthesis added).

### **True Desires**

Desires are the things you want in life. The correct, or true, desires can only come from one source. In order to have the desires the Lord wants, the Christian must allow God to transform his/her mind (Rom. 12:2). The good news is, He wants to do this so that you have the will (determination) and desires that conform to His plans. As He changes what your desires are in life, you will be changed on the inside in a meaningful way. Wrong attitudes, negative thoughts, harmful emotions, and misguided desires will be changed. He will work in your heart and mind to create the true desires that come from God. **"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure"** (Phil. 2:13). You will be changed for the better, since He works for your benefit and for His good pleasure. This is what working out your own salvation is about in Philipians 2:12, i.e., making the salvation you already have work in real life, as God intends.

Psalms 37:4 reads, **"Delight yourself also in the LORD, And he shall give you the desires of your heart."** This verse is referring to the time when the Lord establishes His earthly Kingdom, as evidenced by verses nine through fifteen of the same chapter. This is a specific promise to Israel. Many today use this verse to teach a prosperity gospel related to receiving all sorts of earthly things now. Today we have inherited the spiritual blessing promised to Israel, **"...For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things..."** (Rom. 15:27), but not all the earthly things we may desire. Thus, partaking of Israel's spiritual things means the believer today already has the spiritual blessings that Israel waits to receive and has hoped for over thousands of years. Many of those spiritual blessing are found in Ephesians chapters 1 and 2. A true spiritual blessing is that He changes our minds, wills, and desires so they conform with His. This is far better than having all the earthly things we desire guided by our non-transformed minds, because those minds would inexorably lead us into decadence and make God (in our minds) a "gimme" god. It is His transformation of us that produces lasting joy and confidence in the future. Once we have true, God-given desires it is easy to do the Lord's pleasure because those desires are now part of who we have become in Christ. A transformed person has the desires of God within, this creates a mind and life that is in tune with God.

### Your Thoughts

11.4. Imagine if we got everything our hearts' desired. At first it sounds rather exciting, but as we get serious about this we realize that without a transformed mind we would become nothing but self-seeking, self-absorbed, selfish people (and relegate God to our personal Santa Clause). Once the Lord transforms our minds, then we desire what He desires, and this gets our minds off of pleasing ourselves. Consider how transformation creates the "new man" spoken of in Col. 3:8-10. \_\_\_\_\_.

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### Stuffing Emotions

This study has noted that our emotions are far from our core. However they are not to be ignored, just as we cannot ignore our physical needs. Every part of who we are works together with all other parts to make one human being. Emotions are a concern of the Lord since He clearly says He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, Heb. 4:15. While Jesus Christ was on this earth, He said that trying to deny our true emotions was like putting new wine into old bottles. What He is saying is that if we deny our emotions, we would eventually break (have illness); just as old bottles (actually old, brittle, wine-skins) would burst due to the pressure of fermentation (Mark 2:22). Our Lord is not only concerned about our eternal salvation and transformation, but also for our health while on this earth. Emotions can take control of our lives and take us on a wild and crazy ride. We should not deny our emotions (stuff them away and pretend they do not exist) because that would break us, nor can we let them take control and run our lives without restraint.

It has been said, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." In the short-term, it is good not to let the words of someone get us so upset we get angry or break-down in tears. However in the long-term, if we constantly stuff our emotions (hold them in or deny them), we will also break. Insulting words do hurt us, so we have to make sure we do not let them control us at the time of the event, or later in life, by stuffing them away as if they did not exist. Similarly, we cannot pretend something bad has not happened when indeed it has (like the death of a relative). If we do, we are not dealing honestly with our emotions but denying them by stuffing them away in the back of our minds. What happens when we stuff our emotions of frustration, rejection, and inner pain? We set ourselves up for illness, either mental or physical.

### Your Thoughts

11.5. Stuffed emotions are those hurtful emotions we do not want to consciously recognize and have driven deep inside ourselves, in an attempt to deny or to bury them. We often think we have to do this in order to survive. Sometimes we can get away with this when we are younger, but those emotions never go away and come back to haunt us later in life, unless dealt with by the Holy Spirit. Those emotions become scars upon our soul. Can you think of some you have tried to deny, or can you share an example(s) of how they come back later in someone's life? \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

By stuffing negative emotions, our minds deep inside mistakenly believe we are in constant real danger or under harmful attack, stress hormones are released. The less we express them or deal with them, the more we experience inner turmoil. We may seem serene on the outside, but on the inside we are in turmoil. Our hormones are raging, but there is no real danger, and this eventually catches up with us, emotionally and physically. Our minds get mixed up from unconscious signals of distress from within, and from conscious efforts to say all is well. We experience inner angst, guilt, resentment, rage, and fear. This is why God's desire is to transform our minds and make them new (for example, as He deals with guilt, anger, loss, and fear that will ultimately change our emotional outlook). He wants to reach deep inside us, where only He can tread, and take those emotional patterns and teach us how to deal with them in a healthy way.

Stuffed emotions are part of the mental baggage (hidden in the deep recesses of our minds) which holds us down and keeps our minds captive. We can be held captive to those emotion's control or to the past they represent. The baggage of those emotions is a tremendous weight on our backs and we must get rid of it. Mental baggage is dangerous for our health but is rarely, if ever, a cogent part of biblical discussions. These emotions are within the realm of God's transforming power, and it is essential for us all to go through the process discussed in Lesson 7. When this baggage is addressed by the Holy Spirit, our negative past no longer has control of our present lives. Our marriages and relations with others are greatly enhanced because we now can see life from a clean and unhindered perspective. Forgetting the past does not mean we will not remember it at all, but it means the past will not control or dominate the present. When this occurs we may remember the past, but the former, deeply hidden, emotional turmoil is gone. We become free of the past's control with all its pain, regret, sense of loss, and sorrow. This is Christ redeeming our present.



Remember this quote in Lesson 10 by Hans Selye, *"Every stress leaves an indelible scar, and the organism pays for its survival after a stressful situation by becoming a little older."* Dr. Selye (1907-1982), was of Austrian-Hungarian roots and "wrote the book" on the effects of stress on living organisms. He pioneered our understanding of what stress does to the human organism and guided modern thinking in this regard (thinking always present in the Bible). The purpose of transformation is to remove the scars he mentions and to restore full function of the mind.

We were created in God's image (Greek word from which we get *icon*). In Lesson 5, Figure 5.2., "image" would go in the area of character and spirit. The words image and character are very interrelated in our Bible translations, and they teach we bear more than a resemblance to God (a shadow is a resemblance). We were created in His image, as exact, visible representatives of God (1 Cor. 11:7)--much like a coin or wax seal corresponds exactly to the original die or ring that made it. The Greek word for character means to cut into, as a signet ring cuts into or impresses the wax and makes a seal. The seal bears the impression which is an exact image of the ring, they correspond exactly. We originally corresponded exactly to God's image, and our fallen state has not entirely effaced the original image we had, but it sure desecrated it. Salvation, transformation, and glorification will restore that original state, indeed go even further. As pertains to our topic, the scars of our lives (produced by stress, emotions, sin, thoughts, and who knows what else) can be erased so that we can function (exactly or close thereto) as originally designed.

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**Please consider these responses to Your Thoughts**

11.1. Concentrate on the future by planning ahead, study the Word and pray, develop a hobby, engage in church or volunteer activities, learn to forgive, think on positive things, learn and believe the verses just before this question. Scientists have found that proper thinking promotes good electrical patterns in our brains.

11.2. Because our attitudes reflect the confidence we have in the future, the joy in knowing where we will spend eternity, and the peace we have with God.

11.3. To look forward to the future because Christ is leading you. To strive to advance, to reach forward with confidence, and to not be held back by the past.



## Lesson 12

# Toxic Thoughts and Emotions

## \*Prescriptions for Health\*

*"At Parbar westward, four at the causeway,  
and two at Parbar."*

1 Chronicles 26:18, KJV

Toxic thoughts and emotions are those which destroy us physically and mentally through the constant release of stress hormones; but the "fun" does not stop there, they also destroy our relationships with other people and adversely affect our intimacy with God. Several such thoughts and emotions will be considered in this lesson, but that will be enough to draw attention to the importance the Word places on addressing such matters. It may seem this study has spent a lot of time on the topics of negativity, our thought patterns, out of control emotions, memories, etc., and indeed it has. These topics have been considered rather extensively for good reasons, e.g., it is hard for us to truly understand and be cognizant of these matters without repetition and extensive coverage.

The verse quoted above (1 Chr. 26:18) makes absolutely no sense, so why was it used? This verse is a classic example of how a verse from the Bible, in isolation, can seem meaningless. However, when this verse is read in its context, it does begin to make sense. The verse is saying the Israelites were establishing porters (gatekeepers) in certain areas of the outer court of the Temple. Parbar is a reference to a gate or location, and various gatekeepers (or porters) were being assigned for that location and for the adjoining causeway (roadway). In context, the verse makes sense. As with this verse, a life lived outside the context of Christ makes no sense. When our lives are seen in the context of how they were intended to be lived by God, they do make sense, even if there are hardships. Going even further, our thoughts and emotions are much like this verse, that is, if they are allowed to run amuck and out of control, they are out of God's intended context for our lives. A life with such thoughts and emotions will seem meaningless. Our lives need context to make sense, and that context is found in the Bible. In context, our lives are to be structured around an intimate relationship with the Almighty and nurtured through a renewed mind (which "adjusts" those errant thoughts and emotions).

### **Anger and Hostility**

The first example of negative thoughts and emotions (and God's instructions concerning them) will be about anger and hostility. Ephesians 4:26 reads, " **'Be angry, and do not sin':**

**do not let the sun go down on your wrath."** It may be that some anger is not a sin in itself, but if we lose control or commit another wrong as a result, then it is sin. As you know, being slow to anger is called patience, gentleness, and longsuffering in the Bible (1 Tim. 3:3; Eph. 4:31; Gal. 5:22), and that is what we are called to be. Being slow to anger is something good that is generated within us as we allow the Spirit to work in our lives. Being slow to anger is what the Lord expects because it prevents committing a sin by saying something wrong or striking back. The phrase, "Be angry, and do not sin," implies that if you do get angry, then do not commit a sin by doing something wrong as a result.

If we practice being slow to anger and pray about situations before we do anything, then we can often walk away in calmness. This is responding with a soft word that turns others from their anger, **"A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger"** (Proverbs 15:1). When anger has gotten out of control, rage and hostility are the resulting emotions, and they they are clearly sins.

### Your Thoughts

12.1. Can you share a time when you or someone responded in a soft word and how that totally defused the explosion about to take place? \_\_\_\_\_.

There is some instruction in the intended humor of this oxymoron, "Lord give me patience and give it to me now." It seems, and most honest Christians can attest to this, that prayer alone will not yield a godly virtue, for example, patience. Prayer coupled with a willing mind and obedience to His word will. Since patience is a fruit of the Spirit, we have to follow the Scriptural guidelines on working with the Spirit so that this fruit can grow within us. Accordingly, the very instance we feel impatience occurring we must cut it off, "make no provision for the flesh," and replace it with proper behavior. This may require some personal suffering, recall Romans 5:3b-4, **"...we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance (patience); and perseverance, character; and character, hope"** (parentheses added). Thus we know that tribulation (suffering) actually produces the ability to patiently endurance the trials of life and this leads to character building which creates hope. So when we seek patience, we are likely to experience suffering and gain character building and hope in the process.

Transformation is the process of embarking on a journey with the Holy Spirit, trekking into unexplored secret avenues of our lives, going down paths we never knew existed, and accomplishing the impossible. We learn it is a journey based upon obedience, trust, and reliance upon Him.

Even thinking about what gets us angry causes us harm. If we allow our minds to think about what upsets us, the whole negative thought cycle occurs. Thus, God's remedy is for us "to get over it" and to put it away, **"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice"** (Ephesians 4:31). That is why Ephesians 4:26 says, **"...do not let the sun go down on your wrath,"** which means we are to quickly let go of our anger. This is reconfirmed in Philippians 3:13, which says, **"... forgetting those things which are behind."** We are instructed to forget the things of the past and put them behind us; this is His remedy to protect us from harm and to help us move ahead in life. Putting away our "hurts" means we can express our hurts, but we should then move ahead and not constantly think about them or the events that caused them. As often said in this study, too many Christians do not realize how harmful negative thoughts are; they destroy health and relationships.

If we are to forget the past and move ahead in our lives, someone may ask, "You mean God will take away the memory of the bad event?" No, the memory will remain, but if we do things God's way the memory will fade to the point that the pain and sorrow are taken away. So while it will always be a memory, the negative event will not hurt us as before. That former memory will no longer control us in the present. We can be free of it and say, "I once was bound by my past but now I am free." We will be able to recall the event without breaking down in tears or having it control our present life.

### Your Thoughts

12.2. Suppose a Christian, came to you and said, "I am not speaking to you because I am still angry about what he/she said two years ago." What advice would you give this person? \_\_\_\_\_.

### Resentment and Bitterness

Resentment (strong displeasure) and bitterness (severe dislike) are the results of wrath (anger). Anger occurs initially, and then as it is entertained in the mind it turns to resentment and bitterness. So, we all have to heed the Word because it tells us not to be angry for long, because bitterness will result. Bitterness will surely lead to hostility and trouble, as sure as water runs downhill. **"Pursue peace with all people ... lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled"** (Heb. 12:14-15).

Bitterness will certainly lead to increasingly harmful thoughts and emotions (harmful to ourselves and others), and we will become defiled (bad reputation). Thus if we allow anger

to "fester" in our minds, we will enter a downward spiral. The resulting resentment and bitterness often lead to hostility and rage. Once emotions reach the stage of hostility and rage, other people may be harmed by your out-of-control thought patterns. When hostility comes into our minds and we entertain it (do not get rid of it immediately), that is the point when we lose total control. Then it is easy to get in trouble with the law, relationships are destroyed, jobs are lost, lives are ruined, marriages fail....

### **Envy and Jealousy**

Envy is the emotion that desires to have the things or abilities of another ("I wish I had her clothes"). Jealousy is the resentment of another because of some suspicion of them ("I'm afraid he will take away my girlfriend"). Envy and jealousy are much alike and very subtle, tending to cloud most everything a person thinks. They rob a person of joy because they take control of the mind, poisoning a person's thoughts. They often lead to hostility and rage, just like bitterness. Envy makes a person self-centered and self-seeking, that is, always thinking of one's self or going to extreme lengths to get what is wanted. Jealousy makes us afraid someone will take something or get something we have or want, resulting in fear. Envy and jealousy can be life-changing sins. **"For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there"** (James 3:16). So, these emotions lead to confusion of right and wrong and to evil things that have a toxic effect upon any person.

Some additional thoughts the Bible has on envy are:

- 1) **"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are ... envy..."** (Gal. 5:19-21). The very next sin listed in this passage is murder, do you suppose there is a connection between the two?
- 2) **"A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones"** (Prov. 14:30).
- 3) **"For wrath kills a foolish man, And envy slays a simple one"** (Job 5:2).
- 4) **"...love does not envy..."** (1 Cor. 13:4).

#### **Your Thoughts**

12.3. If you allow yourself to envy (or be jealous of) another person, it tends to take control of your life. Every thought is tainted by it. It often causes a person to desire harm to another person. James 3:16 is quoted above, now read James 3:17-18 and discuss the wisdom from God. \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

## Guilt and Shame

Adam and Eve felt great guilt in the Garden of Eden after they disobeyed God. When God came, they tried to hide. That is what guilt and shame do, they make us feel self-conscious and embarrassed. Guilt is the painful feeling we get from something we did that we knew was wrong. Shame can result from consciousness of our own improper actions or from another person doing something to us that is recognized as wrong—a crime or a sin. Guilt and shame make people feel unworthy of approval and of no value.

Very often the guilt and shame we suffer is not due to our own actions. Sexual and physical abuse cause young people to grow up with shame. Learning disabilities (attention deficit disorder, dyslexia, etc.) can cause people to be termed as stupid, slow, or dumb. These things are humiliating and cause long-term pain and problems; words do hurt. In James 3:8 the Bible makes it clear our words are very powerful and can start wars and ruin lives.

Shame tends to create feelings of deep sadness and worthlessness. Guilt produces a certain amount of anger because we feel trapped or caught in our own actions. In both cases, feelings of being worthless, hopeless, and helpless may result. These are the very things that can lead to depression and suicide. Some Christians suffer from depression due to either guilt and/or shame; they suffer from feelings of terrible gloom, even when things appear just fine. When a person feels worthless, hopeless, and helpless they may not even want to live.

*"A broken heart never mended by the true Healer handicaps us terribly when we're challenged to trust." <sup>1</sup>*

Beth Moore

The good news for those suffering from guilt and shame is this: Christ died on the Cross to remove the stain of guilt and shame. The moment we place our faith in Christ we are accepted by Him and made a new creation in Him (Eph. 1:6; 2 Cor. 5:17). All our sins and guilt are immediately forgiven, forever. Our shame is replaced with the glory of being His son/daughter, and by being a new creation in Christ. Getting to the personal level, as a believer in Christ:

- **You are not worthless.** You are of great value to Him, and He loves you no matter how you feel. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit and a temple is not worthless (1 Cor. 6:19). The fact that He has a plan and purpose for your life shows He places great value in you (Phil. 2:13; Rom. 8:28).

- **You are not hopeless.** You have hope (assurance) right now (Romans 5:5, 15:13) and in the future. God has assured you that you belong to Him, you have a home in Heaven, and He will never take away your salvation (Rom. 8:38-39). You have the blessed hope of the Lord coming (Rapture) to take you to heaven (Titus 2:13).
- **You are no longer helpless.** He gives the Holy Spirit so you can seek help at any time (Romans 8:26). The Lord gives you His power (Eph. 3:20) and He makes you able to endure all of life's trials and sufferings (2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 4:13).

### Your Thoughts

12.4. When we trust in Christ our guilt is forgiven and our shame is relieved. However, in a practical sense they may linger in our minds. How do we sometimes try to hide our guilt and shame? \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

### Fear and Anxiety

Everyone knows what it means to have fear. Some fears are real (a home intruder) and some are phantom (a frightening shadow that is really only a tree branch). Phantom fears are not rooted in reality, but the body's response to any fear is the same, the extreme stress response. However in most cases of fear, the stress response is short-term and will shut down as soon as the situation changes.

There are some forms of fear that do not let the stress response shut down. Anxiety is one such form of fear. It may be caused by excessive worry, but there are many other causes. There can be anxiety over germs, money, school, job, family problems, the future, etc. Phil. 4:6-7 says, **"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made know to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."** Those with fear or anxiety have often read and prayed this verse hundreds of times, and yet they suffer. To be anxious for nothing means, in today's terms, "not to worry about anything." Instead, we are to pray about all things and then trust God to give us peace. Most of the time we ask God to change our circumstances or other people, but He gives us something else--peace of mind. Guess what? This is the very thing the person with anxiety needs the most. He will give us peace over our fears and will keep our hearts and minds; this is more than we could even imagine. Please remember there are serious anxiety disorders, and what you have learned can be very helpful, but it certainly is proper to also seek mental health professionals.

## Your Thoughts

12.5. Consider something in the past that hurt you deeply, but now you can think about it and not feel the pain, why is that? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Help for Those Undergoing Transformation

### The Power of Forgiveness

Forgiving someone is a choice. It is a choice that will help tremendously with our health, mental and physical. If we learn to forgive, we will be following Christ, and it will create better relationships with others; important keys to a rewarding life. Forgiving is a very unnatural act, it goes against our natural way of thinking. In fact, it generally means letting someone “off the hook,” even though they do not deserve it. Forgiveness means we have to give up our right to be angry, and this comes after the other person has transgressed us. This all seems at first to be too much. It means we cannot get even; worse still, we cannot punish them in some way. We reason that the Lord knows they are guilty and deserve to be punished. That is what is so unnatural about it, we think people should have to correct their errors or beg for forgiveness. That rarely happens. It is natural to forgive someone if they ask or are sorry, but the Lord wants us to forgive the offender even if they do not ask, even when they do not deserve it. He expects us to act like He did; He died for us when we did not care, before we wanted His forgiveness (Rom. 5:8).

It does matter if someone offends you or sins against you. However, each of us has to make a choice to forgive someone that hurt us. If what they did was a crime, like sexually abuse you or steal from you, then they still have to pay the civil penalty for their sins, and you should cooperate with the civil authorities to accomplish that. It is on the personal basis that you have to forgive that person; it is generally very hard to do. If seeing them again or being around them causes further attempts by them to harm you, then you should consider avoiding the offender, but you still should forgive them.

Forgiving someone is not a sign of weakness but a sign of your spiritual strength. It takes courage to forgive, to let go of your anger, to give up your right for pay-back. Only a strong person is capable of forgiving. Medical studies have shown that forgiveness does reduce stress, helps prevent heart disease, and reduces depression. The only person who gets hurt if you do not forgive others is you. Forgiveness is something that benefits you. The offender often does not care; their health is not harmed, yours is.



There is a major biblical issue here. In previous ages/dispensations (like when Jesus was on the earth) the directions were that a person had to forgive others in order to be forgiven by God (Matt 6:14-15). That is not true today. In our day, the Age of Grace, things are turned around. We are told to forgive others because we have already been forgiven by God; thus, we do it because we are following His directions to us for godly living, not in order to be forgiven by Him. Ephesians 4:32 gives us the directions for today, “...**forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**” We do it out of love for Him, not because we have to forgive others in order to have our sins forgiven by God.

Most often the most difficult person to forgive is yourself. Remember, the moment you believed in Christ, all your sins were forgiven. There is no sin you have committed, or will commit in the future, that He did not know about when He saved you. He knew of all those sins and saved you anyway--all your sins are forgiven in Christ. If we keep criticizing ourselves, finding fault with ourselves, and letting the sins of our past upset us, then we are not recognizing the forgiveness of God. If God has forgiven you, then get the past behind you, forgive yourself, and move ahead in life.

You can't win a race looking backward, nor can you accomplish what God wants by looking at your past failures. God forgave you, now forgive yourself. He knows you better than you know yourself, so don't think you have to punish yourself for your sin. Self-loathing and "beating one's self up" for sin is contrary to the Word of God, we must stop it. This does not mean you should continue sinning with no conscience of the need to resist sin; instead, acknowledge/confess your sin to the Lord and seek ways to avoid it in the future (that is what transformation is about). A Christian does not have to continually ask for forgiveness, that is done!

### Your Thoughts

12.6. If we forgive someone will that make us friends? \_\_\_\_\_.

### Love--the Prescription for Health

The most harmful negative emotion is hate (a mixture of anger, bitterness, and resentment). Hatred that exists for a long time is a sure-fire recipe for disaster. God's prescription for good health is just the opposite, love. Love is a mixture of many positive things, see I Cor. 13:4-8. Lesson 3 discusses love and how it is: slow to anger, kind, helpful, not jealous, not proud or boastful, able to put others first, able to praise others, respectful, considerate, courteous, slow to find fault, does not keep track of other's wrongs, and is quick to believe the best.



All these components of love create positive emotions and thoughts that lead to a better relationship with the Lord and other people. It has the added benefit of promoting better mental and physical health. As we show this sort of love, we will be loved by others and a blessing to them. If you think you cannot love like this or forgive, that is an honest start. The truth is, no one can without His guidance. Pray and let Him know how you feel, your doubts, and your problems; ask Him to guide you each day. Soon love and forgiveness will become an everyday part of your life, a very God pleasing part.

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<sup>1</sup>Moore, Beth; *"Breaking Free,"* Updated Edition; LifeWay Press; Nashville, TN; 2009; pg. 34.

### **Please consider these responses to Your Thoughts**

12.2. This person has not let go of anger and has sinned by acting in this manner. This person will have to forgive, put this negative event behind him/her, and not think about it all the time. Then he/she will be able to talk to the other person without emotional release, and life will be much better. If the other person continues to "abuse " this person verbally, then maybe that person will have to be avoided, even though they are forgiven.

12.4. What we have positionally in Christ is not always our practical experience; thus we may be forgiven but we still have guilt and shame in our minds. This may cause us to: seek seclusion, clam-up, become over involved in something to "prove" we are a good person, not pray because we are afraid to talk to God, feel inferior, over-compensate by looking down on others or acting superior, try to cover our shame with drugs or alcohol...

12.5. The Lord heals our pain if we do not pick our emotional scabs, i.e., if we let them heal, put them behind us, and move on in life.

12.6. Not necessarily, forgiveness is asked by God and profits us in many ways; but forgiveness can be carried out by just one person. It takes two to reconcile (to restore a relationship). Christ's death made reconciliation possible with God, but we must believe in Him in order to be reconciled to God (the two-person involvement required for reconciliation), 2 Cor. 5:18-21.

## Lesson 13

### Lasting Building Blocks

*"I have noticed even people who claim everything is predestined, and that we can do nothing to change it, look before they cross the road."*

Stephen Hawking

*"The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ, Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line, Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it."*

Omar Khayyam, 1859

#### Review

The first step in God's plan to make us whole is our Salvation. Salvation provides the very deepest spiritual needs a person has; these needs are referred to as spiritual blessings in Ephesians 1:4-2:6. Although we get these blessings the moment of salvation, it takes the life-long work of the Holy Spirit to help us understand and appreciate them. These blessings help erase our insecurities, alleviate our feelings of worthlessness, and quell our fears of hopelessness by replacing them with the comfort and assurance of Christ.

The next step in making us whole (sound-minded) is our transformation (spiritual maturation included). A leopard cannot change its spots; on the contrary, a Christian must. We have divine empowerment to change the spots (core issues) of our lives. To say, "I cannot help who I am," is to deny the power of God. Christians have the Holy Spirit within them, so the issue is not who we are, but who He is. If a person insists they can't change, then they are not cooperating with the transforming power of the Lord. After all, He is the one that expects transformation, and Who will do it if a person cooperates. In all stages of our lives, no matter what our ages, the Lord has work to do; the issue is, are we willing to yield and cooperate. It has been said there are two sides to every person, one minute sweet and lovely to one person and a minute later explosive in rage to another; this does not have to be the case for the believer who can have a life of constancy and inner peace.

Transformation is accomplished through renewal of the mind, and as He renews our minds, the fruit of the Holy Spirit is produced in our lives—slowly but surely replacing the attitudes and character traits belonging to the old nature. Then when we are squeezed by life's trials, we display the love, joy, peace, and longsuffering indicative of Christ in us. A common hymn

refers to us as worms before our salvation; we may have been worms at that time, but His ministry is changing us worms into beautiful creatures of great worth.

The quote above by Stephen Hawking (by all accounts a brilliant man, but one who does not believe in Jesus Christ), is not used here to deride anyone's belief in predestination. The easy answer to what Hawking said is that God predestined each person to look both ways, or to believe that God predestined us to have common sense in such matters. The quote is used here to make the point that if you believe in predestination, then you must understand that God has predestined a way for you to be transformed; whether or not you will be transformed is your choice. It is interesting because the same holds true if you believe in free will, i.e., you must use your own free will to allow the Spirit to work in your life. So whatever you believe concerning predestination and free-will, the point is clear: God does not want us to think He has predetermined the soul's make-up, and that it cannot be changed; indeed, He is the one desiring that it be changed.

The quote above by Omar *Khayyam* means, whatever you do in your life is your own responsibility and cannot be changed. The past cannot be amended and thinking about it changes nothing, except to hold us captive and destroy our health.

### **Judgment Seat of Christ**

What is really important in this life can be discerned from the teachings of the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSC). In that teaching we get the perspective of the One who knows what is most valuable and important in eternal matters. The JSC has been misrepresented in many teachings, so some clarification is needed before we can get to what is important in this life and how that relates to our topic of transformation.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is often discussed and it is imperative that we grasp the basics of this coming event. The expression "Judgment Seat of Christ" is found only in Paul's epistles (Rom. 14:10 and 2 Cor. 5:10). Since Paul is the only Apostle who teaches this judgment, that is a clue that it relates specifically to the Age of Grace. In fact, it applies only to the believers in this Age. The unbelievers of this Age and those (saved and unsaved) from past and future ages are not included in this Judgment. Thus, there are several other judgments in the Bible which are yet future. All these other judgments can get a bit confusing, but when we "rightly divide the Word of truth" (interpret it correctly), it all starts making more sense; and it certainly is logical. We should not expect all the necessary judgments to be a simple process since God will judge everyone, saved and unsaved, from Adam to the last person alive (thousands of years of humanity and billions of people).

## What It Is

The Judgment Seat of Christ is the first judgment of the future and involves only believers of this Age, the members of the body of Christ. Its function is to reward those believers. The term "Judgment Seat" is a translation, not the usual word for judgment (*krisis*) in the Bible, but comes from the Greek word *Bema*. Thus, it is sometimes referred to as the Bema Seat. In Acts 7:5 *Bema* is translated, "to set his foot on," meaning a step or the space a foot covers. It became to mean a raised platform, reached by steps, as a place used by Roman officials for judgment. It was also a sort of throne (Acts 12:21).

Its purpose is found in 2 Cor. 5:10, **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"** (also see Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:9-17). The phrase, **"the things *done* in the body,"** is generally understood to be our lives on earth and seems to specifically refer to what we have done in the Body of Christ, i.e., the body of believers. The good things we have done in the Body will receive rewards which include: a crown (of righteousness, honor, life, and rejoicing); reigning with Him, being glorified together, etc. What all is included in these rewards can only be speculated, but surely the Lord knows what is best, most esteemed, and of lasting value to each of us. This is a blessed event and one to which each believer can look forward. The real stickler in this verse is that some of what we do appears to be good and some appears to be bad, does that mean God will punish us for those bad things?

Each person at the JSC has had all their sins forever forgiven. Paul made it clear that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ; and Christ stated that those who believe in Him would never come into judgment (*krisis*). Charles Baker explains this beautifully, *"The plain teaching of Scripture is that the penal judgment for sin will never fall upon the believer, for the simple reason that it has already fallen in all of its completeness upon the believer's substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer will never be brought into judgment, such as the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 21:11-15, where the penalty of sin is meted out upon unbelievers, and where the consequences of the judgment will be eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. The whole purpose of the death of Christ, as far as the believer is concerned, was to deliver him from such judgment."*<sup>1</sup>

Some wonder if the Lord is bringing up our sins at this judgment, not for punishment, but perhaps in reference to a loss of reward. As we dig deeper into this issue the correct understanding becomes clearer, but for now we should envision the JSC with each person standing/kneeling there robed in Christ's righteousness. We are completely forgiven of all sins and the idea of being judged and punished for those sins (committed at any time in our lives) cannot be the issue. We will see that the mention of "bad" things of our lives is not a reference to Christ taking away a reward He has already given (or was planning to give), or

of us not gaining all the rewards possible because of sin in our lives. The biblical text, and the teachings of the Word for our Age, indicate the reference in 2 Corinthians 5:10 to bad things we have done does not seem to be a reference to sinful acts (discussed below in "What is Judged").

### **When It Is**

It is the position of this study guide that the JSC occurs immediately after the Rapture of the Church and that it takes place in Heaven. The Rapture is the event that ends the Age of Grace; it is the event that causes all believers of this Age (whether dead or alive) to be taken to Heaven. This is when we get our glorified bodies. This event can occur at any time, there are no signs, events, or prophecies that have to be completed before it occurs (1 Cor. 15:50-53; 1 Thes. 4:13-18; 2 Thes. 2:7). In 2 Thessalonians 2:7, it is the Body of Christ (we believers) which is the "restrainer" and which prevents prophetic events from occurring; we have to be taken out of the way (raptured) so that the lawless one (Antichrist) can be revealed. We are the ones that prevent the biblical prophetic clock from restarting, after its long stoppage in our Age.

In order to make sure we are all on the same page, a quick reminder of future events is needed. The Rapture is yet future and takes every believer in the Age of Grace from the earth to Heaven. The next prophetic events take place on the earth (a possible exception is the Great White Throne Judgment); thus, we are not involved in them because we will be in Heaven. The order of coming events is: first the Rapture and JSC, then the seven year Tribulation, then a period of unknown length which ends in the terrible Day of the Lord and the Second coming of Christ, then the 1000 year Kingdom on the earth, and finally the Great White Throne Judgment. The JSC occurs in Heaven right after the Rapture, which means it occurs before (or at the very start) of the Tribulation period.

The JSC is not to be confused with the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15) which will occur after the 1000-year, earthly, Kingdom reign of Christ. That Judgment is to determine who is and who is not saved. Without getting too sidetracked here on other judgments, let it suffice to say the JSC is not to determine if a person is saved--that issue is settled by the mere fact the person is there (the Rapture only takes the believers). However, the question remains as to what this judgment is all about.

### **What Is Judged**

The reference to "good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10) certainly seems to imply we will be held accountable in some manner for our sins; that is, our sins are forgiven but we have to pay for their consequences by loss of reward in Heaven. It is perplexing, indeed haunting, to consider how they can be forgiven yet there are consequences. This is not like the earthly cases in which we forgive someone, but there may still be civil-legal consequences. This is the final

reckoning in Heaven and consequences for sin should be a moot issue, there should be none, since they were placed upon the Savior and remembered no more.

1 Cor. 4:5 certainly refers to the JSC, **"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God."** At first glance, this verse seems to be saying that at the JSC a person's sins will be judged, and done fairly, because the Lord knows all the hidden things in our lives--so we best shape-up. However, we will see this does not seem to be what the text is teaching.

The moment we are saved all our sins (even the ones we will commit later in life) are forgiven, never to be remembered again. So, at the JSC the matter of sin was settled long ago; our sins are completely washed away forever by the blood of Jesus Christ. To remember them again in judgment would violate God's own Word; it is His Word which says that love and forgiveness mean not to make a "list of wrongs" (1 Cor. 13:5 says that true agape love "thinks no evil," which basically means it keeps no account of the wrong things others have done). The consequences of our sins cannot be what the above verse infers, for to hold consequences against us means our sins are not really forgiven. It is more likely that the verses above have been interpreted poorly, for example, the word "bad" (2 Cor. 5:10) can mean "of no value," which is not a reference to sinfulness. Thus, the Lord may be judging the events of our lives to determine those which were good and those which were of no value. The final phase of 1 Cor. 4:5 reinforces this because it does not mention loss, harm, or shame; but, **"Then each one's praise will come from God."** If it were referring to sin, then the idea of receiving praise would be inappropriate. The best interpretation of the Scripture indicates the good we have done in the body garners a reward and the things of no value yield nothing, but all will end up with some reward and are thus praised.

The following verses refer to the JSC, though it is not specifically mentioned. **"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone build on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire"** (1 Cor. 3:11-15). The enduring (good) work we do gains reward, but notice that even the non-enduring work seems to have built something, perhaps that of temporal value. Is it possible that sinful works could build anything, even of temporal value? This study will proceed based upon the belief that sinful work cannot build anything (such work can only destroy and defile); thus, the works suffering loss are works of temporal value but not sinful works.

That the JSC has to do with rewards from God for our service for Him, and not for the consequences of our sins, is found in the refining process. The text refers to separating good from the no-value items by fire. In biblical times a refiner would apply heat to a mixture of a good metal and worthless rock to cause the pure, precious metal to melt and separate from the dross. This ancient refining technique is referred to as a refiner's fire--separating pure metal (gold or silver) from the dross (rock of no value). In this process the rock is not bad; it is merely of no value in the quest for precious metal. In other applications, rock is of great utility. By similar analogy, in the phrase above, "...**the fire will test each one's work...**" there is no implication that the wood, hay and stubble are sinful and bad, they are just worthless from an eternal perspective. Thus, the text does imply a loss of what could have been a reward, but not punishment, as often envisioned.

### Your Thoughts

13.1. We are judged for the good we have done, i.e., for what we did, not for what we did not do. What does this imply in relation to human legalistic rules (see Col. 2:16-23)? \_\_\_\_\_.

Christ will judge all our lives and try our works, deeds, attitudes, heart's desires, etc., and in the process determine what is pure metal and what is dross. The dross does not have to be sin, but merely that which was of no eternal value for God's purpose. What sort of things in our lives are of no value? We may find that much of what we do is of no value. The value of what we do relates, in large part, to our mental attitudes and displaying the fruit of the Spirit, not necessarily on the actual work that is done. Scripture makes it clear that whatever we do, has to be done as unto the Lord, "**Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God**" (1 Cor. 10:31). The actual nature of our work is inconsequential, the attitudes and frames of mind are important, and this applies to all aspects of life. From His perspective, all earthly measures of what is important evaporate, what He discerns in judgment are matters of the spirit and soul.

Our lives are not entirely composed of the dichotomous good or bad, sinful or spiritual, right or wrong. Much of our lives are lived in the middle ground, a grey area which is neither sinful nor worthy of reward. A person can do everyday duties while thinking about buying a new shirt; it is not sinful to think of shirts but it is not worthy of reward either. The point being, that which is of no eternal value may have had temporary, earthly value; but that does not make it sinful. Christ will judge every part of our lives, knowing all things perfectly since nothing is hidden from Him. There will be things we have done which we thought were for Christ, but they may be of no eternal value (perhaps we deceived ourselves into thinking



they were for Him but they really only served our selves). A person's attitude, motives, spiritual fruit, etc., are the precious metal. The remaining portion of a person's life was either sinful (and that is forgiven), or of no eternal value (that is the wood, hay, and stubble).

The JSC is the great equalizer. Everyone will be judged equitably without regard to the status symbols of this world. It will not matter if one had (in the eyes of the world), a menial job, low rank, or limited capability. Similarly, it will not matter if they were disabled, suffered lack of advantage, were denied basic human rights, or were unable to hold high church office. At that time, one's rank, smarts, privilege, gender, race, etc., mean nothing. At the JSC it is the attitude of one's heart that is important regardless of anything else, and that can be pure gold, for example, in a mentally disabled person.

The phrase most often used as a proof text that God will be unearthing the dirt of our past is, "hidden things of darkness" (1 Cor. 4:5). Is this a reference to our hidden sinful deeds which could not be hidden from Him? The context does not support this view, rather, it indicates the hidden things are those things in our lives that others did not see but that were really done for Christ; now they are revealed. C. R. Stam stated this well when he wrote,

*"Then the ... lady, serving Christ as she can, but all unnoticed; that ... man, poor in this world's goods, but living consistently for the Lord; that person generally considered odd, but breathing love for Christ, will all be recognized and honored with "praise" and rewards" (cf. I Cor. 3:14; II Cor. 5:10). For then the Lord will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness" and will manifest the inner motives of our hearts."*<sup>2</sup>

It is our attitudes and frames of mind through the events of our lives that are important (hidden counsels of our heart), 1 Cor. 4:5. Note this verse refers to the hidden things and exposed secret motives (these are not sins, because we receive due praise and reward); these are hidden/secret good things in our lives that are made known at the JSC by the all-knowing God. Thus, we see Paul describes some of these characteristics in 2 Cor. 6:4-10 as: patience, purity, sincere love, always true, great endurance in tribulation and suffering, etc. He explains this further in 1 Cor. 4:9, which is stated in The Amplified Bible this way, **"For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last (exposing us to public scorn, like captives in a military procession who are last in line), as it were appointed to death: (who have a death sentence) for we are made a spectacle (displayed at the end of the line for public ridicule in a death procession), unto the world, and to angels, and to men."** The apostles were made an open show in the world's amphitheater with both men and angels as spectators. Under these conditions Paul instructs us as to the proper frames of mind; then he modeled his life to teach us correct behavior, as seen in 1 Cor. 4:12-13:



- when reviled (abusive language), we bless
- when persecuted, we take it patiently and endure it
- when slandered and defamed, we answer softly and bring comfort.

The Corinthians being addressed by Paul were Christians but living with fleshly (carnal) minds; they were hardly transformed (1 Cor. 3:3). As such, they were living with envy, strife, and division. Naturally, they thought with whom they associated was what was important (1 Cor. 3:4); today we may find this mentally manifest in the belief it is important which church or group we are associated. However as we read about the JSC (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:9-17), we see what the true and lasting building blocks are. What the Corinthians were manifesting were building blocks made of wood, hay, or stubble--which readily burn and go up in smoke. The things Paul modeled in His life are the building blocks which will take trying by fire and will be rewarded.

### Your Thoughts

13.2. Read 1 Cor. 4:12-13, consider how living in this manner would bring you praise from God and reward. List one or more of the things he mentions that you wish to model in your life. \_\_\_\_\_.

As we continue to discuss the topic of what will garner rewards at the JSC, it is imperative we consider the analogy of building our life upon a firm foundation. Based upon today's construction techniques, we envision a building on some sort of concrete foundation which undergirds the entire building. In simple buildings, the concrete foundation is a monolithic substructure, i.e., one continuous concrete substructure (reinforced with steel) which is tied together and works as one system to support the superstructure (the building above). That is not how the Scriptural foundation should be viewed. The foundation for buildings (in the analogy given in Scripture) was a series of huge stone blocks which undergird the entire building. These stone blocks were not tied together nor were they monolithic. The bottom row of blocks was the foundation, and the rest of the building was built upon them. The most important blocks were the cornerstones. And, the very most important cornerstone was the chief cornerstone. All others stones depended upon the chief corner stone (which was placed first) since it established the location, orientation, elevation, etc., for all the other stones and thus the entire building.

In scriptural terms, Jesus Christ is called the chief cornerstone, "**...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone** (Eph. 2:20). We then build our lives upon that foundation which is already established and

based upon the Chief Cornerstone. **"...you are God's building...as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"** (1 Cor. 3:9b-11). Christ establishes the foundation, and we construct our lives on that foundation.

Continuing with the building analogy, the word of God gives us examples of desired building blocks. We can build our building out of wood, hay, or stubble, but we know they will not last long nor withstand trial by fire. The blocks we use to construct our personal building should be the type of blocks that will withstand the trial of fire at the JSC. We can examine passages such as I Cor. 4 and 5:8 and discern what types are blocks to use for our personal temple that are of precious stone or metal. These will be tried by fire and withstand the test; thus, they will be rewarded. What are these lasting blocks made of, well, things like being faithful, non-judgmental, sincere.... Our building blocks are the very things we have been studying, i.e., correct attitudes, values, character, and deeds. Notice that the lasting blocks are not what you did not do ("I did not smoke, drink, chew, cuss...") but are those resulting from a transformed mind (also see 1 Thes. 4 & 5; Col. 3:12-17; Rom. 12:9-21; 2 Cor. 6:3-10). Starting on the foundation of 1 Cor. 3:10 we can build our lives' story, hopefully with the types of blocks shown in Figure 13.1.

Figure 13.1. is only an example of many building blocks that will endure and gain reward at the JSC. Some of the ones shown are the hidden things (hidden in secret) that a person may suffer for Christ and no one knows, but Him. You can make many other temples by studying the verses suggested for reading. The lintel on the top is 1 Thessalonians 4 & 5, which gives many of the virtues a Christian should exhibit, e.g., abstaining from fornication, giving honor, not defrauding, showing brotherly love, quietly doing your own business, walking honestly, being comforting and edifying, esteeming others, living in peace, comforting the feeble-minded, being patient toward all, following that which is good, rejoicing evermore, praying.... It may seem that some of these items are not things of the mind, but upon further analysis you will see that is the case. Someone may say it is the body which commits fornication, but does it? Actually it begins in the mind (lust) and the body merely follows the mind; so the transformed mind will not indulge such thoughts, and that is what prevents the body from doing wrong.

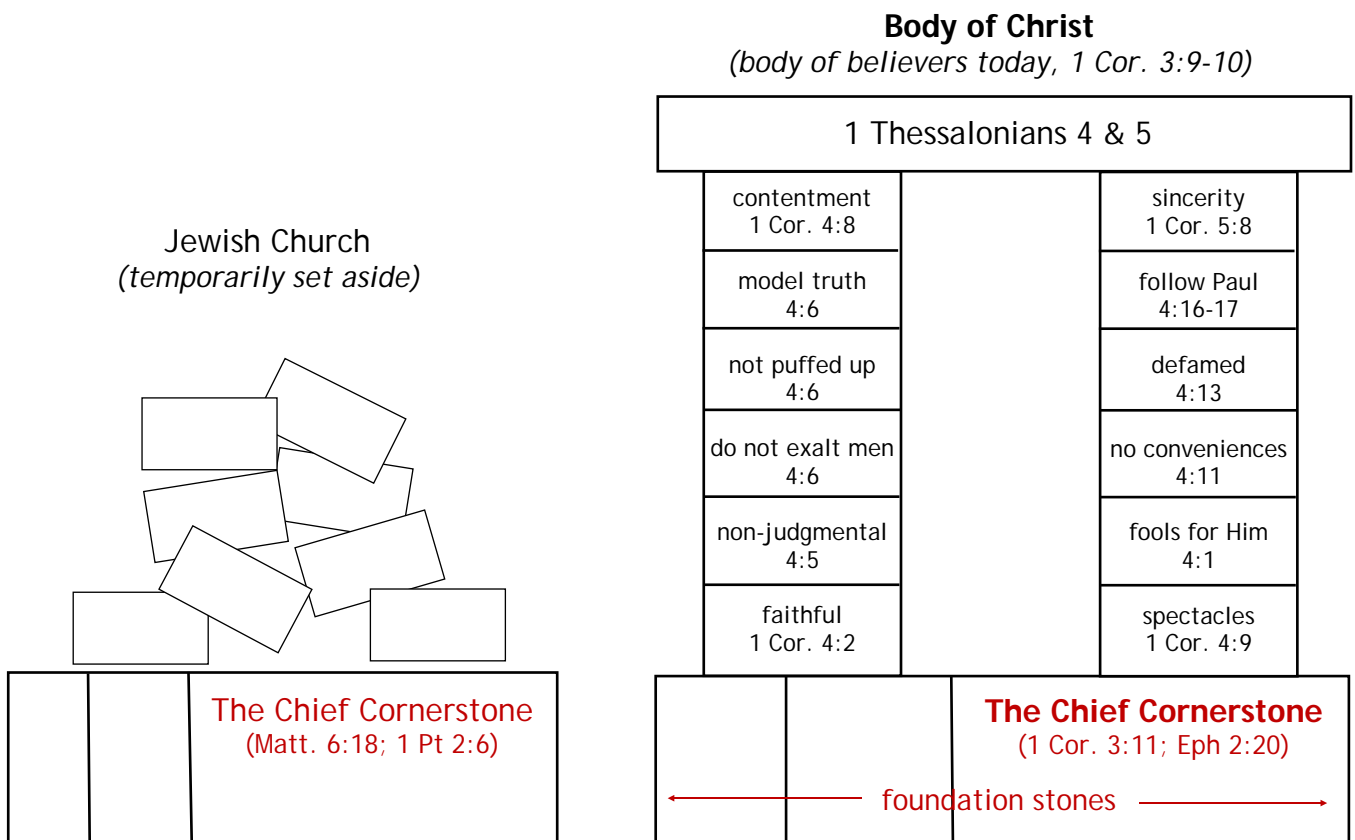


Figure 13.1. Our personal temple is constructed of building blocks that will not suffer loss at the JSC. (Note: This is a front view, the Body of Christ temple/building would continue to the left and eventually reach another corner stone, but there is only one Chief Cornerstone.)

In Figure 13.1., two biblical churches/temples are shown, but there is only one at a time in God's eternal plan. You will note the church Christ spoke about in the Gospels is the church of the Millennial Kingdom. Today, the nation of Israel (the nation of God's special choosing) and her biblical program, which includes the Millennial Kingdom, have been temporarily set aside (Romans 11). Today, God is building the invisible Church, the Body of Christ, in the Age of Grace.

**Your Thoughts**

13.3. Using figure 13.1. as an example, put in your own words what you want your life's building blocks to be. Then, develop a transformational plan to start developing building blocks which will withstand trial by fire. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When the author was a teenager his pastor often said, "You say you do not drink, dance, cuss, smoke, chew, or run around with those that do? Well, neither does a fence post." At least he got that right; following rules does not develop the fruit of the Spirit or attitudes of the mind that gain rewards at the JSC. But now you know what things will garner rewards at the JSC and what things will allow each of us to suffer loss. This understanding is totally consistent with the teachings for the Age of Grace, while imposed human rules relate to the Law.

In the trials of life the right mind-set is crucial if we are to be rewarded by the Lord. Paul gives many examples of this mind-set, here is one passage, "**We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,**" (2 Cor. 6:3-6). To summarize, it is the transformed mind bearing the fruit of the Spirit that God is looking for, as seen in 1 Cor. 4:9-13.

### **1 Corinthians 4:9-13**

#### What will garner rewards

- a. contentment
- b. faithfulness
- c. being defamed
- d. kindness
- e. made a spectacle

#### What will cause loss

- grumbling and complaining
- doing it my way
- telling others where to go
- malice
- revenge

### **What Are The Rewards**

It seems the rewards will be spiritual in nature, after all, we will be in Heaven. If we are faithful stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1-5) and in sharing Christ with others, Paul mentions a crown of rejoicing (1 Thes. 2:19). Generally the rewards mentioned are connected with reigning with Him and some sort of crown: a crown of righteousness, honor, life, and rejoicing. We will be glorified together with Him, and this is a great reward from our present earthly perspective. Our image will again comport exactly with God's design.

The Holy Spirit is given to the believer today as a guarantee of our inheritance (2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Eph. 1:14) until we are taken home. When we get home we receive our inheritance in full. So, in Heaven we will get rewards and our full inheritance--this is just a meager understanding of what lies ahead for the believer.

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<sup>1</sup>Baker, Charles F.; *A Dispensational Theology*; Grace Bible College Publication: Grand Rapids, Michigan 49509; 1972, ISBN 0-912340-01-0, page 630.

<sup>2</sup>Stam, C.R., "*I Corinthians*," Berean Bible Society, Germantown, WI., 1988.

**Please consider these responses to Your Thoughts**

13.1. You will receive rewards for the good you did in the Body or Christ, not for what you did not do. Legalism generally has lists of things you cannot do (sometimes also a list of things you must do); there is no reward for following a list of "do not's". The presumed value of following such rules comes from humanly imposed laws, but allowing the Word and Spirit to guide you in all things is the grace way. Thus, the fact you did not cuss does not gain you a reward, but the fact you were patient will.

## Lesson 14

### Liberty and Our Connection to Christ

*"A crucial part of liberation in Christ means allowing Him to fill our empty places. Satisfaction in Christ can be a reality."*

Beth Moore<sup>1</sup>

*"Can it be that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue?"*

George Washington

*"Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become more corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters."*

Benjamin Franklin

#### **Liberty--A Whole New Thing**

As stated previously, many Christians think they have to go through life like they are on a roller-coaster ride; that is, they have no choice but to sit there and just let things happen to them. There is a resignation to "fate" as though there were no personal influence upon one's own life. While we do not question the sovereignty of God, we also recognize God has given us responsibilities to carry out in our lives. Accepting those responsibilities allows us to have considerable structure and control in our lives, not because of our own abilities but because we are allowing God to work in and through us in the way He has designated. Life was not designed by God for us to walk along with the attitude, "Whatever happens, happens." He wants to guide us from within so that we can make choices and set direction in our lives that enable us to get off the roller-coaster. We can decide to follow God's clear directions, or choose to be "taken on life's ride with no control." If we choose to allow Him to direct our life, we will be more and more led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:5); as a result, life will be much more enjoyable.

We were designed by God to glorify Him and to be led by His Spirit (1 Cor. 10:31; Romans 8:14). Our minds are the key in glorifying Him and being led by Him. Thus it is clear why our minds are the battleground for Satan, and even our former selves. The process of transformation renews our minds and that means our:

- **thoughts** (what we think about),
- **emotions** (how we feel about something, i.e., love, fear, happiness, sadness...),

- **character** (who we really are deep inside),
- **values** (what is right, what is true, what is just), and
- **desires/wills** (what we plan and wish for; our intentions in life).

Notice how these issues are far from the items of the legalist approach of trying to please God. If you have His values and desires, will that not lead you into correct behavior without following some list? If we follow man made rules, what will happen to us when some issue presents itself that is not on "the list"? We need His character and thoughts to guide us, and when they do, we can throw the rules away. That is what liberty in Christ is about. The problem with liberty in a legalist's mind is that God may allow one person to do one thing while not allowing another to do it; how can this be right? The fear is always that people will use their liberty for license to sin, which Paul addresses (Rom. 6:1; 1 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 5:13).

The Spirit does not allow for license to do anything we want, but instead assures we do what He wants. Liberty and freedom will manifest themselves in a variety of ways, differing in individuals. If a person does abuse liberty, the Spirit will deal with that in His way and in His time. Unfortunately, most of us are uncomfortable allowing the Spirit to do this, such freedom is far outside our comfort zone. Christian liberty/freedom is much like individual freedom in society; at times it comes at the cost of security. In our society we may have to stand up and fight, or at least suffer loss, to assure our freedom. In the Christian realm we also have to stand up and deny the legalists (or whomever) who would enslave us again; we may have to suffer in this life in order to maintain our liberty in Christ.

While we have liberty, God has also ordained civil authority, and that authority has laws we are compelled to obey. Liberty also includes giving and taking guidance from fellow believers when they/we lack the spiritual wisdom and understanding to know how to handle certain situations. In general, human restrictions on our Christian liberty are a lack of trust in the work of the Holy Spirit. While human rules, "You can't do this, or must do that," may seem appropriate, they will inevitably cause reversion to the bondage of the non-transformed human mind. Romans 8:15 addresses this by saying, "**For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba, Father.**" Under the Law, people were in bondage and fear; in the Age of Grace we are free of that bondage and fear (notice the word "again" in the verse just quoted, and in Gal. 5:1). When we restrict the work of the Spirit, it is often due to having lost connection with our Head; and having lost our connection we resort to non-transformed ways of thinking.

## Your Thoughts

14.1. **"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"** (2 Cor. 3:17). With the Lord/Spirit in control of our thoughts, emotions, values, character, and desires, we are given liberty. With Him in control, we do not need to fear failure or upsetting Him (because He guides us from within). Describe how liberating this is to you. \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

## Losing Connection with Our Head

### Christ the Head

As believers we are indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works from within us, in an outward fashion, working from our core to the outer parts of our human essence. All believers are part of one body called the Body of Christ (BOC), which is the invisible, universal body of believers (also referred to as the Church). The BOC in Scripture is compared to the human body by way of analogy. Just as the human body is bound together by joints and ligaments, so too the BOC is bound and knit together with each member serving some important function; the supreme function held by Christ as the Head. **"but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, jointed and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."** (Eph. 4:15-16). (also see Col. 2:19).

The BOC grows and prospers as nourishment flows from the Head down through one member to another. As the human body gets its direction from the head, so too in the BOC we are provided direction from our Head (including the Bible and the Holy Spirit). Without the Head, the BOC could not function; all care, nourishment, protection, support, wisdom, truth, righteousness ... come from Him. We are thus instructed to keep the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3-4), that is, we are instructed to make sure the unity He has created in the BOC is kept; lest the Body suffer and some disconnection is made.

### How do We Lose Connection

The Holy Spirit has created unity in the Body of Christ, and we are instructed to keep that unity, **"...endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"** (Eph. 4:3). This verse is teaching that unity can be destroyed, and we have to actively do something to assure it is maintained. There is a bonding agent that keeps unity, but what kind of super-duper



bonding agent could that be? It is peace. It is the glue that keeps the BOC together and functioning properly. When we make peace one of our top priorities in the BOC, then there will be no discord, or anything else, which upsets the function of body of Christ. If one breaks the bond, through strife, quarreling, or arguments, then the whole body suffers (which is obviously true in all relationships). And from where does this true peace come? It is a fruit of the Spirit, Gal.5:22, i.e., it comes to us through transformation. First, we have peace with God because we are reconciled with Him through Christ's death. Then, we have peace with humanity because we allow the Spirit to produce His fruit within us. This latter peace enables us to live peacefully with others in spite of differences--it is the bond that holds relationships together. Love is also a bonding agent (Col. 3:14).

Peace and love help assure unity; there is also another important factor. Unity also requires keeping our connection to the Head strong, "**...and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God**" (Col. 2:19). It is very instructive to learn how we can lose connection with the Head (or what the signs are of having lost that connection). We lose connection by (see Col. 2:18-23):

- delighting in false humility (self-abasement, spiritual pride masquerading as humility, exalting self-will).
- worship of angels.
- claiming we have seen visions (extra biblical knowledge, "God told me").
- being puffed-up by sensual notions and unspiritual thoughts.
- subjecting others to regulations--do not touch, do not taste, do not handle....
- teachings of externalism--measure spirituality by degree of separation or austerity.

**"Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head.... Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations--'Do no touch, do not taste, do not handle,' which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*" (Col. 2:18-23)**

When we lose connection with our Head, we begin to replace the true leading of the Spirit with human wisdom--hardly an equitable replacement. We try to act oh so humble and spiritual. However, all these things rob us of reward at the JSC; we are cheated of reward by our own passions and by others who beguile us with false substitutes such as: worshiping of angels (a quest for a special connection with heavenly beings), claiming to have seen visions

(a quest for more than what is in the Bible), and the inevitable rule-makers (a quest to substantiate a person's piety). In Paul's day the rules were a little different but very similar to what we have discussed, "**Do no touch, do not taste, do not handle....**" Such law-based performance measures have been shown over and over in the Bible to not work and the Bible says they are of no value.

Notice that all the items which cause us to lose connection have the appearance of wisdom, and it fools many. However they do not honor God, but do just the opposite; they serve to indulge the flesh. The Bible teaches that rules against certain sinful activities have just the opposite effect; they actually indulge the flesh (create more sins). Instead of rules, we again appeal to the reader to allow the Spirit to work within you and then you will not have to worry about human rules.

To summarize and expand, when we lose our connection with the Head:

- God is not honored.
- heavenly rewards can be lost.
- we begin to live our lives from a law-based perspective, in which our performance becomes a prime factor in our minds. Our rules, regulations, and external requirements only serve the flesh, while appearing godly.
- we lose spiritual direction, coordination, function, nourishment....
- we become disconnected from the full knowledge (*epignosis*) revealed by the Lord for the Age of Grace (Eph. 1:17; Col. 1:9, 25; Phil. 1:9). We forget we are knit together in love to the assurance of the knowledge of the mystery of God (Col. 2:2).
- we become unable to value the fact we are complete in Him, we want more and more (Col. 2:10).
- we relegate our spiritual blessings (our position in Christ) to a secondary status and elevate experience (Eph. 1:3-2:6).
- our walk, manner of life, and fruitfulness are adversely affected (Col. 1:10).
- our doctrine gets confused, e.g., we confuse what love really is (I Cor. 13) with worldly or carnal views.

### Your Thoughts

14.2. With such terrible personal consequences as a result of losing connection with our Head, what would you recommend to fellow believers as to how to keep that connection strong? \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

## **Failure to Thrive--Transformation Reversal**

Those Christians who have lost connection with the Head will not thrive spiritually and the transformation process will be curtailed. They will replace the internal working of the Spirit with the external working of the law (performance measure of their invention). This process of bringing about change is totally backward! How can one possibly thrive when they are not receiving grace, nourishment, and direction from above?

These who have lost connection (and it is possible we all do lose some measure of connectedness at some time in our lives), begin to go backward in their transformation. Thus, the degree God has been able to transform their lives is brought to a stop, and they begin to experience a transformation reversal, meaning they begin to slip-slide back into former ways, from which God has already brought them. They go from the higher spiritual realities to that which is lower. Since they are operating without connection, what can they do but reason with their old, non-transformed mind? The same mind that got them in trouble in the first place is now in control, again.

Remember the order of importance in our lives: spiritual is first, then soulish (mind), then our physical body. When connection to the Head is lost, we regress, i.e., we revert from His transformation back toward our old self. This is putting on the "old man" which is not renewed. The transformational advancements wrought by the Spirit are reversed to soulish things, then physical things. The person will move from true spiritual realities (which cannot be seen) to appearances, because appearance can fool many, even ourselves. After all, doesn't seeing visions and worshiping angels have a lot more social and religious appeal than the simple, unseen, working of the Spirit within? False humility and spirituality can, to the disconnected, seem more godly than the real thing. However, the former ways and thinking are not satisfying, so more and more of the substitutes are piled-on in an attempt to seem spiritual.

The disconnect with the Head results in the new creation devolving toward the old man and even into the carnal state (the person does not lose their Salvation, but their mind becomes increasingly gaunt and sickly because of lack of nourishment from the Head). The process is predictable and is well stated in Scripture. The disconnected person's spiritual fruit begins to wither, they can no longer hide it so they create false fruit as a substitute. So what can they create using the old mind? Well, they can replace true fruit with: 1) what society thinks is good (since society also has non-transformed minds), 2) what is politically or "religiously" correct, or 3) what best justifies their present life-style. Instead of fruit of the Spirit, they can champion emotional values because feelings will always score high on the scale of societal acceptance. As life spins downward, one may even resort to being the champion of physical passions. This reverse transformation is backsliding in the purest form.

When we lose connection with Head, we subordinate what the Lord has done in our lives to that which is more carnal.

Whether a Christian can lose the fruit of the Spirit may be debatable, but it is clear the fruit can be pushed back into obscurity in our minds, allowing more earthly values to take precedence. Let's consider some examples of what happens in the reverse transformation process when subservient, old-man virtues are elevated in our minds. The reverse process takes us from true, transformed spiritual-soulish virtues produced by the Spirit to non-transformed soulish values, and that can decay further to merely physical passions. Thus, we replace the fruit of the Spirit with degraded human entities, which have the outward appearance of godliness but deny the power of the Holy Spirit. The sad thing is we are losing reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ and not honoring God.

A simple chart is shown below, showing how a person can become seduced by the world/self/Satan and reverse transformation can take place. The first example shown is about love, and how we can be deluded into thinking that true agape love (spiritual) is not as important as having strong feelings and affections (non-transformed soulish emotions typical of phileo love). Given time, a person may slide far enough into thinking that physical satisfaction (eros love) is God's ideal of love (you can see God is not honored, how rewards are lost, and how doctrinal confusion exists). The examples below show the flow from the transformed mind (as developed in us by the Spirit) into a degenerate state based upon non-transformed feelings and emotions; and then perhaps, proceeding to the physical or carnal perspective. Becoming disconnected from our Head has serious consequences and staying in the Word is the best antidote.

**Transformation Reversal** (always flows from left to right)

<b><u>Spiritual-Soulish</u></b>	<b><u>Soulish</u></b> (non-transformed)	<b><u>Physical</u></b>
Love (agape) —————→	affection/feelings (phileo) —————→	physical satisfaction (eros)
Joy -----	happiness -----	pleasure seeking
Peace -----	performance -----	legality (Gal. addresses this)
Kindness -----	tolerance -----	indifference (chose who to like)
Patience -----	coexistence -----	cultism

### Your Thoughts

14.3. Take some of the other fruit of the spirit, as seen in Gal. 5:22, and describe how you think they can degenerate into soulish and then physical entities.

1. \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_.

In the Transformation Reversal chart above, the flow of events is always from the left to the right, i.e., from God's fruit, to mankind's ideal, then to the world's values. True transformation flows from right to left. In the chart, notice how joy, a deep soulish value, can be replaced by happiness (an outward, external emotional expression). When happiness begins to fail, then pleasure seeking in general can be the goal of a person's life in order to provide the desired "feel good" condition (after all, it is reasoned, "God wants me to feel good"). As you read down the listing above (and that list is just the start), you will see kindness is replaced by tolerance (not kindness to all because of your compassion for them, but putting-up with people because you have to). Patience devolves into coexistence; there is a huge gulf between patience and coexistence, which is the putting aside of your morals and beliefs in order to fit in with the politically correct crowd. An interesting confirmation is afforded by the world today, in which tolerance and coexistence are considered the epitome of virtuosity.

### Headship Run Amuck--An Example

We will look at an example of how losing connection with the Head affects marriage. This is a true case in which a Christian husband had lost connection with Christ and turned into an absolutely impossible-to-live-with control freak. He was a classic example of creating rules and regulations his wife could not possibly meet (nor any woman), and that was grounds, in his mind, for saying she was not being submissive. The basic problem was his ever emerging legalism with absurd rules and demands for her; funny thing, similar rules and demands did not seem to apply to him.

This man thought that as head of the marriage he had to control everything, and that means everything (after all, isn't that what the head is supposed to do?). The wife could not do anything on her own. The husband used these verses as his Scriptural authority and requirement to be rigid, demanding, and domineering, "**Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife ... Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything**" (Eph. 5:22-24). He saw no limits to submission because the Word says, "in everything." He had a book about marriage (written by a woman) to support his views; needless to say this book was a classic

example of a bad example. His disconnection from Christ had the impact of making his wife nothing more than a door mat; however, he saw little or no responsibility for himself.

For all of us, if we want to follow Christ, we can learn a lot from how He conducted His life on this earth; in addition, we mostly have to learn how He acts today as our Head. We then have to model our lives in accordance with what we have learned. Listed below are some things we, and this husband, should learn from our Head. All the teachings required to arrive at the listing below are not shown, but this listing is supported by Scripture.

- Our Head nourishes, directs, and ministers to each member of the body. He does not work with us by criticizing, demanding, or controlling our every move. We have tremendous freedom to act the way we want. Over-control has a negative effect, but there is no limit on nourishing and encouraging others. This is the model of headship the husband must adopt.
- Respect, equality, and esteem are hallmarks of marriage; our concepts of submission have to be balanced with them if a marriage is to survive.
- Encourage your spouse to grow spiritually, but do not think you own your spouse.
- The husband had better make sure he loves his wife as the Lord loved the Church if he expects her to submit in everything; after all, he has to set the example. However, no one can love his wife to this degree, so when it comes to her submission, it will have human limitations also. Do not expect the impossible from your mate, do not demand perfection because neither of you can provide it.
- The wife's spirituality is not measured by the husband's rules, regulations, and demands (in the Age of Grace, ordinances are blotted out and we work together in grace).
- A man's headship does not require child-like obedience by the wife. Wives today are educated, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and spiritually equal with the husband. Take that into consideration, and do not demand something that is humanly impossible to provide.
- The wife is scripturally allowed to voluntarily arrange her affairs under the husband's overall leadership. This means he is not supposed to control and regulate every aspect of life.
- Keeping connection with the Head is required or a person will revert to legalism (legalism in essence says the Holy Spirit is not enough), with resulting marital discord.
- Each spouse has the Spirit within them, so the wife has direct guidance from the Lord, just as the husband does. A man should not think he is so spiritual that he is the authority on everything, and best make sure he is not fighting against what the Holy Spirit is doing in his wife's life.
- The wife is a member of the Body of Christ and fills a needed function. The husband best be careful not to make demands that run counter to God's will for the wife. So being head takes thought and understanding, and requires a strong connection with the Head to assure true leadership.

- We live in the Age of Grace, not under the Law. **Grace and freedom go together, law and bondage go together.** In our Age, God's ideal is not for the wife to be in bondage to her husband, but for the two to live in peace as is expected in the Body of Christ.
- A review of 1 Cor. 13:4-8 and Proverbs 31 clearly shows that the common phrase, "submit in all things," has reasonable and prudent limitations, as exhibited throughout the Bible.
- Each believer is complete in Christ, not just the husband (Col. 2:10). He is not the measure of her spiritual standing with Christ.

Putting headship into perspective, we see from Scripture the **head's function is to:**

- **minister nourishment (Col. 2:19).** Minister is *epichoregeo*, "leader of a chorus who pays the costs and liberally supplies the needs" (but does not criticize, belittle, condemn, or control every move).<sup>2</sup>
- **edify (Eph. 4:12).** To edify means to build another person up and promote spiritual growth. It does not mean to tear another down. In the Age of Grace no one can edify others by creating rules (the Old Testament teaches that rules only condemn and create bondage; they cannot liberate).
- **lead in order to show the way.** In the New Testament, the word pastor and shepherd are generally the same word. We may not all be pastors (in the sense of ministering to a local church), but we all have duties, to some degree, as shepherds. A shepherd is trusted and loved by the sheep, and goes in front to lead the sheep, who willingly follow. We are not called to be cowboys (no offense to real cowboys, this is about marriage) who drive the herd from behind (by whooping and shouting, at least in the movies), trying to get the herd to move in the right direction. What do you suppose best suits a marriage, leading by example or driving by shouting?
- **make willing submission possible.** Submission should not be onerous, instead, of her own free-will the wife should respond positively because the relationship is conducive to submission.
- **know the true Head works from within.** The Spirit works within each of us promoting peace and love; similarly, the husband has to learn how to create an internal marital environment that creates trust, respect, etc. Thus as a true leader, it is up to him to work with the Lord and his wife in a way that leads to marital peace.
- **follow/teach correct doctrine.** The husband must understand what love really is (1 Cor. 13) and not confused it with law-based performance measures. The worst thing a husband can do is create rules to tests the wife's submission. What if the Lord demanded he pass a "love test?"
- **demonstrate agape love.** Our Head gave Himself for us. If husbands love their wives accordingly, and are willing to die for them, how can they get upset over trivial



matters? Agape love is known only from the actions it prompts, irrespective of our rights.<sup>3</sup> It is concerned with:

- ÿ the welfare of others, especially a spouse, Rom. 15:2
- ÿ not keeping a list of wrongs things the other has done, I Cor. 13: 4-8
- ÿ working no ill, Romans 13:10 (is it love if a spouse is upset, health is harmed, etc.?)
- ÿ seeking to do good, Gal. 6:10; 1 Cor. 13:4-8; Col. 3:12-14
- ÿ not finding fault or require conformance to another's rules; freedom is invested in love
- ÿ not finding reasons to condemn, but to build-up, 1 Cor. 14:26
- ÿ edifying others; it does not complain, fly-off in a rage, or make demands when someone messes up.

Note: This man was confronted by his present church's leadership concerning his expectations and the consequences of his actions. He had clearly lost connection with the Head. His severe demands seem to have resulted from many failures he was experiencing in life. He may have had a deep need to feel in control of something, unfortunately over-control of a spouse and children is not the way to get it. Certainly a main factor stemmed from being exposed to very legalistic teaching in a former church. Many people were in prayer over this situation; and he was exposed to more balanced literature. The wife was about to leave, but he finally woke up and started listening to mature counsel. A couple years after this started, things have gotten much better in their marriage.

The above example relates primarily to a husband. The problems in a marriage can be reversed, and be due to the wife losing connections with her Head. It is a universal truth, men and women are equally messed up mentally, thus the need for renewed minds. Both husbands and wives can be in serious error in their marriages and not know it, all the while thinking their spouses are not living for the Lord. As the marriage spirals downhill, a wife may be thinking, "If he only loved me as he is supposed to do," and the husband may be thinking, "If she only obeyed me as she is supposed to do." Disconnection causes such thinking, so each person must examine the Scripture and his/her life to make sure he/she is acting wisely and scripturally. Each spouse is to seek peace, to make sure his/her actions are based upon a good connection with the Head, and to refrain from unrealistic demands.

### Your Thoughts

14.4. If a person loses connection with Head will he/she know it? Will that person try to cover it up with something that is hoped will pass for super-spirituality?

\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.



## **National Disconnection from the Head**

What we have considered in this study has been primarily about personal transformation. However, is it possible that personal transformation has a larger application, i.e., to nations and societies within nations? To answer this question, a brief consideration of the broader implications of our topic is apropos. We will consider the impact of Christians on the world around them, and how important it is for them to remain strongly connected to the Head. By doing so, we expand our perspectives and enhance our appreciations of how God's grace impacts all humanity.

Unfettered liberty is found only in Jesus Christ, and a nation devoid of, or at least lacking, true godly virtue and character fetters (shackles) liberty in its national expression. Some nations that discourage Christianity have great military, economic, and intellectual prowess; however, individuals (Christians or not) in those nations generally lack personal liberty/freedom (China and Russia may be an examples). There are those nations which once were strongly Christian but which drifted away from the Lord, and that resulted in diminished long-term national health (decline in a nation's culture, freedom, economy, strength, and significance, i.e., some European nations). It is more than coincidence that a nation's health (including personal liberty/freedom) has a strong correlation to the majority of individuals in that nation being well connected to Jesus Christ.

From the Old Testament we learn how God blessed Israel when she trusted in Him and chastised her when she went after other gods. Israel existed under the law-based format, "If you do that, then I will do this." Living in the Age of Grace certainly has a profound impact on how God works with individuals, but how does that relate to nations? Many arguments can be made for how God deals with nations today, but it seems that God's grace (working through individuals) does impact a nation's long-term health and individual liberty. The impact of His grace on nations may be secondary, that is, His grace primarily impacts individuals, but those individuals then impact the nation (of course, there can be Sovereign exceptions). As individuals stay strongly connected to the Head, there is a restraining influence on evil and there is an outflow of grace to society. As individuals within a nation lose connection with Christ there is a national loss of character and virtue, the restraining influence is diminished, and there is the need for more human laws (which bring bondage and the loss of individual liberty/freedom). This is a perfect example of reverse transformation on the national level. A nation will move from God-given individual liberty/freedom, to a more secularly acceptable concept of tolerance/coexistence, and then inexorably toward more humanistic laws with their inherent bondage.

The founders of the United States of America certainly thought the fate of a nation was connected to its faith in the Lord, and the corresponding virtues springing from that faith (thus the quotes by George Washington and Benjamin Franklin at the beginning of this lesson). Even a casual understanding of history seems to support such a view. Transformed minds are

what create true godly virtues, and the transformed minds of individuals can determine the values and virtues of a nation; indeed they can determine the actual character of that nation. As individuals within a nation drift away from God, the nation becomes more corrupt, the restraining influence on iniquity is quelled. As Benjamin Franklin said, "*As nations become more corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters.*" Clearly, the need for masters is diametrically opposed to freedom and liberty. The correlation between the transformation of individuals and a nation's health cannot be over-stated, for godly virtues uphold a nation. When there are few with such virtues, the nation will have lost its "soul" and its future is bleak (it may exist as a nation, but life within it will be like a life without Christ).

**"Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to *any* people"** (Prov. 14:34).

**"Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain"** (Psa. 127:1b).

May the Lord provide you the wisdom and spiritual insight needed to understand the importance of transformation and how it impacts every aspect of your life; indeed societies and nations. Understanding transformation is an essential part of grasping the overall will of God for each human, and His perfect will for your life. A clear and unfathomable spiritual blessing in the Age of Grace is how God sends His Spirit into each believer and renews their minds to be more like His. May His transforming power overwhelm you with praise and awe, as the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ continues to sustain you and give you peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Moore, Beth; "*Breaking Free*," Updated Edition; LifeWay Press; Nashville, TN; 2009; pg 42.

<sup>2</sup> Vine, W. E.; "*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*," Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, NJ; 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Dido.

### **Please consider these responses to Your Thoughts**

14.1. Our liberty assures us that He allows us freedom to make mistakes and to fail; however, He does not get upset with us or angry. He is in us and guiding us, and while mistakes on our part will be made, He does not give up on us. Our failures will be used to help us mature in Christ, but will not be used against us. A person's performance does not affect his/her salvation. A person's performance reflects his/her transformation, obedience, and need for growth. A person's standing with Him is complete and unchangeable; it is not influenced by conditions in your life or your performance.

14.2. To keep connected, a person must read and study the Word, pray on a regular basis ("without ceasing"), allow the Spirit to work in his/her life....

14.4. It seems that most people are generally unaware of their loss of connection, and that is because their minds deny the truth and covering it up with a false spirituality. It is the covering up part that turns life sour. Relationships with others are harmed because the expressions of grace and love are curtailed. The disconnection follows along the lines of reverse transformation.

## Epilogue

After fourteen lessons, the topic of transformation is still wide open. However, continued discussion may well have an adverse impact, i.e., either the sheer volume would deter people from reading it, or the topic would appear to be so complex it could be discouraging to some. Perhaps it is best to allow the Holy Spirit to use the scriptural base that has been presented to continue this study within the heart and mind of each reader.

The bottom line is that transformation is a very simple concept to understand, but it is so complex to perform that God must do it. God (through the Holy Spirit) does the transforming, but we have to be willing and do our part. Delineating our part (what it is and providing insights on how to actual do it) is the main thrust of this study. It is the author's prayer that each reader will have a much clearer understanding of what transformation is, how it takes place, and why it is needed. Please remember that transformation is commanded by God because that is what conforms the believer to His image (Rom. 8:29), and that benefits you, your relationships, your nation, and the Body of Christ. May your life's journey with Christ be more rewarding than you could have imagined; may you become the epitome of His image.

**"Now to Him *who* is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that work in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Eph. 3:20-21).**

## Addendum for Lesson 7

### **Food Qualities that Determine Long-term Health**

Lesson 7 discusses achieving proper body weight and a lifestyle that helps assure long-term health. This Addendum is designed to give more details to the readers, so they have insight into how food and drinks relate to a healthy lifestyle. This Addendum also provides insights for the reader to assure them there are scientific and biblical support for proper dietary patterns.

An evaluation of various foods and drinks was made several years ago to determine their impact on long-term health. This evaluation considered biblical information, studies of cultures with long and healthy lives, health and nutrition literature, natural health textbooks, and health-related scientific studies. Readers are encouraged to read Dr. Ted Morter's excellent book, *"Your Health...Your Choice,"* which gives the basics of correct food and drink choices.

Dr. Morter presents five factors which can be used to evaluate foods and drinks. His work is indeed ground breaking and establishes new and clear direction in how to evaluate foods and drinks. Building upon Dr. Morter's fine work, additional research on foods and drinks (by this author) indicates there are at least nine (9) factors that are important for long-term health. The nine factors are shown below with brief descriptions of what they mean and why they are important.

A complete analysis of specific foods and drinks is not possible in this Addendum. For the purpose of Lesson 7, foods will be placed into logical groupings (which may not agree with the common food groups used by other organizations or governments around the world). The information shown in this Addendum will help you establish a diet that will promote health and correct body weight. If you are already ill, following these guidelines may be very beneficial. Older people often require more cooked food than shown (cooking breaks down the cell walls in foods and makes digestion easier, but it also destroys good enzymes). If you have a serious illness, then this information may have limited application to you.

Nothing in this addendum is intended to circumvent or alter the direction of your health care professional, nor is it meant to treat or diagnose any disease.

As you continue to read, there is a brief discussion of the nine factors that define the qualities of any food or drink. The commonly consumed foods and drinks were analyzed with respect to these nine factors. That means scores were given to each food and drink

(romaine lettuce, milk, fish, apples, dates, soda, etc.) for each factor; then the final score for each food was based upon the sum of the scores. The scoring scheme for each food was based upon the scientific-based properties for that food. The factors were also given a mathematic weight, to give them proper significance (weight). Foods were then grouped into categories and analyzed to derive the ideal proportions (in serving sizes) required for a well-balanced diet leading to long-term health (shown below).

#### Factors That Define a Food's or Drink's Quality

**1. Whole:** Foods/drinks that are as close to the natural, created form as possible. No vital minerals, vitamins, enzymes, etc., have been removed or altered. Fresh is more whole than frozen, frozen is better than canned. Whole wheat (and other grains) flour is processed, it is not "whole" since the vitamins, minerals, and fiber have been altered. Whole grain flours are better because the entire grain is used.

**2. Raw:** Raw foods have God's enzymes, the weak-organic bonds have not been modified by heat and there has been no human tampering. Obviously, some foods cannot be consumed in the raw state.

**3. Satisfaction (satiety):** A food satisfying in small to moderate amounts, there is not a tendency to overeat. No one overeats carrots because they cause satisfaction without excess; however, chips, sweets, pastries, and ice cream do not.

**4. Alkaline Ash:** The ash content of a food/drink refers to what remains of a food or drink after metabolism takes place. It is the ash (much like the ash left after burning a log) that is being considered here. Ash may be a misleading term, but it is referring to the minerals in the food/drink. The ash concept is not well understood. For example, lemons are very acidic in their natural state, but after a lemon is metabolized the citric acid is eliminated and what remains are the minerals or ash (which are alkaline). Proteins contain nitrogen and sulfur which are acidic, as is phosphorus. Fruits and vegetables contain alkalizing minerals (calcium, magnesium, potassium, and sodium). Those foods that yield an alkaline ash (minerals) are needed to counter the harmful effects of acidic ash (minerals). The sum of all the ashes of the foods/drinks we consume should be on the alkaline side, our bodies require that. If the foods and drink we consume leave an imbalance on the acidic side, then all sorts of illnesses or diseases can result in the long-term. Acidic foods are not necessarily bad for you, it is just that the overall diet has to be on the alkaline side for good long-term health.

**5. Compatibility:** A food's compatibility refers to its ability to be used by the human body. It contains that which is essential for physical use and is nourishing and/or cleansing. It is not a phony/fake food, it is non-poisonous, it does not contain additives, it is not genetically engineered, and it contains no man-made products such as pesticides or herbicides. Thus, organic foods are more compatible with the human body than non-organic, since they do not contain pesticides, herbicides, antibiotics, hormone additives....

**6. Nourishment:** Refers to a food's ability to provide vitamins, minerals, good oils, fiber, protein, etc. A food may be whole but not very nutritious, example: iceberg lettuce. The nutrient density (nutrients per calorie) has some bearing.

**7. Special Features:** Some foods have special, health-promoting factors beyond that found in typical foods. Such factors relate to these factors: cleansing, adaptogenic, alterative, phytoestrogenic, anti-inflammatory, high/special enzyme levels, anti-carcinogenic, complete food, anti-virus/mold/yeast/bacteria, special organ/gland support, etc.

**8. Insulin Load:** The concept of the glycemic index provided a little help in understanding what some foods did to raise glucose/insulin levels, but it did not consider a reasonable serving size and was often misleading. The glycemic load, (referred to as insulin load here) was devised to consider a reasonable serving size and does help delineate what foods can lead to insulin related problems (hypoglycemia, syndrome X, insulin resistance, diabetes...).

**9. Anti-oxidants:** It has become increasingly clear that the anti-oxidants found in food have a profound effect on human health and longevity. Anti-oxidants are the compounds that reduce the harmful effects of free radicals. Anti-oxidants include flavonoids; vitamins A, C & E; pycnogenol, CoQ10; lipoic acid, glutathione, carotenoids (beta-carotene, lutein, lycopene), resveratrol; selenium, etc. The anti-oxidants are: anti-inflammatory, anti-carcinogenic, anti-aging, health promoting....

**Ideal Proportions for Optimal Long-Term Health**  
(servings of each food group are shown for one day)

4 -- vegetables (weak alkaline ash)

2.5 -- fruit (weak alkaline ash)

1 -- milk, yogurt, kefir (weak acid ash)

1 -- bread, pasta, grains, cereal, rice (moderate acid ash)

1 -- legumes, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds (moderate acid ash)

½ -- meat, cheese, eggs (strong acid ash)

**In a nutshell: 65% of a person's diet should be vegetables and fruit (half of that should be raw). The remaining 35% should be composed of other food products, but consume very little meat and cheese.**

**Important: eat foods as closely to the way God created them as possible.**

The chart above shows ideal proportions, it is not intended to be a diet plan. How much you actually eat is based upon your needs. You can eat more or less than shown in the chart above; what is important is keeping the relative proportions the same. Thus if you want to eat twice the amount shown, then eat eight (8) vegetable servings, five (5) fruit servings, two (2) milk/yogurt/kefir servings, etc.

Eat a great variety of different food types. Your fruit and vegetables should be a rainbow of colors, not because it is visually appealing, but because of the great variety of antioxidants indicated by the various colors.

If you decide to change your life-style by following the information given in this Addendum, please adopt a correct dietary lifestyle at a moderate rate. Thus, over a period of a few weeks adopt this protocol, if you go into it quickly you may be getting healthier but you may also feel worse. Severely cold climates, pregnancy, major illnesses, sports or work that create unusual demands upon the body, etc., may require some modifications.

Each line in the chart represents a food group. Thus, the third line shows one (1) serving for milk, yogurt, and kefir; that means one (1) serving of all of them combined (all the milk, yogurt, and kefir you eat in one day should amount to one serving). Similarly, all the meat, cheese, and eggs you eat in one day should amount to 1/2 (one-half serving). Serving sizes are shown below.

Allergies and food intolerances will modify your particular needs. Thus, if you cannot tolerate grains, then you can substitute from the milk or legume groups. Getting more alkaline ash than shown is perfectly fine, but more acid ash is not good. There are certain health issues, for example yeast infections, which will require you not eat high starch or sweet foods, such issues are not addressed here.

How do you use this chart with commonly consumed foods, for example a pizza? A meat pizza has a grain crust, cheese topping, tomato sauce, vegetables, and various meats. One meal will likely provide one serving of grain, one serving of vegetables, one serving of cheese, and one to two servings of meat. Yikes, this is way out of proportion. Here is what you can do to help yourself: order thin crust to reduce the grains (get whole grain if possible), ask for a lot of vegetables, ask for no cheese or very little, and forget the meat (may just a little if you "just gotta have it"). If you make the pizza at home, you can omit dairy-based cheese and use a vegetable-based cheese, and really load it with vegetables.

One Serving Size:

- 2 cups raw leafy vegetables (lettuce)
- ½ cup non-leafy vegetables (carrots)
- ½ cup cooked vegetables
- ½ cup small or cut-up or cooked fruit (berries)
- 1 medium sized fruit (apple)
- 1/2 cup milk or yogurt
- 2-3 ounces meat/fish/cheese
- ½ cup vegetable juice

- 1 cup fruit juice (50-50)
- ¼ cup dried fruit (raisins/dates)
- ¼ cup nuts or seeds
- 3 tablespoons oil (olive)
- 2 slices of bread
- 2 ounces cold cereal
- ½ cup cooked cereal
- ½ cup cooked dry beans or rice
- 2 eggs

### **Alkalinity Comments**

A diet with excessive acidic ash foods will eventually lead to all sorts of disease. A high acid ash diet requires that our bodies neutralize that ash by taking alkaline minerals out of muscles, organs, and bones (resulting in muscle spasms, bone density loss, etc.). Sodium or other salts from inorganic compounds (table salt) are not alkalizing. Vegetables and fruit leave a weak alkaline ash, all others foods leave an acidic ash (meat and cheese being the highest). Do not be fooled by the myth that a person needs huge amounts of protein; it is so high in acidic ash that it must be limited. Typically, 30-35 grams, which is basically one ounce, of protein is needed in one day (from all sources).

Taking a good calcium supplement (which should also have magnesium in it) can be helpful to restore/maintain alkaline balance. An organic form is best: such as calcium-magnesium citrate. Avoid the shell and rock forms of calcium: calcium carbonate, dolomite, sea shells, and coral calcium. However, over-consumption of calcium supplements (beyond authoritative recommendations) is not wise. A person's diet has to basically establish the level of alkalinity, not supplements. Vegetables are the most alkalizing (high in potassium); so vegetables, their juices, and green drinks (wheat grass, barley green) are good. Fruit juices are weakly alkalizing, but they generally have so much high fructose corn syrup added that they are not good. Most all fruit juices (including fresh juices and orange juice) should be diluted with an equal amount of pure water (to reduce the sugar load). Raw almonds are alkalizing so they can work much like a vegetable. The goal is to get more alkalizing ash than acid ash in your diet.

### **Other Comments**

Most of your drinks should be pure water. Drink at least half of your weight in pounds, in ounces of water (a 150 pound person should drink 75 ounces of water a day). Pure water is not found in plastic bottles because xenoestrogens (foreign compounds in the plastic which are estrogen mimicking) leak into the water and have a very powerful estrogenic effect on our bodies. Obviously drink more in hot weather or with extreme physical work/exercise. Soda and related types of drinks should be limited, a couple bottles per week.



Eggs are not as bad as previously reported and moderate consumption is perfectly fine.

**Remember: eat foods as closely to the way God created them as possible.** Thus, fresh, whole, unprocessed, unaltered foods are best. Fresh, raw foods are generally better (because more whole) than frozen, and frozen is better than canned or cooked. Obviously, meat should not be eaten raw. Most fast food items, deep fried foods, pastries, processed foods, desert items, and items with altered fats/oils (hydrogenated oils or transfats) are far from God's design.

## About the Author

Steve was raised in a Christian home in Wisconsin (USA) and placed his faith in Jesus Christ at an early age. He has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a master's degree in structural engineering. He served in the US Army in the late 1960's. The author is married to Ruth and they have three daughters and three grandchildren. A considerable number of secular and faith-based publications were authored by him, and, he has served on numerous engineering-scientific committees, research boards, and religious organizations. After retiring from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, he worked as a natural health doctor (received a doctorate in naturopathy), then as the Director of Growing Up in Grace (a Sunday school ministry). In 2012 he felt the need to create a new ministry to reach out to teens and adults (*Grace 4 You Ministries, Inc.*). Steve has had a life-long fascination with many biblical topics (transformation being one of them), and felt these topics were so important and so fertile that he was compelled to write.