

Growing To Become Like Christ

“speaking the truth in love,
we are to **GROW UP** to
become more and more like Christ
who is the head of His body, the church.”

Ephesians 4:15



Book One
Growing Up

Bill Loveless
Christ Is Life Ministries

Growing To Become Like Christ

**Book One of The
Growing Up Series**

Bill Loveless

Christ Is Life Ministries

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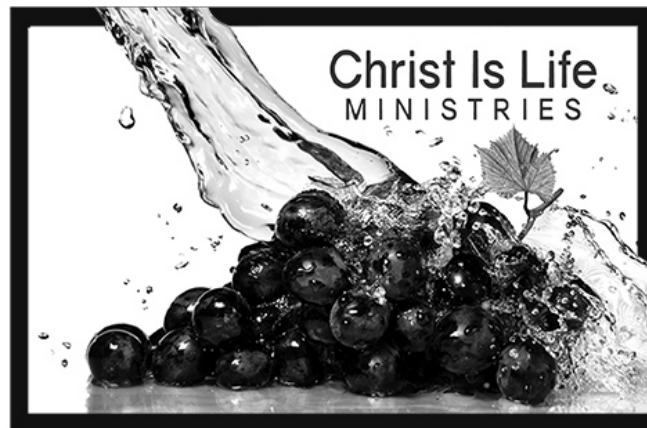
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Growing Up - Growing Out - Growing Deep Series

This is Book One of a four-part series designed to fulfill our calling as Christians:

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

This calling is summed up by the three phrases: Growing Up – Growing Out – Growing Deep. Here is the breakdown and the four-part curriculum associated with these three phrases.

Growing UP

Book One - Growing To Become Like Christ

- 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.

Book Two - Experiencing Your True Identity

- How God exchanged our old identity for a new identity.
- What our true identity is in Christ.
- God’s transformation process to experience our true identity.
- How living from our true identity impacts our lives and the lives of others.

Growing OUT

Book Three - Living Life For Others

- What the overflow of Christ-likeness looks like in living life for others.
- Looking past the externals and seeing the heart of another person.
- What freedom looks like to love others with Christ’s love.
- Ministry to others from the overflow of Christ-likeness.

Growing DEEP

Book Four - Experiencing A Deeper Relationship With God

- How God feels about you and why He created you.
- What intimacy with God and God with us looks like.
- Key truths concerning intimacy with God.
- Engaging God to experience a deeper relationship with Him

Growing To Become Like Christ

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The Layout of This Study

Thank you for choosing to study *Growing To Become Like Christ*. Before we begin, let's look at the layout of the study. The study contains six lessons, and each lesson has five daily readings (Day One, Day Two, etc.). If you are meeting weekly, this will give you seven days to complete the five daily readings. Throughout each lesson there will be **Questions, Scriptures for Meditation**, and an **Engaging God** section.

Questions

There are questions throughout the lesson and at the end of each lesson. They are primarily designed for you individually and for you to share with the group.

Meditation of Scripture

Throughout the study there will be several places where you will be asked to meditate on scriptures. If the idea of meditation is new to you, it means to engage the Spirit of God to give you personal revelation of a scripture(s). It involves being quiet before the Lord and allowing Him to insert whatever thoughts He wants to share. Meditation is a crucial part of the transformation process.

Engaging God

This section is designed for you to ask the Holy Spirit to give you personal revelation, understanding, and application of what you have just read. This is especially crucial when you come to truths that contradict what you believe. (If we don't seek God to reveal His truth, then we will never move beyond the false beliefs that we may be believing.) Therefore, be sure and take the time to engage God as you go through the study.

Information – Revelation – Application – Transformation

God provided His word primarily for four reasons.

- Information – for you to know intellectually what God's word says.
- Revelation – for God to give you personal revelation of His word.
- Application – depending on God to apply His truth into your life.
- Transformation – into Christ-likeness will be the result of information, revelation, and application.

Revelation

Since I will be using the word "revelation" throughout the study, I want to define what I mean when I use this word. "Revelation" simply means that God **supernaturally** takes His truth and makes it personal to you and to your life situations. Revelation takes you from intellectual understanding to spiritual understanding of God's truth.

Key Truth

Please remember this key truth as you go through this study:

**You will not live beyond what you believe.
If what you believe is a lie, then that is how you will live.**

This is key because what you believe affects what you think, your behavior, and the choices that you make. Therefore, one of God's objectives through this study is to expose your false beliefs, renew your mind, and set you free according to John 8:32. Therefore, our prayer for you is that you will seek Him throughout this study to set you free from your false beliefs and the adverse effects that those false beliefs are creating in your life.

LESSON ONE

What Is Spiritual Growth? What If We Don't Grow Up Spiritually?

DAY ONE

Overview of Lesson One

Here are the key points we will be discussing in this chapter:

- **The Goal of Spiritual Growth**
- **The Meaning of Christ-Likeness**
- **Key Truths About Christ-Likeness**
- **The Consequences of Not Growing Spiritually**

The Goal of Spiritual Growth

Four Key Words

*"but **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."
2 Peter 3:18a*

*"like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you
may **grow** in respect to salvation." 1 Peter 2:2*

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you have probably heard the term "spiritual growth." To better understand what it means, let's start by looking at Ephesians 4:15:

*"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*." Three key words that focus on spiritual growth are "conformed," "transformed," and "formed." Let's begin by looking at 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.*” This means we are to align our beliefs and thoughts with those of Christ.

The second word we see in 2 Corinthians 3:18 is the word “transformed.”

*“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.” [Note: The word “nature” with regard to Christ means resembling Christ in His attitudes and behavior.]

Finally, let’s look at Galatians 4:19 and the word “formed.”

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

As Christ is being formed in us, our thoughts, beliefs, and behavior will be transformed to line up with His. We might sum up the meaning of these three words this way:

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

Now that we have looked at these three “growth” words, the next question we need to answer is, “What is the objective or goal of spiritual growth?” Let’s take another look at the prior four verses to find the answer:

- “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 likeness**” – 2 Corinthians 3:18
- “**Christ being formed** in you” – Galatians 4:19

“Like Christ,” “image of His Son,” “His likeness,” and “Christ being formed” can be summed up in one word: **Christ-likeness**. We will look at the meaning of Christ-likeness in the next section.

Questions: Prior to your reading this section, how would you have defined spiritual growth? Had you known before that God’s promise is to make you a completely different person by supernatural means?

Meditate: on the four growth verses above and seek the Holy Spirit to give you deeper revelation of their meaning in relationship to what you understand about spiritual growth.

Engaging God: Seek the Lord to give you a deeper personal revelation and understanding of the words *conformed, formed, and transformed*.

DAY TWO

What Is Christ-Likeness?

The Definition of CHRIST-LIKENESS

We looked at the four words in the last section and saw that one of the main goals of spiritual growth is growing in Christ-likeness. Let's define the meaning of Christ-likeness:

***Christ-likeness is living FROM and EXPERIENCING the
SUPERNATURAL characteristics of Christ.***

Let's look at some examples of Christ-like characteristics.

Characteristics of Christ-Likeness

Below is a list of some of the characteristics of Christ.

Christ-likeness means you are living From and Experiencing Christ's:

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

Let's now look at some scriptures that reveal these Christ-like characteristics. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, 23a and Colossians 3:12-15 are great examples of Christ-likeness.

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

Galatians 5:22, 23a

"So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another [selflessness], and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful." Colossians 3:12-15

We see that Christ Himself is our peace in Ephesians 2:14 and our strength in Ephesians 6:10.

"For He [Christ] Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall." Ephesians 2:14

[**Note:** Whenever you see the term "Christ-likeness," it is referring to the list of Christ-like characteristics on the previous page.]

Since we can experience human peace, joy, etc., let's look at the difference between a human characteristic versus a Christ-like characteristic.

What Is The DIFFERENCE Between Christ-Like Characteristics and Human Characteristics?

In addition to what we will learn about Christ-like characteristics, we live in the human realm where we experience feelings of human love, joy, peace, patience, security, etc. But there is a significant difference between human and Christ-like.

HUMAN Characteristics – feelings or experiences generated by man that CAN be changed by our circumstances and/or our relationships.

Let's assume, for example, that you are having a good day. You are feeling peace, joy, and security. However, you come home to find that someone has broken into your house, your house is flooded due to a broken pipe, and your two-year old son is throwing a temper tantrum.

What happens to your human feelings of peace, joy, and security? They evaporate quickly because human feelings are subject to change. How do human feelings differ from living from Christ-likeness?

CHRIST-LIKE Characteristics – supernatural characteristics of Christ that CANNOT be changed by circumstances or relationships.

Using the same example as above, let's assume that instead of walking in human peace, joy, etc., you are walking in Christ-like joy, peace, etc. When you are faced with the robbery, the flooding, and the crying child, none of these things rob you of Christ's peace, Christ's joy, or Christ's patience. Let's look at a biblical example to further explain.

Look at what the apostle Paul experienced in 2 Corinthians 11:24, 25:

*"Five times I received from the Jews **thirty-nine lashes**. Three times I was **beaten** with rods, once I was **stoned**, three times I was **shipwrecked**, a night and a day I have spent in the deep."*

In spite of all this, look at what he says in 2 Corinthians 12:10:

*"Therefore, I am **well content** with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."*

Despite the persecution that Paul went through, he says that he is "well content." We know this was not a human feeling of contentment because it is nearly impossible to experience human

contentment when we are suffering. Paul was experiencing a supernatural Christ-like contentment that even suffering could not rob him of. Therefore, let's sum up the difference between a human and a Christ-like characteristic.

The KEY difference between a HUMAN characteristic and a CHRIST-LIKE characteristic is that neither relationships nor adverse circumstances can ROB you of experiencing Christ-like characteristics.

[Note: Becoming Christ-like does not mean we are becoming deity. It means that we can experience Christ-like attitudes as the Holy Spirit transforms us into Christ-likeness. Christ-like attitudes are the result of Christ “being formed in you” according to Galatians 4:19.]

Question: In what ways might it change the struggles and conflicts that you are facing today if you could live from the Christ-like characteristics of peace, rest, joy, patience, forgiveness, etc.?

Meditate: on how your life would be different if you were experiencing the Christ-like characteristics that you listed above.

Engaging God: Seek the Holy Spirit to give you a deeper understanding of the characteristics of Christ-likeness.

DAY THREE

Key Truths About Christ-Likeness

Before we go on, let's look at five key truths concerning Christ-likeness.

1. We contain ALL of the Christ-like characteristics.

Since Christ is in you, how much of Christ's love, joy, acceptance, etc., do you contain? The answer: all of it. How do we know? Look at Colossians 2:9, 10 for the answer:

"For in Him [Christ] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him [Christ] you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority."

Since we have the fullness of Christ in us and we have been made complete, we contain all of the Christ-like characteristics in full. Not only are they given to us in full, they are inexhaustible. We have a never-ending supply of Christ's love, peace, forgiveness, etc.

2. We no longer have to TRY to produce these characteristics.

Have you ever been taught that it is up to you to produce the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, 23 (i.e., love, joy, peace, patience, etc.)? However, since you now contain all the fruit of the Spirit (i.e., Christ-like characteristics) in Christ, you no longer have to try to produce what you already have in Christ and could not in your own strength produce anyway. That should be freedom for you if you have believed it is up to you to produce Christ-likeness in your own strength and ability. Look at what Jesus says in John 6:51:

"I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread..."

He says, "I am the living bread" and all you have to do is eat. You don't have to prepare it. Just eat of it. In like manner, we don't have to produce Christ-likeness. We simply have to "eat" (live from Christ-likeness) from Christ who is the bread of Life.

3. These Christ-like characteristics are designed to meet all of your needs.

"And my God will meet all of your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ."
Philippians 4:19

When Paul says that all of our needs are met in Christ, part of what he is referring to is Christ-likeness. Take a moment and look back at the list on page 8.

When you look at the list, is there anything on that list that you don't need? This is crucial because we are tempted to try and get our needs met or look to others to meet our needs. This is most true in the marriage relationship when we look for "unconditional" love, acceptance, value/worth, etc., from the other spouse who is only capable of providing "conditional/human" love, acceptance, and worth.

4. These Christ-like characteristics are SUPERNATURAL.

These characteristics of Christ are supernatural which means they are God-produced and are beyond our understanding, as Paul explains in Philippians 4:7:

*“Then you will **experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.**
His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”*

Paul was experiencing a Christ-like peace but even he did not have words to describe. Even though Christ-like characteristics are supernatural, you can eventually experience them and that experience will prove they are true and real. We will explore the supernatural aspects of spiritual growth in a later lesson.

[Note: Our culture has taken the word “supernatural” and distorted it into meaning something paranormal, magical, or associated with the occult. However, in the Christian realm, this word means that God and His work cannot be explained by human understanding or natural means.]

Questions: Which one of these four truths impacted you the most? Why?

Meditate: on these four truths and how your life might change if they were true in your experience.

Engaging God: If you struggle believing any of the truths in this section, seek the Holy Spirit to persuade you they are true.

5. “I AM”

Another way of looking at Christ-likeness is through the two words “I AM.” We see Jesus declare Himself as the I AM when he said:

*“... **I AM** the way, the truth, and the life....” John 14:6*

In like manner, Christ is the I AM when it comes to Christ-like characteristics. Let’s look at a few examples to explain. Here are two examples using the list of Christ-like characteristics on page 8.

Example #1: Let’s assume that you are experiencing rejection from your spouse. What you need is Christ-like acceptance. Jesus says, “I AM your acceptance.”

Example #2: Let’s assume that your job is in jeopardy due to cutbacks in the company. You are feeling anxious. Your need is for Christ-like peace. Jesus says, “I AM your peace.”

[**NOTE:** Christians say that they ask Christ to **give** them such things as patience, peace, etc. It is a little like asking a pharmacist for a prescription. However, Jesus is not our divine pharmacist who is writing us a prescription to give us something. Rather, He is saying “I AM” what you need – I AM your peace, I AM your joy, I AM your wisdom, etc. Therefore, as we saw in the examples above, you don’t need to ask Christ to “give” you His peace, joy, and wisdom. You simply need to “trust” Him to **BE** your peace, joy, and wisdom.]

***Since Christ IS your life, He is NOT dispensing something to you.
Rather, as the I AM, He is continually supplying HIMSELF
(peace, joy, humility, etc.) as your life.***

Meditate: on the truth that Christ is the “I AM.”

Exercise: What is it that you need based on the internal and external struggles that you are facing today? Go to the “I AM” list at the end of this lesson and write down the “I AM’s” that most apply to your struggles.

Engaging God: Seek Christ to BE what you need concerning your struggle.

DAY FOUR

The Consequences of Not Growing Spiritually

Before we end this lesson, let's look at the consequences of not growing up spiritually. The question is: If we are **not** being conformed to the likeness of Christ, **not** being transformed into Christ-likeness, or Christ is **not** being formed in us, are we truly growing up spiritually?

In these three verses, Paul admonishes us not to stay spiritual children.

*"As a result, we are no longer to be **children**, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming."*

Ephesians 4:14

*"Brethren, do not be **children** in your thinking...."*

1 Corinthians 14:20

*"When I was a child, I used to speak like a **child**, think like a **child**, reason like a **child**...."*

1 Corinthians 13:11

Paul is telling us that if we don't grow spiritually, we will remain spiritual children. This should be a real incentive because when we think of little children, these questions come to mind.

- How deeply can small children think or reason?
- How easily can they be deceived?
- How well can children navigate the complexities of life?
- How much of their focus is on themselves?

I think we know the answers to these questions. As true as it is with physical children, it is also true with spiritual children when it comes to living THE Christian life. Let me put into context what our staying as spiritual children means by asking some questions.

If we stay spiritual children:

- Will we be able to walk consistently in the Spirit?
- Will we be able to discern God's will for our lives?
- Can we experience God's promises (e.g., victory, freedom, etc.)?
- Can we be transformed into Christ-likeness?

I think we could agree that the answer is "no."

Here are some other consequences if we choose not to grow up.

Our Focus Will Continue Being On OURSELVES

*“Do nothing from **selfishness** or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.” Philippians 2:3*

Would you agree that we come into this world being selfish? Up until we were saved, our focus was on ourselves, trying to get our own needs met, and living life without much regard for others. This is especially true in marriage relationships. If two self-focused people get married, is it any wonder that there will be problems? If we don't mature spiritually, we will remain selfish, self-focused, and self-centered.

Question: What will be the impact on ourselves and others if we stay self-focused?

We Will Stay In BONDAGE To Our Sin, Our Flesh, and Our Fleshly Behaviors

*“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my **flesh**; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.” Romans 7:18*

*“For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of **flesh**, sold into bondage to sin.”
Romans 7:14*

What is the flesh?

***THE FLESH is our desire to live life with OURSELVES
as the source, INDEPENDENTLY OF or APART
FROM God as our Source.***

Our flesh says, “Life is all about me and you need to be all about me as well.” It also says, that apart from God:

- **I** can be in control of myself and others.
- **I** can get my needs met apart from God.
- **I** can, in my own ability, fix, solve, or overcome all of my struggles and conflicts.
- **I** can change myself and others.
- **I** can produce a fulfilling and happy life.

However, it does not stop with the flesh. From our flesh will flow fleshly behaviors. This is the definition of fleshly behaviors.

***Fleshly behaviors are self-centered, sinful ATTITUDES
and ACTIONS that result from living from the FLESH.***

Below are some examples of fleshly behaviors that rise out of our flesh:

Rejecting	Controlling	Demanding	Frustrated
Manipulative	Unforgiving	Self-protective	Judgmental
Uncaring	Insensitive	Resentful	Jealous
People-pleasing	Self-righteous	Selfish	Overbearing
Critical	Angry	Guilt	Shaming
Envious	Deceitful	Bitter	Blaming
Condemning	Unloving	Resisting	Condescending

The problem is our flesh is toxic to us and those around us. If we don't grow up spiritually, we will not only be stuck in our fleshly behaviors but they can get worse and eventually become strongholds that we stay in bondage to. [A "stronghold" is a fleshly behavior that becomes reinforced to a point where you believe you can never be set free from it.]

Question: Write down any of the listed fleshly behaviors that apply to you.

Would you agree that as you live from them, they are toxic not only to you but to those around you?

INTERNAL TURMOIL or MISERY

"For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate." Romans 7:15

What do you think the result will be if we continue to live from ignoring what we should be doing (i.e., living from God's truth) and keep doing the things we hate (i.e., living from our flesh)? The result will be constant internal turmoil and eventual misery. It may manifest itself in ongoing frustration, anxiety, or trying to cope with the misery through such things as eating, TV, pornography, alcohol, or work.

When it comes to internal misery, one problem is we may not recognize it because we have lived with it for so long it seems "normal." We rationalize, "It's just how I am."

DAY FIVE

We Will Continuously Be DECEIVED By Satan and The World

*“So also we, while **we were children**, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.” Galatians 4:3*

*“Little children, make sure **no one deceives you**....” 1 John 3:7*

Satan wants to keep us as spiritual two-year-olds because it is easier to control and manipulate us. He does this by continually trying to deceive us, keeping us in bondage to our false beliefs. Not only that, Satan wants to keep us from growing up because he knows God’s truth and how, if we believe it and live from it, our lives will be transformed.

Satan has a three-fold strategy to keep us trapped in our flesh and miserable. It is summed up in John 10:10:

*“The thief comes only to **STEAL** and **KILL** and **DESTROY**....”*

He accomplishes this three-fold strategy by:

1. Keeping you from knowing God’s truth
2. Keeping you from believing God’s truth
3. Keeping you from walking in God’s truth
4. Keeping you from seeking God as your Source to transform your life

If Satan is successful, we never grow up. The result: he continually deceives us and we become receptive to the lies from the world which say, “do more to get more” and “life is all about you.” He knows the truth will free you and transform you, so he must pull out all of the stops to keep you locked into spiritual immaturity.

Questions: Would you agree that if we stay spiritual children we can be just as susceptible as non-Christians to Satan’s deceptions? What do you think would be the results in your life if Satan was able to keep you from accomplishing the four things listed on the previous page?

We will be talking more about Satan’s strategies in Lesson Six.

We Will NEVER Experience God’s Promises

If we don’t grow, we will never experience God’s wonderful promises. Here are a few examples:

- To live in victory over sin – 1 Corinthians 15:57
- To live in freedom from our fleshly behaviors and sin strongholds – Galatians 5:1

- To be healed from our past or present woundedness – Psalm 147:3
- To be transformed into the likeness of Christ – 2 Corinthians 3:18

I am sure that we want to experience all of these amazing promises. But if we don't mature, then none of those promises will ever become our experiential reality.

Question: What might be some of the consequences if we don't experience God's promises?

Things Will Get WORSE

If we don't grow spiritually, not only will nothing change but things will only get worse because we will experience:

- More frustration
- More failure
- More defeat
- More bondage
- More disillusionment
- More inner turmoil
- More of the same or worse (i.e., no change or transformation)

Do any of the above apply to you?

We Can Get To A Place of RESIGNATION

If we don't grow spiritually, we can come to the place of resignation: "This is as good as it is ever going to get." This is a very dangerous place to be because we have not only given up on God, but we have opened the door for Satan to use our resignation to keep us from growing spiritually.

We Can Even Reach A Place of HOPELESSNESS

A continuing attitude of resignation can eventually lead to feeling hopeless – that we will never grow up. Hopelessness is like a dark abyss where we are so consumed by the darkness that we believe our lives are beyond even God's ability to transform us. Satan wants us to get to this place because we not only become spiritual casualties but he wants to take us to a place where we will take our own lives.

Our Hearts Will HARDEN Towards God

If we continue to resist allowing God to transform us, over time our hearts will harden towards Him. Hardening of the heart is defined as:

The DEATH that occurs in our hearts from continuing to live from our spiritual immaturity and continuing to RESIST God's work in our lives to grow us up.

If our hearts harden towards God, it moves us further and further away from seeking Him as the solution. Eventually, we will turn away from God completely, resulting in our hearts becoming deadened to God and His eternal desire to grow us into spiritual adulthood.

Question: Are there any other consequences you think might result if we harden our hearts towards God?

I hope this section has been a sobering one because these consequences can stunt our growth spiritually resulting in deepening and perpetual misery.

Engaging God: Since we can deceive ourselves, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you if any of these consequences apply to you.

Question: Is it possible that you have been living in some internal misery and are not aware of it because you have been living there for such a long while? If you are not sure, seek the Spirit to tell you.

Conclusion

Has this lesson been helpful in understanding how important it is to grow spiritually? We saw the outcomes personally if we don't grow spiritually but the overflow of spiritual immaturity negatively impacts our marriages, families, relationships and even the church. We see this in the words of Paul when he says:

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part 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 4:14-16.

For us to be WHOLE and HEALTHY as the body of Christ, we must grow more and more like CHRIST.

"I AM"

As needs arise in your life, Christ is the "I AM" to meet your needs. Insert your personal need(s) and find from the list how Christ will be your Supply.

Your need _____? Jesus says, "I AM your _____"

**I AM your love – Galatians 5:22
I AM your control – 2 Timothy 1:7
I AM your salvation – Psalm 27:1
I AM your comforter – John 14:16
I AM your hope – Colossians 1:27
I AM your life – John 14:6
I AM your joy – John 15:11
I AM your adequacy – 2 Corinthians 3:5
I AM your wisdom – 1 Corinthians 1:30
I AM your way – John 14:6
I AM your rest – Matthew 11:28
I AM your security – Proverbs 1:33
I AM your goodness – Galatians 5:22
I AM your confidence – 2 Corinthians 3:4
I AM your compassion – Psalm 25:6
I AM your forgiveness – Daniel 9:9
I AM your success – Romans 8:37
I AM your endurance – Hebrews 10:36
I AM your peace – Ephesians 2:14
I AM your perseverance – Hebrews 12:2
I AM your strength – Romans 6:10
I AM your kindness – Galatians 5:22
I AM your humility – Matthew 11:29
I AM your acceptance – Romans 15:7
I AM your faithfulness – Galatians 5:22
I AM your need-meeter – Philippians 4:19
I AM your deliverer – Psalm 18:2
I AM your freedom – John 8:32
I AM your victory – 1 Corinthians 15:57
I AM your gentleness – Galatians 5:23
I AM your patience – Galatians 5:22
I AM your courage – John 16:33
I AM your conqueror – Romans 8:37**

Discussion Questions

Questions: What truth(s) impacted you most in this lesson? Why were they impactful?

Question: What are some reasons why you believe spiritual growth is necessary?

Question: Which Christ-like characteristics on page 8 do you most want to experience?

Question: How might experiencing the Christ-like characteristics you listed change your life, your marriage, your parenting, your workplace, your relationships, or your circumstances?

Questions: Which consequences of not growing spiritually most spoke to you? Why?

LESSON TWO

Understanding The Foundational Truth In Growing To Become Like Christ

DAY ONE

Overview of Lesson Two

- Living “THE” Christian Life Versus Living “A” Christian Life
- How Do We Know That God Is To Be Our Source?
- The Two Sides of The Cross
- What God Accomplish In Your Life As He Lives His Life In You

Introduction

There is a key foundational truth for growing into Christ-likeness: knowing the difference between living either “A” Christian life or “THE” Christian life. One way of living will keep us spiritually immature while the other will transform our lives and grow us spiritually. Let’s look at the difference between the two to better understand the foundational truth for spiritual growth. We’ll begin by describing “A” Christian life.

Living “A” Christian Life

“A” Christian life is defined as follows:

“A” Christian life means it is up to YOU, with God’s help, to be the SOURCE, using your own intellect, will power, and ability to learn God’s truth and make it an experiential reality in your life.

For purposes of this study, let’s boil down the definition of “A” Christian life this way:

You are the SOURCE, with God’s HELP, to GROW spiritually and be TRANSFORMED into Christ-likeness.

The key word in both definitions is “source.” When it comes to living the Christian life, some key words defining “source” are to produce, to provide, to supply, and to initiate. Keep these four words in mind as we contrast “A” Life versus “THE” Life.

At some point in your Christian life, did you ever ask yourself the question, “What am I supposed to **do** to live the Christian life?” This is a natural question because most of our lives we learn something and then go and do it. The question is, “Does the ‘learn and do’ mentality apply to living the Christian life? Let’s explore the answer to this question by looking at what you were taught concerning living the Christian life.

Were you ever taught that it is up to you (you being the source), with God’s help, to accomplish the following?

1. “To take what you learn from the Bible and go out and try to accomplish what it says.”
2. “To stop sinning.”
3. “To consistently keep God’s rules and commands.”
4. “To become more righteous.”
5. “To transform your fleshly behavior into Christ-like behavior.”
6. “To attain freedom and victory by trying harder.”
7. “To transform yourself.”

If so, have you honestly been able to attain or accomplish these things? If not, is it possible that the Christian life may be something more than learning and then doing? Let’s look at a few more questions to dig deeper into the answer to this question.

- Are you struggling with experiencing consistent victory in your Christian walk?
- Is there some sin pattern that you cannot set yourself free from?
- Is there some sinful behavior or attitude that you want changed, but it never seems to change no matter how hard you try?

If you answered “Yes” to one or more of these questions, is it possible you might be the source for trying to live the Christian life?

Look at John 8:32 for a moment:

*“You will know the truth and the truth will **make you free.**”*

Have you thought about the fact that if the truth will make you free, what might living from the lie produce? Here are some examples.

As a result of living from the lie rather than God’s truth, there will be:

- No consistent victory
- No ongoing freedom
- No significant spiritual transformation
- More inner turmoil
- More frustration

Unfortunately, if a Christian is living “A” Christian life with he/she being the source with God’s help, these are the results they can expect. This is a key truth about living “A” Christian life.

We will NEVER grow into Christ-likeness by our living “A” Christian life (i.e., trying to be the source to live it).

If this is true, it begs the question: “Is there another life that God has for us to live?” The good news is there is another life that God has called us to experience, and it is called “THE” Christian life.

Questions: What have you been taught concerning what it means to live the Christian life? What are the results of what you have been taught? Is it possible that you have been living “A” Christian life?

Living “THE” Christian Life

Let’s begin our understanding of the meaning of THE Christian life with these words of Jesus:

*“... I AM the way, the truth, and **THE LIFE**...”*
John 14:6

*“... I AM the resurrection and **THE LIFE**...”*
John 11:25

What is Jesus saying in these two passages when He says that He is **THE** Life?

***Since He is THE LIFE, “THE” Christian Life is a PERSON:
Christ HIMSELF!***

To further confirm this, look at the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 1:21:

*“For me, to live **IS** Christ....”*

Paul is saying that for him the Christian life is Christ Himself. This is an especially significant statement from Paul because he came from a very orthodox Jewish background that was all about keeping the law and all its rules. It would have been natural for him to believe it was all up to him to be the source to live the Christian life. Instead, he confirms “THE” Christian life is Christ Himself.

Think about this for a moment. If “THE” Christian life is a Person, does that mean “THE” Christian life is not about trying to keep a set of rules, trying to keep from sinning, or trying to do your best to live for God? Jesus and Paul are saying that “THE” Christian life is not a life that we can ever be the source to produce. It is a life that only Christ, as our Source, can produce in and through us. Since this is true, we can define “THE” Christian life this way:

***CHRIST is our SOURCE to GROW us up spiritually and to
TRANSFORM us into Christ-likeness.***

In Colossians 3:4, Paul further confirms this:

“... Christ who is YOUR life....”

Paul makes it more personal when he says that Christ is YOUR life. Jesus is not just THE Life; He is your very life. Considering this truth, think about this statement:

***There is only ONE Person who truly lived “THE”
PERFECT Christian life: Christ HIMSELF.***

If this is true, what makes us think that we, using our intellect and ability apart from Christ, can successfully attain a perfect Christian life? All you and I can do as the source—in our own strength and ability—is to live “A” Christian life. Only Christ Himself can live “THE” Life in and through you. This may be good news to you if you have been living “A” life because it is not up to you.

Question: What did the Holy Spirit reveal to you in this section about THE Christian life?

Meditate: on the verses above.

Engaging God: If this truth is new to you, please take a few moments and meditate on these verses and seek the Holy Spirit to make these truths real to you personally. Ask God to reveal to you in a deeper way what it means for Christ to be your life. If this truth contradicts what you have believed about the Christian life so far, ask God to reveal if what you have just read is the truth or not.

DAY TWO

What Does It Mean That Christ IS Your Life?

The next question that you may be asking is: “What does it mean that Christ is my life?” God sums up the answer in 1 Corinthians 1:30:

*“**He** is the **SOURCE** of **your** life **in** Christ Jesus....” (RSV)*

God gives the answer in the first part of the verse when He says that He is the SOURCE of your life in Christ. Remember the words we used for the word “source” earlier: producer, provider, supplier, and initiator. God, and God alone, is the producer, provider, supplier, and initiator.

Look at two other verses that reveal that God is your Source for living the Christian life:

*“**In Him** we **live** and **move** and have our **being**....” Acts 17:28*

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

These are just two of many verses in the Bible that reveal to us that God is our Source for living THE Christian life. You may be wondering what it means practically for God to be your Source. Let’s look at four examples of what it means for God to be your Source.

- God is your Source to meet your needs – SUPPLIER. Philippians 4:19
- God is your Source of power over your sin – PROVIDER. 1 John 3:6
- God is your Source to renew your mind to believe His truth – PRODUCER. Romans 12:2
- God is your Source to make all His promises of transformation an experiential reality in your life – INITIATOR. Philippians 1:6

Have you been trying to be the source to accomplish any of the four things listed above? If so, how is that working for you? If we are honest with ourselves, we would have to say that it is not working. The truth is if we try to be the source for living the Christian life, we are destined to fail. If God is not the Source of our Christian walk (and in all other areas of our life), we will never experience God’s truth and His promises in our lives. Let’s end this section with this final truth.

***God as your SOURCE for living THE Christian life means that ONLY
He can TRANSFORM us into Christ-likeness.***

Question: In what ways might it change how you live your Christian life if you believed that God, not you, is the Source to live it?

Meditate: on 1 Corinthians 1:30, Acts 17:28, and Romans 11:36, above.

Engaging God: Using these three verses, ask the Spirit to give you a deeper understanding of what it means for Him to be your Source for living THE Christian life.

Why Does God NOT HELP Us To Be The Source?

We talked earlier about asking God to help us. You may have been taught to ask God to help you which really means “**God is going to help ME be the source to solve my own problems, set myself free, be victorious, transform myself, etc.**” Another way of saying this is, “God will help me help myself.” (Some people mistakenly think “God helps those who help themselves” is in the Bible.) This is a false teaching because God never intended for man to be the source for living life. Think about this question, “If God is the Source, then why would He help you be the source?”

Let’s look at an example to explain. Let’s assume that you are having brain surgery. Halfway through the surgery, you come out of the anesthesia and say to the surgeon, “I don’t really trust you completely to do the surgery. Give me the scalpel and help me finish it.” As crazy as that sounds, it is no different than you asking God to help you be the source to live THE Christian life.

Look at how Paul looks at this in Romans 15:18:

*“For I will not presume to speak of anything except what
Christ has accomplished through me....”*

Look at the words “Christ has accomplished.” Paul did not say Christ “helped” him accomplish. He said Christ, as the Source, accomplished His work through Paul. You see, God has it rigged! If He is not your Source for living the Christian life, then the results in your life will be more defeat, more bondage, and no transformation. God’s design only works one way: by His being your Source. Therefore, the key false belief concerning living the Christian life is this:

Man can never SUCCESSFULLY live the Christian life by being the source and using his OWN intellect and ability “with God’s HELP.”

Engaging God: If you have believed until now that God is going to help you live the Christian life, ask God to give you deeper revelation that because He is the Source, He Himself will produce spiritual growth and transformation in you rather than helping you do it.

How Do We Know That God Is To Be Our Source?

To help you better understand the truth that God is our Source, it is important to look back at God's original design and plan for man. The truths in this section should give you further proof that God's intention from the beginning was for God to be man's source for living life. In this section we will answer the following four questions:

- **Who was Adam and Eve's source before the Fall?**
- **What happened to Adam and Eve at the Fall?**
- **What was man's spiritual condition at birth?**
- **What did God accomplish in man to become man's Source?**

Let's begin by looking at the condition of Adam and Eve before and after the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

Who Was Adam and Eve's SOURCE Before The Fall?

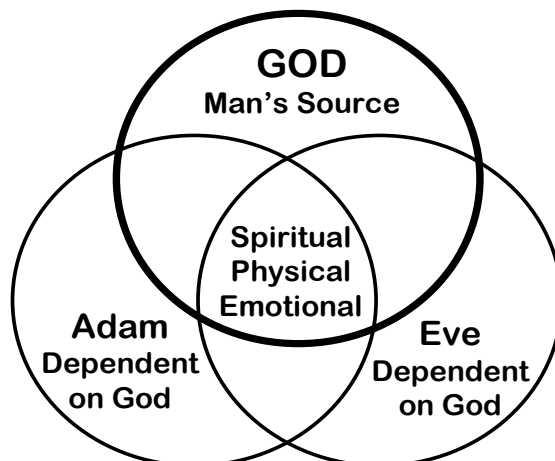
*"And the LORD **God** formed man of the dust of the ground, and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**; and **man became a living soul**." Genesis 2:7*

*"And my **God shall supply all of your needs...in Christ Jesus**."*
Philippians 4:19

At the creation of man, God was man's Source by breathing His very life into Adam and Eve according to Genesis 2:7. In addition, God was their SOURCE to meet all their physical, spiritual, and emotional needs (Philippians 4:19). God's design to be man's Source was clear from the beginning because man cannot meet the needs that only God can meet.

The following diagram illustrates man's relationship with God before the Fall:

God Was The SOURCE To Meet Adam and Eve's Needs Before The Fall



If God was the Source to meet all their needs, can we conclude that Adam and Eve were TOTALLY DEPENDENT on God to meet those needs?

“Dependence” is the key word to describe the relationship between God and Adam and Eve. They were totally dependent on God to meet their every need. We will end this section with the following key truth:

KEY TRUTH:

As long as Adam and Eve continued to live DEPENDENT upon God, He was their SOURCE to meet all their needs.

God Gave Adam and Eve A Free Will Choice To Be DEPENDENT

“And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” Genesis 2:16, 17

For man to have free will, God gave man a choice to be dependent or independent according to Genesis 2:16, 17. The choice was they could eat from any tree in the garden but one. This choice was a test of man’s willingness to continue depending on God. If they chose to depend on God and eat of every other tree but the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they would live. However, if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would die. We know the result in Genesis 3:6:

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, **she took some and ate it.** She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and **he ate it.**”

In that moment Adam and Eve made a sinful, independent decision that resulted in **spiritual death** according to the first part of Romans 5:12:

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world **through one man** [Adam], and death through sin....”

What is the meaning of spiritual death? The key word in defining spiritual death is “**separation.**” In the original Greek text, the word “separation” means to “sever” or “cut off.”

SPIRITUAL DEATH is defined as being SEVERED or CUT OFF from God.

This separation was twofold:

- SEPARATION from the LIFE of God

*“Being darkened in their understanding, **separated** from the **life of God**...”*

Ephesians 4:18

At the moment that Adam and Eve chose **independence** from God and sinned, He removed or separated His life from them. Even though Adam and Eve would still be alive physically, they would no longer experience God’s spiritual life. As a result, they died spiritually.

- SEPARATION from God as the SOURCE

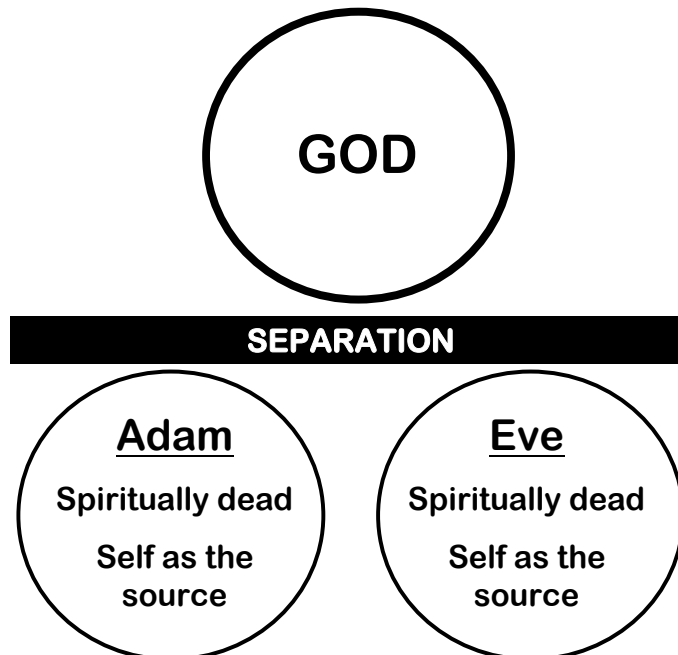
*“But your iniquities have made a **separation** between **you** and your **God**, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.” Isaiah 59:2*

As I mentioned above, Adam and Eve totally depended upon God as their Source to meet every need. However, as a result of their sin, God separated Himself from man with the result that He would no longer be the Source for meeting man’s every need. This was the result:

Man was left on his OWN to be his OWN source to meet his OWN needs, to solve his OWN problems, and to TRY to make his life a success.

Look at the diagram below and see how man’s condition changed after the fall.

Adam and Eve’s Condition AFTER The Fall



DAY THREE

The Problem Is That We INHERITED Adam and Eve's Spiritual Death

What this means for all of us is we inherited Adam and Eve's spiritual death and separation at our physical birth. Romans 5:12 tells us this:

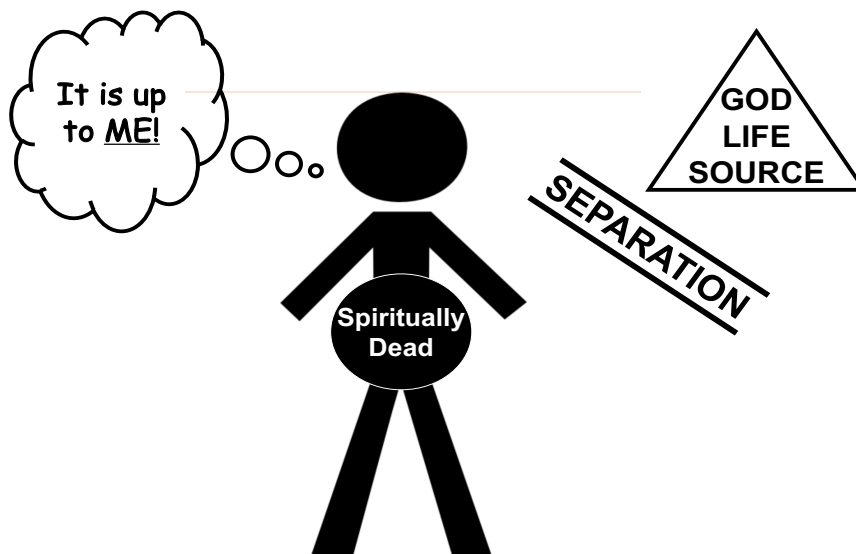
"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."

We see in Romans 5:12 that through the sin of Adam, every one of us was born spiritually dead. In other words, we inherited Adam's spiritual death the moment we were born.

Like Adam and Eve, we were born separated from God's LIFE and from Him as our SOURCE.

The next diagram illustrates the truth that we inherited Adam's separation from God as our Life and Source with the result that we were spiritually dead.

Spiritual Death Means There Is A Separation From God As Our Life and Source



You inherited Adam's spiritual death which results in a SEPARATION from God's Life and a SEPARATION from God as the Source. Because of this separation, it was up to YOU to become the source to TRY to live life.

Question: If God's original design was for total dependence upon Him as our Source, can you and I live independently of God and truly meet our own needs, solve our own problems, and be successful in living the Christian life?

Meditate: on the truth that God's design from the beginning was for man to totally depend upon Him as the Source for living the Christian life.

Engaging God: Ask the Lord to give you further revelation of what it means for Him to be your Source for living life (i.e., in your marriage, in your job, and in your circumstances).

The Two Sides of The Cross

God knew that man would be eternally separated from Him if He did not provide a solution. That meant there were two things that God needed to do in order to give man salvation and life (and to restore Himself as man's source). I want to illustrate these two things by using a diagram called the Two Sides of The Cross. One side of the cross represents the SIN side, and the other represents the LIFE side. Let's first look at the SIN side of the cross to see what God accomplished in order to deal with our sin.

The SIN Side of The Cross – Christ Died For Our SINS To Give Us Eternal Life

The "good news" of the gospel is Jesus came to bear our sins because we needed a Savior. Through His death the penalty of our sins was paid, and by our trusting Christ for salvation, we received eternal life.

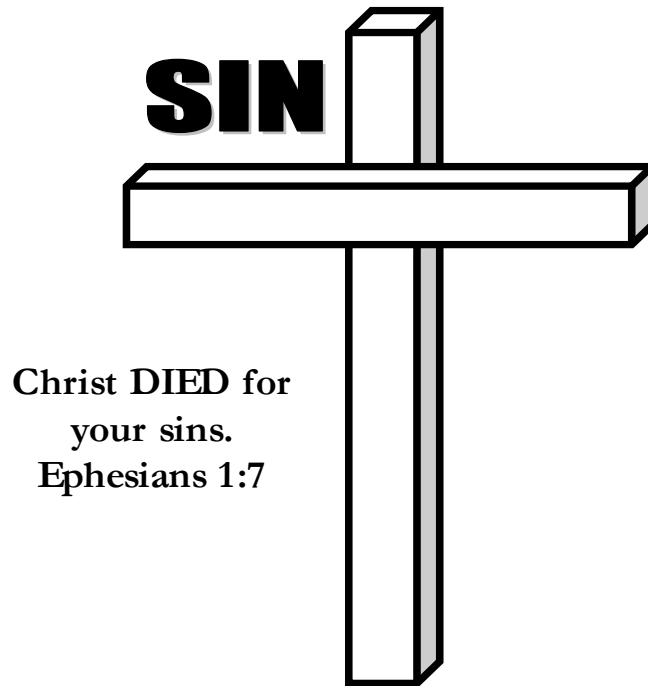
*"He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood of his Son, and **our sins are forgiven.**" Ephesians 1:7*

*"He who **believes in the Son has eternal life....**" John 3:36a*

<i>Christ's dying for our sins represents the SIN side of the cross.</i>
--

The following diagram illustrates the SIN side of the cross:

The SIN Side of The Cross



[Note: If you are not sure that you have received Christ for salvation, you can do that right now. You can simply say the following prayer in faith and receive forgiveness and salvation: “Jesus, I recognize that I am a sinner in need of You as my Savior. Because You died on the cross for my sins, I receive You by faith to be my Savior. Amen.”]

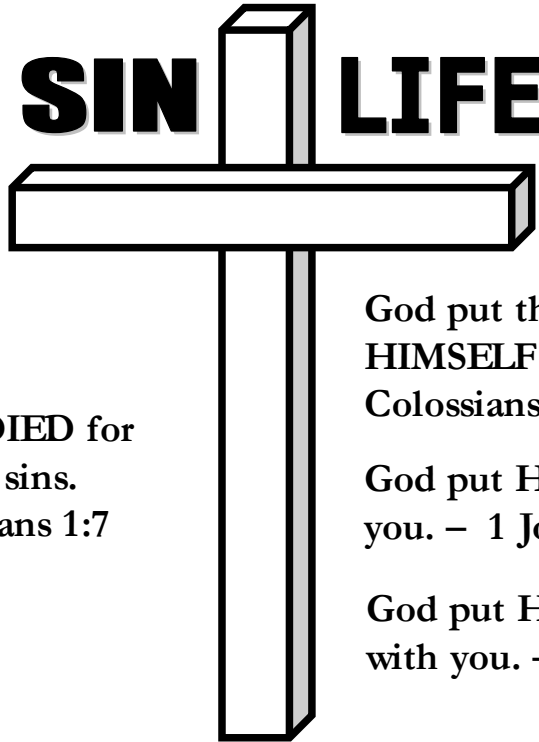
The LIFE Side of The Cross – God Put Himself In Man To Be Man’s SOURCE For Living Life

Even though Christ died for man so that he could be saved, the problem still REMAINED of man’s being SEPARATED from God as his LIFE and SOURCE.

Since God did not design man to live in separation from Him, He accomplished three more things to restore Himself as man’s Source. These three things make up what I call the “LIFE” side of the cross.

Let's explore the meaning of the "LIFE" side of the cross.

The LIFE Side of The Cross



Christ **DIED** for
your sins.
Ephesians 1:7

God put the **FULLNESS** of
HIMSELF back into man. –
Colossians 2:9, 10

God put His **LIFE** and **POWER** in
you. – 1 John 5:12; Acts 1:8

God put Himself in **UNION**
with you. – John 14:20

DAY FOUR

1. God Put The FULLNESS of Himself Back Into Man.

At the moment of salvation, you not only received Jesus as your Savior, but you also received the complete Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). We see this in Colossians 2:9, 10:

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”

These verses are telling us that the fullness of the Godhead is in Christ and that Christ is now in you resulting in your having the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within you. You no longer have a God Who is separated from you. You now have the complete Godhead IN you!

God Put The Fullness of Himself In You



It is critical that you understand that once you receive Christ for salvation, you now CONTAIN the fullness of the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Question: If you have not understood or believed that within you is the entire Godhead, what impact might it have on you if you believed it was true?

Meditate: on Colossians 2:9, 10. Think about this question, “What am I lacking if I contain the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?”

Engaging God: Ask God to give you further revelation of the eternal significance of the fullness of Himself now being in you.

2. You Now Have The Fullness of God’s LIFE and POWER IN You.

In addition, to receiving the fullness of God, you also received all His Life and Power.

a. Christ’s LIFE

*“...God has given us eternal life, and this **life is in His Son.***

*He who has the **Son has THE LIFE....”** 1 John 5:11, 12a*

We see at salvation that God gave us THE Life that is in Christ. What are some examples of THE Life that we now possess?

Christ as your life means that you contain ALL of Christ’s:

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

These are the Christ-like characteristics we talked about in Lesson One.

***Christ as your life means that Christ IS your SOURCE
to provide you HIS peace, HIS acceptance, HIS joy, etc.***

b. God’s POWER

In addition to Christ’s life, you received all of God’s power at the point of salvation, according to Acts 1:8:

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

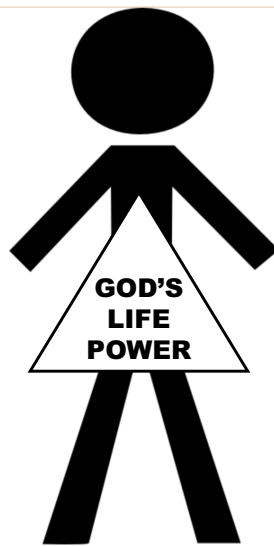
Think about this for a moment. Since you contain all of the Godhead, then all of God’s power resides in you. God knew that without His power in man, there would be no transformation. So, He put the fullness of His power in us to transform our lives.

We will talk more about the magnitude and purpose of God's power in the next lesson. The key truth for now is this:

God put His POWER in you to transform you into Christ-likeness.

The diagram on the following page illustrates that you are the container of God's life and power.

God Put His Life and Power In You



Question: Why do you believe it was essential for God to put His life and power into you?

Meditate: on 1 John 5:12 and Acts 1:8 and think about this question: "Why was it necessary for God to put His life and power into me?"

Engaging God: Begin asking God to give you a greater experience of His Life and power in you.

DAY FIVE

3. God Put Himself In UNION With You.

Not only did God put Himself in you, but He went even further. God put Himself in UNION with you. We see this truth in the following three verses:

“...[God] made us alive together with Christ.” Ephesians 2:5

*“But the **one** [the believer] who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit [in union] with Him.”
1 Corinthians 6:17*

*“In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you [are in union] in Me,
and I [am in union] in you.” John 14:20*

Being in union or “divinely connected” with God means we are “alive” with Him, “joined” to Him, and are “in” Him. Understanding our union with God is a divine mystery but nevertheless true. God lives in you and is in union with you.

[Note: If you believe you can lose your salvation, this truth will set you free from that false belief because being in union with God means that you can never be separated from Him. If you can’t be separated from Him, then how can you lose your salvation? This is why God promises in the second part of Hebrews 13:5: “... **I will never leave you or forsake you.**”]

Meditate: on Ephesians 2:5, 1 Corinthians 6:17, and John 14:20 and seek the Holy Spirit to give you a deeper revelation of your union with God.

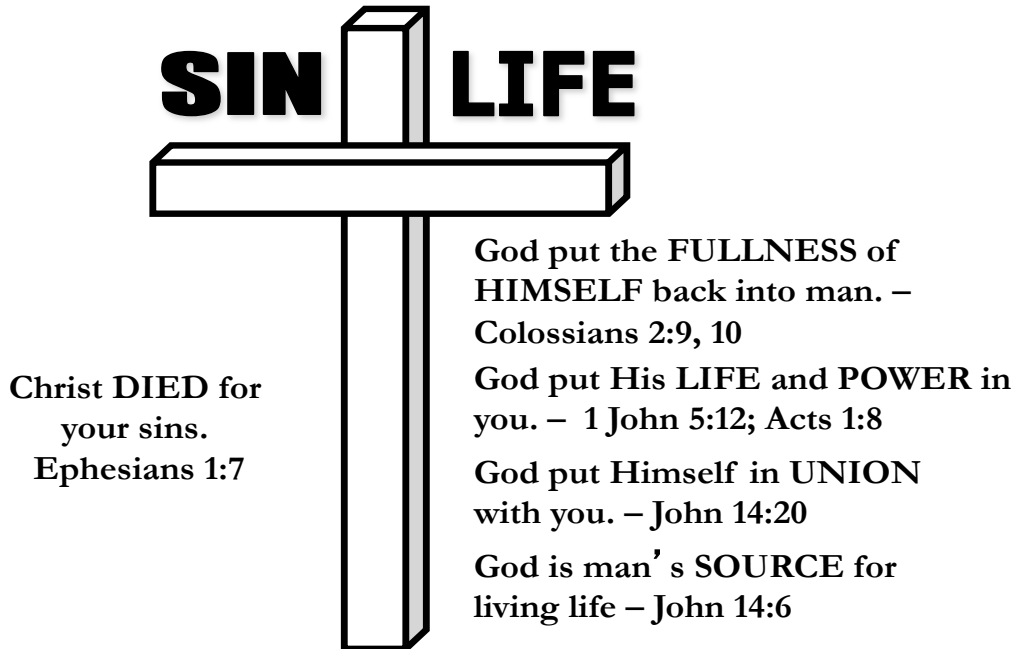
Engaging God: If you struggle with the security of your salvation, seek God to persuade you that there is nothing that you can do to lose your salvation or ever be separated from God again.

What is the result of God putting His life and power in you?

By God’s putting His LIFE and POWER in you and putting Himself in UNION with you at salvation, YOU no longer have to be the Source for living life. God HIMSELF becomes your SOURCE from which to live life.

Let's take one more look at the SIN side and LIFE side of the cross.

The Two Sides of The Cross



Christ As Your Life and Source Means That He Wants To Live His Life IN You

***Since Christ is THE Life and put Himself in you,
He wants to live His Life IN you.***

Paul confirms this for His own life in the first part of Galatians 2:20:

*"I am crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but **Christ lives IN me....**"*

Think about what Paul is saying in this verse. When Paul says, "I no longer live," he is, in effect, saying that he CANNOT be the source for living the Christian life. This is amazing considering all of Paul's credentials, intellect, and capability. He clearly acknowledges that none of those things qualifies him to be the source. Therefore, since he admits that he cannot live the Christian life, he says, "Christ lives in me." Paul recognizes his absolute need for Christ to live THE Christian life in him.

Christ's living His life in you may be a new concept for you. If it is, seek the Holy Spirit to give you deeper revelation of what that means and how it can transform your life.

Questions: Have you realized before now that the Christian life is about Christ's living His life in you? How might this truth change the way you think about how you are to live the Christian life?

Meditate: on the truth that you can't live THE Christian life. Only Christ living in you will ever grow you into Christ-likeness.

Engaging God: Ask God to give you revelation of what it means for Christ to live His life in you.

Christ As Your Life Also Means We Live FROM God and Not FOR Him

With Christ's living His life in you, you no longer have to try and live FOR God, primarily because He does not need for you to do anything for Him. He never expected you to do something FOR Him because He is your source. Now that we have Christ in us, we are to live FROM Him.

THE LIE:

We are to live FOR God because we NEED to do something for Him.

THE TRUTH:

We are to live FROM God because He is our Source FROM which to live life.

Questions: Do you believe that God needs for you to do something for Him? What do you think it means that you are to live from God as your Source? How would it change how you live your Christian life if you believed that you are to live from God versus living for Him?

What Will God Accomplish In Your Life As He Lives His Life In You?

You may be asking, "What does it look like for God to live His life IN me?" Part of the answer lies in what He promises to accomplish in your life. Let's look at a few of those promises.

VICTORY – God will give you experiential victory over the power of sin, the flesh, the world, and the power of Satan.

*"but thanks be to God, who gives us the **victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ."
1 Corinthians 15:57*

FREEDOM – God will set you **free** from your false beliefs, your defeating sin patterns, and your ongoing inner struggles.

*"So Christ has really set us **free**. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law." Galatians 5:1*

HEALING – God will **heal** you of your past and present woundedness.

*"He **heals** the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Psalm 147:3*

SUPPLY – God will **supply** all of your needs.

*"My God shall **supply all your needs...in Christ Jesus**." Philippians 4:19*

INTIMACY – He will draw you into a personal, intimate **relationship** with Himself.

*"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." Ephesians 1:5*

Concerning our study, the key promise is this:

<i>God will grow us up by TRANSFORMING us into CHRIST-LIKENESS.</i>

Meditate: on the promises listed above. Think about which of these promises you want to experience more of.

Engaging God: If you are not experiencing these promises to the extent that you would like, ask God to begin making these promises a greater experiential reality in your life.

True Story Example: There was a counselor who struggled with experiencing Christ-like compassion for hurting people. He knew how important it was for people he was counseling to experience Christ's compassion through him. He began seeking Christ to transform him so he could experience His compassion for others.

After seeking the Holy Spirit for several weeks to transform Him to experience Christ-like compassion, one day as he was counseling a married couple in conflict, a spiritual feeling of compassion came over him. It was so strong that the wife said after the session, "Thank you for being so compassionate."

Discussion Questions

Question: What truth(s) impacted you most in this lesson? Why?

Question: What do you understand are the major differences between living “A” life versus living “THE” life?

Question: Why is the word “source” so crucial when it comes to living THE Christian life?

Question: Did understanding God’s original design for man help you understand why the word “source” is so important? If so, why?

Question: Why is the LIFE side of the cross as important as the SIN side of the cross?

LESSON THREE

God's Part and Your Part In Becoming Like Christ

DAY ONE

Overview of Lesson Three

- God's Part In Transforming Our Lives
- Your Part In The Transformation Process
- Dependence and Faith

God's Part In Transforming Our Lives

Now that we have a foundation for growing into Christ-likeness, let's look at God's part and our part in transforming our lives. There are two key words to understand when it comes to God's part in the transformation process: initiator and producer. Let's look at the importance of these two words as they pertain to our spiritual growth.

God Is The INITIATOR

As our Source, God is the initiator of His transforming work in us. We see this in the first part of Philippians 1:6:

*"For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began [initiates] a good work** in you...."*
Philippians 1:6a

What is Paul telling you in the first part of this verse? He is saying that God began the work that He wants to accomplish in you. He began or initiated this work in you at salvation. The Father accomplished this work by sending Jesus to die on the cross to save mankind from their sins.

This is also born out in John 14:26 which tells us that the Holy Spirit, as the initiator, will teach us and bring spiritual truths to mind.

*"... the **Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, He will **teach** you all things, and **bring to your remembrance** all that I said to you."* John 14:26

Questions: If we see ourselves as the source, wouldn't we be tempted to be the initiator? In what ways do you think our lives might be different if we let God initiate?

God Is The PRODUCER

God promises to do much more than just save you. Look at the second part of Philippians 1:6:

*“... He who began a good work in you will **carry it on to completion**
[produce] until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6b*

We see in the second part of Philippians 1:6 that God not only began the work, but He also will produce or complete the work that He began in you at salvation.

As the producer, God will:

- FREE you from the sin strongholds that you can't overcome. Galatians 5:1
- HEAL you of your past and present woundedness. Psalm 147:3
- SUPPLY all your needs. Philippians 4:19
- Be your VICTORY over sin, the world, the flesh, and Satan. 1 Corinthians 15:57
- TRANSFORM your life to experience Christ-likeness. 2 Corinthians 3:18

The most common false belief that many Christians have is that they believe they are the initiator and producer of transformation in their own lives with God's help. In other words, if any change is to occur, it is up to you, using your intellect, will power, and self-discipline, to transform yourself with God's help. This is like climbing a greased rope. You use all your strength and effort to climb it but in spite of your effort, you keep sliding to the bottom of the rope.

It is because of this false belief that so many believers either give up on God's promises or else keep trying in vain to produce Christ-likeness in their own strength. If this is what you have been taught, do you feel you are truly growing into Christ-likeness?

Question: What are some of the things listed above that God will do as the Producer that you want to experience more of?

Meditate: on Philippians 1:6. Think about God initiating and producing Christ-likeness in you apart from your trying to produce Christ-likeness using your own resources. Shouldn't that take a load off you and give you a sense of freedom since it is not up to you to transform yourself?

Engaging God: If you have believed that you are the cause and effect of transformation with God's help, seek Him to persuade you that He, and He alone, is the initiator and the producer of transformation.

God Is WILLING and DETERMINED

Before we get into your part in the transformation process, let's look at one final truth. Many Christians ask the question, "Is God truly willing to transform my life?" Look again at Philippians 1:6 because it clearly shows that God initiated His work in you at salvation and that He is continuously willing and determined to transform your life.

*"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you **WILL** carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:6*

***The truth in many Christians' lives is that it is NOT God who is unwilling.
Rather, it is our UNWILLINGNESS to allow God to transform our lives.***

Engaging God: If you struggle with God's being able or willing to transform your life, ask Him to persuade you that He is more than able and is willing.

DAY TWO

Your Part In The Transformation Process

John 15:5 Reveals Your Part

Even though God is the initiator and producer of transformation in your life, you have a vital part to play in order for Him to transform you. Let's look at John 15:5 to give you a better idea of what that part is:

*"I AM the VINE, you are the branches; he who **ABIDES** in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit...." John 15:5a*

Jesus is saying that just as the physical branch is designed to be totally dependent upon the physical vine for life, you, as a "spiritual" branch, are designed to live totally dependent upon God, the spiritual Vine of your life. The word "abide" is another word for "dependence." In addition to dependence, other words for "abide" are:

- Remain
- Rely on
- Draw from
- Live from
- Cooperate with

Remember, God's design for man from Lesson Two? Adam and Eve were designed to live in total dependence on God. Even though we are living after the Fall, we must remember this key truth:

God's design for man has NOT changed.

Just like Adam and Eve, God's design for you and me after the Fall is no different. We, too, are designed to live in total dependence on God.

Doesn't it make sense that since God is our Source, our part is to depend on Him to be our Source? That is why Jesus uses the perfect example of the branch being totally dependent on the vine for life. Therefore, our part in God's transformation process is this:

***To **DEPEND ON**, **RELY ON** and **DRAW FROM**
God as our **SOURCE** to transform us into Christ-likeness.***



[Note: The word “bears” in John 15:5 does not mean “produce.” The word “bears” means “to carry.” The key point is that the branch does not produce the fruit. The vine is the source for producing the fruit while the branch is the agent through which the fruit is produced.]

Questions: Have you believed up to this point that it is up to you to produce the fruit? If so, how would it change your attitude toward your Christian walk if you believed that your part is “dependence,” and God’s part is “production” of the fruit in you?

Meditate: on John 15:5. Even though this is a very familiar verse, spend time slowly reading and meditating on the words.

Engaging God: Ask God to give you a deeper spiritual understanding of the branch-vine relationship as it relates to how you are to live the Christian life and be transformed.

Another Key Reason We Are To Live Dependent On God

Look at the end of John 15:5 where Jesus says:

*“... **apart** from Me you can do **NOTHING**.”*

Think about this question: “What happens to a branch when it is separated from the vine?” It begins to die because it is no longer able to draw life from it. If you, as a spiritual branch, decide to try to live independently of Christ, the spiritual Vine, then what do you think will be the result?

When Jesus says, “*apart from Me you can do **nothing**,*” what does He mean?

***Jesus means that APART from Him you CANNOT produce
“THE” LIFE that God promises you.***

This part of John 15:5 creates problems for many Christians. Why? Because man is capable of doing many things apart from God such as how to do a job, to master a hobby or a sport, or to manage his finances. Even though this is true, when it comes to spiritual growth, it will not happen apart from Christ being the Source to grow us spiritually.

In addition, apart from dependence upon Christ there will be:

- NO power over sin
- NO victory over your flesh
- NO freedom from your defeating sin patterns
- NO healing of your past or present woundedness

Concerning our study:

Apart from DEPENDENCE upon God, there will be NO transformation into Christ-likeness.

Let's look at an example to explain. Imagine for a moment a glove sitting on a table. Without a hand in the glove, what can that glove do? Nothing. All it can do is lie there. However, when you put your hand in the glove, now what can that glove do? Using this example, the glove is you and God is the hand. As you depend on God, His Life and power work in you to produce Christ-likeness.

Question: Why might the concept of “nothing” be a hard one to grasp, especially since our default thinking says we are to do something?

Engaging God: If you struggle with the idea that we cannot transform our lives spiritually apart from God doing it, ask the Holy Spirit to persuade you this is true. In addition, ask Him to persuade you that apart from living dependent on Him, you will never experience His freedom, victory, healing, or transformation that He promises and you desire.

DAY THREE

Does This Mean That I Live A PASSIVE Life and Do Nothing?

This might be a question you are asking at this point. The answer is “no.” The Christian life is anything but passive because you have a vital part to play in the spiritual growth process.

Your DEPENDENCE on God is a very ACTIVE part of His transformation process.

The truth is the walk of faith is anything but passive. As you actively depend on God, He actively grows you into Christ-likeness. Here is another way to look at it.

***ACTIVE dependence means you are trusting GOD as your SOURCE
to transform you into Christ-likeness.***

Let’s look at the life of Jesus while on earth in the next section to further explain.

Question: If depending on God as the Source seems passive to you, how might it change your spiritual walk if you believed that you are to actively depend on God to transform you into Christ-likeness?

Meditate: on the thought that as you actively depend on God that He is the Source of the activity (spiritual transformation) taking place in you.

Jesus Is Our Example of Living A Dependent Life

To better understand the issue of passivity, let’s look at Jesus’ life and ministry while on the earth. We know that one of Jesus’ main purposes was to die on a cross for our sins in order for us to have the opportunity to be saved. But equally important is that Jesus came to show us how to live THE Christian life. So, let’s look at just how Jesus lived His life on earth. We first need to understand that Jesus as the “God-man” laid aside His privileges of deity. We see this in Philippians 2:6, 7:

“He [Jesus] had equal status with God but didn’t think so much of Himself that He had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, He set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave and became human!”

This doesn't mean that at any time while Jesus was on this earth He was not fully deity. What it specifically means is that Jesus chose not to exercise His divine right to be co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit in order to live as a man.

How did Jesus live in relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit while He was on the earth.

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

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

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

The common theme in each of these verses is that Jesus said He could do **nothing** apart from the Father and the Holy Spirit. In other words, Jesus lived in active dependence upon the Father and the Holy Spirit as His Source while He was living on earth. Here is a key truth concerning Jesus.

***While on earth, Jesus was NOT functioning as the SOURCE.
Rather, He was DEPENDING on the LIFE and POWER
of His FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT as the Source.***

Could this mean that the Father and the Holy Spirit, not Jesus, was the Source for all that Jesus accomplished while He was on earth? We see the answer in John 14:10 when Jesus says:

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

Would you say that Jesus was passive while living on earth? I don't believe that any of us would say that based on all the ministry that took place. However, as evidenced by the above verse, He was not the Source to accomplish the healings, the resurrection of Lazarus, etc. The truth is that Jesus was actively dependent on the Father and the Holy Spirit for them to accomplish these works through Him. Jesus' life in relationship to His Father was a perfect example of the branch-Vine relationship. Using the previous glove analogy, Jesus, as a man, was the glove and the Father was the hand. Here is a key question:

***If Jesus, as a man, lived in total DEPENDENCE upon His
Father and the Holy Spirit as His Source,
THEN HOW SHOULD YOU LIVE LIFE?***

We are to live totally dependent on God as our Source to transform us into Christ-likeness.

Question: What did you learn from how Jesus lived His life on earth and how do you think that applies to your spiritual walk?

Meditate: on the four verses from John, above, and think about this question, “If Jesus as our example lived totally dependent on His Father’s life and power, then how does God expect us to live?”

Engaging God: Ask God to reveal to you how Jesus’ dependent relationship on the Father applies to you in your daily life.

DAY FOUR

The Problem Is That We All Struggle With Being Dependent. Why?

All of us as Christians struggle with dependence. Why is that the case? Here are three reasons.

1. The FLESH Within Us Continually Tempts Us To Live Independent of God

Remember the definition of the “flesh” from Lesson One? Here is another definition of the flesh.

The FLESH is an ATTITUDE within us that says, “I DON’T need God to live life. I can live life INDEPENDENT of God.”

Look at Romans 7:18 to confirm this.

“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my **flesh**; for the willing is present in me, but the **doing of the good is not.**”

Living in our flesh prevents us from “doing good” (i.e., living dependent on God) because as it says in the first part of Romans 8:7:

“because the mind set on **the flesh is hostile toward God....**”

We will talk more about the flesh in Lesson Five, but it is important to know at this point that our flesh will always resist living dependent upon God.

2. The World Tells Us To Be INDEPENDENT

Part of our struggle with dependence is that we live in a world that screams “you can do it, fix it, handle it, and overcome it.” We are so inundated and brainwashed with the message of independence and self-sufficiency from the world that we struggle when it comes to living dependently upon God.

3. The World Reinforces The Message That Dependence Equals WEAKNESS

Not only does the world scream “independence,” but it also sends the message that “dependence” equals “weakness.” Since no one wants to be perceived as weak (especially men), then they choose to live out of their own strength which equals independence.

Dependence and Faith

Dependence ON God = FAITH IN God

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

Walking by faith is another way of saying living dependent on God. Let’s look at a definition of faith as it pertains to our study.

Faith is a moment-by-moment DEPENDENCE on God believing that ONLY He, as THE SOURCE, can transform you into Christ-likeness.

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you know that your part in our Christian walk is faith. However, many Christians have some misunderstanding or false belief regarding the issue of faith because what they believe about faith is not resulting in consistent freedom, victory, healing of woundedness, or transformation. Here is the first question that you might ask yourself:

Is what I believe about walking by faith transforming my life?

If not, is it possible that you are putting your faith in the wrong object? Let’s explore the answer to this question in the next section.

Faith Must Always Have An OBJECT

Would you not agree that faith always has an object. For example, when you drive your car, you have faith in your brakes, or you have faith in the construction of the building that you work in every day, or faith in the chair that you sit in. When it comes to spiritual transformation, the key question is: Who is the **object** of your faith? We know from scripture that the object of our faith as Christians is God. We see this in the following verses:

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

*“We do this by keeping our **eyes on Jesus**, on **Whom our faith depends** from start to finish.”
Hebrews 12:2 (NLT)*

DAY FIVE

However, Is It Possible That There Is ANOTHER Object of Our Faith?

If Christians are not being transformed into Christ-likeness or growing spiritually, it is likely there is another object of their faith other than God. Could it be that if they are not being transformed, the object of their faith might really be themselves? Let's make this a little more personal.

If you believe that it is up to YOU, as the source with God's help, to live the Christian life, is it possible that the REAL object of your faith is YOU?

This is not a question to guilt or shame you. Rather, it is crucial to understand that if we are not growing spiritually, one of the problems may be that we are focused on ourselves rather than God as the object of our faith. To better understand the real object of our faith, look at the following questions.

Are you experiencing:

- Ongoing victory over your defeating sin patterns and Satan?
- Ongoing freedom from your sinful behaviors?
- Ongoing healing of your past or present woundedness?
- Ongoing transformation into the likeness of Christ?

If your answer is "No" to each of the previous questions, is it possible that you are really putting your faith in yourself as the source versus faith in God as your Source? If God is the Source of your faith, then you would be experiencing ongoing victory, freedom, healing, and transformation.

The CONSEQUENCE of putting faith in OURSELVES means we will NEVER experience God's transforming work in our lives.

However, if we walk by faith with God as the true object of our faith, He will produce, and we will experience, transformation into Christ-likeness.

Let's look at a diagram to illustrate the difference.



What Choice Will You Make?

Meditate: on your walk of faith and whether the object of your faith is yourself or God.

Engaging God: Ask the Spirit to reveal to you whether the true object of your faith is in your ability and will power or in God's ability. If the Holy Spirit reveals to you that you are really walking by faith in your ability versus God's ability, then seek Him to give you the willingness to seek Him solely to be the object of your faith.

Three Key Truths About Faith

Before we end this lesson, let's look at three key truths concerning faith.

1. It Is Not Up To You To PRODUCE The Faith

Many Christians have been told that it is up to them to produce their faith or that they have too little faith. Both are wrong for two reasons. First of all, we have all the faith we need because Christ will meet all our needs according to Philippians 4:19.

*"And My God shall supply **all your needs** according to His riches in glory **in Christ Jesus.**"*

If you have need of faith, Christ will supply all the faith you need. How much faith do we have in Christ? Paul answers this question in Colossians 2:9, 10.

*"For **in Christ all the fullness of the Deity** lives in bodily form, and you have*

*been **given fullness IN Christ**, who is the head over every power and authority.”*

If this is true, think about this statement.

***SINCE you have been given fullness IN Christ, this means
that you have the FULLNESS of Christ’s FAITH in you.***

Since you have the fullness of Christ in you and Christ is the Source to supply your faith, then it is not up to you to produce or manufacture faith. Rather, your part, as it says in Colossians 2:6 below, is simply to **receive** the faith Christ supplies:

*“As you therefore have **received Christ Jesus the Lord**, so **walk in Him**.”*

Since you have received Christ who is the Source of your faith, your part is to continue walking/receiving the faith that He will supply. Another way of saying this is:

***God does NOT expect you to produce the faith.
He expects you to RECEIVE and walk in His SUPPLY of faith.***

Have you believed that it is up to you to produce the faith required to live the Christian life? How much easier would it be for you to simply receive the faith that is already yours in Christ rather than trying to produce it?

Meditate: on the two verses in this section.

Engaging God: If you have believed it is up to you to produce faith, or you are struggling with what you have just read (i.e., Christ is the Source of your faith), seek the Holy Spirit to persuade you of this key truth.

2. Early On, Faith May Be WITHOUT Feeling Or Experience

When we walk by faith, God is working through our faith to transform us into Christ-likeness. However, early on in our faith walk, we may not feel or experience God working. This is important to realize because the tendency for many Christians is to equate faith with feelings and experience. However, look at the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1.

*“Now faith is the **assurance** of things hoped for, the **conviction** of things not seen.”*

The two words you don’t see in this definition are “feeling” and “experience.” The problem is as human beings, we feel and experience life every moment. However, as we walk by faith, God promises He is working in our lives (remember Philippians 1:6) even if we don’t feel Him working. So, with regard to our study, this is a crucial truth to remember.

Faith is BELIEVING God is transforming us into Christ-likeness even if we don't FEEL or EXPERIENCE Him working in us.

We will apply this truth when we talk about what it looks like to walk by faith.

3. STEPS of Faith Versus An ATTITUDE Of Faith

Paul says in Galatians 5:16:

*"But I say, **walk by the Spirit (attitude of faith)**, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."*

The word "walk" is a progressive tense in the Greek which means it is continuous. We take a step of faith to engage God to work in our lives. However, where God is taking us is from steps of faith to a continuous walk or attitude of faith. What does a walk/attitude of faith mean.

The WALK of faith is an ongoing ATTITUDE of dependence.

As we take steps of faith, over time walking by faith becomes a "holy habit" or attitude where we are for the most part walking by faith without consciously thinking about it. Like when learning to walk, a child has to be very intentional in carefully taking each step. They will fall down many times but as they continue to take steps, they eventually get to a place where they are walking and don't have to think about each step. In like manner, as we take steps of faith, the Holy Spirit is transforming us to live from an attitude of faith that becomes like breathing.

Conclusion

This lesson lays an important foundation for transformation. If we not only understand but believe God's part and our part in the spiritual growth process, we will experience true spiritual growth. In the next lesson, we will take the truths that we have learned in these first three lessons and apply them to growing into Christ-likeness.

Discussion Questions

Question: What truth(s) impacted you most in this lesson? Why?

Question: What might be the consequences, if we believe it is up to us to produce faith?

Question: What are some reasons you personally struggle with being dependent on God?

Question: How does living dependent on God differ from what our culture is telling us about living life?

Question: As you go through life, you can do all that you do living dependent on God or live in dependence on yourself. What might be the consequences if you lived independent of God concerning your decisions, your marriage, your parenting, your job or in other relationships?

LESSON FOUR

Being Transformed To Become Like Christ

DAY ONE

Overview of Lesson Four

- Transformation Into Christ-likeness
- The Line
- Application of Steps of Faith To Be Transformed

Transformation Into Christ-Likeness

Review of Christ-Likeness

Let's look again at what we are being transformed into according to 2 Corinthians 3:18:

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

Here again is the list of Christ-like characteristics we talked about in Lesson Two. According to 2 Corinthians 3:18, as you walk by faith, the Holy Spirit will transform you to live from Christ's:

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

Question: If you were living from these Christ-like characteristics, in what ways do you think it might change or transform your spiritual life, your marriage, your parenting, your job, or how you view your adverse circumstances?

What Are Examples of What Our Lives Will Look Like Living From Christ-Likeness

Before we talk about the practical applications of being transformed, let's look at a few outcomes you can expect after being transformed into Christ-likeness:

- You can live from **Christ's unconditional love** which means you can love people instead of comparing, being critical, or being judgmental of them.
- You can live from **Christ's acceptance** which means you can accept others and not take ownership of others' rejection.
- You no longer have to live in fear because you can live from **Christ's courage**.
- You no longer have to try to be in control because you can live from **Christ's control**.
- You can live from **Christ's peace** when adverse circumstances occur (such as receiving a life-threatening health diagnosis).
- You no longer have to strive to gain victory over a sin stronghold. Rather, you can depend on **Christ's victory** to be victorious.
- You live from **Christ's selflessness** rather than your selfishness which will result in putting others' needs before your own.

Remember the definition of the word "transformation" from Lesson One:

***A CHANGE of the form or nature of a person into a
COMPLETELY different person by SUPERNATURAL means.***

If you were experiencing more and more Christ-likeness, wouldn't that change you into a completely different person? This is why being transformed into Christ-likeness is one of the most amazing promises by God.

We will see more outcomes of transformation as we continue this study. However, when you look at the outcomes listed above, don't they encourage you to engage God in order to be transformed?

Question: What other outcomes can you come up with that might result from living from Christ-likeness?

“The LINE”

Introduction

Now that we know what Christ-likeness is, let’s begin looking at what it means to grow into Christ-likeness by looking at an illustration called “The Line.” In the illustration on the next page, everything above “The Line” is living from Christ-likeness versus living from below “The Line,” which is what you are experiencing in the moment, or is something you have been experiencing long term.

ABOVE = CHRIST-LIKENESS
THE LINE

BELOW = EXPERIENCE

Christ-Likeness Versus Experience – Negative Feelings-Fleshly Behaviors-Strongholds

Concerning our study, what we experience below the line falls into three categories: negative feelings, fleshly behaviors, and strongholds as illustrated below.

Unconditional Love	Victory	Worth	Acceptance
Freedom	Patience	Strength	Forgiveness
Understanding	Peace	Security	Kindness
Discernment	Wisdom	Humility	Compassion
Christ-confidence	Adequacy	Boldness	Gentleness
Righteousness	Rest	Courage	Selflessness
Christ-control	Hope	Power	Goodness
Other’s Focused	Joy	Sacrificial	Faithfulness

CHRIST-LIKENESS

EXPERIENCE

Negative Feelings
Fleshly Behaviors
Strongholds

Let's take a closer look at the meaning of negative feelings, fleshly behaviors, and strongholds.

Negative Feelings – When we experience adversity, stress, circumstantial or relationship struggles, the outcome can result in our feeling:

Rejected	Anxious	Miserable	Inadequate
Fearful	Stressed	Frustrated	Angry
Condemned	Criticized	Unhappy	Unworthy
Inadequate	Discouraged	Shame	Unforgiveness
Guilty	Burdened	Confused	Depressed
Fearful	Impatient	Despairing	Paralyzed
Troubled	Perplexed	Empty	Judged
Defeated	Overwhelmed	Powerless	Ashamed
Insecure	Misunderstood	Insignificant	Vulnerable
Hopeless	Defensive	Dejected	Lonely

Question: With whatever internal and external struggles you are facing concerning your circumstances or relationships, what are some of the feelings you are experiencing?

INITIAL negative feelings are NOT sinful, but if our feelings become more intense and begin CONTROLLING us, then they become FLESHLY/SINFUL.

Look at Ephesians 4:26 to confirm the above truth.

"Be angry and do not sin...."

There is nothing wrong with the initial feeling, but when it goes beyond an initial feeling it becomes fleshly/sinful. For example, we all can feel rejected at different points. But when we take ownership of someone's rejection and let it control us, this goes from a feeling of rejection to become a fleshly/sinful feeling. This can also result in fleshly behaviors.

DAY TWO

Fleshly Behaviors – On the other hand when these feelings take us to the flesh, they can result in fleshly behaviors. In the previous lesson, we defined flesh this way.

The FLESH is an ATTITUDE within us that says, “I DON’T need God to live life or I can live life INDEPENDENT of God.”

Living out of the flesh produces fleshly behaviors. Let’s look at a definition of fleshly behaviors.

Fleshly behaviors are self-centered, sinful ATTITUDES and ACTIONS that result from living from the FLESH.

Below are some examples of fleshly behaviors that flow out of our flesh:

Frustrated	Angry	Controlling	Rejecting
Unloving	Critical	Guilting	Shaming
Manipulative	Unforgiving	Condescending	Judging
Uncaring	Insensitive	Resentful	Jealous
People-pleasing	Self-righteous	Selfish	Abusive
Envious	Deceitful	Bitter	Blaming
Condemning	Resisting	Demanding	Retaliating

Using our example above, you can initially feel rejected but if you take ownership of that rejection, you can express a fleshly behavior of retaliation by rejecting back the person who rejected you.

Question: With whatever internal and external struggles you are facing or have faced concerning your circumstances or relationships, what are some fleshly behaviors you are experiencing?

If we continue to live from negative feelings and fleshly behaviors, they can eventually become strongholds.

Strongholds – A stronghold is defined as a feeling or fleshly behavior that, over time, is reinforced to a point where it controls you and keeps you in bondage. Let’s look at an example of a stronghold that results from negative feelings and fleshly behavior.

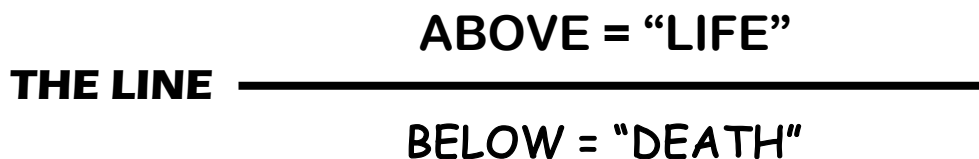
Example of negative feelings becoming strongholds: Someone may condemn you or you may condemn yourself. If you take ownership of that condemnation and continue living in it, it will eventually become a stronghold by keeping you in bondage to it.

Example of fleshly behaviors becoming strongholds: If you struggle with the fleshly behavior of judging others and it is reinforced over time, it will have such a grip on your life that you find yourself judging everyone around you.

Another Key Truth About The Line

As Christians we have a choice. We can choose to live above the line from Christ-likeness or we can choose to live below the line from our negative feelings, fleshly behaviors, or strongholds. God intends for us to live above the line. If we do, the result will be experiencing THE Life of Christ in us. Whereas, if we live below the line we will live in the “death” that results from living from our negative feelings, fleshly behaviors, or strongholds as the verse below says and the diagram illustrates.

*“The mind set on the **flesh** is **death** and the mind set on the **Spirit** is **life** and peace.” Romans 8:6*



Let’s add the Christ-like characteristics above the line and some examples of negative feelings, fleshly behaviors, and strongholds below the line to further illustrate.

Unconditional Love	Victory	Worth	Acceptance
Freedom	Patience	Strength	Forgiveness
Understanding	Peace	Security	Kindness
Discernment	Wisdom	Humility	Compassion
Christ-confidence	Adequacy	Boldness	Gentleness
Righteousness	Rest	Courage	Selflessness
Christ-control	Hope	Power	Goodness
Other’s Focused	Joy	Sacrificial	Faithfulness

CHRIST-LIKENESS = LIFE

EXPERIENCE = DEATH

Anxious, angry, unworthy, self-righteous, impatient, demanding, unforgiving, unloving, defensive, inadequate, critical, judgmental, ashamed, controlling, arrogant, manipulative, guilty, rejecting, insecure, selfish

Exercise

From the list of Christ-like characteristics on page 57, the list of negative feelings on page 59, and the list of fleshly behaviors on page 60, fill in the blanks below.

What Christ-Like Characteristics Would You Most Like To Experience

What Are Some Of The Negative Feelings, Fleshly Behaviors or Strongholds You Are Experiencing

How We Live Above “The Line” = Growing Into Christ-Likeness

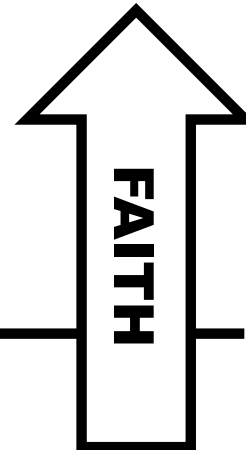
Since we were designed to live above the line, how do we do that? The answer as we saw in the last lesson is **faith**. John tells us that faith = victory in 1 John 5:4:

*“... And this is the **victory** that conquers the world, our **faith**.”*

We see this in the illustration on the following page.

FAITH Is What Takes You Above The Line

Unconditional Love	Victory	Worth	Acceptance
Freedom	Patience	Strength	Forgiveness
Understanding	Peace	Security	Kindness
Discernment	Wisdom	Humility	Compassion
Christ-confidence	Adequacy	Boldness	Gentleness
Righteousness	Rest	Courage	Selflessness
Christ-control	Hope	Power	Goodness
Other's Focused	Joy	Sacrificial	Faithfulness



Christ-likeness

Experience

Anxious, angry, unworthy, self-righteous, impatient, demanding, unforgiving, unloving, defensive, inadequate, critical, judgmental, ashamed, controlling, arrogant, manipulative, guilty, rejecting, insecure, selfish

Where will faith take us?

Steps of faith will take us ABOVE the line where the Holy Spirit will TRANSFORM us into Christ-likeness.

Application of Steps of Faith To Be Transformed

In this section, we will use the line analogy to understand how to move from living below the line to living above the line.

Taking A Step of Faith Releases The Full Force of God's Power

Transformation starts with a step of faith. What happens at the moment you take a step of faith?

God's SUPERNATURAL power is RELEASED in you to transform you into Christ-likeness.

Why is this? Because FAITH = POWER. We see this in the following two verses:

*“... so that your **faith** would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the **power of God.**”*

1 Corinthians 2:5

*“To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of **faith with power.**” 2 Thessalonians 1:11*

Let's examine these next two questions concerning God's power.

DAY THREE

1. What Kind of Power Is God's Power?

Look at the answer in 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."*

Think of it!

The SAME power that resurrected Jesus from the dead is IN YOU!

In addition, God's power in you is the same power that:

- Created the heavens and the earth
- Is holding the universe together
- Opened the Red Sea

It is absolutely necessary for us to live from God's power because without it we will never experience spiritual growth. You may have tried in your own will power and strength to overcome some defeating sin pattern or you may have simply tried not to sin. If so, how did that work out for you? The truth is without living from the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, we will never grow into Christ-likeness.

God's power is supernatural because there is no man-made explanation for how His power transforms our lives. This is a crucial truth to understand concerning God's power.

***God's supernatural power is working in us NON-STOP
whether or not we FEEL His power working.***

Since this truth is so important, would you please stop and re-read that sentence.

Engaging God: Ask God to persuade you in a deeper way of His divine power that you possess and how He is both willing and able to use His supernatural power to transform you into Christ-likeness as you walk by faith.

2. What Can God's Power Accomplish?

What can God's power accomplish within us? Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 3:20:

*"Now to Him who is able to **do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think**, according to [God's] **power** that works within us...."*

Think about this verse for a moment. Paul is making a very bold proclamation when he says what God can accomplish through His power which is “abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.” Paul is exclaiming this truth because he has experienced God’s power working so mightily in him that it has taken him to places of transformation he never thought were possible.

In addition to God’s power transforming you into Christ-likeness,

God’s Power Will:

- RENEW your mind to believe His truth. Romans 12:2
- Set you FREE from your sin strongholds. John 8:32
- HEAL your woundedness. Psalm 147:3
- Give you VICTORY over the flesh, sin, Satan, and the world. 1 Corinthians 15:57
- Draw you into a deeper RELATIONSHIP with Himself. Ephesians 1:5

Meditate: on God’s power in you and what it can accomplish.

Here is a key truth to remember when it comes to God’s power:

If we have NOT experienced the MAGNITUDE of God’s power, it is because we have not taken enough steps of faith to EXPERIENCE it.

As we experience the supernatural power of God working in our lives, we can say with Paul:

“...‘How awesome are your deeds! So GREAT is your power....’” Psalm 66:3

Examples of Steps of Faith To Be Transformed Into Christ-Likeness

In this section, we will look at some of the Christ-like characteristics and some examples of steps of faith to move from living below the line to above the line.

Hold Onto Or Entrust “Your Feelings” Or “Fleshly Behaviors”

Before we get into the application, let’s look at two choices we have when it comes to our journey of transformation. Whatever issue or struggle is associated with the Christ-like characteristic we want to experience, we can choose either to hold onto it or entrust it to God. Let’s look at the difference between the two.

HOLDING ONTO

What if we hold onto a negative feeling or fleshly behavior? It will be like grabbing a piece of burning charcoal and not letting go. You will inevitably get third degree burns by not letting go.

Spiritually speaking, if you hold onto a negative feeling or fleshly behavior not only will it negatively impact you, it will be toxic to everyone around you.

ENTRUSTING

Let's look at the definition of "entrust."

"ENTRUST"

GIVING OVER to God for Him to handle a CIRCUMSTANCE or RELATIONSHIP that is causing you to react in the FLESH.

Imagine going to your favorite restaurant and when the server brings the food, he is holding the plate with hot pads and warning you the plate is hot. What happens if you forget and grab the plate? You will instantly feel pain and let go. Imagine that this hot plate represents every internal and external conflict that you are currently experiencing. God does not want you to hold on to these. He wants you to entrust them to Him to resolve for you. Let's apply this truth to Christ-like acceptance.

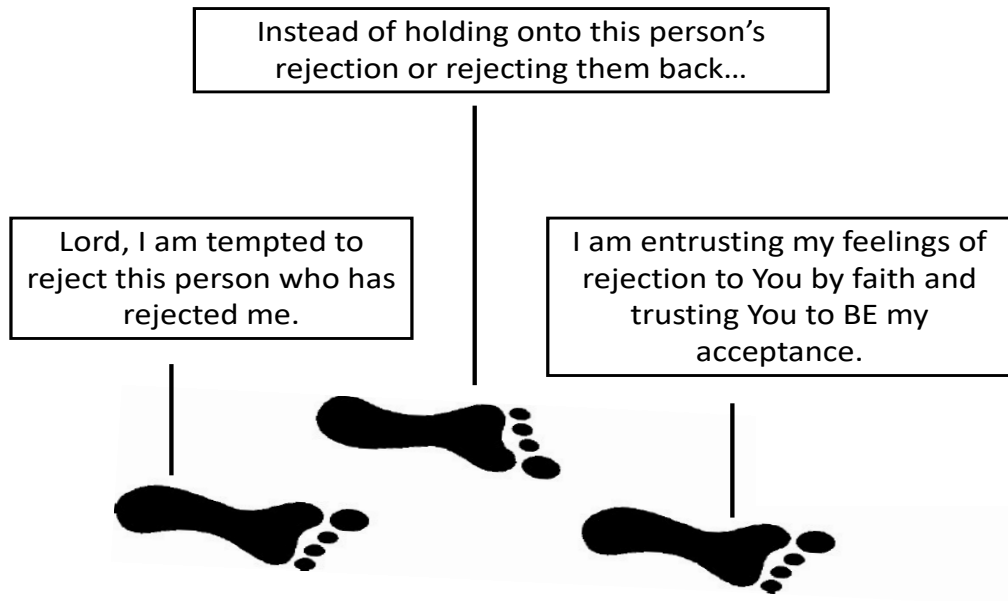
Christ-Like ACCEPTANCE

Example: Let's assume you struggle with taking the rejection of other people personally.

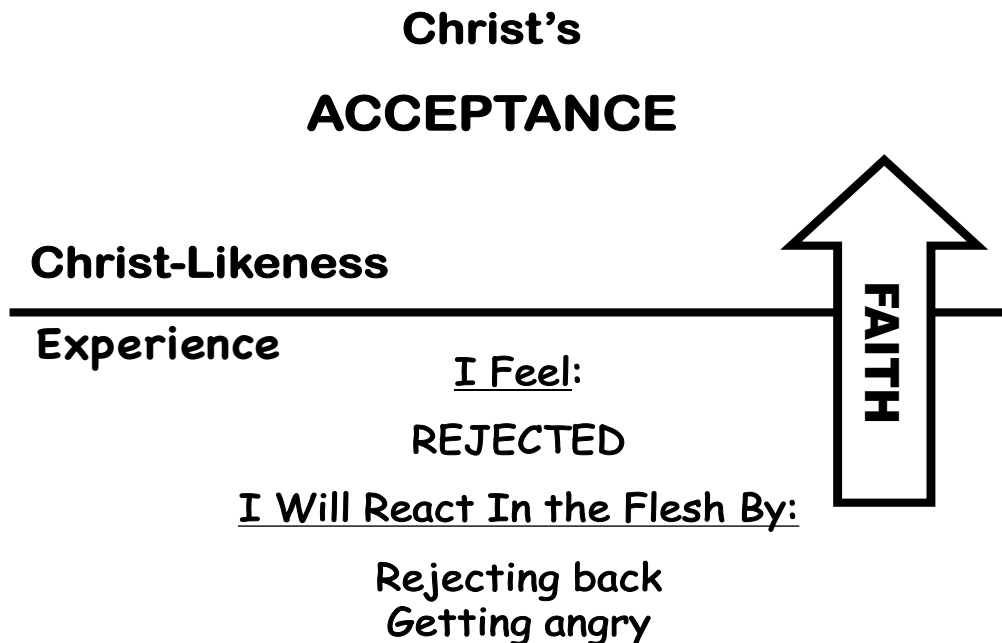
Holding Onto Negative Feelings Which Lead To Fleshly Behaviors: We can hold onto our feelings of rejection which can result in fleshly behaviors such as rejecting back, withdrawing, or getting angry.

The Truth: When other people are rejecting you, you will be tempted to hold onto (take ownership) of their rejection. But as you are being transformed to live from Christ-like **acceptance**, you will find you are no longer taking ownership of others' rejection. Rather, you will be believing in and living from Christ's acceptance.

Let's look at some steps of faith and see the how we entrust versus hold onto rejection.



In this example, we are seeking Christ to exchange our rejection for His acceptance. Look at the line analogy below to look at Christ-like acceptance.



Engaging God: Do you tend to take ownership of someone else's rejection towards you? If so, begin taking steps of faith to entrust your rejection to God and trust Jesus to BE your acceptance and replace your rejection.

[**Note:** If this is a real struggle for you, remember that every time you feel or experience rejection (perceived or real), entrust it immediately to God.]

DAY FOUR

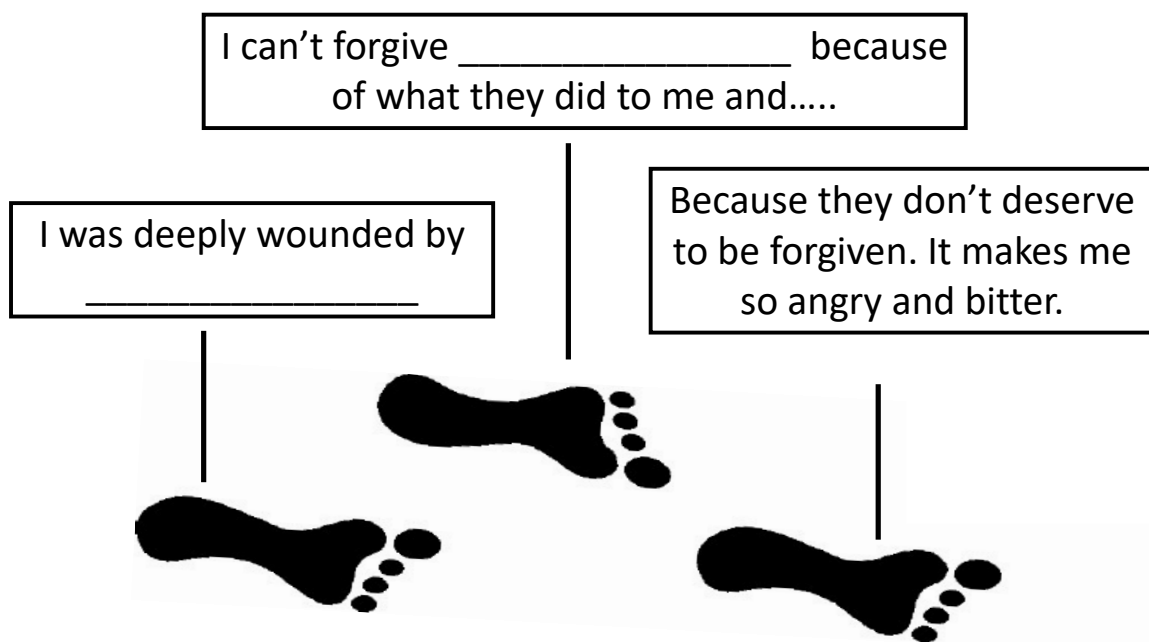
Christ-Like FORGIVENESS

Example: Assume you were wounded by someone and you struggle with forgiving them.

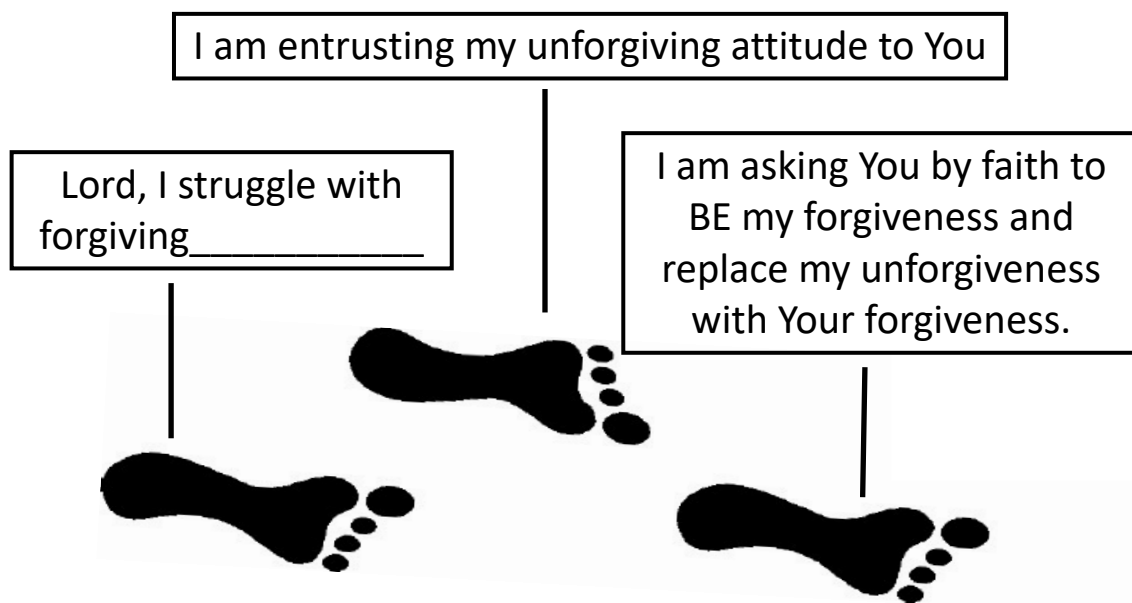
Consequences and Choices: If you hold onto your unforgiveness, it will produce ongoing anger, bitterness, and deeper unforgiveness. If you entrust your unforgiveness to the Lord, He will not only give you the willingness to forgive but will transform you to live from an attitude of forgiveness with the result that forgiving others will get easier every time you are offended.

The Truth: Unforgiveness results when we take ownership of someone else's offense. However, we have no excuse for not forgiving because we contain all of Christ's **forgiveness** and He forgave us of all our past, present, and future sins.

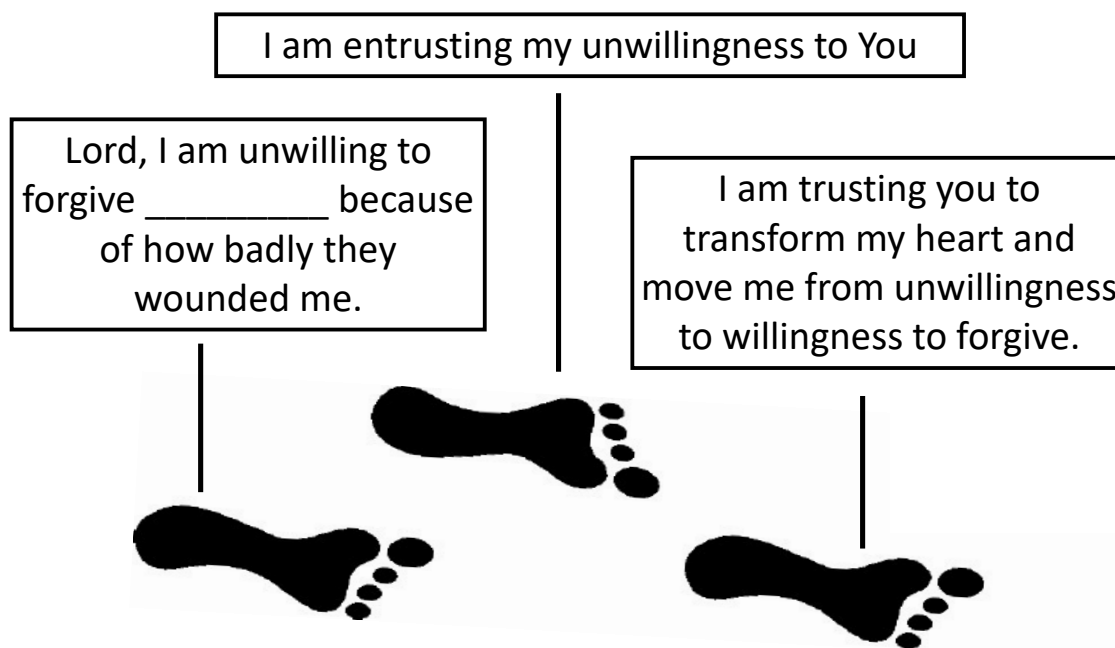
Here is an example of what it looks like if you hold onto your unforgiveness.



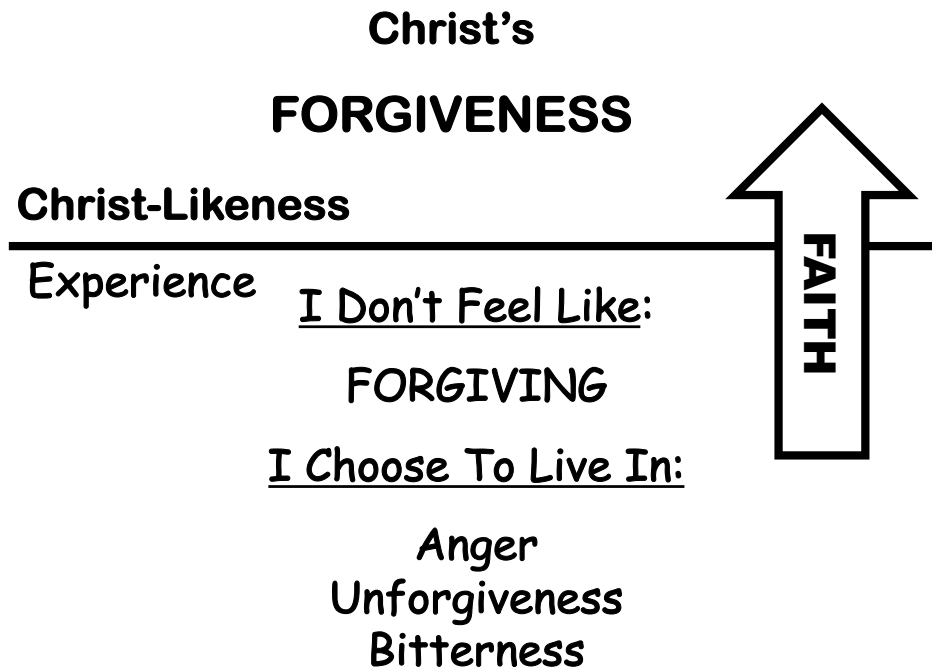
What does it look like to entrust your unforgiving attitude to God? Look at the illustration on the following page?



Important Thought: What if you are **not** willing to forgive that person. In order to have that willingness, seek the Spirit to give you the willingness to forgive. Here is an example of steps of faith.



Let's look at the line analogy on the following page concerning forgiveness.



Engaging God: Who do you struggle with forgiving? Will you seek the Lord to forgive that person or seek Him to give you the willingness to forgive? Begin taking steps of faith.

Christ-Likeness and Your MARRIAGE

Christ-Like UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Example: You are trying to get your need for unconditional love met from your spouse but he/she is not meeting it.

Consequences and Choices: You can choose to try to get your need for unconditional love from your spouse with the result that you will get frustrated, angry, etc. Or you can choose to get that need met from Christ which will result in your experiencing Christ's unconditional love for yourself. As you do, it will give you the opportunity to seek His unconditional love to flow through you to your spouse.

The Truth: Every human being is hard-wired with the need to be unconditionally loved. But, as humans, we cannot get that need met because the only thing we and others can offer is conditional love. Christ Himself is our **unconditional love**. Therefore, if we get our need for unconditional love met from Christ, then we no longer have to try and get that need met from our spouse. As we get that need met in Christ, then we can meet our spouse's need for unconditional love by asking Christ to love our spouse through us. When we do, His unconditional love will pour through us to him/her.

Step of faith: “Lord, I can’t produce unconditional love for my spouse. I am trusting You by faith not only to meet my need by BEING my **unconditional love** but also to love my spouse through me with Your unconditional love.”

Challenge: Take this step of faith as many times as it comes to mind in the next thirty days, and take note of any changes in how you see your spouse or how he or she sees you. You will begin to see a supernatural change in your marriage relationship. Even if you are not married, you can choose someone you have difficulty loving and take the same steps of faith.

Christ-Like SELFLESSNESS

Example: The number one problem in most marriages is selfishness. With that selfishness comes self-centered expectations towards our spouse on how we expect to be loved, accepted, valued, and respected.

Consequences and Choices: If you choose to stay selfish, you can expect more conflict and turmoil in your marriage. But if you choose to live from Christ’s selflessness, you will find yourself wanting to be more about meeting your spouse’s needs than getting your own needs met.

The Truth: One of the key Christ-like characteristics is **selflessness**. One key thing about Jesus while He was on the earth is He was always for others. Since we contain all of Christ’s **selflessness**, the Holy Spirit wants to transform us to set us free from our selfishness and replace it with an other’s-focused attitude.

Step of faith: “I admit that I am selfish in my marriage. I see the conflict my selfishness is causing. I am entrusting my selfishness to You and seeking You to BE my **selflessness** by faith and asking you to transform me to live from Your selflessness.”

Exercise: Look at the list of negative feelings on page 60 and the list of fleshly behaviors on page 61. Write down those feelings and fleshly behaviors that you are experiencing in your marriage.

Write down what Christ-like characteristics you would most like to experience instead of the negative feelings and fleshly behaviors. Begin taking steps of faith to take you from below the line to above the line.

DAY FIVE

Christ-Likeness and Your WORKPLACE

Christ's REST

Example: Let's assume that you have a stressful job. You are taking ownership of the stress which creates inner turmoil and unrest.

Consequences and Choices: If you choose to keep taking ownership of your stress, the results will likely be frustration, anger, or vain attempts to cope with your stress through such things as alcohol, drugs, pornography, overeating, etc. However, if you choose to engage God to live from Christ's peace, you will find yourself taking less and less ownership of your stress and increasingly experiencing His peace.

The Truth: We live in stress-filled bodies, in a stress-filled world, surrounded by stress-filled people. There is no getting away from the reality of stress. However, like rejection, we don't have to take ownership of our stress. We can choose to entrust it to Christ and trust the Holy Spirit to replace our stress with His **rest**.

Step of faith: "Lord, I am taking ownership and being weighed down by the stress of my job. I am entrusting my stress to You and trusting You to BE my **rest**. Move me to a place where I no longer take ownership of my stress."

Christ-CONTROL

Example: You just found out that you have lost your job, and you start feeling out of control.

The Truth: One of the major struggles we face as humans is the need to be in control. Often this is because we feel if we are in control, we will feel secure. But our thinking we are in control is an illusion because the truth is there is only One who is actually in control. Concerning this example, God provided the job you just lost. Because He is in control and is for you (Romans 8:31), He will provide your next job.

Consequences and Choices: If you choose to try to be in control concerning your job loss, you may start feeling anxious, fearful, or frustrated because you don't know where your next job is coming from or how you will meet your financial obligations. However, if you choose to walk in Christ's **control**, then you can be at peace knowing the Lord will provide.

Step of Faith: "Lord, I just lost my job. I feel out of control. I am entrusting those feelings to You and trusting You to BE my **control** because You are in control. I can rest in You because you brought me my last job and You will provide me the next one."

Exercise: Look at the list of negative feelings on page 60 and fleshly behaviors on page 61. Write down those feelings and fleshly behaviors that you are experiencing in your workplace.

Write down what Christ-like characteristics you would most like to experience instead of the negative feelings and fleshly behaviors. Begin taking steps of faith to take you from below the line to above the line.

Christ-Likeness and Your PARENTING

Christ's PATIENCE

Example: One of the key words when it comes to parenting is patience. Kids (young and old) can rob you of your patience.

The Truth: It is a fact of life that our kids can try our patience. It goes with the territory of being a parent. Parents are always going to be tempted to get impatient with their kids when their expectations of them are not being met (e.g., they're not behaving like we want them to). By seeking Christ to BE our **patience**, we won't hold onto the emotions and fleshly behaviors that result from our impatience.

Consequences and Choices: What feelings or behaviors can come out of your impatience? Frustration, anger, the need to be in control? How do you think those feelings negatively impact your children? If you choose to live in impatience, your kids will be wounded as they continue to receive the negative feelings and fleshly behaviors that flow out of your impatience. But if you choose to seek Christ to BE your patience, you will discover that when your kids try your patience, you will be giving in less and less to your impatience.

Step of Faith: "Lord, my child is trying my patience. I am asking You to BE my **patience** so that I won't go to my fleshly behaviors of frustration, anger, etc."

Exercise: Look at the list of negative feelings on page 60 and the list of fleshly behaviors on page 61. Write down those feelings and fleshly behaviors that you are experiencing as a parent.

Write down what Christ-like characteristics you would most like to experience instead of the negative feelings and fleshly behaviors. Begin taking steps of faith to take you from below the line to above the line.

Christ-Likeness and Your CIRCUMSTANCES

Christ's WISDOM

Example: Let's assume you are struggling with your finances and realize that you have to make some major decisions concerning them.

The Truth: Regardless of how smart we may be, our wisdom is minute compared to God's infinite wisdom. Since He knows the end from the beginning, we can seek Him to BE our **wisdom** in making these decisions.

Consequences and Choices: If we choose to walk in our own finite wisdom, we can make the wrong choices. However, if we choose to seek Him to BE our **wisdom**, then He will direct us to make the right decisions.

Step of faith: "Lord, I am confused about what decisions I should make concerning my finances. I am seeking You to BE my **wisdom** to reveal to me the right decisions to make."

Christ's PEACE

Example: Let's assume you just found out at your doctor's office that you have a serious illness and you are overtaken with fear, anxiety, and worry.

The Truth: Because Jesus is our **peace**, we can choose to walk in His peace and not let a serious diagnosis rob us of our peace. Peace also comes from believing that God is in control.

Consequences and Choices: If we choose to walk in anxiety or worry, it will rob us of our peace in Christ. However, if we trust Christ to BE our **peace**, we can rest in His peace which nothing, and no one, can rob us of.

Step of faith: "Lord, I am worried about what may happen to me with this health issue. I am **trusting** my worries to You and I am trusting You to BE my **peace** and replace my worry with Your peace."

Exercise: Look at list of negative feelings on page 60 and the list of fleshly behaviors on page 61. Write down those feelings and fleshly behaviors that you are experiencing in your circumstances.

Write down what Christ-like characteristics you would most like to experience instead of the negative feelings and fleshly behaviors. Begin taking steps of faith to take you from below the line to above the line.

Discussion Questions

Question: What truth(s) impacted you most in this lesson? Why?

Question: Write down some of the consequences that might result if we stay below the line. In what ways might those consequences negatively impact those around us?

Question: What changes do you want to experience personally, in your marriage, workplace, parenting or circumstances concerning your fleshly feelings and behaviors?

Question: When you look at the negative feelings or fleshly behaviors you are holding onto personally, in your marriage, workplace, parenting or circumstances, honestly, how does it make you feel holding onto them?

Question: When it comes to you personally, in your marriage, workplace, parenting or circumstances, by referring to the list of Christ-like characteristics on page 63, what specific characteristic do you most want to experience in those areas of your life? How might being transformed to live from them change your attitude in those areas of your life?

LESSON FIVE

Key Truths About The Transformation Process

Walls and Resistance To Our Walk Of Faith - Part One

DAY ONE

Overview of Lesson Five

- **God's Work In You Is Supernatural**
- **Faithing It Before Experiencing Transformation**
- **The Need To Be Intentional and Determined**
- **Transformation = "Holy" Displacement**
- **The Walls and Resistance We Will Encounter**

Now that we have looked at several examples of taking steps of faith, let's look at some key truths we need to understand about the growth process.

TRUTH #1: God's Work In You Is SUPERNATURAL

Understanding this truth that God's work is supernatural is crucial to our understanding of God's transforming work in our lives. Before we go on, let's look at the definition of a supernatural work.

Is a work that God accomplishes in and through us as we walk by FAITH for which there is NO natural or man-made explanation.

I believe most, if not all of us, struggle with the concept of "supernatural." The reason is that we live in the realm of our five senses where we are experiencing life every moment. Supernatural can be a foreign concept because when God works in the spiritual (supernatural) realm as opposed to the natural or physical realm, we may not feel or experience His work in our lives.

Since we are experiential beings, not feeling or experiencing God's work in us is not natural. This is why it is called a "faith" walk. How do walking by faith and the supernatural work of God connect?

TRUTH #2: Walking By Faith and God's Supernatural WORK

When we walk by faith, it is important to understand that the word "faith" does not necessarily include feelings or experience. To better understand this truth, look at the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1.

*“Now faith is the **assurance** of things hoped for, the **conviction** of things not seen.”*

This verse tells us that the faith walk is a supernatural one of “assurance” and “conviction” of things not seen. The word “seen” refers to feelings and experience. Therefore, the walk of faith is a supernatural walk that may or may not include feelings and experience. Let’s apply this definition to spiritual growth.

Faith is BELIEVING God is transforming us into Christ-likeness even if we don’t FEEL or EXPERIENCE Him working in us.

Believing without feeling or experience can be like telling someone they have to write with their left hand when they are right-handed. It is unnatural. When it comes to our faith walk, we may have to “faith it” before we experience change. Let’s take a deeper look into what that means.

Question: Do you struggle with the word “supernatural” or God’s work in us “being supernatural?” If so, write down why you struggle.

Engaging God: Seek the Holy Spirit to give you revelation of God’s work being supernatural.

TRUTH #3: You May Have To “FAITH IT” Before You EXPERIENCE Transformation

Early on as you take steps of faith, you often won’t feel or experience God’s power working in you. However, after some length of time of walking by faith, you will begin to experience changes in your thinking, beliefs, choices, and behaviors. We will call the walk of faith up until we actually experience the changes “faithing it.” What does “faithing it” mean?

“FAITHING IT”

Means that up until you ACTUALLY experience a change, you CONTINUE to believe that God is working even though you are NOT feeling or experiencing His working in you.

Let’s look at a biblical example in Joshua 6:2-5 to explain. This is the story of the fall of Jericho. It begins with God speaking to Joshua.

*“The LORD said to Joshua, ‘See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. **March around the city** once with all the armed men. Do this for **six days**. Have seven*

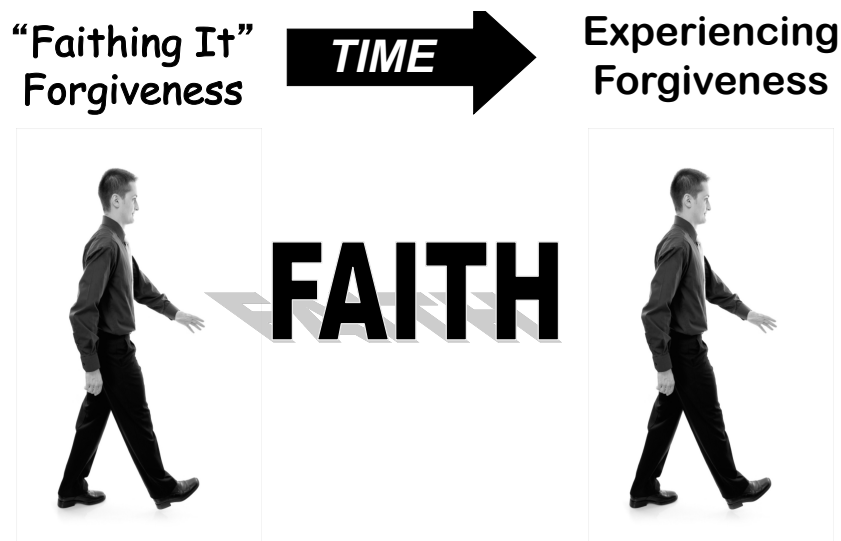
*priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then **the wall of the city will collapse** and the people will go up, every man straight in."*

Read this passage again and this time put yourself into the story. What if God told you to march around Jericho for seven days, to blow your trumpet on the seventh day, shout, and then the walls would fall down? (FYI – God did not tell the Jews to bring a crane with a wrecking ball!) Well, we know from the passage that is just what they did and, as God promised, the walls of the city collapsed. The key point to understand is that their part was to do all God commanded by faith and believe God's promise that the walls would fall down. They had to "faith it" for seven days before they "experienced" God's promise. It is no different with our walk of faith.

In our walk of faith, we have to continue "FAITHING IT" until we EXPERIENCE SUPERNATURAL changes in our thoughts, choices, beliefs, or behaviors.

Let's look at an example of what this looks like. Let's assume you struggle forgiving someone. Remember the steps of faith concerning forgiveness on pages 68-69. As you begin taking steps of faith, early on in this process you may not feel or experience Christ's forgiveness for that person. However, if you are walking by faith, what do we know is true?

The Holy Spirit is working in you (Philippians 1:6) to eventually forgive that person. Since at this point you are not experiencing Christ's forgiveness, we will call it a "faithing it" forgiveness. However, if you "faith it" long enough, you will eventually come to a place where you will begin to experience Christ's forgiveness for this person. Remember that moving from faith to experience is a supernatural work of the Spirit that for the most part will take time. Below is an illustration of what it looks like to move from "faith" to "experience."



The Process of Moving From Faith To Experience

DAY TWO

One reason that we struggle with “faithing it” is that we live in a microwave culture of “instant” gratification that says, “I want ‘it’ and I want ‘it’ now!” We bring that same mindset into our walk of faith, and we want to experience change and we want to experience it NOW. When we don’t experience God’s working according to our timetable, we can get impatient and eventually want to give up because nothing seems to be changing. We will talk more about this idea later in this lesson. Let’s end this section with this truth:

We will NEVER truly understand how God is working or what He is doing in the moment, but He promises us that He IS working non-stop as we walk by faith.

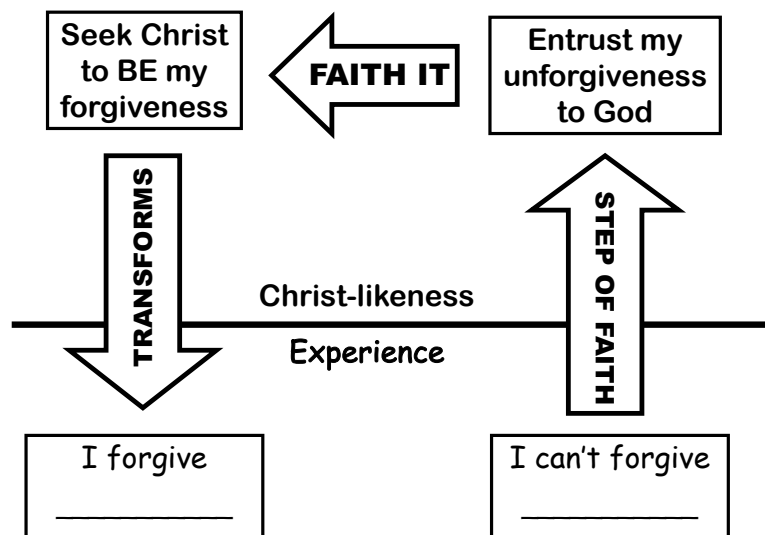
*“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in us **WILL carry it to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6*

Question: What might be some of the consequences if we don’t continue “faithing it” until we experience God’s transformation? You can use the issue of forgiveness as an example.

Engaging God: As you walk by faith, seek God to persuade you to keep “faithing it” until you experience transformation.

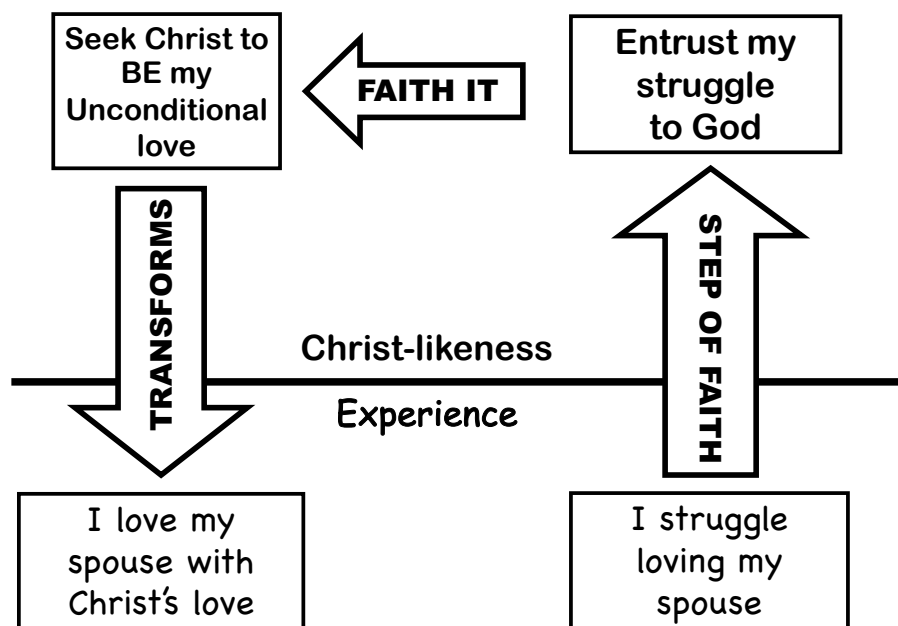
The Line and Moving From FAITH To EXPERIENCE

Let’s take this same example and use it with the line diagram as illustrated below.



Below the line you are experiencing an unwillingness to forgive someone. You take a step of faith and entrust your fleshly attitude/behavior of unforgiveness to God. As you continue “faithing it” by seeking Jesus to BE your forgiveness, the Holy Spirit transforms you so that you choose to forgive that person.

Let’s look at another example. Let’s assume you have an ongoing struggle loving your spouse. You take a step of faith and entrust your struggle to God. You continue “faithing it” by seeking Jesus to BE your unconditional love. As you continue to “faith it,” the Holy Spirit is transforming you to a point where you will choose to love your spouse with unconditional love.



TRUTH #4: Early On You Will Need To Be INTENTIONAL and DETERMINED

When you wanted to learn to drive a car, how intentional were you about showing up to driver’s ed class to learn to drive? What about a hobby you are passionate about. How intentional were you at mastering that hobby? It is no different with spiritual growth. The question is how determined are you to grow spiritually? We see Paul’s determination in 1 Corinthians 2:2.

*“For I **determined** to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”*

What should drive our determination to be transformed? Here are four reasons that should motivate us to be determined.

- We can experience victory over sin, Satan, and the world.
- We can be set free from our fleshly behaviors and strongholds.
- We can be transformed into Christ-likeness.
- We can experience a personal relationship with God.
- We can live an abundant life.

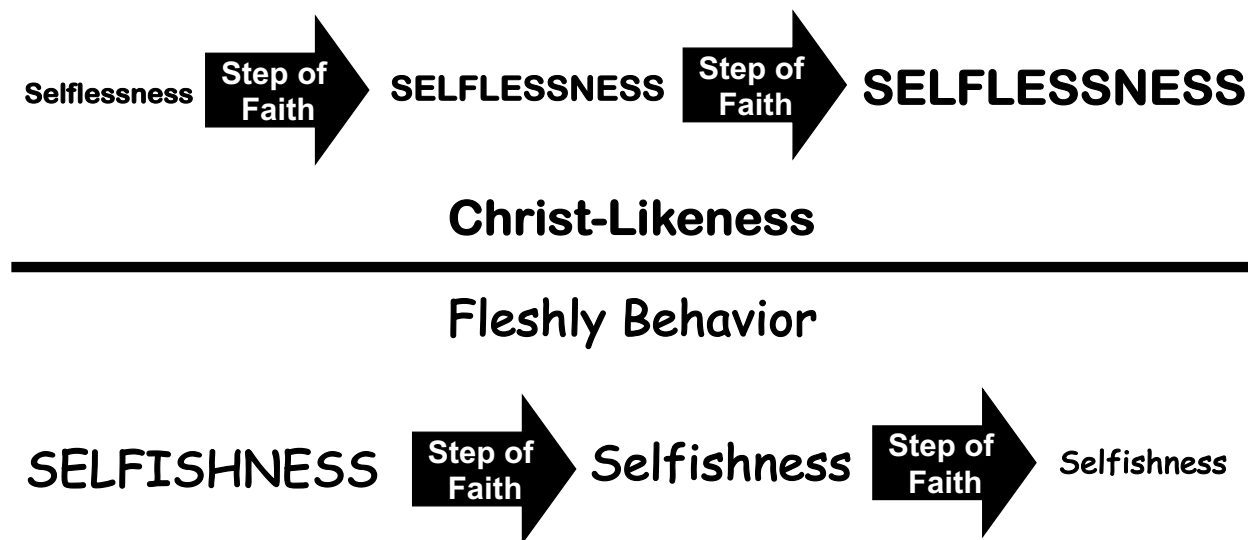
God has given us these promises and more that should fuel our determination to be transformed.

TRUTH #5: Transformation = “HOLY” Displacement

*“Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet **our inner man is being renewed day by day.**” 2 Corinthians 4:16*

Imagine a glass full of dirty water. If we take a pitcher of clean water and start pouring it into the glass of dirty water, what will be the result? As we pour, the clean water displaces the dirty water. Spiritually speaking, let’s assume the dirty water represents your selfishness. The pitcher represents the Holy Spirit. The clean water represents Christ’s selflessness.

As you take steps of faith, the Holy Spirit is pouring Christ’s selflessness into you and “displacing” your selfish attitude with His selflessness. The Holy Spirit is renewing your mind to the truth that Christ is your selflessness and persuading you that you are selfless in Him. This process is called “holy” displacement because over time you will find yourself being more selfless and less selfish.



True Story Example: There was a man who had a very unlovable brother. His brother had hated him for over 40 years because of all the negative things that had gone on between them. This man felt justified in not loving his brother because of their history of bad blood. As he was learning these Christ-life truths, the Holy Spirit convicted him that he had no excuse for not loving his brother. So, he began seeking the Spirit to transform his heart to love him with Christ-like love.

It took six months of “faithing it,” but one day his brother called him and instead of feeling angry, he felt Christ’s unconditional love for his brother. He knew it had to be a spiritual feeling because in his entire life, he had never had that feeling of love for his brother. As Christ’s love grew in him and overflowed to his brother, they reconciled and are now experiencing a love

relationship that would have been impossible apart from the work of the Spirit. Below illustrates this man's journey from faith to experience over the six months.



Moving From Faith Christ-like Love To EXPERIENCING Christ-like Love

Engaging God: Using the truth of holy displacement, what needs to be displaced in your life? Fear, rejection, pride, etc.? Seek God to displace whatever it is that needs to be displaced with who Christ is in you (i.e., His courage, acceptance, humility, etc.).

DAY THREE

TRUTH #6: Transformation (For The Most Part) Is A PROCESS

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

A question many people ask is how much time will it take to be transformed? We talked earlier about living in an instant gratification culture where we want things now. It is no different when it comes to the walk of faith. We really don't want to wait to be transformed.

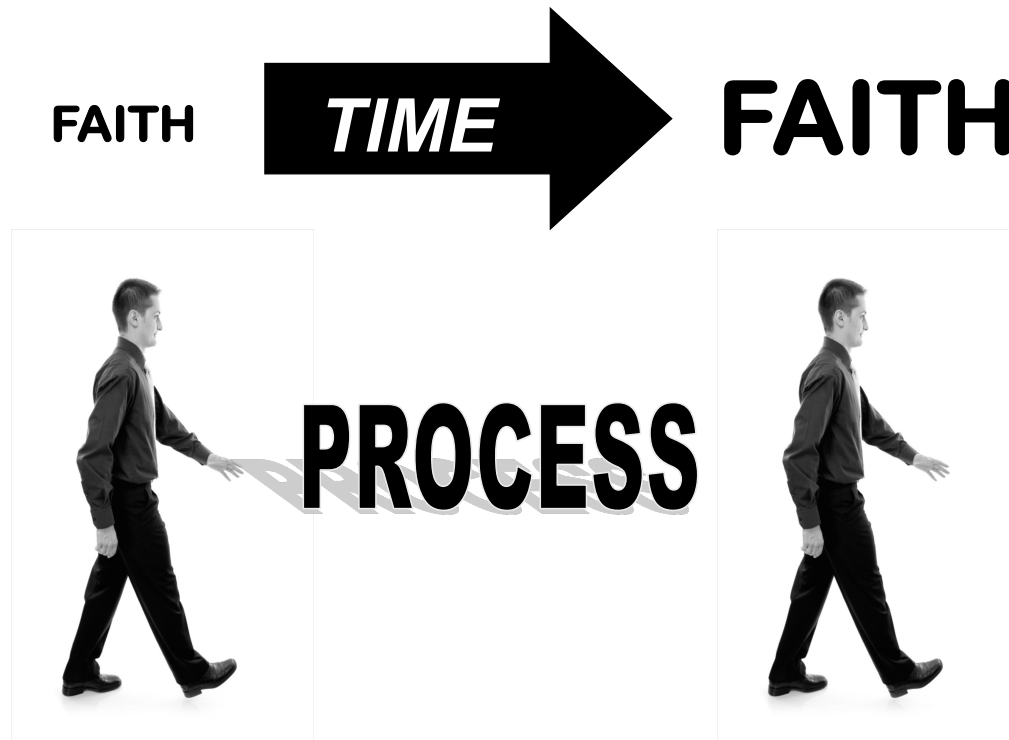
The truth we need to understand about growing into Christ-likeness is it, for the most part, is a PROCESS.

We know the Lord can transform us instantly but usually it is a longer-term process. Let's compare God's work in our lives to an IV versus an injection. While we would rather get a quick injection of transformation, God's process is usually more like a slow spiritual IV drip. The question you may be asking is, “Why?” Here is the answer.

Through God's transformation process He is GROWING our FAITH.

Think about it for a moment. Would our faith truly grow if transformation was instantaneous? Why does our faith need to grow? It needs to grow because faith is believing God is working even though we don't feel Him working. Faith says, “I am going to trust You are working even though there is no evidence of it.”

As much as we don't like the process, this is God's design. Therefore, as we walk by faith, God is not only transforming us into Christ-likeness, He is also growing our faith in the process per the illustration on the following page.



God Is GROWING Our FAITH During The Process

Here is another analogy that may help you understand the transformation process. Imagine a pitcher of clear water. In this example, you represent the water. The tea bag represents Christ and the tea represents Christ-likeness. As with a real tea bag, when you drop the bag into the water, it is sitting in (abiding in) the water but nothing happens immediately. However, we know over time the tea will eventually flow from the bag into the water. In like manner, as you, the water, abide with Jesus, the tea (Christ-likeness) flows out of the bag and into the water changing the nature of the water. Once again, it is important to emphasize that transformation is a process.

Engaging God: When you are feeling impatient with God's (often slow) process, seek Jesus to BE your patience and perseverance.

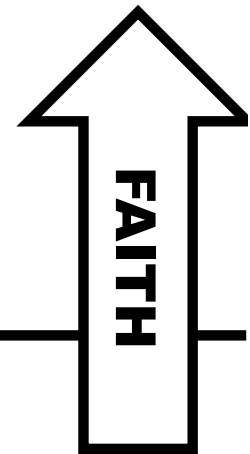
TRUTH#7: Moving From Christ-likeness To Christ-like ATTITUDES

As we discussed earlier, as we take steps of faith, we will move from below the line to above the line to experience such things as Christ-like love, freedom, humility, etc.

Unconditional Love	Victory	Worth	Acceptance
Freedom	Patience	Strength	Forgiveness
Understanding	Peace	Security	Kindness
Discernment	Wisdom	Humility	Compassion
Christ-confidence	Adequacy	Boldness	Gentleness
Righteousness	Rest	Courage	Selflessness
Christ-control	Hope	Power	Goodness
Other's Focused	Joy	Sacrificial	Faithfulness

Christ-likeness

Experience

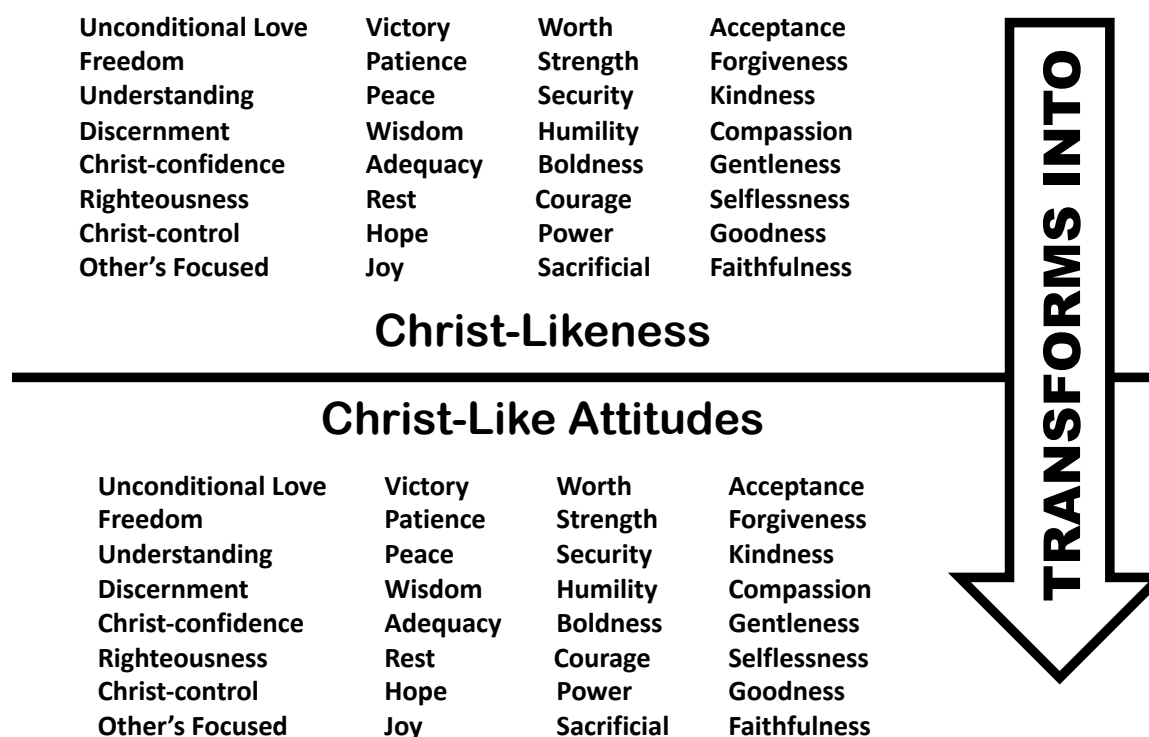


Anxious, angry, unworthy, self-righteous, impatient, demanding, unforgiving, unloving, defensive, inadequate, critical, judgmental, ashamed, controlling, arrogant, manipulative, guilty, rejecting, insecure, selfish

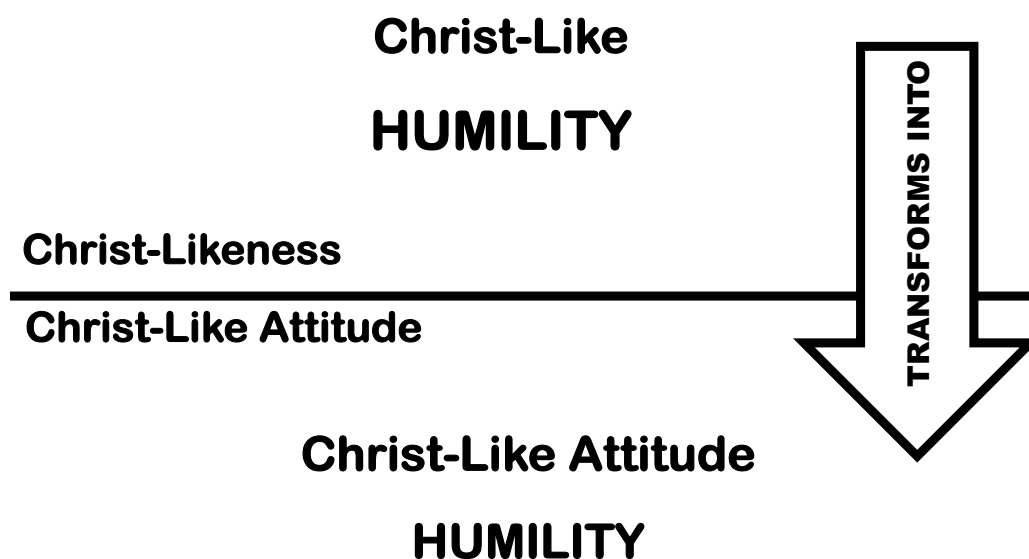
Eventually we will move beyond “faithing it” to experiencing Christ-likeness. Experiencing Christ-likeness means you will be transformed to have an “attitude” of Christ-likeness. Let’s define an attitude of Christ-likeness.

An ATTITUDE of Christ-likeness means you have begun to THINK, FEEL, BELIEVE, BEHAVE, and CHOOSE to walk in Christ-like characteristics.

Look at the diagram on the following page to illustrate.



For example, let's assume you struggle with pride in the area of being self-righteous. You begin taking steps of faith for the Holy Spirit to transform you from self-righteous pride to walking with Christ-like humility. Over time, you will experience not only your self-righteousness being replaced more and more by humility, but you will be experiencing an attitude of humility in every area of your life. Below is a diagram to illustrate this process.



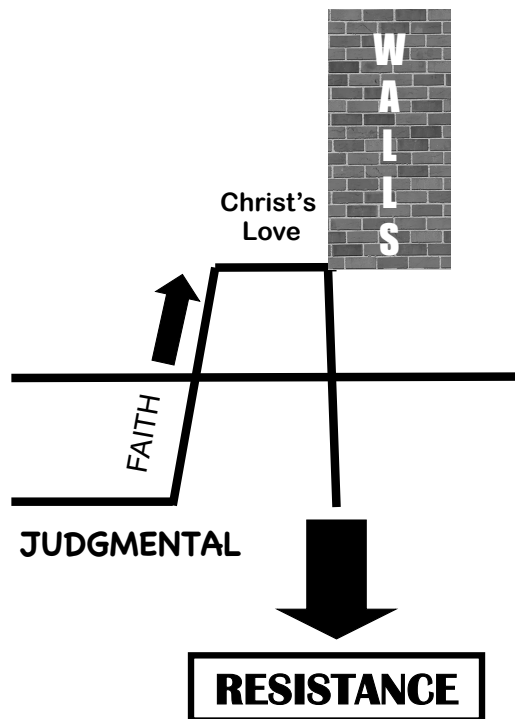
WALLS and RESISTANCE To Our Walk Of Faith

Introduction

Now that you have a better understanding of the walk of faith, let's look at what we can expect as we move from below the line (Negative Feelings-Fleshly Behaviors-Strongholds) to Christ-likeness above the line.

Let's look at an example to explain. Let's assume that you struggle with the fleshly behavior of being judgmental of certain people. We know that we are to unconditionally love them (John 15:12) versus judging them. You begin taking steps of faith to move from being judgmental to loving with Christ's love.

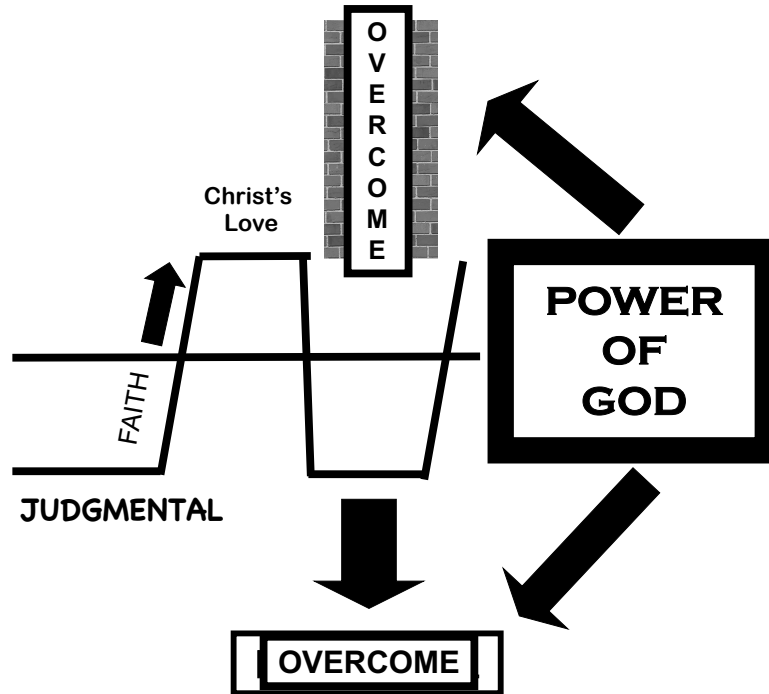
When you take that first step of faith and go above the line to seek Christ to BE your unconditional love, at some point you will encounter two things we call "walls/obstacles" and "resistance."



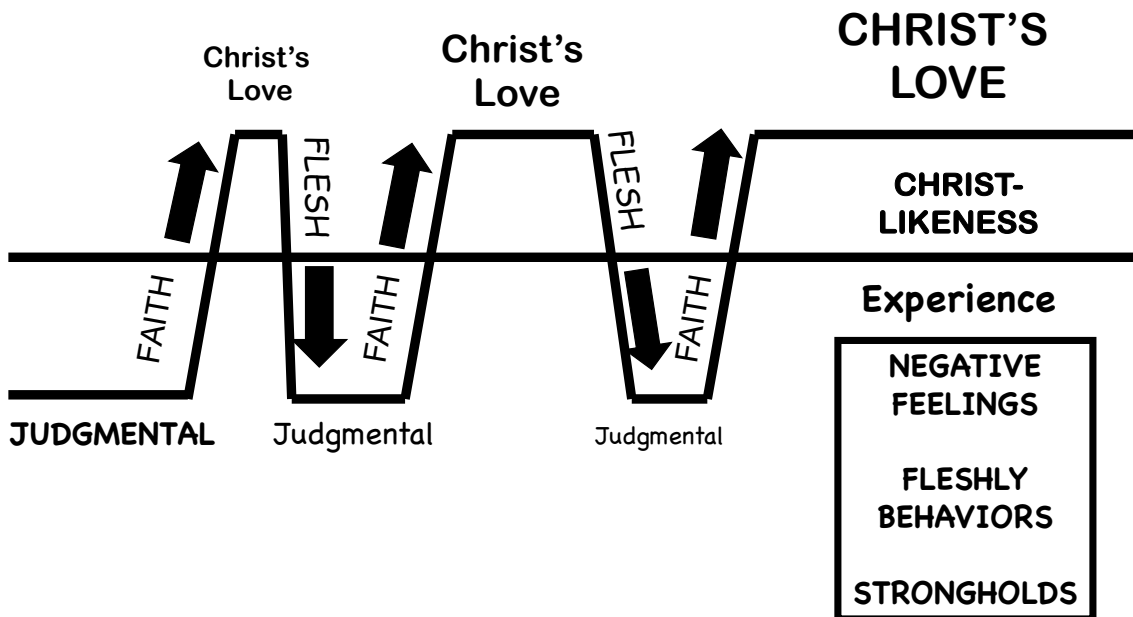
**Early On
You Will Experience
WALLS/OBSTACLES
and
RESISTANCE
To Your
Walk of Faith**

Before we go into detail about what the walls and resistance are, the key truth to understand is that we will hit these walls and resistance and fall below the line. The good news is that we do not have to stay below the line because we have God's power available to us to overcome these two things.

In the next diagram, we see that as you choose to walk in God's power, in that step of faith, you will overcome those walls and resistance.



Early on, you will fall below the line many times but when you do, engage the power of God to overcome these obstacles and resistance. As you will see in the following diagram, you will continue to fall below the line, but what do you see happening as you look at the diagram moving from left to right? You are staying below the line less and above the line more. The bad news is there will always be resistance but as we develop a “holy habit” of engaging God’s power, you will find yourself staying below the line less often. Using our previous example, over time, as you are being transformed, you will find yourself judging less and loving more with Christ’s love.



True story example: There was a man whose sister once called him the most self-righteous person she had ever known. Others in his life confirmed what she said was true. This man came to an understanding of Christ as life and began seeking the Holy Spirit to transform his heart of self-righteousness to living from Christ's humility. At some point in his transformation process, this man's sister told him that she saw some changes in his life. She bore witness that she was seeing humility instead of self-righteousness. As the Holy Spirit continued replacing his self-righteousness with Christ's humility, this drew the man and his sister into a closer relationship than they had ever experienced before.

Now that we understand what we can expect as we take steps of faith, let's break down what walls and resistance we will face.

DAY FOUR

WALLS - OBSTACLES

As we walk by faith, we need to understand there will be obstacles or walls that may prevent us from continuing to walk by faith. Look at the obstacles in the diagram below.

Faithing It



Experience



Walls That Can Hinder Our Walk of Faith

Let's briefly look at each of these roadblocks, how they slow us down or keep us from walking by faith, and how we engage God to move past these roadblocks.

STRUGGLES

We all face internal and external struggles. When they overwhelm us, we can lose focus on our walk of faith. Instead, we get self-focused and drawn into our struggles to a point where we are consumed with them. Not only will the struggles obstruct us but the negative feelings and fleshly behaviors (i.e., frustration, fear, worry, etc.) that flow from them can control us and eventually cause us to quit walking by faith.

The Truth: We will constantly face some sort of struggle because we live in a fallen world surrounded by fallen people. Whether large or small, internal or external, God is using our struggles to remind us of our constant need for Him, and our need for Him to transform our lives in order to live above the line in the midst of our struggles.

Engaging God: When these struggles overwhelm you, seek the Holy Spirit to take you above the line and seek Christ to BE your strength, wisdom, and discernment in order for Him to knock down the walls these struggles are creating.

IMPATIENCE

When we have walked by faith for some time and we don't feel God is meeting our timetable, we get impatient. This is a common obstacle because of our need for God to work faster in our lives, especially when we are faced with overwhelming struggles. I hear many people say, "God is too slow in transforming my life." I think we can all identify but we cannot let our impatience get to a point where we no longer walk by faith.

The Truth: Impatience is normal because of our desire for swift results from God. The question is what might be some of the results if your impatience festers? Rather than living below the line in impatience, remember you have all the patience you need in Christ above the line.

Engaging God: When we get impatient with God or His timetable, entrust your impatience to Him and trust Christ to BE your patience.

TEMPTATION

If you have been a Christian long enough, you know that between our flesh, Satan, and the world, we are constantly being tempted to turn back to self as the source. These three tempters are working non-stop to keep us from walking by faith.

The Truth: We have God's power in us that can resist every temptation we face, if we choose to engage His power. (We will look at how to engage God concerning temptation later in the study.)

UNBELIEF

Unbelief is a major roadblock because it prevents us from not only not believing God and His promises, but it prevents us from trusting Him as well. Unbelief creates doubt, distrust, and an unwillingness to keep walking by faith.

The Truth: We are all unbelieving believers. However, our faith walk is what the Holy Spirit works through to move us from unbelief to belief. With every step of faith we take, the Holy Spirit is transforming us to grow our belief and trust in Him. Without walking by faith, we will be continually stuck in our unbelief.

Engaging God: When we hit a wall due to our unbelief, seek God to transform you and move you from unbelief to belief. When you face doubt, distrust, or unwillingness, entrust those things to the Holy Spirit to give you the willingness to keep walking by faith.

UNMET EXPECTATIONS

Let's define expectations as a certainty or presumption or a belief that something will take place. We put expectations on God, His truth, ourselves and our spiritual journey. We also put expectations on other people. When our expectations are not met we can go to fleshly behaviors such as anger, unbelief, disillusionment. For example, "If God is a loving and merciful God why is He allowing this pain and suffering in my life. This makes me so angry because I expected Him to keep me from suffering like this."

The Truth: The Holy Spirit wants to and if we depend on Him, will set us free from our fleshly behaviors associated with our unmet expectations.

Engaging God: We seek the Holy Spirit to reveal to us if our expectations line up with God's truth or not. When our expectations are not being met, we engage the power of the Holy Spirit to set us free from any fleshly behaviors associated with our unmet expectations.

DISTRACTIONS

This is the most common obstacle because life is full of distractions. We can feel pulled in every direction by life, people, jobs, circumstances, and the endless to do lists. These are legitimate distractions but they can become obstacles when we let them keep us from walking by faith. There is a commercial that says, "Life comes at you fast."

It seems each day life gets faster and fuller. Technology that was designed to make us more efficient, is creating more and more distractions and even obsessions. Our cell phones are the perfect example. Here are a few statistics to prove this point:

- 47% of Americans consider themselves "addicted" to their phones.
- 70% of Americans check their phones within five minutes of receiving a notification.
- 48% of people say they feel a sense of panic or anxiety when their cell phone battery gets low and their charger is not close by.
- 45% say that their phone is their most valuable possession.

Whatever the distractions might be, we cannot afford to let them consume us and deter us from our walk of faith.

Truth: We will all be distracted but God is working through those distractions to reveal your need for Him, to draw you to Him, and to keep you focused on Him.

Engaging God: Seek the Holy Spirit to reveal to you how the distractions in your life are drawing you away from the Lord and as He reveals them, seek Him to BE your discernment to know when these distractions are becoming a hindrance to your faith walk.

Question: Write down which of these six obstacles you most struggle with. If there are others you struggle with that are not on this list, please write those down as well.

Engaging God: With whatever you wrote down, seek the Lord to reveal when these obstacles are hindering your walk of faith and seek Him in His power to knock these walls down. It may take time because of how high and thick the walls may be, but seek His perseverance to not stop engaging Him until the obstacle is removed.

When it comes to hitting these walls or obstacles, here is a key truth we need to understand.

Whenever we hit these walls in our walk of faith, it is at this point God is REVEALING our NEED to totally DEPEND on His POWER to knock these walls down.

These and other obstacles are a part of the normal Christian life. We will be faced with one or more of them the rest of our lives. This should not discourage you because within you is the power that will remove every obstacle you face. Much like the Jews at Jericho, our part is to continue to depend on and draw on God's power by faith with the result that God will knock those walls down.

**As We Walk By Faith In The Holy Spirit's Power,
We Will Move Past These Walls**



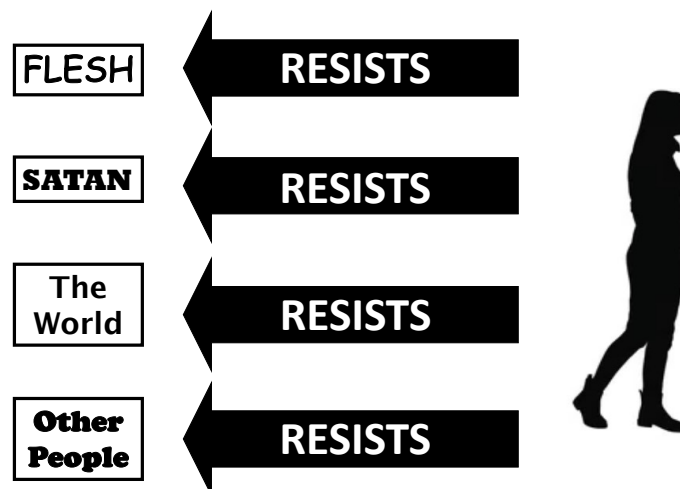
Before we leave this topic, we need to understand that even though we walk in the Holy Spirit's power to knock down a wall of resistance, we will encounter these walls for the rest of our lives. The key is to keep walking by faith and these walls will come down one at a time.

RESISTANCE To Our Walk of Faith

In addition to the walls we face in our spiritual walk, there will also be resistance. This resistance comes primarily from four sources: our flesh, Satan, the world, and other people's flesh. We will look at each one of these and talk about how we engage God to overcome these forms of

resistance. Here is an illustration using the line diagram that shows the four areas of resistance to the transformation process.

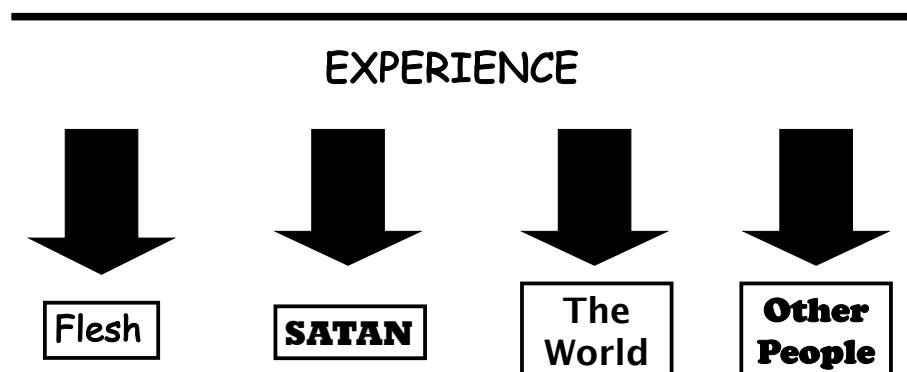
The Resistance To Your Walk of Faith



These areas of resistance are constantly seeking to keep you below the line and prevent you from being transformed into Christ-likeness as the diagram below illustrates.

The Resistance To Your Walk of Faith

CHRIST-LIKENESS



Here is key truth to remember as we learn about the four areas of resistance.

When you HIT the walls to in your faith walk, you will be TEMPTED by your flesh, Satan, the world, and other people's flesh to GIVE UP and QUIT walking by faith.

We will talk more about what this looks like practically as we go through and expand on the four areas of resistance.

DAY FIVE

The Fight of Faith

A key truth to know and remember is that as you seek God's power to overcome this resistance, it will result in what Paul calls a "fight of faith."

"Fight the good fight of faith...."

1 Timothy 6:12

What is the fight of faith?

FIGHT OF FAITH:

Engaging the POWER of God to OVERCOME and CONQUER all the RESISTANCE to your transformation into Christ-likeness.

Because our will power, ability, and self-discipline is no match for our "resisters," we must engage God's power to overcome and conquer.

Let's look at the four areas of resistance to our walk of faith and how to engage God to fight the fight of faith and conquer the resistance.

#1: YOUR FLESH

We have seen in the previous lessons several diagrams on how we move from living from our fleshly behaviors to living from Christ-likeness. In this section, we will look at the flesh as a "resister" to keep us from taking steps of faith and going above the line. We see this resistance in the two verses below.

"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." Galatians 5:17

"... because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God...." Romans 8:7

In addition, there is an even bigger problem when it comes to our flesh.

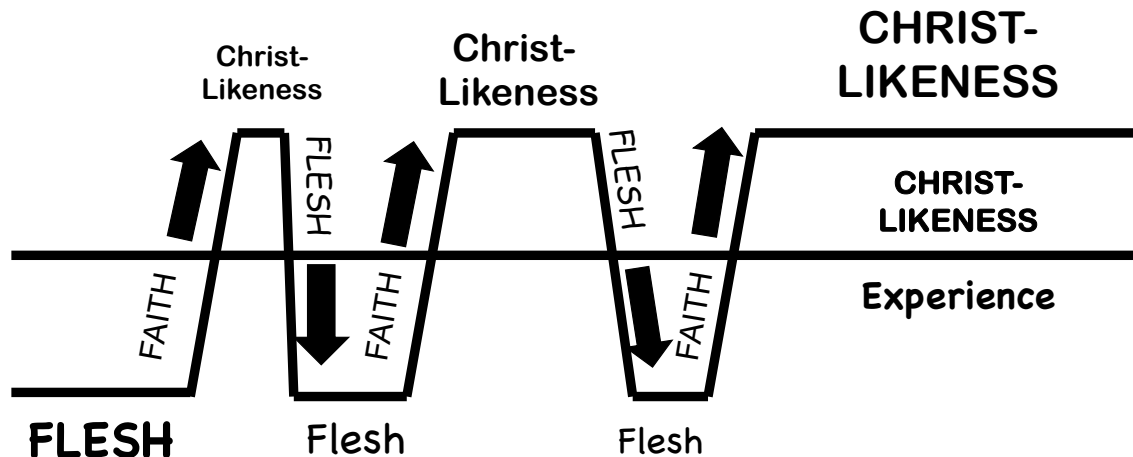
If our flesh PREVAILS, it not only keeps us from being transformed but it keeps us in BONDAGE to our fleshly behaviors below the line.

Engaging God To Overcome Our Fleshly Resistance

1. Early on as you are seeking to be transformed into Christ-likeness, the resistance by your flesh will be very STRONG.

2. Just like being intentional/determined to take steps of faith, we need to have that same determination in seeking God to OVERPOWER our fleshly resistance.
3. As you engage God's power to defeat your flesh, the more you will find your fleshly resistance will LESSEN over time.

Look at the diagram below to illustrate.



Example: Your desire is to live from Christ's selflessness. You begin taking steps of faith to move from being selfish to becoming selfless. However, the grip of your fleshly resistance drags you back below the line. You engage God's power to overcome the fleshly resistance and take another step of faith. As you continue this process, you will be experiencing less and less resistance.

[Note: Because our flesh never goes away, we will be prone to fall below the line at times for the rest of our lives. However, as evidenced by the diagram, we will spend less and less time there.]

You will choose to go back to the flesh many times during your walk of faith, but the key is to PERSEVERE in seeking God by faith in order to experience increasing VICTORY over your flesh.

Fleshly STRONGHOLDS

If we don't choose to engage God to overcome the fleshly resistance, fleshly behaviors can worsen and over time may result in strongholds. Let's look again at the definition of a stronghold:

Any REINFORCED fleshly behavior that has such a grip on you that, apart from God's POWER, you CANNOT be set free from it.

We can also call strongholds addictions because of the grip they can have on our lives. There are obvious addictions like drugs, alcohol, and pornography but any of our fleshly behaviors (anger, fear, anxiety, etc.) can eventually become strongholds as well if we choose not to engage God's power. Let's get a better understanding of how to engage God to deal with our strongholds by looking at the difference between our "fleshly" will and our "spiritual" will.

FLESHLY Will Versus SPIRITUAL Will

Another key element in winning the fight of faith is understanding the difference between your "spiritual" will and your "fleshly" will. What is the difference?

Willingness to walk by faith and depend on God to transform you is called your SPIRITUAL WILL. Unwillingness to walk by faith and living independently of God is called your FLESHLY WILL.

Another way of saying this is, your "want to" is your "spiritual" will and your resistance is called your "fleshly" will. Paul reveals both the spiritual will and fleshly will in Romans 7:15:

"For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do (spiritual will), but I am doing the very thing I hate (fleshly will)."

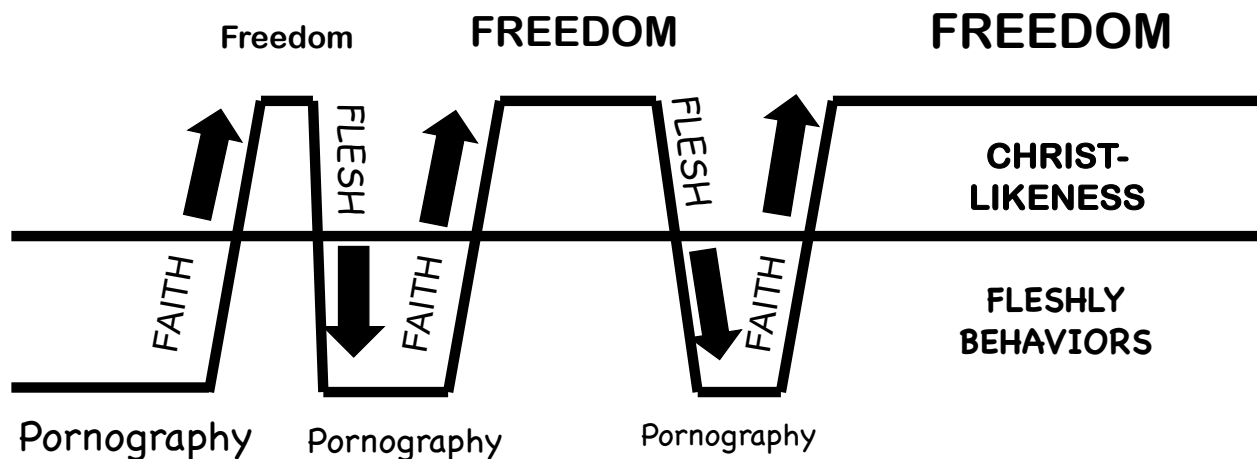
When Paul says, "I am not practicing what I would like to do but I am doing the very thing I hate," he is essentially saying his fleshly will is stronger than his spiritual will. Why?

Let me use this analogy to illustrate. If you have a guy with weak muscles arm wrestling a body builder, who is going to win? The body builder of course. Early on in your Christian walk, your spiritual will is more like the weak-muscled guy while your fleshly will is like the body builder. Why? Because up until you start walking by faith, all you have exercised were your fleshly muscles. Your spiritual muscle was small and weak. However, as you increasingly walk by (exercise your) faith, your spiritual muscle (i.e., will) strengthens and you more consistently, through Christ's power, overcome your fleshly will through seeking as illustrated on the following page.



True Story Example: There was a 27-year-old man who was married with four young children. He had a 20-year stronghold to pornography. (His father introduced him to it at age 7.) His wife was about to divorce him and he sought help to be set free. He started applying the principles we have discussed and this is what happened. Early on in his walk of faith, his fleshly will easily overpowered his spiritual will which took him back to pornography. However, as this man continued to exercise his spiritual faith muscles (spiritual will), over time, his spiritual will began to have victory over his stronghold. He fell below the line many times, but he kept drawing on Christ's perseverance, determination, and power.

It took several months but eventually he was completely set free from this stronghold. He is still married today and his marriage is thriving. This is what his journey looked like to be completely set free from this stronghold. Look at the diagram below to illustrate his walk of faith to experience freedom.



So, it follows that we must continue to walk by faith so our spiritual will, depending on Christ's power more consistently, overpowers our fleshly will. Like physical exercise, you must be diligent to exercise your faith muscles.

The Walls and Defeating Your Flesh

We said before, the resistance of our flesh can be activated when we hit walls of impatience, temptation, unbelief, etc. For example, if you are wanting to be set free from some fear, you begin taking steps of faith seeking the Holy Spirit to set you free. However, you soon run into the wall of unbelief. (“This is too big for God.” “God can’t or won’t really set me free.”) At this point, a fleshly feeling of doubting God surfaces. If you take ownership of the doubt, it overcomes you and you quit seeking God to set you free. Instead of taking ownership of the doubt, seek the Holy Spirit to fight the fight of faith by removing the doubting thoughts and give you the willingness to press on.

It is important to remember that by your efforts, you can never overcome your own flesh (flesh can never overcome flesh). It is through you depending on Christ’s power that overcomes the flesh. We see this in Galatians 5:16.

*“But I say, walk **by the Spirit** (in His power), and you **will not** carry out (give into) the **desire (resistance)** of the flesh.”*

[**Note:** Walking in the Spirit is another way of saying walking by faith.]

Discussion Questions

Question: What truth(s) impacted you most in this lesson? Why?

Question: Do you struggle with the word “supernatural” or God’s work in us “being supernatural?” If so, write down the struggle(s)?

Question: What were the key things you learned from the “faithing it to experience” section?

Question: Why do you think we need to be intentional and determined early on in our Christian walk? What might be some consequences if we are not intentional and determined?

Question: What might be some of the consequences if we don’t engage God to knock down those walls?

Question: Why do you think it is helpful to understand the difference the spiritual will and fleshly will?

LESSON SIX

Resistance To Our Walk of Faith - Part Two

What Transformation Looks Like

DAY ONE

Overview of Lesson Six

- The Resistance To Our Walk of Faith – Part Two
- Final Key Truths Concerning The Transformation Process
- What Will We Experience As We Are Being Transformed
- The “Normal” Christian Life

Resistance To Our Walk of Faith - Part Two

At the end of the last lesson, we looked at the flesh as being our first source of resistance. In this lesson we will look at the next three sources starting with Satan and his demonic forces.

#2: SATAN AND HIS DEMONIC FORCES

[**Note:** Whenever Satan is mentioned, it will refer to Satan and his demonic forces.]

*“For our struggle is **not** against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**, against the **powers**, against the **world forces of this darkness**, against the **spiritual forces of wickedness** in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 6:12*

*“The thief comes only to **steal** and **kill** and **destroy**....” John 10:10a*

We are not going to go into an exhaustive study on Satan, but it is important for you to understand, at the very least, how Satan creates great resistance in our faith walk. The first thing we need to understand about Satan is that he knows your history. He knows your strengths and weaknesses. He has been storing up all the data on your life from birth. He knows intimately your flesh patterns and their strength and will do everything in his power to promote and deepen the hold your fleshly behaviors have on your life. Because of this, he can strategize on how best to keep you from walking by faith. Before we look at his strategy, let’s look at three of Satan’s objectives for Christians.

Satan wants to:

1. Keep you from knowing Christ as your life
2. Keep you from walking by faith
3. Keep you from being transformed into Christ-likeness

Satan knows God's truth and he knows even better than we do that if we choose to believe and walk in God's truth, we will be transformed and our spiritual "will" will grow, leading to a greater resistance to his control over our lives. That is why he will do everything in his power to keep you from knowing, believing, and walking in God's truth.

Your greatest threat to Satan is twofold:

1) KNOWING and BELIEVING God's truth

2) Choosing to WALK in God's truth by faith

What is his primary strategy to accomplish this?

Satan's Primary Strategy: Infiltrate Your THOUGHT Life

Satan has a number of strategies, but this is his primary one.

Satan's primary strategy against you is to INSERT lying, deceiving, tempting, condemning, and fleshly THOUGHTS into your mind.

Satan's strategy focuses on your thought life. He wants you to take ownership of fleshly, lying, condemning, and tempting thoughts that he inserts into your mind. If you struggle with this truth of Satan being able to insert thoughts into your mind, then look at Matthew 16:21-23 below to see a perfect biblical example of how this works.

*"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. **Peter took him aside** and began to rebuke him. **'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'**" Matthew 16:21-22*

*"But He [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, **'Get behind Me, Satan!'** You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." Matthew 16:23*

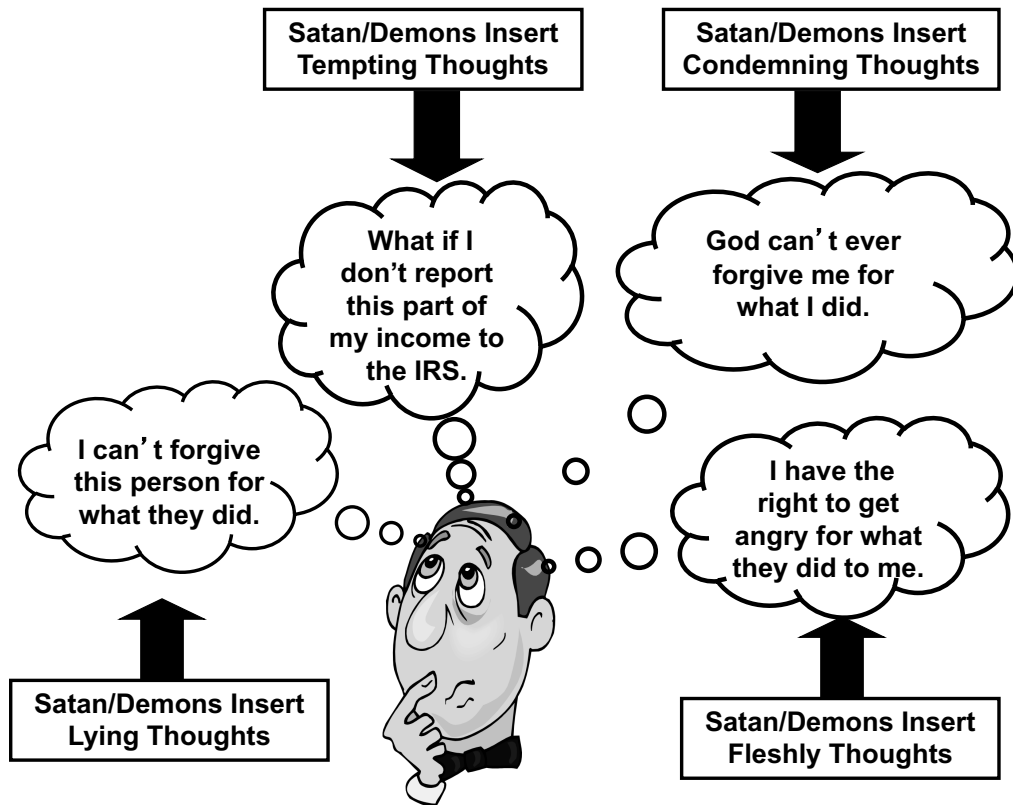
When Peter responded to what Jesus told His disciples about His death and resurrection, Jesus' response was, "Get behind Me, Satan." Jesus knew who was behind the thoughts that were verbalized by Peter. Jesus knew Satan had introduced those thoughts because He did not address Peter. Rather, He addressed Satan directly.

Here is the key truth to the thoughts Satan inserts into our minds.

When Satan/demonic forces insert thoughts into your mind, the thoughts will always come in the form of FIRST PERSON (I, me, myself, etc.) and will sound like your voice.

Since Satanic thoughts come in the form of first person, it can be extremely difficult (if not impossible) for us to discern whether our thoughts are our own or are from Satan himself.

Here is an illustration of the kinds of thoughts that Satan can insert into our minds:



Key truths to know concerning how Satan works:

1. Satan's greatest strategy is that he is a DECEIVER. When he inserts thoughts into your mind, he wants to deceive you by making you think that those are YOUR thoughts not his.
2. Early on in your walk of faith, you will find yourself, more often than not, taking OWNERSHIP of thoughts that Satan inserts into your mind.
3. However, as you continue to walk by faith, your DISCERNMENT will GROW and you will have a greater sensitivity to where those thoughts are coming from.

Here is an example to explain. Let's assume someone in your past deeply wounded you, but you choose to walk by faith to be transformed to walk in Christ's forgiveness. You have been seeking Christ's forgiveness for this person but nothing is changing. You hit the wall of unbelief. At this point, Satan inserts the two thoughts illustrated below to tempt you to stay in bondage to your unforgiveness.



If you take ownership of Satan's thoughts, and give in to the temptation, you will be dragged down below the line and will be stuck in your unforgiveness.

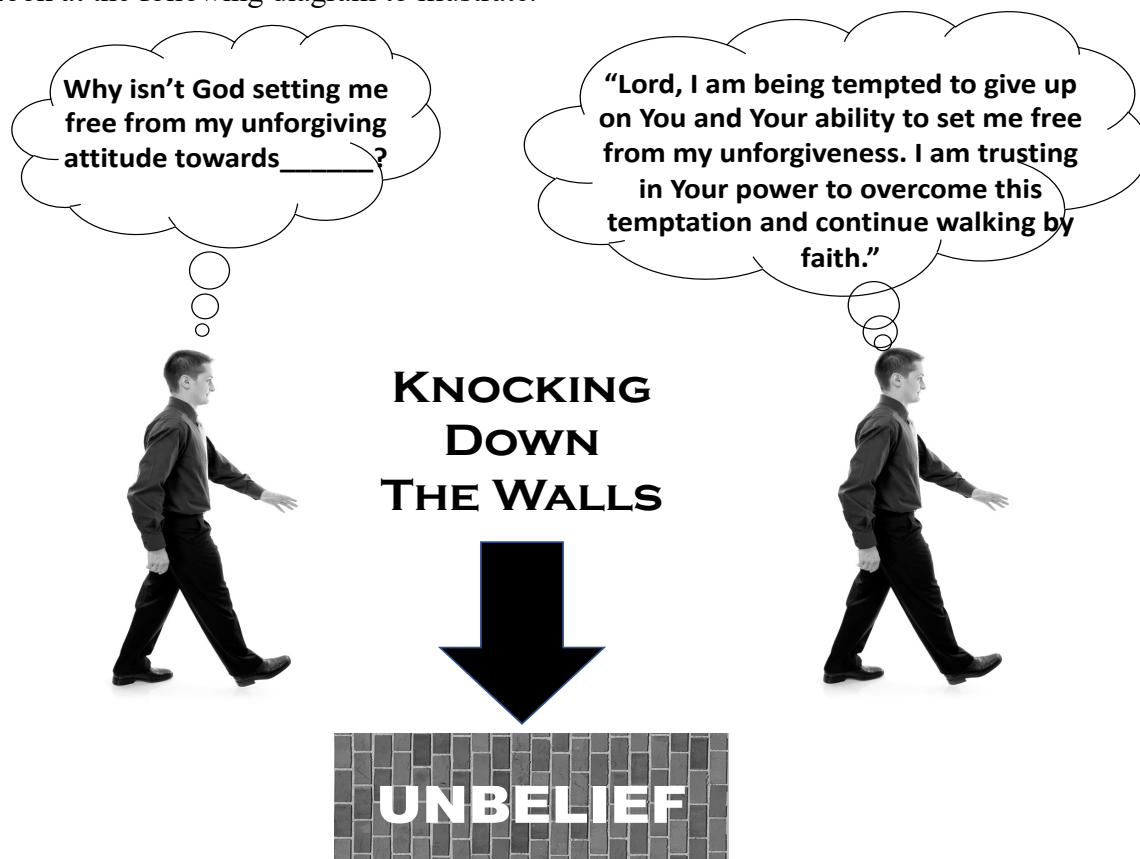
DAY TWO

Engaging God To Overcome The Temptation

If you choose to engage God and His power to overcome the temptation, here is an example of what that might look like:

Engaging God: “Lord, I am being tempted to give up on You and Your ability to set me free from my unforgiveness. I am trusting in Your power to overcome this temptation so that I can continue walking by faith.”

Look at the following diagram to illustrate.



We may not know whether or not thoughts are coming from the flesh or Satan. Regardless, the answer will be the same. Engage God's power to overcome the temptation, unbelief, etc., and keep walking. Before we leave this topic, let's look at one more key truth.

***Not only can Satan insert thoughts,
but the HOLY SPIRIT inserts thoughts as well.***

Not only can Satan insert thoughts into your mind, but the Holy Spirit can do that as well. This is one of the key reasons we learn God's word because as we do, the Holy Spirit will bring His truth back to our minds. This is true especially when you are about to take ownership of thoughts inserted by Satan.

Steps of faith: "Holy Spirit, thank you for reminding me that your word says that since I have been forgiven and contain all of Christ's forgiveness, I have no excuse for not forgiving_____."

*"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, **forgiving each other**, just **as God in Christ also has forgiven you.**" Ephesians 4:32*

Questions: What are some of your recurring negative, lying, or condemning thoughts? Please write those down. Is it possible that Satan could be inserting those thoughts into your mind?

Engaging God: Ask God to reveal to you the origin of the thoughts you wrote down. When those thoughts come to mind, seek His power to keep you from taking ownership of those thoughts and to overcome them with His truth.

#3: THE WORLD

There is no doubt the world is only focused on resisting your walk of faith. Why? John tells us why in 1 John 2:16.

*"For all that is in the **world**, the **lust of the flesh** and the **lust of the eyes** and the **boastful pride of life**, is not from the Father, but **is from the world.**"*

This is why Paul admonishes us in Colossians 2:8.

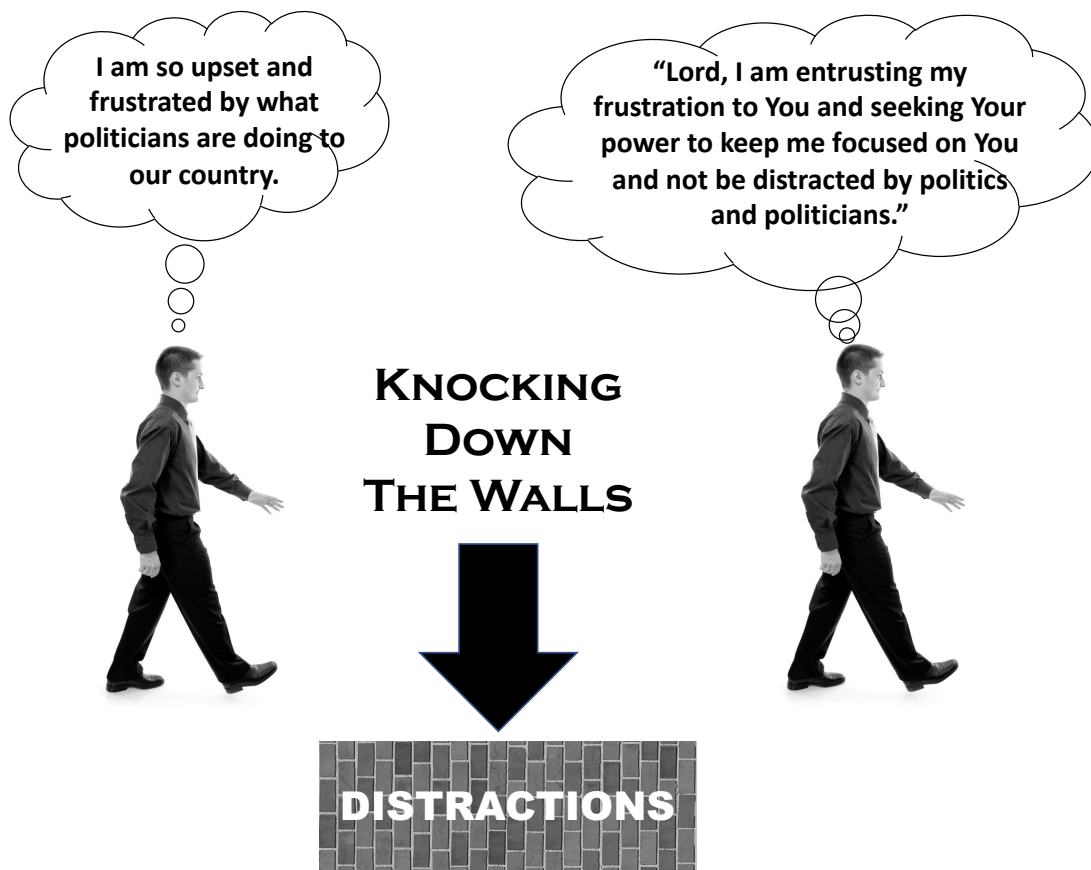
*"**See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.**"*

Turn on the TV, look at your cellphone or computer, or read a newspaper and immediately you will be bombarded with the world tempting and distracting you to compete, succeed, win. It constantly beckons you to be stronger, be self-sufficient, and most importantly, live independent from God. Satan uses our culture to entice us to want bigger, better, and always more. This is why Satan keeps tempting us with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life to distract and even derail our walk of faith. You can see his strategy succeeding among unbelievers, but sadly it is distracting many Christians as well.

In addition, world events, politics, pandemics, economics, negative news, etc., can invoke fear, anger, anxiety, and depression. There are Christians who can't get past their anger because of

what the government is doing or not doing. They let politicians and governmental action (or inaction) rob them of their peace and joy in Christ. If we truly take a closer look at our reaction to all that is going on in the world, we might be surprised to know how deeply our culture influences our thinking and distracts us from our walk of faith. These thoughts can cause resistance to God's work in transforming our lives.

Here is an illustration of how to engage God to defeat worldly thinking.



Questions: What is going on in our culture, politics, or world events that is negatively impacting your thought life? What are some of your negative or fleshly thoughts or feelings that you are experiencing when you think of these things?

Engaging God: Begin seeking the Holy Spirit in His power to keep you focused on and not distracted by the thoughts that the world serves up. If you really struggle in this area, ask God to set you free from these worldly thoughts.

DAY THREE

#4: OTHER PEOPLE'S FLESH

The final area of resistance is other people's flesh. Similar to the world, we can let the fleshly behaviors of other people keep us below the line in bondage to our fleshly behaviors. Every day we will most likely experience someone else's flesh towards us such as rejection, frustration, disapproval, controlling, manipulation, etc. What we need to understand is if someone is living according to their flesh, what else would we expect them to do other than exhibit fleshly behaviors? It is the same with us.

When it comes to non-Christians, they can only function in their flesh. They have no other option. What we get surprised about is when Christians walk in their flesh. We might think they should know better or should refrain from going to their flesh. However, we know that we can get into the flesh as quickly as anyone else. Especially when people are rejecting, condemning, or judging us. We see this in 1 Corinthians 3:3.

*"For since there is **jealousy** and **strife** among you, **are you not fleshly**,
and are you not walking like mere men?"*

When it comes to other people's flesh, the key question is:

***Why do we allow other people's flesh to ROB us or HINDER us
in our walk of faith? In the Holy Spirit's power we can CHOOSE not to take
ownership of anyone else's flesh directed at us.***

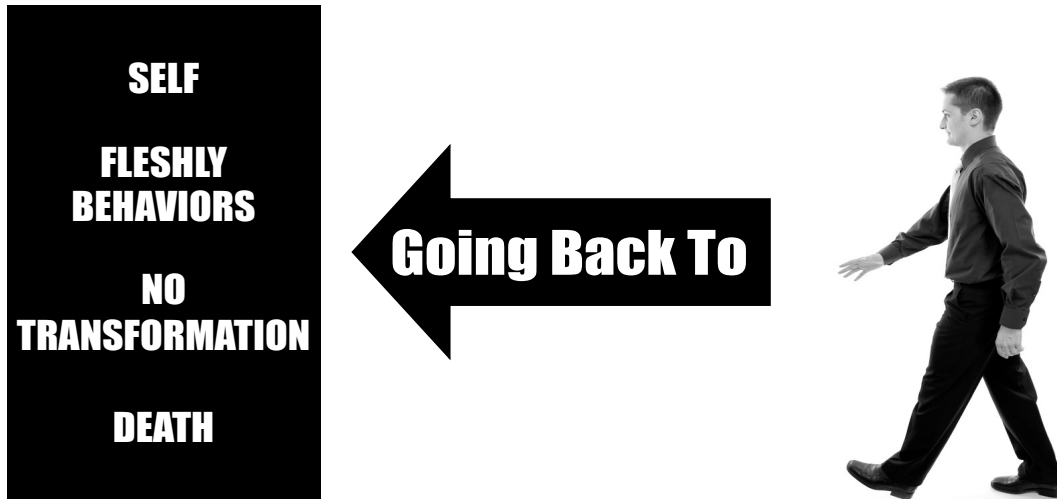
When someone is acting in the flesh towards us, we can forget that we don't have to take ownership of anyone else's flesh. For example, if someone is rejecting you, verbally or non-verbally, do you have to take ownership of their rejection? No! You can choose through the power of the Holy Spirit to not be hindered (robbed) in your walk of faith by not taking ownership of someone else's flesh. Doesn't that sound like freedom?

Questions: Is there someone in your life that you feel is rejecting, judging, criticizing, or disapproving of you? If so, what are the consequences you are experiencing by taking ownership of that person's fleshly behavior towards you?

Engaging God: Begin seeking God to set you free from other people's flesh. Seek Him to remind you that just because someone is trying to offend you with their fleshly behavior, you don't have to take ownership of it.

Where Do We End Up If We Don't Move Past These Obstacles and Resistance?

If we don't depend on God's power to move past our obstacles, the temptation will be to give up and go back. The question is, "What are we going back to?" Look at the following illustration that answers the question.



These are at least four consequences of giving up and turning back on our walk of faith. Let's take a deeper look at each consequence.

Self

If we quit walking by faith in God, then the only other option is to turn back to self (i.e., self-effort and self-sufficiency) to TRY using our own strength, ability, IQ, and self-discipline to fix, handle, or overcome the obstacles and resistance to our walk of faith.

Fleshly Behaviors

If we give up on our walk of faith, our fleshly behaviors will strengthen and have a greater hold on our thoughts, beliefs, and actions. Some of the fleshly behaviors may become so reinforced they become strongholds.

No Transformation

Turning back to self will lead to no spiritual transformation. It can only lead to more defeat, more failure, and more frustration. It can lead to one more thing.

Death

*"For the mind set on the flesh is **death**, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace."*
Romans 8:6

“Death” defined in this verse in the original Greek means “misery of the soul as a result of sin.” This is the ultimate result of giving up on our walk of faith. Our misery index will continue to get worse and it can even lead to hardening our hearts against God.

Questions: When you look at these four consequences of giving up or turning back from our walk of faith, can you think of any other consequences? If so, please write these down.

Will these consequences encourage you to keep walking by faith?

Let’s end this section with some good news.

Spiritual Growth = Spiritual Strength

Here is another motivation for not giving up:

Spiritual GROWTH = Spiritual STRENGTH
With spiritual growth comes GREATER spiritual strength in Christ
to RESIST the obstacles and resistance to our faith walk.

The greater the spiritual growth, the greater our spiritual strength. The greater our spiritual strength, the easier it will be to resist the obstacles and resistance to our walk of faith. Here is an illustration of this truth.



We will take a deeper look at this truth when we talk about our spiritual armor.

Conclusion:

I hope this section has helped you to understand the sources of the non-stop resistance to our walk of faith. The good news is that we have the power of God within us to overpower any resistance we face, as John writes in the second half of 1 John 4:4:

“... greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”

DAY FOUR

Final Truths About Growing Into Christ-Likeness

Truth #1 - Changes Will Be (For The Most Part) SUBTLE

The key thing to understand about spiritual transformation is this:

***For the most part, transformation will be INCREMENTAL
and changes in your life will be SUBTLE.***

This is not to say God can't reveal in overt ways that we are being transformed, but for the most part the changes will be subtle. This is why we need to ask the Holy Spirit to give us a spiritual awareness. This is the meaning of "spiritual awareness."

***SPIRITUAL AWARENESS is what the Holy Spirit gives us to
DISCERN the SUPERNATURAL transformation that is taking place.***

Without the Holy Spirit's giving us a spiritual awareness of what is supernaturally changing, we may overlook the changes that are taking place within us. One way of defining spiritual awareness is having "spiritual eyes" to see into the unseen realm where the Spirit is working. To have spiritual eyes is what Elisha prayed for his servant in 2 Kings. If you remember the story, there were chariots of fire all around the mountains but Elisha's servant could not see them with his physical eyes. So, Elisha prayed the following prayer:

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

In much the same way, we need to pray as Elisha did: "Lord, open my spiritual eyes so I can see what supernatural changes are taking place."

Engaging God: Begin seeking the Spirit to show you the subtle changes taking place as He transforms you.

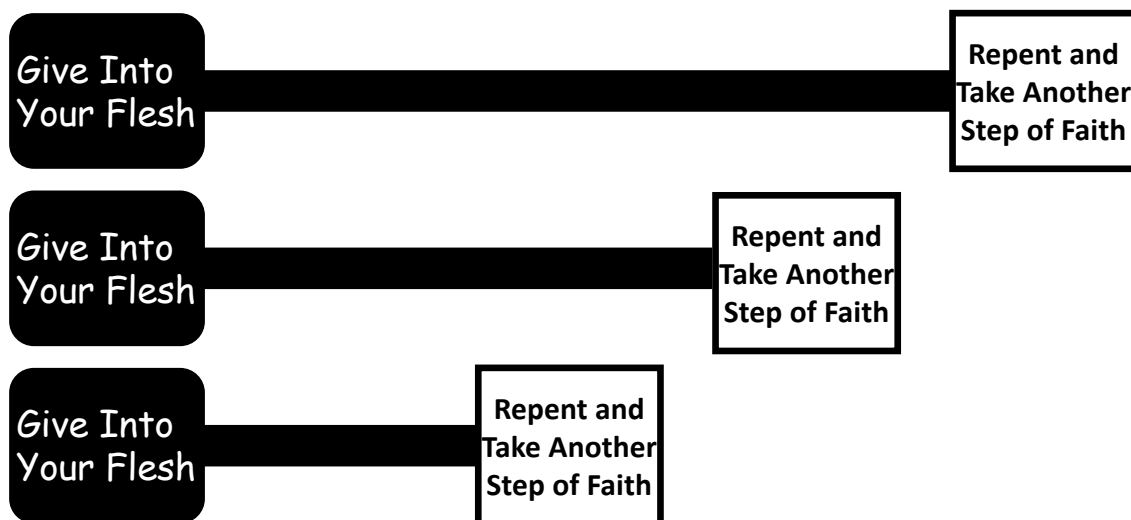
TRUTH #2 - The GAP TIME Will Close

Let's begin by defining "gap time":

***The time between when you give into the flesh until you
REPENT and KEEP WALKING by faith.***

Look at the following diagram to illustrate.

GAP TIME



The good news is that as you grow spiritually, you will find yourself repenting of your flesh sooner and moving back into your walk of faith. When you give into your flesh, you will recognize the “death” of your flesh, and you will move to repentance more swiftly. You will spend less time below the line as a result.

TRUTH #3 - You Will Experience Your Spiritual Armor Growing Thicker

“Put on the full armor of God (Christ-likeness) so that you [in God’s power] can take your stand against all the strategies of the devil.” Ephesians 6:11

“... in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the **flaming arrows** of the evil one.” Ephesians 6:16

In Ephesians 6, the armor of God is described as Christ-likeness. Here is a key truth we need to understand about our spiritual armor.

Early on, EXPERIENTIALLY, our spiritual armor is THIN so the resistance we face will OFTEN defeat us. However, as we grow spiritually, our spiritual armor will THICKEN so that we will be MORE able to overcome the resistance we face.

As we have previously discussed, at the moment we were saved, we received the fullness of Christ and His Life (His peace, love, joy, etc.). And as we walk by faith, we are transformed to live from those Christ-like characteristics.

As we discussed earlier, the categories of resistance (i.e., your flesh, the power of sin, Satan, the world, and other people), are the “flaming arrows” referred to in Ephesians 6:16. Early on, as we walk by faith, our armor is “thin” because of our unbelief and because we are just learning to walk on our new “faith” legs (much like a young child learning how to walk). As a result, the flaming arrows of our resistance can easily penetrate our spiritual armor. Why? Because, as we talked about in the last lesson, early on our spiritual muscles are weak and can be more easily overcome by the resistance we face.

But, as we saw earlier, just as every step of faith strengthens our spiritual muscles, each step also adds another layer of “spiritual” thickness to our spiritual armor. As we grow spiritually, our spiritual armor grows thicker. This means that the flaming arrows of the resistance will be less effective at penetrating our armor. Let me sum it up this way:

As we grow into GREATER dependence, faith, and Christ-likeness, our spiritual armor THICKENS.

As we experience more transformation through steps of faith, our armor thickens and we are able to more easily resist the “flaming arrows.” This allows us to live more above the line and less below.

What Will Be Some of The Results of Your Transformation

As you are being transformed, there is an overflow towards yourself, towards God, and towards others. Let’s see what that overflow looks like in each instance.

Towards YOURSELF

To one extent or another we don’t like certain things, including behaviors, about ourselves. As you are being transformed, you will begin to see yourself in a different light. Why? Because you are becoming Christ-like. As you experience the Holy Spirit’s transformation, you will find you are less condemning of yourself; you are giving yourself more grace; and, you are being less self-focused. Look at John 3:30 for a moment:

“He must increase but I must decrease.”

Even though John the Baptist was referring to his ministry versus Jesus' ministry in this passage, the same can be said of our journey into Christ-likeness. Christ-likeness will increase and our self-sufficiency and self-focus will decrease. If you tend towards self-hatred, you will begin to like the new Christ-like self that emerges as you are becoming transformed.

True Story Example: There was a lady who experienced years of sexual molestation as a child. As a result, she had a very hardened heart towards all men and chose never to marry. She lived in her bitterness towards men and self-hatred for years. But, when the Lord began teaching her and persuading her that even her molestation was not an excuse for hating men, she began taking steps of faith seeking the Spirit to transform her fleshly behavior. Even though it took a number of years, the Holy Spirit, over time, replaced her bitterness with His love. As a result, she no longer condemns herself and she can now express a Christ-like love towards men.

Towards OTHERS

As God transforms us, we become more selfless and others-focused. When we are more focused on others, we will be more concerned about meeting someone else's needs rather than our own.

The greatest manifestation of transformation towards others is our demonstrating the love of Christ to them.

"No one has seen God at any time; if **we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.**" 1 John 4:12

Ultimately, as we are being transformed, the overflow towards others reveals through us the fragrant aroma of His very life.

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

True story example: A middle-aged man who was molested as a child became angry and very self-protective due to his molestation. He went to a conference where he heard about Christ is Life and, as a result, began seeking the Spirit to heal him of his woundedness and set him free from his anger and self-protectionism. It took several months for any changes to take place, but as he continued walking by faith, the Lord set him free from his anger and self-protectionism. He was so radically transformed that he started teaching the Christ-life truths resulting in many others, who were wounded like he had been, to also be healed and set free.

[Note: We will be discussing this truth in greater depth in Book Three, *Living Life For Others*.]

Towards GOD

Let's look at three results that occur towards God as a result of our being transformed into Christ-likeness.

1. A Growing Heart of THANKSGIVING

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service." 1 Timothy 1:12

Can you imagine the heart of thanksgiving the Lord gave Paul when he rescued him from the Law and his self-righteousness, but, most importantly, transformed him into Christ-likeness? I can see Paul's falling on his face thanking God continuously for the transforming work He accomplished in his heart.

Experiencing transformation opens our eyes to this amazing God who both (1) lives within us and, (2) infinitely more than we want to be transformed, desires to transform us. The more we are transformed, the greater our heart will be towards thanking God.

Engaging God: Will you take a few moments to thank God for revealing Himself as your life and for revealing to you that you can be transformed into a completely different person?

2. Your CHRIST-CONFIDENCE In God Will Grow

Christ-confidence is not a concept you hear much about, but it is crucial to understand when we are in the process of growing into Christ-likeness. Let's first define what it means:

CHRIST-CONFIDENCE results when you begin to EXPERIENCE supernatural changes in your life and are being PERSUADED that the changes you are experiencing could ONLY come from God.

Paul expressed Christ-confidence when he wrote:

***"For I am (Christ) confident of this very thing that He who began a work in you will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus."** Philippians 1:6*

Paul is not talking about his own self-confidence. Rather, He is talking about a God-produced Christ-confidence. Why? Because he had experienced such supernatural changes from God that he was persuaded only God could have produced those changes. He further confirms this in 2 Timothy 1:12:

"... I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able..."

While our spiritual destiny is to be transformed, too many believers have failed to achieve Christ-confidence because they have not walked long enough by faith to experience supernatural changes. Why is Christ-confidence so crucial to our spiritual walk? Without it, we will doubt God, His promises, and even His desire or ability to transform our lives. Without it, we may give into Satan's temptation to give up or walk away. Without it, when suffering or trouble comes, we may lose faith or even hope of our lives ever changing.

I encourage you, therefore, to continue to walk by faith long enough to experience Christ-confidence and be able to say one day with Paul:

*“Now to Him who is able to **do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think**, according to [God’s] **power** that works within us....”*

Ephesians 3:20

Meditate: on 2 Timothy 1:12 and Ephesians 3:20, above.

Engaging God: Seek the Holy Spirit to persuade you in a deeper way of His ability and desire to transform your life to a point where you will experience Christ-confidence.

DAY FIVE

3. A Greater AWARENESS of God's Love For You

*"See how **very much** our Father loves us...."*

1 John 3:1

When it comes to God's transforming work in your life, the most important truth you need to understand is this:

His LOVE for you drives EVERYTHING He does FOR you and IN you.

If you struggle with this truth, that struggle itself may tell you where you are with your concept of God. This is especially true if God has not answered your prayers, met your expectations, or fulfilled your desires. If you have lived the Christian life for very long, you have experienced all of these things. However, this does not change how God feels about you or what He wants to accomplish in you. Why? Because He knows what your life is going to look like as transformation takes place. He plans to transform you, your marriage, your parenting, your job, and your relationships as you trust Him by faith.

It may take your experiencing transformation for Him to prove His love for you. If so, what if God:

- Sets you free from a sin stronghold
- Gives you victory over something or someone you have been in bondage to
- Heals your past woundedness
- Moves you to love someone you are critical of, judge negatively, or live in unforgiveness towards

One of God's greatest desires is for you to know how much He loves you. Why? Because He created you out of love and made you for His love. Think about this for a moment. There are 500 million genetic possibilities at conception and God chose you out of all those possibilities. He chose you to be born (that is why there are no illegitimate children) because He wanted a love relationship with you. The ultimate goal of His transformation is for you to see the height and length and depth of His love for you. This is not only so that you can love others but, more importantly, so you can love Him.

This is why God is working non-stop in your life whether you are cooperating with Him or not. If you choose to live independently of Him, He will use even the misery that results from that choice to persuade you to come back to Him and depend on Him.

Infinitely more than you want to be transformed, He wants to transform you. Why? Because the greater the transformation, the more your eyes will be opened to His immense, unconditional, and unstoppable love for you. This is why He went to the cross for you and came to live His life in you and through you to others. He wants you to live THE Life you were designed by Him to live. A life that you never dreamed or ever thought possible. THE Life Jesus calls “abundant.”

So, regardless of where you are in your relationship with God, know one thing:

As LONG AS you draw breath, God will be working NON-STOP in your life to reveal to you the HEIGHT and LENGTH and DEPTH of His LOVE for you.

[**Note:** We will be discussing this truth in greater depth in Book Four, *Experiencing A Deeper Relationship With God*.]

The “NORMAL” Christian Life

What Is “NORMAL?”

It is important for us to understand what the “normal” Christian life is because without understanding it, we can fall into so many spiritual sinkholes that we become discouraged from continuing our walk of faith.

For example, it is “normal” to:

- Fail and fall below the line multiple times
- Doubt God’s ability and willingness to transform your life
- Get frustrated and maybe even angry with God
- Condemn yourself
- Become complacent and default back into the flesh
- Want to give in or give up

These things will occur because we are frail human beings who will fail many times in our journey. We will experience times of doubt, confusion, condemnation, disheartenment, etc. If we don’t see this as “normal,” then at some point we may throw up our arms and say, “I am done.” What we don’t understand is that God gives us much more grace than we ever give ourselves. He never gives up on you, condemns you, or gets frustrated with you when you fall below the line.

God is like a human father when his child is learning how to walk and falls down. He doesn’t get angry or condemn the child. He lovingly says, “Get up and take another step.” It is the same with us. He knows our weaknesses much better than we do. Unlike what you may say about yourself, you will never hear God say, “You blew it. Just give it up. It will never work for you. Go ahead and beat yourself up.” You may hear that from Satan but you will NEVER hear that from

God. The only thing you will hear from the Lord is this, “It’s okay, just get back up and take another step of faith.”

So, when the enemy knocks you down, puts his foot on your neck, and tempts you to give up, then push him off, stand up, brush yourself off, and...

... Take ANOTHER step of faith.

- When everything within you says, “give up,” **take another step of faith.**
- When you demand answers from God but don’t get them, **take another step of faith.**
- When you are in more pain than you think you can bear, **take another step of faith.**
- When you are perplexed, confused, and bewildered, **take another step of faith.**

If you do and persevere, then you will experience all that God promises and much, much more.

“BUT GOD”

In addition to taking steps of faith when you experience resistance to your walk of faith from your own flesh patterns, Satan, the power of sin, the world, and others’ flesh, another tool to help you continue on is to get to the place called “But God.” What does “But God” mean?

It means that NO MATTER how bad things get, you DON’T give up. You GET UP and take ANOTHER step of faith.

Look at how Paul experienced “but God” in His life:

“We are afflicted in every way, BUT not crushed; perplexed, BUT not despairing; persecuted, BUT not forsaken; struck down, BUT not destroyed.” 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9

Paul admitted he was afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down. These were real experiences. However, what is the key word in these two verses? The word “but.” In this context the word “but” means that no matter what goes on before the “but,” Paul is going to trust God. Why is it so crucial to get to the “but?” Because the alternative is to give up on God and turn back to self to be the source to navigate life. Paul knew that was not an option because it would lead to more pain, more heartache, and more misery.

David also arrived at the place of “but God” in Psalm 13:

*How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?
How long shall I take counsel in my soul,*

*Having sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?*

*Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;
Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
And my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
And my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.*

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

So, as we journey down this path of faith, we will on some level face what Paul and David faced and experience the same feelings they did. However, what both of these godly men are telling us is there is no other option than "but God." Trust Him regardless of your feelings or circumstances.

Conclusion

Let's finish our study by looking again at the definition of "transform."

***Transform: "a CHANGE of the form or nature of a person into a
COMPLETELY different person by SUPERNATURAL means."***

As we are being transformed by the Holy Spirit into Christ-likeness, we will become very different people. At some point you will no longer recognize your "old" self because of how much God has transformed you to experience His love, joy, forgiveness, selflessness, etc. Those around you will experience Christ's likeness through you and some will be drawn to what Christ is doing in you because they want to experience what you are experiencing. Think about that for a moment. As a result of God transforming you, He will draw others through you because of the spiritual attraction of Christ in you. Therefore, seek the Holy Spirit to cement the truths He has revealed to you.

Know with confidence that if you persevere in seeking God to transform you into Christ-likeness, you will come to the place where you are stunned and amazed at what God has done in you with the result you will say Paul's words as confidently as he did when he said:

***"Now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond all we could ask or think,
according to the power that works in us."
Ephesians 3:20***

Discussion Questions

Question: What truth(s) impacted you most in this lesson? Why?

Question: Why is the truth about “gap time” important to your spiritual journey?

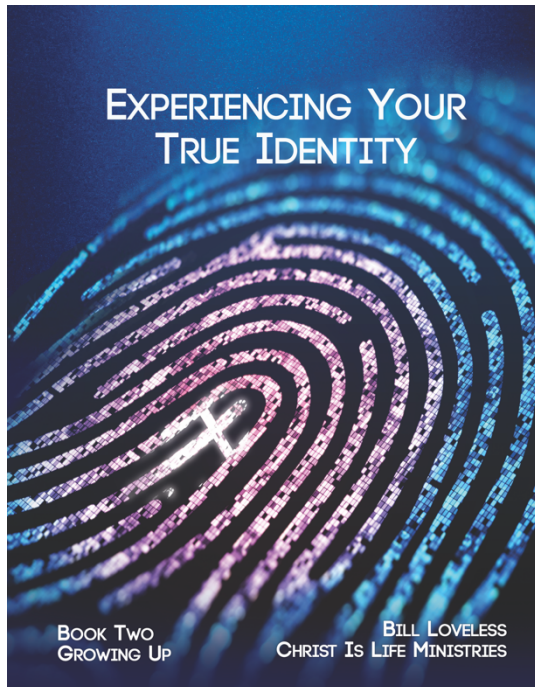
Question: Concerning the overflow of Christ-likeness towards yourself, towards others, and towards God, which of those three areas impacted you most? Why?

Question: Which of the two sections, *The Normal Christian Life* or *But God*, most impacted you? Why?

Question: Since the beginning of this study, have you experienced any changes concerning how you think, feel, choose, behave, or believe? If so, please write those down.

Where Do I Go From Here?

You have just finished Book One of the four-part discipleship series called ***Growing Up – Growing Out – Growing Deep***. We encourage you to continue on with Book Two of this series called ***Experiencing Your True Identity***.



The focus of this study is:

- What false beliefs we have about ourselves.
- How our false beliefs negatively impact our lives.
- What God did at salvation to give us a new identity.
- What our true identity is in Christ.
- God's process to transform us into our true identity.

CILM DISCIPLESHIP MATERIALS

CILM has this book and many other studies, booklets and videos at our website listed below. To purchase ready-to-use copies from Amazon or to 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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