

Growing UP Growing OUT Growing DEEP



Bill Loveless
Christ Is Life Ministries

Growing UP
Growing OUT
Growing DEEP

Bill Loveless

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Introduction

This book is an overview of a new curriculum series I have written called ***Growing Up-Growing Out-Growing Deep***. This is a four-part curriculum series that is written to explain the how we are to grow up spiritually, grow out by living life for others and grow deep in our relationship with God. It is based on what I believe is our calling as Christians:

“We are called to grow into Christ-likeness and experience our true identity in order to live life for others and experience a deep relationship with God.”

The following is a breakdown of the four-book series.

Growing UP – What it means to grow into Christ-likeness and to experience your true identity.

Book One - Growing Into Christ-Likeness

Book Two - Experiencing Your True Identity

Growing OUT – the overflow of Christ-likeness through you to selflessly live your life for others.

Book Three - Living Life For Others

Growing DEEP – Understanding the depth of God’s love for you and how to experience a deeper relationship with Him.

Book Four - Experiencing A Deeper Relationship With God

At the end of each chapter will be an invitation to go deeper in each of these areas through the curriculum listed above. My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will use this booklet to give you a greater desire to grow up, grow out and grow deep.

GROWING UP - Part One

Growing Into Christ-Likeness

What Does The Bible Say About Growing Up?

Let's look at four verses that provide us with insight into the meaning of growing up. First, in Ephesians 4:15 Paul exhorts us to grow:

*"Instead, we will speak the truth in love, **growing** in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church."*

The word "growing" in this verse means "inward spiritual growth." To better understand what it means to attain spiritual growth, let's look at three words starting with the word "conformed" in Romans 8:29:

*"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become **conformed** to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren."*

The word "conformed" means to "align our beliefs and thoughts with another or having the same form as another."

The second word is the word "transformed" in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

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

The Greek word for "transformed" is "metamorphoo" which means "a change of the form or nature of a person into a completely different person by supernatural means." It is where we get the word "metamorphosis."

In Galatians 4:19, we find the last word, “formed”:

*“My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is **formed** in you.”*

The word “formed” in the Greek means “in the same nature as.”

What Is The End Result of Growing Up?

Now that we have looked at the words “growing,” “conformed,” “transformed” and “formed”—let’s put these verses together to define spiritual growth.

- “**Growing** in every way more and more **like Christ**” – Ephesians 4:15
- “**Conformed** to the **image of His Son**.” – Romans 8:29
- “**Transformed** into His [Christ’s] likeness.” – 2 Corinthians 3:18
- “**Christ** being **formed** in you.” – Galatians 4:15

Bringing these four verses together, let’s define “growing up” this way:

Christ’s being FORMED in you is the result of you being CONFORMED to His image which occurs when you are being TRANSFORMED into Christ-likeness (i.e., growing to become more like Christ).

Before we get into what it looks like to grow into Christ-likeness, we will lay a foundation of some key truths.

What Is THE Christian Life?

The foundational truth we need to understand concerning growing into Christ-likeness is what is THE Christian life. You may have been taught the Christian life is a set of rules,

commands or a spiritual “to do” checklist. However, could THE Christian life be something else? Let’s begin answering that question with two verses from Jesus:

*“... **I AM** the way, the truth, and **THE LIFE**....”*

John 14:6

*“... **I AM** the resurrection and **THE LIFE**.”*

John 11:25

Jesus is saying that He Himself is **THE** Life. What does He mean when He says that He is **THE** Life? He is saying that He is THE Christian life. In other words, THE Christian life is not a legalistic checklist or a set of rules or “dos and don’ts.” Rather, THE Christian life is Christ Himself. What else does Christ as THE Life mean for you?

Christ As THE Life Means He Is The Source Of Your Life

We see this truth in 1 Corinthians 1:30a (RSV):

*“**He is the SOURCE of your life in Christ Jesus, ...**”*

One of the definitions for the word “source” is “the one who produces.” Let’s apply this to spiritual growth.

***The truth is that Christ is the only SOURCE
to PRODUCE THE Christian life.
(i.e., Transform us into Christ-likeness)***

Paul is saying that Christ, not us, is the Source to produce Christ-likeness.

The Definition Of Christ-Likeness

***Christ-likeness is living from and experiencing the
supernatural characteristics of Christ in us.***

The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, 23a is a great example of Christ-like characteristics:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is [Christ’s] love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control....”

Here is a longer list of Christ-like characteristics:

Christ-Likeness means that Christ is our:

Unconditional love	Victory	Grace
Acceptance	Faith	Freedom
Patience	Strength	Peace
Forgiveness	Understanding	Security
Fearlessness	Wisdom	Discernment
Christ-confidence	Adequacy	Humility
Boldness	Righteousness	Selflessness
Rest	Compassion	Courage
Hope	Gentleness	Christ-control
Faithfulness	Power	Joy
Worth/Value	Kindness	Goodness

Here is another example of Christ-likeness:

“For He [Christ] Himself is our peace, ...” Ephesians 2:14

Engaging God To Be Transformed Into Christ-Likeness

1. Growing In The Truth Starts With ENGAGING God

I said earlier that we can know and believe the truth and yet choose not to walk in it. How do we walk in the truth? We start by engaging God. This is how I define engaging God:

Engaging God means that you come to Him with a WILLING heart, totally DEPENDING on Him as your Source to grow you up.

Why must we totally depend on God for spiritual growth? Look at John 15:5 for a moment:

“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for **apart from Me, you can do nothing.**”

There are two key truths in this verse. First, the physical branches are totally dependent on the vine for life. Similarly, we, as spiritual branches, are totally dependent on Christ for life.

Second, when Jesus says that apart from Him we can do nothing, do you believe that includes your spiritual growth? Absolutely! In the context of spiritual growth, “nothing” means that we—apart from God—cannot develop spiritually. Our part is to totally depend on Him to do it.

2. The Way We Engage God Is By FAITH

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Hebrews 11:6

We know that God is the Source, but we have a part to play in God’s healing process as well.

***Faith is an ongoing **DEPENDENCE**
on God as your Source to grow spiritually.***

Faith is simply coming to God with an attitude of total dependence and willingness for Him to transform your life.

Why is dependence the key to spiritual growth? Let me give you an example to explain. If you needed surgery, why would you go to a surgeon? For two reasons. First, you can’t accomplish the surgery on yourself. Second, you have to totally depend on the surgeon to do the surgery because he is trained to do it and you aren’t able to do it. It is the same with letting Christ live in you.

3. Growing Up Means Taking STEPS of Faith

*“For we **walk by faith**, not by sight.”
2 Corinthians 5:7*

The walk of faith begins with the first step. What does it mean to take a step of faith concerning healing? Here is an example:

Step of Faith: “Lord, I am coming to You and trusting You to set me free from_____.”

Faith does not depend on your having the “right” feelings or thoughts. Initially, you may be taking steps of faith despite what you think or how you feel. Faith is a **choice** to believe God and to act on that choice in spite of your doubts.

4. What Happens At The MOMENT You Take A Step of Faith

The moment you take a step of faith, God releases the full force of His power in you to transform you. What kind of power are we talking about? The power that raised Jesus from the dead according to Ephesians 1:19, 20:

*“I pray that you will begin to understand the **incredible greatness of His power** for us who believe him. This is the **same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead** and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms.”*

This is the same power that created the heavens and is holding the universe together. Good news! You received all of God’s supernatural power at the point of salvation according to Acts 1:8:

*“... you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you....”*

God knew that without His power in you, you would never experience any spiritual transformation or spiritual growth.

5. Moving From Faith To Experience

As you walk by faith, over time, you will eventually experience transformation into Christ-likeness.



The Process of Moving From Faith To Experience

Walking by faith means you may have to "faith it" for some time before you experience transformation into Christ-likeness. However, as you continue to walk by faith, remember that the Holy Spirit is:

- RENEWING our minds to believe His truth. Romans 12:2
- Setting us FREE from our sin strongholds. John 8:32
- HEALING our woundedness. Psalm 147:3
- Giving us VICTORY over the flesh, sin, Satan, and the world. 1 Corinthians 15:57

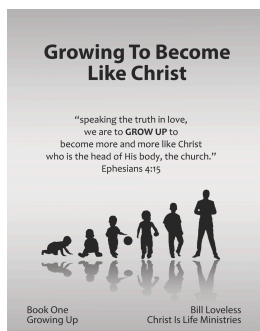
Ultimately, God's power will TRANSFORM us into CHRIST-LIKENESS according to Ephesians 4:15

The Results of Being Transformed Into Christ-Likeness

The manifestation of Christ's living in us is we will experience the results of being transformed into Christ-likeness. Here are some examples:

- You will live from **Christ's unconditional love** rather than trying to seek love from others.
- You will live from **Christ's acceptance** which means you no longer have to take ownership of someone else's rejection of you and you can accept others unconditionally.
- You no longer have to live in fear because you are living from **Christ's courage**.
- You no longer have to try to be in control because you are living from **Christ's control**.
- You can live from **Christ's peace** when adverse circumstances occur (like receiving a life-threatening health diagnosis).
- You can live from **Christ's selflessness** rather than living from your selfishness.
- You can live from **Christ's forgiveness** when someone has offended you.

Conclusion



To have a deeper understanding of what you have read in this chapter and learn practically how to grow into Christ-likeness, I would encourage you to go through **Book One** of the GROW series called ***Growing To Become Like Christ***. You can download this study for free by going to the **Discipleship** tab on our website which is

www.christislifeministries.com or you can purchase it from Amazon.

GROWING UP - Part Two

Experiencing Our New Identity In Christ

Defining Identity

To begin with, let's look at the definition of "identity."

***Your IDENTITY is defined as how you FEEL
or what you BELIEVE about yourself.***

This brings up two questions. "Does what you believe about yourself line up with God's truth?" "If it doesn't, what are the consequences?" These are important questions because you will not live beyond what you believe and if you are living from false beliefs (any belief that does not line up with God's truth) then there will be consequences. Therefore, let's start by looking at how our false beliefs are formed.

How Are False Beliefs About Yourself Formed?

Think back to your childhood for a moment. Do you remember any repetitive statements that your parents made to you about yourself? Maybe you heard positive statements like: "You are special." or "There is nothing you can't do." Or you may have heard negative statements like: "You are a failure." or "If only you could do better." or "Why can't you be like _____?" You may have grown up in a home where you heard mostly positive messages, a home where you heard mostly negative messages, or even a home where you heard mixed messages.

In addition to verbal messages, we all received non-verbal negative or positive messages. In my case, my father never said he didn't love me – he just never said he did love me. You might

even remember body language from your parents that positively or negatively impacted you.

Your false beliefs/identity were formed as you heard these positive and/or negative verbal or non-verbal messages over and over again. As you heard these messages, you began to draw conclusions about yourself. A positive conclusion might be: "I really am special." A negative conclusion might be: "I really am a failure." The more you heard such messages, the more they became reinforced and the stronger became your belief that they were true of you. These messages resulted in two kinds of false beliefs: positive and negative. Let's look at some examples of both kinds of false beliefs.

NEGATIVE False Beliefs

**Unworthy
Unacceptable
Rejected
A failure
Anxious
Inadequate
Insecure
Fearful**

POSITIVE False Beliefs

**Secure in self
Self-confident
Self-sufficient
Successful in self
Self-reliant
Self in control
Fearless in self
Strong in self**

These false beliefs determined your old identity. I define "old identity" this way:

***Your OLD identity is made up of EVERY FALSE belief
you had about yourself BEFORE you were saved.***

The Consequences of Living From Your False Beliefs/Old Identity?

The problem with living from your false beliefs is that there are consequences not only for you but for those around you. Those consequences can be summed up in one word: the FLESH. Paul refers to our "flesh" in Romans 7:14:

*“For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of **flesh**, sold into bondage to sin.”*

If you don't understand the word “flesh,” the biblical meaning of this word is man’s desire to live life with himself as the source, independent or apart from God as the Source. However, in the context of our false beliefs about ourselves, flesh is defined as:

The sinful ATTITUDES and BEHAVIORS that result from our adopting FALSE beliefs about ourselves.

Below, in Galatians 5:19-21, are some examples of those fleshly behaviors/attitudes:

“Now the **works of the flesh** are obvious: **fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these....”**

Galatians 5:19-21a

Here are some other examples of fleshly behaviors that result from our false beliefs:

Unforgiving	Unloving	Fearful	Jealous
People-pleasing	Envious	Impatient	Angry
Defensive	Rejecting	Judgmental	Critical
Self-condemning	Comparing	Depressed	Prideful
Self-protecting	Self-confident	Controlling	Selfish
Self-righteous	Demanding	Manipulative	Guilt

What is the problem from continuing to live from our false belief and resulting fleshly behaviors?

It creates an ongoing internal MISERY and makes us TOXIC to everyone around us.

Therefore, what did God accomplish to remove our old identity and give us a new identity?

At Salvation, God Removed Your Old Identity And Gave You A New Identity

Look at 2 Corinthians 5:17:

*“Therefore, if any man is **in Christ**, he is a **new creation**; the **old things [old identity]** passed away (**was crucified**); behold, **new things [new identity]** have come.”*

Let’s break this verse down by first looking at what it means that our old identity passed away.

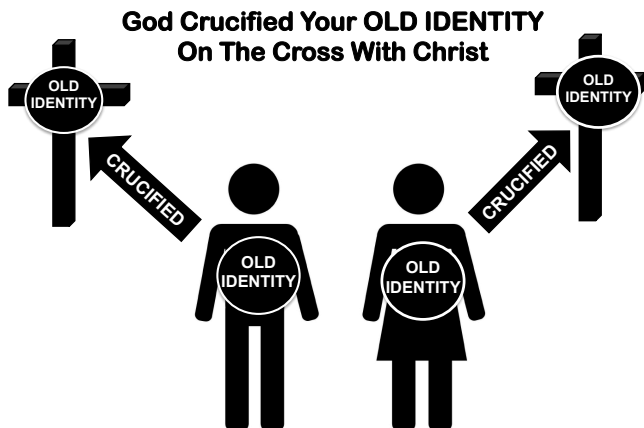
a. God CRUCIFIED Your Old Identity

In order for God to give us a new identity, He had to crucify your old identity. Therefore, we see in Romans 6:6 that God crucified your old self including your old identity.

*“... knowing this, that our **old self (old identity)** was **crucified with Him**, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.”*

Romans 6:6

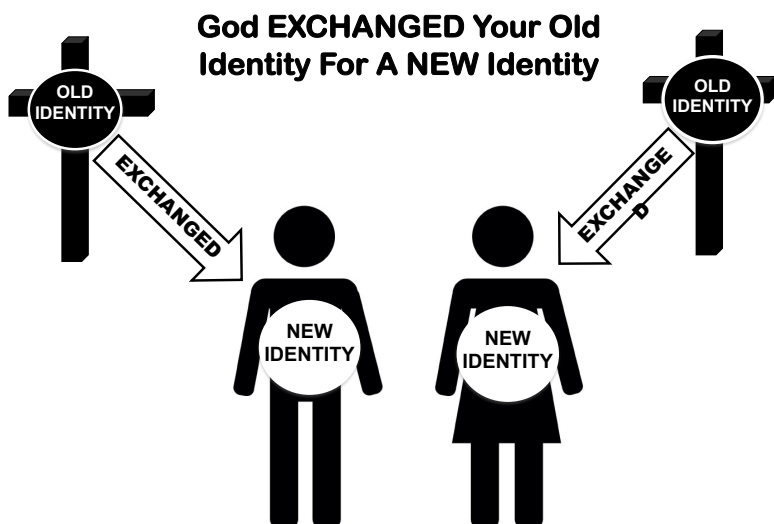
Let me illustrate this truth in the following diagram:



b. God EXCHANGED Your Old Identity For A NEW One

The good news is that God didn't just crucify the old identity. The moment you were saved, you became "in Christ," which means God removed your old identity and exchanged it for a new identity (in Christ). That is what Paul means when he says, "*new things have come*" in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

The diagram below illustrates this exchange.



Therefore, you no longer have an old identity with your false beliefs. Rather, now that you are "in Christ," you are a new creation which means you have a new identity. What is the makeup of your new identity?

Who You Are In Your New Identity

Look at the following verses that reveal some characteristics of your new identity in Christ.

Romans 8:35, 38-39 In Christ, you are unconditionally loved.

Ephesians 4:24 In Christ, you are righteous and holy.

Romans 15:7	In Christ, you are accepted and acceptable.
Colossians 3:13	In Christ, you are a forgiving person.
Psalms 139:14	In Christ, you are worthy.
2 Corinthians 3:5	In Christ, you are adequate.
Psalms 56:4	In Christ, you are fearless.
Colossians 2:10	In Christ, you are complete in Him.
Galatians 5:1	In Christ, you are free.
Psalms 139:5	In Christ, you are secure.
1 Corinthians 15:57	In Christ, you are victorious.
Romans 8:37	In Christ, you are a conqueror.
John 15:13	In Christ, you are sacrificial.
Psalms 71:5	In Christ, you are confident.

What Are The Results Of Living From Our True Identity?

As you engage God to renew your mind to the truth and transform you to live from your true identity, you will see below some examples of what your life looks like as you begin living from your true identity in Christ.

As I am being transformed to believe that:

In Christ, I am **righteous** – I don't have to try to work to try and become more righteous.

In Christ, I am **worthy** – I no longer have to try and find my worth from others or from what I do.

In Christ, I am **secure** — I don't have to depend on such things as finances, things, people or what the world offers as security.

In Christ, I am **confident** – I no longer have to live from my self-confidence.

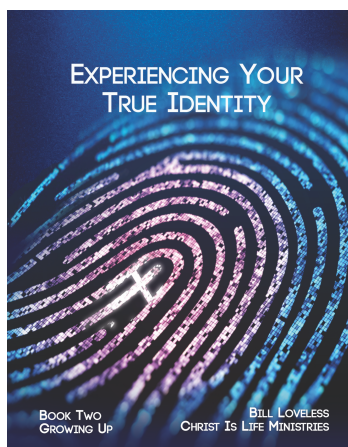
In Christ, I am **adequate** — I no longer have to live in inadequacy.

In Christ, I am a **forgiving person** — I have no excuse for not forgiving everyone.

In Christ, I am **free** – I am already free which means I no longer have to try and set myself free.

Conclusion

The key to being transformed to live from our true identity is to seek the Holy Spirit by faith to transform us.



If you would like to know more about God's transformation process, I would encourage you to go through **Book Two** of the Growing Up – Growing Out – Growing Deep series called ***Experiencing Your True Identity***. This curriculum will expand on the truths shared in this chapter as well as show you practically how to engage God to be transformed.

You can download this study for free by going to the **Discipleship** tab on our website which is www.christislifeministries.com or you can purchase it on Amazon.

GROWING OUT

Living Life For Others

Definition of Growing Out

“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” 2 Timothy 2:2

As we grow into Christ-likeness, we will experience a greater selflessness and a greater desire to become others’ focused. Spiritual growth means less focus on ourselves and our needs and a greater focus on others and their needs. As we do, we are growing out. I define growing out this way:

***Depending on Christ as your Source to live His life
THROUGH you to SPIRITUALLY impact everyone
who is in your life or will come into your life.***

Foundational Truth In Growing Out

We can do several things as believers to spiritually impact those around us. The key truth in living life for others is not what we are doing but who is the Source for doing it. As we discussed earlier, Jesus is the Source for His work in us. So too, is Christ the Source for living His life THROUGH us to impact others.

The reason I make this distinction is that for 30 years as a Christian, I worked **for** the Lord instead of allowing Him to work **through** me. The result was that I had very little impact on anyone because I was the source to do the works that only God can accomplish. However, as I began to depend on God as my Source to work through me, I have witnessed Him transform lives in amazing ways.

Why Do We Struggle With Living Life For Others

There are several reasons why we struggle with living life for others. Fear of rejection, feelings of inadequacy, self-protective or too self-absorbed. The foundation for all our struggle is that we have not grown up enough to become others' focused.

I know because I was a spiritual two-year old for thirty years because I did not know how to grow and therefore was not growing up into Christ-likeness. Therefore, to spiritually care for others we must grow into Christ-likeness which will result in loving, caring for, and seeking out those in need.

Let's look at some key truths concerning living life for others.

God Has (Good) Works For You And NO ONE Else

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

This verse confirms we are to do good works. What is the meaning of a "good work?"

GOOD WORK

Any work that ORIGINATES from God and is done BY Him THROUGH you.

Paul highlights this in Romans 5:18.

"For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed."

As tools in God's hands, He has prepared works that He wants to do through us for others. These are works specifically designed for you and on one else. It is important to understand

that these works were prepared in eternity past which means you don't have to come up with or create new works. As you live dependent on Christ as your Source, He will reveal to you the works designed for you and no one else.

Good News! Ministry Is NOT About Your Capability

The primary reason I hear why Christians don't minister to others is, "I am not capable." If that is where you are, I have some good news for you. You are not capable! Neither am I. The only One who is capable is God. Since God is the Source to accomplish His good works, then He is not depending on your capability to do His work.

In all the years of ministry, God has never once asked me if I am capable to minister. He knows better than that. The only question He asks me is: "Are you AVAILABLE for me to work through you?" Therefore, as you are available to Him then He will pour His life and power through you to minister to others. Therefore, please remember this key truth:

***Your part in growing out is to be constantly
AVAILABLE for God's CAPABILITY
to work through you.***

Good Works Are SUPERNATURAL

Since God is the Source for the works, all that He accomplishes through us is supernatural. Concerning ministry, a supernatural work is one that only God can accomplish for which there is no man-made explanation for.

We have talked about supernatural in relationship to our personal transformation but supernatural also refers to the work God does through you. As you depend on Him to do the work through you His supernatural life and power are flowing through you to transform another person.

You Have The Same POWER In You To Live Life For Others As Jesus Did While On Earth

We know we have the Holy Spirit living in us but do we realize the magnitude of the Holy Spirit's power moving through us? It is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

*"I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the **same mighty power** ²⁰ **that raised Christ from the dead ...**"*

Ephesians 1:19, 20a

What can this power do? The same thing the Holy Spirit's power did through Jesus while on earth. Look at what Jesus said in Luke 4:18.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me **to bring good news to the poor, heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.**"*

Jesus was speaking about what the Holy Spirit was doing through Him while He lived on the earth. Now that we have Christ living in us, that same power is available to us to do the same things set out in this verse and more.

Think about this. The Holy Spirit through you can:

- Can transform someone into Christ-likeness.
- Set someone free from a sin stronghold.
- Give a person victory over a fleshly behavior.
- Heal someone from their woundedness.

How do I know this? Because He has been doing those things through me for over 20 years. Since you have the same power in you then He can and will accomplish those same things and more through you. Do you believe it?

God Has Given You Six Square Feet

One morning in my time with the Lord, He brought a sermon to mind from 40 years ago. In his message, the pastor told us how the Romans conquered the world. The way they did it was to convince each Roman soldier that all he had to do was conquer the six square feet around him. He did not have to worry about anyone else's six square feet but his own.

The strategy behind this instruction was if a soldier conquered his six square feet and the soldiers to the right, to the left, in front of and behind him conquered their six square feet, they would conquer all their enemies. And history proved that out. The spiritual analogy is that God gives each of us as Christians our own six square feet. Here is how I define six square feet for the Christian.

ANYONE the Lord brings into our lives so that through us He can ACCOMPLISH His DIVINE purposes.

It can be your spouse, your child or the checker at your grocery store. Every person who comes into your life or whom God brings into your life today is part of your six square feet. Right this moment, God is calling you and me out to allow Him to live through us to accomplish His divine purposes in the life of another person.

As We Grow In Christ, The Lord Gives Us Spiritual Eyes To See Others

One of the things I have experienced as I grow into Christ-likeness is seeing others with the eyes of Christ. Let me explain.

a. See Past The Externals and See A Person's Heart

Since Christ lives in us, we now have the same "spiritual" eyes to see people as Jesus did. Jesus, while on earth, saw past the externals of people. Here are some examples of those externals:

- Sins.
- Failures.
- Fleshly behaviors.
- Unbelief
- False beliefs.

None of those things deterred him from ministering to anyone who came into His six square feet. Isn't the same true of what He looks past in you because of His great love for you? Is He not asking the same of us? Rather than judging or condemning, should we not look past people's sins, failures, etc.? What does God want us to see? He wants us to see the heart. We see this in 1 Samuel 16:7.

*"The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but **the Lord looks at the heart.**"*
1 Samuel 16:7

Rather than just seeing others externally, we, too, can see peoples' hearts. Through the eyes of Christ, we can see:

- People's needs.
- People's woundedness.
- People's pain.
- People's struggles.

Seeing others in this context requires supernatural sight rather than just physical sight. By supernatural, I mean this kind of seeing is Spirit-produced and can only occur as we grow into Christ-likeness. The word "see" in the Bible means to discover, to examine, to understand and to discern or perceive.

A great example of "spiritual" seeing is Elisha's servant who could not see the chariots of fire around the mountains until Elisha prayed this prayer.

*"Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, **open his eyes that he may see.**" And the **LORD opened the servant's eyes and***

he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” 2 Kings 6:17

I continuously pray Elisha’s prayer for myself for two reasons. First, I realize that if the Lord does not give me His eyes to see, I will never see into another person’s heart. Second, when I pray this prayer, the Lord moves my focus away from me and my struggles and gives me the desire to look at the heart of those in my six square feet.

As you grow in Christ, the Spirit will give you eyes to see people’s needs, pain, woundedness, etc., with the result that you will find yourself speaking God’s truth to them, encouraging them, comforting them, etc.

There are two other things you will see as well.

b. See The VALUE To God Of Every Person Who Comes Into Your Six Square Feet

When you are driving down the road and see the homeless person on the side of the road, what are your first thoughts? Do you feel love or compassion or are you tempted to be condescending, critical or judgmental because of his looks, the way he smells or his status as a homeless person? I must admit that if I were to look at this man in the flesh my thoughts would trend towards being critical and judgmental.

Instead of the homeless person, what if it is the boss you dislike, an ex-spouse, your prickly mother-in-law, the politician you dislike the most or the most unlikeable person in your life? Isn’t it a challenge for you to see and value that person the way God does?

The Lord is persuading me that not only do I have eternal, inestimable and infinite value to God but so does everyone else who comes into my six square feet. It may be a homeless guy or my server at lunch or even the foreign person who I can’t understand over the phone when I have a question about my

credit card. Our tendency is to look past people like this and not even ask ourselves the question of how valuable they are to God.

What about the value Jesus places on others? How much did He value the woman caught in adultery or the Samaritan woman He met at the well who had been married five times and was living with a man who was not her husband? Because of their failures and sins, wouldn't it have been easier to avoid, write off or judge these two? Yet what do we see in the heart of our Lord? We see the eternal value these two women were to Him.

I wonder if there is a direct correlation between how much you believe you are valued by God and how much you value others? In other words, doesn't the extent to which you feel valued by God determine how valuable you perceive others are to God. You might want to give that some thought.

My challenge to you is to focus on everyone who comes into your six square every day and ask the question, "How valuable is he or she to God?" As you do, over time you will find yourself more and more looking past people's appearance, personality, sins and failures and seeing them through the same eyes Jesus sees you.

c. You Will See the "Spiritual" POTENTIAL in Every Person

What does seeing spiritual potential mean?

Seeing spiritual potential is believing what God can accomplish to TRANSFORM a person REGARDLESS of their IQ, their status in life or the depth of their sins or failures.

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

Unlike me with my limited vision, God not only sees the here and now but He also sees the spiritual potential in every person regardless of their pursuit of Him or their resistance to Him. God, because of His omniscience, can see where a person's life could be if he/she chose to live from Him as his/her Source. He has provided us with many stories about people in His Word as examples.

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

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

I even look back on my life when I was in total despair and having suicidal thoughts. I saw no hope and no future and yet what did God see? Potential. He didn't flinch at my doubts because He knew there was coming a time where I would see the death of my self-life and see Him as Life and turn an eternal corner that would change my life forever. Part of my experiencing my spiritual potential was that God brought believers into my life who saw spiritual potential in me. I am forever grateful for them because I shudder to think where I would be without their willingness to invest in my life.

God wants to use us to be part of other people's experiencing their potential. He wants us to participate with Him in their transformation. But we cannot do that if we are judging them, rejecting them, or not pursuing them.

As the earthly father ran towards the prodigal son, so our heavenly Father runs toward us. He is not deterred by our

resistance or our rejection of Him. He keeps coming because He sees the potential in each one of us. Should we not do the same?

The Most Important Truth In Living Life For Others

Whenever I go to speak, my wife always says these words, “When love is felt the message is heard.” It is a great reminder because the filter for all the Lord wants to do through us is His unconditional love. If it is not, Paul says we are just a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

*“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but **do not have love**, I have become a **noisy gong** or a **clanging cymbal**.” 1 Corinthians 13:1.*

As Christians, we are called to be messengers of truth, ministers, encouragers, teachers, evangelists, etc., but the key to living life for others is found in these two verses.

*“...**speak the truth in love**....” Ephesians 4:15*

*“Let **all that you do** be done in **love**.” 1 Corinthians 16:14*

Just as important as the truth you are sharing, is the attitude with which you share it. Truth spoken through Christ’s unconditional love is the key for the message to be heard.

What Kind Of Love Are We Talking About?

Love comes in many forms but the love of Christ only comes in one. It is called “agape” love. Agape love is the divine love that only comes from God. Agape love is perfect, unconditional, sacrificial, and selfless. Loving others with agape love means that you love everyone equally regardless because agape love has:

- No conditions
- No expectations

- No fleshly rights
- No limitations
- No selfish motives

In addition, agape love doesn't judge, criticize, compare, take offense, or hold grudges. Agape love is unconditional which removes all excuses for not loving others.

What Do We Need To Know About Agape Love?

1. Agape Love = Power

Until a recent event took place, I had never equated love with power. I realized this when I went to share my testimony at a men's prayer breakfast. I had a long-term relationship with the pastor and had taught and preached at his church a number of times.

As I was driving over to the church, the Spirit implanted these thoughts into my mind, "Bill, I want you to first and foremost focus on loving these men and not on giving your testimony." So, when I started speaking, I silently prayed this prayer during the whole time I was speaking,

"Lord, love these men through me."

Please recall the words of Lord through my wife: "When love is felt the message is heard." When I got through, my pastor friend came over to me and said, "I have heard your testimony many times before but never more powerfully than today." I realized that because I was focusing on God's loving these men through me, the Spirit was able to work in His power through His love to minister to the hearts of these men.

I compare this to an iron fist in a velvet glove. The iron fist is God's power and the velvet glove is His love. What can His power in love accomplish?

- It can disarm others and make them open and transparent.

- It can bring a person to brokenness.
- It can draw an unbeliever to salvation.
- It can move people to love you.

In addition, God's love through you can:

- **Penetrate** someone's heart.
- **Soften** someone's heart.
- **Heal** someone's heart.
- **Transform** someone's heart.

2. Agape Love Is An Unstoppable Force

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38, 39

Romans 8:38-39 promises that nothing will separate us from God's love. In addition, Paul tells us that nothing and no one is going to stop God from loving you. Likewise, no one can stop you from loving other people. The person you are loving may say, "No" to your overtures of love, but that will not stop Christ's love from pouring through you into them, because His love is truly an unstoppable force.

When I think of this truth, it reminds me of one of my board members who calls me periodically and says, "I love you Bill and there is nothing you can do about it." Isn't this a great example of the unstoppable love of God?

3. Agape Love Makes You "Safe"

First, let me tell you what I mean by "safe?"

By safe, I mean that others will TRUST you enough to share their struggles and know you will LOVE them rather than condemning or judging them.

Becoming a safe person is a process, for the most part, but by your increasingly loving others with Christ's love, you will eventually create an atmosphere of safety that allows others to trust you.

Here are some characteristics of a "safe" person:

- Being trustworthy.
- You listen attentively and are focused on them.
- You are compassionate and empathetic.
- You are not trying to "fix" someone or necessarily solve whatever it is they are struggling with.
- You aren't critical, judgmental or condescending.
- Others feel secure with you.
- Others are experiencing Christ's love flowing through you.

I believe safe people are what an unbelieving and struggling world is looking for. If that is true, shouldn't Christians be the safest people on earth? People like you who can be trusted to handle, with the utmost care and love, others' struggles, heartaches, and any other issue they are facing.

4. Agape Love Is the Key To Unlocking a Person's Heart

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

I have seen God's love unlock many people's hearts, including mine. I had a padlock on the door of a heart filled with anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, and woundedness. This went on for

many years until God brought a man into my life in 1996 named David Love. (God's sense of humor to bring a Love to a Loveless.)

This was the darkest time in my life. The wheels were falling off and I was spiraling down into depression and despair. David and his wife Denise were missionaries to Colombia at the time. We met because as head of the mission's committee of my church, I was interviewing David to see if our church would support them financially. I went to pick him up for lunch at a restaurant and on the way there he said very few words. Little did I know what was about to happen.

I started the interview with a question but he didn't give me a response. I thought that was strange but I was soon to realize we weren't there for me to interview him. Rather, we were there for me to experience the love and power of Jesus through him. When David finally opened his mouth, he didn't answer my questions. Rather, he started probing me about my life. Before I knew it, I had spent the next 3 hours pouring out 46 years of pent-up pain and heartache. Christ's love through him was so powerful I couldn't stop weeping in the middle of the restaurant.

I didn't realize at the time that it was not only the love of Christ that was being poured through him, but also the power that love had to be able to pierce the thick walls of self-protection surrounding my heart. Looking back, I recognize it was God's power flowing through His love that was beginning to set me free.

All I knew at the time was I was being loved by Jesus through David. His love was unconditional and irresistible. (Since then, David and I have become very close friends.) When I look back on that event, I recognize that what I saw and experienced was the irresistibility of agape love that unlocked my heart.

"I Will Build My Church"

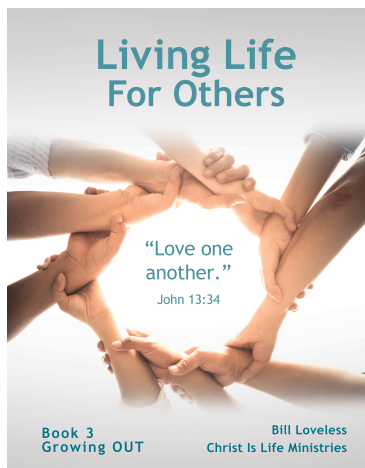
Jesus said in Matthew 16:18,

"....I will build My church...."

What He means by building His church is for Christians to not only grow up but grow out because He wants to work through you to grow others up. There is no doubt He can accomplish this apart from us, but He chooses to work through us to build His church. What a wonderful privilege the Lord has given us. Look at the results if we seek Christ to live life for others through us.

“He makes the whole body **fit together perfectly**. As **each part (you)** does its own special work, it **helps the other parts grow**, so that the whole body is **healthy and growing and full of love**.” Ephesians 4:16.

Conclusion



I hope this chapter has given you a greater desire to live life for others. If so, I would encourage you to go through **Book Three** of the Growing Up – Growing Out – Growing Deep series called ***Living Life For Others***. This curriculum will expand on the truths shared in this chapter as well as show you practically how to engage God to live life for others.

You can download this study for free by going to the **Discipleship** tab on our website which is www.christislifeministries.com or you can purchase it on Amazon.

GROWING DEEP

Experiencing A Deeper Relationship With God

Introduction

The Christian life is like a funnel. It is constantly narrowing until you get to the bottom of the funnel. In much the same way, the Christian funnels down to “one thing.” In Part One and Part Two we will be focusing on two facets of the “one thing.”

The Definition of Growing Deep

Growing deep means:

Growing into a deeper LOVE for God and a deeper desire to have a RELATIONSHIP with Him.

God’s Plan To Restore The Relationship That Was Lost

From the Fall of mankind until the end of this world as we know it, God’s heart is to bring us back to Himself. Paul tells us this in Ephesians 1:5:

“His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave Him great pleasure.”

Why did God want to bring us to Himself?

To EXPERIENCE what we were created for: a deep, personal RELATIONSHIP with God.

Can you imagine God's anticipation for you to be born and how excited He was the moment you came into this world? You thought your parents were happy. Their happiness pales in comparison to how happy the Lord was (and still is) the day you were born because the stage was now set for Him to start bringing you to Himself for an intimate relationship. Why? Because this is what you were created for. Before we go on, let me share with you what I mean concerning intimacy with God.

A MUTUAL love relationship with God that is based on our KNOWING and EXPERIENCING Him on an emotional, experiential and spiritual level.

More simply put, intimacy is the desire and experience of loving God and being loved by God.

How Do We Know God Really Loves Us?

Let's look at just a few key truths that prove how much God loves us.

1. The GREATEST Expression of His Love

*"There is **no greater love** than to lay down one's life for one's friend." John 15:13*

Would you spend a few moments meditating on three words in this verse? "*No greater love.*" What Jesus is saying here is "There is no greater expression of My love for you than going to the cross for you. It was a horrible, painful death but I love you enough that I laid down My life for you – even if you were the only person who ever lived."

Even though our finite minds cannot comprehend the height and depth of His sacrifice, we must continue to seek the Spirit to take us deeper in our understanding of what happened on the

cross because it wasn't Roman soldiers who drove the nails into His hands and feet – it was His for love you that chose the nails.

2. He Chose The “YOU” Version of You To Be Born

You may not know this, but there are 500 million genetic possibilities at conception. God loved you enough that out of 500 million possible genetic combinations, God chose the “you” version of you to be born. Think about it. He did not want 499,999,999 other versions of you. He wanted you! David confirms this in Psalm 139:13-16.

“For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother’s womb.14 I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

Think about these words, “fearfully and wonderfully made.” “You knit me together.” God is telling us that the “you” form of you was personally chosen by Him and hand crafted to be exactly the form of you He desires. All because He wants to love you and no other form of you.

3. You Are God’s BELOVED Son or Daughter

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved...” Colossians 3:12

The word “beloved” is an adjective that refers to “someone who is dearly loved and cherished.” What person do you dearly love the most? Multiply the love you have for that person by eternity and that is how much God dearly loves you. If you have come from a home of unloving or even abusive parents, the word “beloved” may be hard to receive. If this is true of you,

please know that your heavenly Father will spend the rest of your life persuading you that you are His very own beloved son or daughter. Another one of the Greek words for “beloved” is “favorite.” You may not know this but you are God’s favorite.

4. God Loves You As A PERFECT Father (Abba)

“and I will be a (perfect) Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty.”

2 Corinthians 6:18

Depending on what kind of a father you had, God saying, “I will be a Father to you” can be well received or troubling since we tend to put our earthly father’s face on our heavenly Father’s face. Regardless of how loving or unloving a home you came from, we all have (or had) imperfect fathers (and mothers). What God will do as we continue to seek Him, will be to reveal to us what a perfect, unconditionally loving father looks like. He will bring us to the same place of intimate relationship where Jesus was when Jesus calls His Father “abba” in Mark 14:36.

*“And He was saying, ‘**Abba!** Father!...”*

5. He Put Himself In UNION With You To Love You At The Deepest Level

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

God so wants to love you at the deepest level that He put Himself in union with you. The word “united” in Ephesians 1:3 means “in union with.” When God entered into union with us, He restored us to the same union relationship He had with Adam and Eve before the Fall. Why did He do this? So that we, like them, could experience a love relationship with God at the deepest level. Think about it. God cannot get any closer to you than He is right now.

Is Intimacy With God Conditional?

Someone recommended that I read John Eldridge's book, *"Get Your Life Back."* I really enjoyed the book because it focused on unplugging from the busy-ness of the world and spending time in stillness before God. But little did I know when I started this book what the Lord had in store for me.

One day as I was reading, I came to a part in the book where Eldridge says:

***God's love and acceptance are UNCONDITIONAL
but intimacy with Him is CONDITIONAL.***

Those words jumped off the page because I had never thought that intimacy with God was conditional. I had always just assumed that since we are in union with God, we couldn't get any closer to Him than we already were. While that is true, what I was going to find out is that being in union with God does not necessarily result in "experiencing" intimacy with Him. To make his point, Eldridge cited James 4:8:

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you..."

As I further meditated on this verse, I realized that for many years I was seeking God for what I wanted or needed rather than seeking Him for who He is.

Eldridge compared intimacy with God to our human relationships. Human intimacy is based on the depth of **mutual, reciprocal** love. We can unconditionally love people that don't like us or even hate us. However, we can only experience intimacy with someone we love who responds with love towards us. Why would it be any different with God?

We Are To Be Men and Women After God's Heart

***"... the LORD has sought out for Himself a man (or woman)
after His own heart...." 1 Samuel 13:14***

To cultivate an intimate relationship with God, it begins by becoming men and women after God's heart. However, you may be asking that since we are in union with God, why do we have to be "after" God's heart? The answer is what we discussed in the previous section. God is non-stop pursuing us but we are to pursue Him as well. We see this in 1 Chronicles 16:10 below:

*"Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those who **seek** the Lord rejoice. **Seek** the Lord and His strength; **Seek** His face continually (**longing to be in His presence**)."*

Look at David as the ultimate example of being after God's heart.

*"But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, 'I have found David's son of Jesse, **a man after my own heart**. He will do everything I want him to do.'" Acts 13:22*

I have learned more about what intimacy with God looks like from David's life than any other biblical character. He expressed His love of God in so many ways. Here are a few verses that reveal his deep love for God:

*"You **satisfy** me more than the richest feast. I will praise you with songs of joy." Psalm 63:5*

*"O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul **thirsts** for you; my whole body **longs** for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water." Psalm 63:1*

Can you see God's desire for intimacy with God with such words as "satisfy, thirsts for, and longs for?" God will spend the rest of your life persuading you of His love for you and giving you the desire to love Him in return.

What Are Some Of The Results of Growing Deep?

1. The Lord Will Become More IRRESTIBLE

*"When You said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You,
'Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.'" Psalm 27:8*

2. There Will Be A Deeper EXPERIENCE of God

*"O **taste** and **see** that the Lord is good..."
Psalm 34:8*

3. We Will Have A Deeper SATISFACTION With God

*"You **satisfy** me more than the richest feast. I will
praise you with songs of joy." Psalm 63:5*

4. We Will Experience A Deeper THIRST For God

*"I lift my hands to you in prayer. I **thirst** for You
as parched land thirsts for rain." Psalm 143:6*

5. We Will Experience A Deeper Heart Of PRAISE and THANKSGIVING.

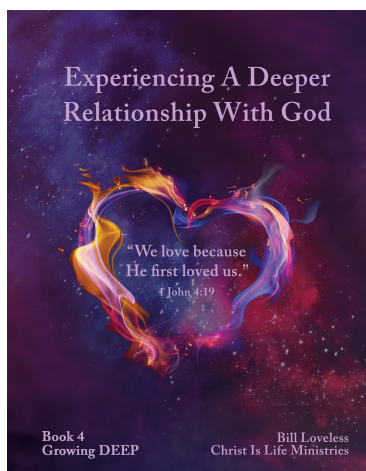
*"I will bless the LORD at all times; His **praise**
shall continually be in my mouth." Psalm 34:1*

*"Sing to the LORD with **thanksgiving**; Sing
praises to our God on the lyre." Psalm 147:7*

6. We Will Live In Greater AWE and WONDER Of God

*"Let all the inhabitants of the world stand
in **awe of Him.**" Psalm 33:8*

Conclusion



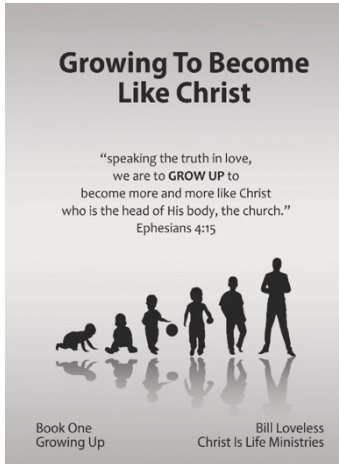
If after reading this chapter, you want to experience a deeper relationship with God, I would encourage you to go through **Book Four** of the Growing Up – Growing Out – Growing Deep series called ***Experiencing A Deeper Relationship With God.***

You can download this study for free by going to the **Discipleship** tab on our website which is www.christislifeministries.com or you can purchase it on Amazon.

Where Do I Go From Here?

At our website listed below, we encourage you to check out our four-part discipleship series called ***Growing Up – Growing Out – Growing Deep*** designed to teach Christians how to fulfill their purpose and calling. The first book in the series is called ***Growing to Become Like Christ***.

Book One covers the following topics:



- What it means to grow up spiritually to become like Christ.
- The difference between living “A” Christian life versus living “THE” Christian life.
- What it looks like practically to grow to become like Christ.
- What are some of the hindrances to spiritual growth and how we overcome them.
- How becoming like Christ transforms every area of our lives.

CILM DISCIPLESHIP MATERIALS

CILM has this series and many other studies, booklets and videos at our website listed below. To purchase ready-to-use copies from **Amazon or download for free** and do your own printing, copying and binding, please go to the **Discipleship** tab of our website. We hope you will take advantage of these materials.

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(2025-08-08)

Growing Up – Growing Out – Growing Deep

I believe these three phrases for the most part sum up the Christian life. Growing up spiritually is paramount to spiritual maturity. Growing out is the overflow of Christ through us. Growing deep is experiencing a deepening personal relationship with God. This booklet is designed to give you an overview of the meaning of these three phrases.

*** Growing Up**

- * What it means to grow into Christ-likeness.**
- * Knowing and living from our true identity.**

*** Growing Out**

- * Living life for others.**

*** Growing Deep**

- * Experiencing a deeper intimacy with God.**

I trust the Lord will use this book to encourage you in your spiritual journey.



Bill Loveless is the founder of Christ is Life Ministries (CILM), a non-profit, non-denominational discipleship ministry. CILM's focus is teaching Christians that Christ is their only source for living the Christian life, what it looks like to be transformed into Christ-likeness, and how to be drawn into a deep relationship with Him. Bill finished his earthly journey in 2024 and is now with the Lord he loves.

For further information and to see other discipleship materials being offered, please go to our website: www.christislifeministries.com

