Pursuing Transformation

Practical help in actively pursuing an effective lifestyle of godly transformation.

by Sonny Bowman
**Pursuing Transformation – Teaching Notes**

**Table of Contents**

**Introduction**..........................................................................................................................5
  Dealing with the Junk Room .................................................................................................5
**Who You Are in Christ** ......................................................................................................5
  In Christ You are a New Creation .........................................................................................5
  In Christ You are Accepted ..................................................................................................5
  In Christ You have Bold, Confident Access .......................................................................5
  In Christ You are Adopted ..................................................................................................6
  In Christ You are an Heir of God .......................................................................................6
  In Christ You are Righteous ...............................................................................................6
  Homework: ..........................................................................................................................6

**Three Lists** .........................................................................................................................6
  List #1 ..................................................................................................................................6
  List #2 ..................................................................................................................................6
  List #3 ..................................................................................................................................6
  Compare the three lists .......................................................................................................6
  A Contest .............................................................................................................................7
  A Conviction or a Preference? ............................................................................................7

**Course Objective** .............................................................................................................7

**Seeing the Treasure** ........................................................................................................8
  Truly Seeing the Treasure ....................................................................................................8
  Homework: ..........................................................................................................................8

**Spirit, Soul, and Body** .....................................................................................................9

**Three Parts — One Person** .............................................................................................9
  Which Parts need to be Transformed? ...............................................................................9
  The Spirit .............................................................................................................................9
  The Body ............................................................................................................................10
  The Soul .............................................................................................................................11

**Salvation of the Whole Person** ........................................................................................11
Salvation and the Spirit .................................................................................................................. 11
Salvation and the Body .................................................................................................................. 12
Salvation and the Soul .................................................................................................................. 12
Each Part Gets a Vote .................................................................................................................. 13
Homework: ................................................................................................................................. 13

The Heart of the Matter .............................................................................................................. 14

The Heart Bucket Illustration .................................................................................................... 14
Illustration: ................................................................................................................................. 14

What is the Heart? ....................................................................................................................... 14

Why is the Heart Important? ...................................................................................................... 15
Your Heart Can Become Hardened .............................................................................................. 16
Good Works Come Naturally from a Transformed Heart ............................................................ 16

Transformation ......................................................................................................................... 17

What is Transformation? ............................................................................................................ 17
Homework: ................................................................................................................................. 17

How Can We Pursue Transformation? ..................................................................................... 17
1. To Pursue Transformation – Soften Your Heart ................................................................... 18
   Stop hardening your heart ......................................................................................................... 18
   Accept Responsibility for Choices and Renewal ...................................................................... 18
   Ways to Choose to Soften Your Heart .................................................................................... 18
   A Hardened or Tender Heart .................................................................................................. 19

2. To Pursue Transformation – Get Help .................................................................................. 20
   The Baptism with the Holy Spirit ........................................................................................... 21
   The Work of the Holy Spirit in a Believer’s Life ..................................................................... 22
   Receiving the Baptism with the Holy Spirit ............................................................................ 23
   Tongues and the Holy Spirit ................................................................................................... 23

3. To Pursue Transformation – Replace Error with Truth ....................................................... 24

4. To Pursue Transformation – Develop New Habits for Living ............................................ 25
   Faith and Endurance are Needed .......................................................................................... 26
   Homework: ............................................................................................................................. 26

God’s Truth .................................................................................................................................... 27

Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 27

1. God is Good and Trustworthy ............................................................................................... 27
   Some Common Lies about God’s Goodness ......................................................................... 27
Consequences of Error ........................................................................................................ 28
God is the Very Definition of Good .................................................................................. 28
We Must Put Our Trust in God as Good and Trustworthy ............................................. 29

2. The Bible is God’s Word and Trustworthy ................................................................. 30

3. Salvation is Only by Faith in Jesus Alone ............................................................... 30

Common Lies about Salvation ..................................................................................... 30
Consequences of Error .................................................................................................. 31
Good Works Can’t Make Us or Keep Us Right with God .............................................. 31
Good Works are Fruit ................................................................................................... 31

4. This is Not Our Home! .............................................................................................. 32

Common Lies about Our Residency ............................................................................. 32
Consequences of Error .................................................................................................. 32
Proper Perspective ......................................................................................................... 32
We Have a Job to Do ...................................................................................................... 33
Homework: .................................................................................................................. 33

Other Foundational Truths ............................................................................................. 34

Developing Godly Character Traits and Goals ............................................................. 34

1. Learning to Love with God’s Love ........................................................................... 34

The Love Connection .................................................................................................... 34
Agape Love .................................................................................................................. 34
Love Motivated God and We Need to Learn to Let It Motivate Us............................... 35
Greatest Commands – Love God, Love Others ............................................................ 35
Love is a Choice You Make .......................................................................................... 35
Why Don’t We Love Others More? ............................................................................. 36
Focus On and Follow Jesus! .......................................................................................... 36
Love Dies to Self-Serving and Self-Promotion ............................................................. 37

2. Walking in Humility .................................................................................................. 37

Being Honest with Yourself and Others ...................................................................... 37
Humility Embraces God’s Personal Correction and Chastisement............................... 38
Humility Does Not Seek to Please People .................................................................... 38
Humility Submits to Authority ...................................................................................... 39

3. Faithfulness ............................................................................................................... 40

Trustworthy .................................................................................................................. 40
Integrity .......................................................................................................................... 40
Homework: .................................................................................................................. 41

Other Godly Character Traits and Goals to Develop ................................................... 41
Introduction

Dealing with the Junk Room

Do you have a garage, room, or drawer that is overflowing with junk? You know you need to clean it out some day, but each time you look into it you feel overwhelmed and just close the door and walk away. That can happen with our lives, also.

We are all messed up people. But we should also be people in process toward becoming less and less messed up. Transformation is a biblical word for that process.

Seeing the ungodly things in your heart can overwhelm you. “How can you use me for anything?” Many times I have been discouraged as I got a glimpse (or eye full) of some ungodly areas in my heart. I feel like quitting, but quitting is not an option. So I push forward in cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He works with me to clean up the messes and teaches me how to love more like Jesus does.

The enemy’s goal is to get you to focus on your shortcomings so you will become discouraged and quit. If he can get you to focus on your own goodness, abilities, and qualifications rather than on those that God put in you in Christ, then you will never find the ability to enter into all that God has for you.

Hebrews 12:1-3 — …let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, … For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. [NKJV]

You must become willing to see and face the ugliness of your own heart. It helps to recognize that Jesus sees it already. If He is now revealing it to you, He wants to help you overcome it. You have loving help. You do not have to go it alone.

You will not and cannot be able to look at the trash and ugliness in your own heart, and then successfully move forward unless you understand your full acceptance, approval, and righteousness in union with Jesus. And you cannot begin to understand your union with Jesus unless you are first born again. (Romans 10:9-10, 13)

Invite God’s revelation of His truth, especially as it applies to your beliefs and life.

Who You Are in Christ

It is critical for transformation that you understand who you are in Christ. You must believe that “I am who God says I am—not what others or the world say that I am.” So who does the Bible say you are in (with, through, by…) Christ.

In Christ You are a New Creation

2 Corinthians 5:17 — Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. [NKJV]

In Christ You are Accepted

Ephesians 1:6 — to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. [NKJV]

In Christ You have Bold, Confident Access

Ephesians 3:11-12 — according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. (NKJV)
In Christ You are Adopted

**Ephesians 1:5** — having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, [NKJV]

In Christ You are an Heir of God

**Galatians 4:7** — Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. [NKJV]

**Romans 8:17** — and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. [NKJV]

In Christ You are Righteous

**2 Corinthians 5:21** — For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [NKJV]

Homework:
Find at least 10 verses (in addition to those mentioned above) that explain who you are in Christ [with, through, by, etc.]. Include a summary statement of truth declaring who you are (first person) in Christ for each verse. Example...

**Colossians 2:10** — and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

“I am complete in Christ!”

Three Lists
Create the following three lists on a separate sheet of paper.

**List #1**
List 5 or 6 things that you highly value.

*Example:* Maybe you value having plenty of money or maybe you value freedom.

**List #2**
Make two columns on the page. In the left column list 5 or 6 things you regularly spend significant time, energy, or money on. In the right column, identify and write down the core value that may be associated with each item in the left column.

*Example:* Suppose you notice a person who washes his car every few days. While you can’t truly know his heart, what might that say about what he values? Maybe his core value is how he appears to other people. Maybe his core value is cleanliness and he hates dirt and clutter.

**List #3**
Make a list of 5 or 6 things that you believe God highly values.

*Example:* truth, honesty, humility, etc.

Compare the three lists
For your lists, put a G (for God) in front of each listed value (Lists #1 & #2) that is also a listed value on God’s list (List #3).

On your list #1, put a C (for conviction) in front of each listed value that has a corresponding value in the right column of list #2. Note that the values listed in the right column of List #2
represent things you value in your heart enough to spend significant time, money, and effort to attain (as indicated in the right column of List #2).

What can you learn from the values you listed in these three lists? The challenge is to learn to truly value things from your heart that God also values.

A Contest
Imagine what you would do in the following situation. Suppose I made an offer for anyone who ran outside, wrote down their car license plate number, then ran up on the stage within the next two minutes. People who complete the challenge would be allowed to work in our nursery or children’s ministries. Anyone who did not complete the challenge in time will not be allowed to work in those ministries. What would you do? Be honest with yourself—would you hop up and run to get up on the stage?

Now imagine a different reward for those on the stage…. $10,000 cash each! Be honest—how many would run to get on the stage now?

If you were willing to complete the challenge for $10,000, but not willing to do it for the opportunity to work with children, it means that you believe in your heart that $10,000 cash is more valuable than ministry to infants or children. This is revealed by what you are willing to do in order to get the “prize!”

This “contest” helps us see where our hearts really are. It shows that we are often motivated more strongly by things that benefit us than by things that benefit others. In short, we often love ourselves more than we love others.

This “contest” example is not meant to condemn anyone, but does your attitude bother you? What can you do about it?

A Conviction or a Preference?
The goal of the three lists and the “contest” is to gain some insight about the things we treasure (value) so we can see how they compare to what God treasures. It also helps us distinguish between what we value in our head (preferences) compared to what we truly value in our heart (convictions).

A conviction is something for which a person is willing to die (figuratively or literally). A preference is something that a person has a strong feeling about but is willing to change under certain circumstances. People tend to have many preferences, but few convictions. A good question to ask when evaluating your values would be, “Is this a preference that I have strong feelings about, or is this a conviction for which I am willing to die by giving up my own comfort and benefit?” That gives you an idea of whether it is something you primarily believe in your head (a preference) or something you firmly believe in your heart (a conviction). Note: “Willing to die” can mean simply being willing to die to yourself—willing to lose your personal comfort, interests, benefits, security, or desires to follow that conviction.

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

Romans 12:1-2 highlights the objectives of this course. In this passage, the Greek word for “transformation” is (μεταμορφώ) metamorphō from which we get the word “metamorphosis”
which is used to describe the process of a caterpillar changing into a butterfly. So this transformation in Romans 12:2 is a very radical process.

The objective of this course is for you to purposefully and aggressively pursue transformation as an ongoing lifestyle by...

- Learning to see and value the treasure of God’s Kingdom,
- Adjusting your values to more closely match God’s values, and
- Consistently choosing to walk in God’s ways.

Seeing the Treasure

The goal of the lists exercise at the beginning is to help identify what you truly value and treasure in your heart. Seeing and embracing the treasures that God values requires revelation from God. Fortunately, He wants to give you understanding so you can truly value what He values.

**Ephesians 1:17** — that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, [NKJV]

**Truly Seeing the Treasure**

**Matthew 6:33** — But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. [NKJV]

**Matthew 13:44-46** — “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. [NKJV]

The Kingdom of God is the treasure which when clearly seen will motivate us to sell out completely to follow Jesus as a lifestyle rather than just attending a Sunday event.

**Matthew 6:19-21** — “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [NKJV]

One way to develop an increased value for something is to choose to invest time and money in pursuing it. (Examples include things such as hobbies, golf, photography, and quilting.)

**Homework:**

Carefully read through Ephesians chapters 1-3. Make a list of all the treasures and blessings you see which God has provided for you, along with the verse number for each. Please state these in the first person.

Let’s work together through first 5 verses…

**Ephesians 1:1-6** — ¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. [NKJV]
• I receive grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:2)
• I am blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (1:3)
• I am chosen in Christ (1:4)
• I have been predestined to be adopted as a son by Jesus (1:5)
• It was Jesus’ good pleasure and will to adopt me (1:5)
• My adoption brings praise of the glory of His grace (1:6)
• By grace He made me accepted [to God] in the Beloved [Jesus] (1:6)

Spirit, Soul, and Body

God created man with three dimensions: spirit, soul, and body. He is a spirit being who has a soul and lives in a body. Each part interacts with a different realm. Your body interacts with the physical world around you. Your soul interacts with the mental realm, which includes your thoughts, will, and emotions. Your spirit interacts with the spiritual realm. Jesus works with us in each dimension of our being.

1 Thessalonians 5:23  Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Three Parts — One Person

There are some important questions to ask as we’re pursuing transformation.

• Do you ever get disgusted with yourself for being saved but still doing bad things?
• What is transformation?
• What needs to be transformed?
• How is it transformed?
• What part is our responsibility, and what is God’s responsibility in the transformation process?

Which Parts need to be Transformed?

I am a spirit. I have a soul. I live in a body. These don’t all break down easily into neat categories but the following are true.

• We are 3-part beings. (God is also a “3-part” being: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.)
• Each part needs transformation and each part is saved (i.e., transformed) differently.
• Each part gets a “vote” in the choices you make.

The Spirit

A person’s spirit is that part of you that knows and relates to God. It is the inner you that is eternal.
1 Corinthians 2:11-14 — For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. [NKJV]

- The spirit of a person is eternal. For a Christian, his spirit is the part that is born again (John 3:3-7). It is the part that is the most like God.

  John 4:24 — God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” [NKJV]

- A person’s spirit is transformed, made new, and saved instantly when he is born again through repentance and faith in Jesus.

- The born again spirit of a person is the part that is perfected in Jesus. It always wants to do the right and godly thing.

  Hebrews 10:14 — For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy. [NLT]

- Understanding the nature of your born again spirit helps you understand your righteousness in Christ, which helps you avoid the pitfall of legalism (seeking righteousness by doing good things).

- The born-again spirit always “votes” for God and desires to follow His ways.

The Body

The body is that outward part of a person that houses the inner you. It contacts and interacts with the physical realm. The body is a housing or vehicle through which a person’s spirit and soul functions in this present physical world.

2 Corinthians 5:1-6 — For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven… So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. [NKJV]

The body is sometimes called the “flesh” in the Bible.

- Your body is the earth suit for your spirit and soul to live and function on earth.

- Your body wants to serve itself. It is “all about me.” It wants to do what is easy, feels good, and generally what’s opposed to God. It needs to be offered as a living sacrifice.

  Romans 7:18 — For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells… [NKJV]

  Galatians 5:17-21 — The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. … When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. … [NLT]

- The body is transformed (saved) instantly at the last trumpet when Jesus returns.

  1 Corinthians 15:51-52 — But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. [NLT]
The Soul

The soul of a person includes his intellect, will, and emotions. People sometimes confuse the spirit and soul by thinking they are the same. While it may be difficult at times to distinguish between the two, they are not the same. They can be separated.

**Hebrews 4:12** — For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. [NKJV]

- The soul includes the mind, will, emotions and thinking
- The soul is transformed (saved) through a process of changing the way you think and following God’s ways more closely. This is an on-going process that takes place over an entire lifetime through hearing, knowing, believing, and obeying the Word of God.

**Romans 12:2** — Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. [NLT]

**Ephesians 5:26** — to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God’s word. [NLT]

**Hebrews 10:14** — For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy. [NLT]

- How does that happen? It takes place as the soul/mind is renewed to think like God, primarily by embracing the truth of God’s Word.

Salvation of the Whole Person

The salvation of each of the parts of a person is related to the born again experience. However, each part experiences a different salvation process as we move toward that final righteous and perfect state originally intended by God.

**1 Thessalonians 5:23** — Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [NKJV]

- The spirit attains perfection at the very instant a person is born again.
- The soul ideally moves toward perfection over time as it is renewed to the things of God. Final perfection of the soul is completed after our time in this life is over.
- The body moves away from perfection as it deteriorates throughout a person’s life until it finally decays in death. Perfection comes to the body when believers receive a new body at the coming of the Lord.

Salvation and the Spirit

Before salvation, a person is spiritually dead in sin. When a person is born again, his spirit is replaced with a new spirit making him a new creature in Christ.

**Ezekiel 11:19** — Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, [NKJV]

**Ephesians 2:1** — And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins. [NKJV]

**2 Corinthians 5:17** — Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. [NKJV]

This new spirit is joined to God’s spirit and is righteous in Christ.

**1 Corinthians 6:17** — But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. [NKJV]
2 Corinthians 5:21 — For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [NKJV]

When God says you are righteous, He is referring to the real you, the spirit. The spirit man of a Christian is totally righteous. There is nothing that can be done to make that spirit any more righteous than it already is.

**Salvation and the Body**

When a person is born again, he receives a new spirit, but his body, also called the “flesh,” is not fixed or replaced at that time.

Romans 8:10 — And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. [NKJV]

If you were bald a minute before salvation, you will still be bald a minute after salvation. Unfortunately, the body also retains its old desires for self-gratification after you are born again.

Romans 7:18-25 — For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!... [NKJV]

At death the body dies and decays. Later, when Jesus returns and Christians are resurrected, they will receive a new, spiritual body that is perfect in every way.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 51-52 — So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. … Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. [NKJV]

Philippians 3:20-21 — For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. [NKJV]

Until then, we must not let our bodies rule us. Instead, we are instructed to present our bodies as living sacrifices in service to God (Romans 12:1).

**Salvation and the Soul**

People often confuse the soul and spirit, which are different from one another. Your soul (ψυχή, psuchē) includes your mind, thoughts, will, and emotions. Your spirit (πνεῦμα, pnēuma) is your inner man, the spiritual you. Your soul interacts with the mental realm while your spirit interacts with the spiritual realm.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

1 Corinthians 14:14 — For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. [NKJV]

After the new birth, a Christian’s soul must be “saved.” This salvation of the soul is a process that takes place over a believer’s entire lifetime as his mind is renewed and transformed to conform to the will of God. This is what we are aggressively pursuing in this course.
James 1:21 — Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. [NKJV]

1 Peter 1:22 — Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, [NKJV]

Ephesians 4:23 — and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, [NKJV]

At death, the soul goes with the spirit to be with the Lord (for believers) or to await the Great White Throne Judgment (for non-believers).

Each Part Gets a Vote

A person’s spirit is in union with Jesus and will always want to do God’s will. The body is always seeking that which is easiest or gives the most pleasure. Therefore, the body will always choose against God’s will in order to satisfy its own desires. There is constant conflict between a believer’s spirit and body. (See Romans 7:18-25 quoted earlier.)

Galatians 6:8 — For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. [NKJV]

In a simplified way, the operation of our spirit, soul, and body can be viewed like three people linked arm in arm. The body is on the left, the spirit is on the right, and the soul is in the middle. For example: Suppose a Christian man considers buying a new boat out of anger toward his wife who forgot his birthday. His body will pull him toward buying the boat while his spirit will pull him toward loving and forgiving his wife. What happens next depends on the condition of his soul. If he has not spent much effort in renewing his mind, his soul will likely agree that he deserves a new boat. Then his body and soul will drag his spirit kicking and screaming off to get a new boat. Alternately, if he has been renewing his mind and seeking to follow Jesus, his soul will agree with his spirit that he should forgive his wife and not try to please himself. Then his soul and spirit will drag his body kicking and scream in a direction that honors God and expresses love to his wife.

Another way to look at it as though the spirit, soul, and body each have a vote in the choices you make. If your mind (soul) is renewed to the things of God, it will vote with your spirit to follow God’s ways. If you have been filling your mind (soul) with fleshly desires and interests, it will vote with your “body” to make self-serving choices that conflict with God’s ways.

Galatians 6:8 — For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. [NKJV]

As the soul is renewed to the ways of God, it will develop the skills to love without condition, believe the best, and follow God’s ways. You will find joy through listening to and following the Spirit of God!

Demonstrations:

Your spirit is perfected forever when born again. Explain using iodine, water, and bleach.

Your soul is like a glass with food coloring in it. Keep pouring water (the Word of God) into the glass and notice that the color begins to clear up over time.

Homework:

—Read the Book of Ephesians for treasures (insights, blessings, or other things that speak to you). It may be helpful to read slowly with another person sharing insights and questions along the way. Be prepared next week to share some of your insights with the group.
—Intentionally love several people this week. Share the target (person) of your love, the “act” of love (what you did to love them), and your own heart’s attitude afterward.

References:

- Building Blocks of Life session #6 “Spirit, Soul, and Body”
- Finding Light in Darkness #18 “Major Doctrines: Man, Sin, and Salvation”

The Heart of the Matter

The Heart Bucket Illustration

Illustration:
Several years ago, I was working on something when it broke. I threw the wrench across the garage and said a few choice words that a Christian should not be saying. Immediately I was reminded of Matthew 15:18, “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.” I had been working hard to control my anger and words, but it wasn’t working very well. Then the Lord spoke to me saying that the anger and words were not the real problem, but it was a problem in my heart. Then He said, “Put so much of Jesus in your heart that there is no room for trash.” Later, thinking on this I envisioned a bucket full of sewage. When it got knocked over, all the garbage spilled out for all to see. Any time that happened, I had been trying to quickly upright the bucket and scoop all the garbage back inside where it would be hidden. I realized that the real solution was to clean out my “heart bucket” so when it gets knocked over, Jesus will flow out. This revelation totally changed my life leading to real transformation.”

Matthew 12:34-35 — Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. [NKJV]

The heart is like a bucket. When it gets knocked over, whatever you have been putting into it comes rolling out for everyone to see. Our typical response is to quickly scoop everything back in the bucket and try to keep it from getting knocked over again. The real answer is to replace the trash in our buckets with the good things of God. It is also important to quit putting garbage or useless information into your heart bucket.

What is the Heart?

Your heart includes…

- The foundational things you strongly believe
- The things that define your character
- Your worldview (the way you see and interpret the world around you)
- The fundamental core of your soul

What is the heart in Scripture? It is not usually talking about the physical heart. Nor is it exactly the same as a person’s soul or spirit.

Mark 12:30 — And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. [NKJV]
Romans 10:9-10 — that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Consider earthly examples of a figurative heart: artichoke hearts, the heart of Texas, the heart of a matter. In a similar way, it is difficult to precisely define the heart, yet God speaks often about the heart.

The heart includes what you really, really believe.

Proverbs 23:7 — For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. “Eat and drink!” he says to you, But his heart is not with you. [NKJV]

Jesus asked a serious question to get at the heart of the problem in a particular situation.


His question teaches us that we should look at whether or not we are obeying Jesus so we can determine whether or not we have truly made Him Lord of our life.

You can say you believe something, and on one level you do. But your actions may show that you believe something different down deep in your heart. For example, you may believe that if you read your Bible regularly it will help you, but you still don’t read it very often. Or maybe you believe that prayer makes a difference, but you don’t pray very much. On one level we want to do what is right and good, but we just don’t do it consistently.

We can—and do—believe truth and lies at the same time. What is unfortunate is that the lies can sometimes be the most firmly rooted down deep in our hearts.

Your heart is also where you character resides as well as those fundamental beliefs that shape who you are and what other things you believe. We use terms such as, “I believe it with all my heart” to express those kinds of fundamental beliefs.

We can believe a lot of things with our mind—even things that are mutually contradictory. But it’s only those things we believe in our heart that consistently shape who we are, what we say, and what we do. So the heart, and what we truly believe in it, is critically important.

How can you really change things in your heart and not only just what’s in your mind? You can change your mind quite easily at times. And some of us change our minds frequently. But to change your heart is not so easy. It requires transformation. Your heart is much more solid and stable than your mind in general. It takes a lot of effort to actually change what you believe in your heart. The lies we believe in our heart must be rooted out and replaced with truth in a process the Bible calls “renewing our minds” and “transformation.”

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

Why is the Heart Important?

It is critical that we are intentional with what we believe in our hearts because it determines the course of our lives. And what you treasure will capture your heart’s attention and affections.

Proverbs 4:20-27 — My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. Don’t lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body. Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech. Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. Don’t get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil. [NLT]

Matthew 6:19-21 — “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor
rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [NKJV]

**Your Heart Can Become Hardened**

If you are not intentional with your heart, it can become hardened. Our hearts can become hardened, dull, callous, and uncaring through refusing to obey God, unbelief, unthankfulness, and refusing to have compassion for others.

**Hebrews 3:15** — while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” [NKJV]

**Matthew 13:15** — For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.’ [NKJV]

**Mark 16:14** — Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. [NKJV]

**Romans 1:21** — because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [NKJV]

**Deuteronomy 15:7** — “If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, [NKJV]

**Mark 3:3-5** — And He said to the man who had the withered hand, “Step forward.” Then He said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. [NKJV]

We must carefully watch out for times when…

- we close our ears and eyes to the things or call of God,
- we refuse to believe the testimony of others,
- we fail (or refuse) to be thankful for the good we have,
- we hold on to what should be shared with someone in need, and
- we refuse to respond properly when confronted with truth.

**Good Works Come Naturally from a Transformed Heart**

Often we try to live good lives, but we find that we still do a lot of things that are ungodly. So we try harder to do what is right. But that doesn’t address the real problem and it can never be truly successful. Evaluating the words and actions (or reactions) that come out in your life will help you understand the condition of your heart and where it needs work. *[Remember The Heart Bucket? When it is knocked over, whatever is inside will come rolling out.]*

**Matthew 12:35** — A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. [NKJV]

So we need to have our hearts transformed so they will be full of God’s good treasures.
Transformation

What is Transformation?

We must get God’s truth down deep into our heart so that it changes us fundamentally and thus affects the way we see things and the way we think, talk, and act. This is what the Bible calls transformation, and it actually changes our core character. As your heart is transformed over the process of a lifetime, it will progressively change who you really are—and that is good!

George Barna described God-driven transformation as, “…the process that enables us to gradually die to sin, self, and society in order to fully and profoundly love God and people.” (‘Experiencing God’s Best Through His Transformation Process” paper by George Barna)

Transformation is basically a process of learning more fully to obey the great commandments.

Mark 12:30-31 — And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” [NKJV]

Transformation is not about becoming a good person, but about learning to truly love God and people. This transformation is a process that requires God’s power AND our cooperation (participation). We can’t do it without Him and He won’t do it without us positioning ourselves to receive His help.

Jesus defined successful discipleship as bearing godly fruit. Unfortunately, Christians in America often measure successful discipleship based on a person’s level of Bible knowledge, activities in ministry, and emotional stability.

John 15:4-8 — Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. [NKJV]

Transformation is the process where we let God rule our lives while we become servants to Him and to the world that Jesus died to save. As a result, we will become disciples who bear much fruit.

Homework:
—During the next week, pay attention to your actions to determine what things may be in your heart that need replacing. List any un-godlike action, what lie may be at the root of it, and what truth needs to replace that lie. Do this for at least two different situations during the week. You will not be required to turn this in, so be honest with yourself. Remember that you have been made right with God in Christ, not by your good works.

—Read the book of Colossians for treasures (insights, blessings, or other things that speak to you). It may be helpful to read slowly with another person sharing insights and questions along the way. Be prepared next week to share some of your insights with the group.

How Can We Pursue Transformation?

So how can you cooperate with God in active and aggressive pursuit of this transformation process with our heart? Following are some things I have found helpful.

[Pray the following for the class – Modified to be personal]
Ephesians 1:17-20 — that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to [us] the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of [our] understanding being enlightened; that [we] may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, [NKJV]

1. To Pursue Transformation – Soften Your Heart

Stop hardening your heart

Whether your heart is hard and unyielding or soft and open to transformation depends on your choices. You must choose to not harden your hard.

Hebrews 3:13-15 — but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” [NKJV]

A soft or tender heart is essential for transformation and maturity. A hardened heart can lead to bitterness, unforgiveness, isolation, anger, lack of growth, etc.

Things that tempt us to choose to harden our heart include: pride, fear, rejection, pain, discouragement, anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, and hopelessness.

[Illustration: You can't put your fingers in your ears so you won't hear God’s calls to obedience without also limiting your ability to hear all of God’s words to you. This could cause you to miss important warnings.]

We cannot afford to run our hearts by our feelings. Feelings come and go depending on our circumstances and the actions of other people. Our feelings can go from extremely joyful and hopeful to extremely discouraged and hopeless in just a few seconds due to situations beyond our control. We cannot trust our feelings or emotions. They are as unstable as water. We cannot afford to harden or soften our hearts based on our fickle feelings and emotions.

Accept Responsibility for Choices and Renewal

As we saw earlier, your heart can be hardened and unyielding to the truth and ways of God. A soft heart is tender to God’s voice, quick to repent, humble, and sensitive to the needs of others. The first step in softening your heart is to acknowledge that your heart has a problem, and it needs God’s transformation.

Jeremiah 17:9 — “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? [NKJV]

Matthew 15:18-19 — But the words you speak come from the heart—that’s what defiles you. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. [NLT]

If you are not born again, the absolute first step is salvation. (John 3:3, Romans 10:9-13)

So, what if you are already saved? Then acknowledge that your heart is alive by God’s power, but it needs transformation. Invite God to work a transformation in your heart and agree to cooperate with Him in this work.

Ways to Choose to Soften Your Heart…

Look for and confess ways you have hardened your heart, and ask for God’s forgiveness and help in choosing to soften your heart.

[Illustration: Suppose you plan to buy a certain car, but you refuse to ask for God’s input because He might say something different than what you want. Refusing to take time to listen to
God when an important decision is pending may be evidence that you are hardening your heart.

Choose to love God and people. We are commanded to love others, therefore we must be able to choose to love people even when they are unlovely—which can be often. Choosing to love God and others works to soften our hearts.

[Class interaction: Ask for ways we can choose to love people. For example: Be patient and kind when someone asks you the same thing for the third time.]

It is important that your goal in loving others not be for the purpose of changing them or changing your circumstances. It can also help facilitate learning to love other people if you can change the way you see them and the way you interpret circumstances. For example: it personally helped me to be more kind and patient with other drivers on the road by changing my view of them as competitors (like football opponents) to seeing them as dance partners. Then I began to work on flowing with the moves of the other drivers rather than being irritated by them.

Think on godly things, replacing your negative thoughts with good and godly thoughts.

Philippians 4:8 — And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. [NLT]

This is a big issue! We live in a very negative world where people often talk about bad weather, problems, and people issues. It is easy to get caught up in the negativity that is all around you. If you find yourself being negative about things, immediately stop and choose to look for the good and virtuous things to think and talk about.

[Class interaction: Ask for examples of ways we can choose to think on godly things.]

Cast down pride and thinking that you know what’s best. Be willing to consider other people’s viewpoints and input. Listen—both to God and to others.

1 Corinthians 13:5 — … It [love] does not demand its own way. … [NLT]

Watch out for times when you try to control circumstances or people. Attempts to control circumstances or people can be a symptom of a hardened or fearful heart. It is not our job to change or control people or circumstances. Instead, cast all your cares on God, trusting Him to give you what you need when you need it. And let Jesus be your peace rather than seeking to gain peace by trying to control your circumstances.

1 Peter 5:6-7 — Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. [NKJV]

Matthew 6:31-34 — “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. [NKJV]

There are many opportunities daily for us to choose to harden your heart. Don’t take them!

[Class interaction: Ask for examples how trying to control circumstances exposes a lack of trust in God. — When I was serving with Youth with a Mission in Utah, there was an opportunity for a small team to go to Idaho to work with James Spencer. I really wanted to meet him and work with him, so I thought about asking to go. But I chose to keep quiet and trust God to put me on the team if that was His desire. I chose to trust God’s will rather than trying to obtain my own desires using manipulation and hints.]

A Hardened or Tender Heart
A hardened heart has trouble hearing and understanding the voice of God.
Mark 6:52 — For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened. [NKJV]

A tender or soft heart is pliable and changeable. It is sensitive to the voice of the Spirit of God and purposes to obey God. It is also willing to risk loving others even if it costs much.

2 Chronicles 34:27 — because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the LORD. [NKJV]

Proverbs 10:8 — The wise in heart will receive commands, But a prating fool will fall. [NKJV]

When choosing to soften your heart, you often have to fight off strong emotions and internal defenses. It requires trusting God to heal the hurts in your heart and to work out His good will in your life—even when people are abusive or demeaning. If you don’t trust the goodness of God toward you, then you will seek to protect your own heart by hardening it and putting walls around it. But that stops the flow of love—both inward and outward. It stops the heart's ability to conform to God’s ways and to be transformed.

When people hurt you, choose not to focus on your own hurts but on their suffering that may have led to their actions. It is like an injured dog that bites you when you try to help. Don’t kick the dog.

2. To Pursue Transformation – Get Help

We all need outside help in the transformation process. First, we need to invite the Holy Spirit to work in us to bring godly change to our soul.

Psalm 51:10 — Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. [NKJV]

John 16:13 — However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. [NKJV]

Hebrews 4:16 — Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. [NKJV]

It is important to acknowledge that God also uses other people to help us be transformed. Other people can often see and recognize our heart issues easier than we can. Unfortunately, when they point those things out to us, we often get irritated and disregard them. Our hearts can deceive us. It is important that we learn to value input from others because they can sometimes see things we can’t.

Jeremiah 17:9 — “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? [NKJV]

Proverbs 11:14 — Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety. [NKJV]

Proverbs 28:26 — He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered. [NKJV]

Proverbs 12:15 — The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise. [NKJV]

Proverbs 26:12 — Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. [NKJV]

People are not always accurate in their interpretation of what they see in you, but their observations can still be useful to expose lies you believe or bad habits you have. Rather than getting defensive, prayerfully consider what they are saying and ask the Lord what He would like you to do differently.
If someone questions, disagrees with, or confronts something you say, how do you feel? If you feel angry, irritated, offended, or feel a need to be secretive, then your heart may be deceiving you. You may believe that your actions or choices are God's will, but you need to seriously reevaluate it if you find yourself feeling angry, irritated, offended, or secretive when someone questions you about it. The other person may have done a poor job of understanding or reacting to you, but that is not as important as your heart response.

Also, something you are doing may offend someone, even when you are in the right. You are called to lay down your rights to avoid offending that other person. Therefore, if your heart is uncaring toward the scruples or weaknesses of the other person, it may be that your heart is deceiving you.

Romans 14:13-15:1 — ... but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way. ... Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. ... Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. ... All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. ... We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. [NKJV]

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 — ... But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. ... But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. [NKJV]

1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1 — ... All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being. ... For why is my liberty judged by another man’s conscience? ... Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. [NKJV]

[Example: If your spouse feels uncomfortable with your relationship with someone else, it doesn’t matter if you think he or she may be wrong or overreacting. It is important to make godly adjustments because of the simple fact that the relationship causes him or her concern.]

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit

The disciples experienced a great transformation booster on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus had promised the disciples that they would receive power and be witnesses for Him after they were baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 — But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” [NKJV]

Even after seeing the resurrected Jesus, the disciples were still fearful and met behind locked doors. But just as Jesus promised, the disciples transformed from being fearful and timid to being bold and confident after they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. (That included Peter who had even denied Jesus earlier.)

John 20:19, 26 — Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ... And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” [NKJV]

Acts 2:1-6 — When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every
nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. [NKJV]

Acts 2:14, 36, 40 — But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. … “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” … And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” [NKJV]

Acts 4:8-13 — Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone. ‘Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. [NKJV]

Acts 4:29-31 — Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. [NKJV]

After being baptized with the Holy Spirit, the early disciples’ lives where dramatically transformed. This is still true for believers today.

[My experience with the Baptism with the Holy Spirit: While salvation had the greatest impact on my spirit and eternity, my baptism with the Holy Spirit has had the greatest impact on my soul—which continues to this day. Until then, God seemed distant and busy. I believed He knew who I was. But until that day, I did not realize that God wanted an intimate, on-going relationship with me individually. At that time, God became very real and personal to me, and I have immensely enjoyed that ever-deepening relationship to this day.]

The Work of the Holy Spirit in a Believer’s Life

The Holy Spirit is here to help transform you and to empower you to do God’s work.

John 14:26 — But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. [NKJV]

Romans 8:26-27 — Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. [NKJV]

Matthew 10:18-20 — You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. [NKJV]

The Holy Spirit teaches you to know the things of God and He speaks to you personally.

1 Corinthians 2:9-16 — But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who
is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ. [NKJV]

Acts 13:2-4 — As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. [NKJV]

Receiving the Baptism with the Holy Spirit

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a promise available for every believer.

Acts 2:38-39 — Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” [NKJV]

Acts 10:44-47 — While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” [NKJV]

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a separate event from salvation.

Acts 19:1-6 — And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.” Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. [NKJV]

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is received by faith and asking.

Galatians 3:14 — that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. [NKJV]

Luke 11:9-13 — “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” [NKJV]

Tongues and the Holy Spirit

Speaking in unknown tongues is an expected and regular occurrence when a person is baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:1-4 — When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. [NKJV]

Acts 19:6 — And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. [NKJV]

When a person speaks in tongues, he is speaking to God rather than to men.

1 Corinthians 14:1-5 — Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation
and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification. [NKJV]

We should pray both in tongues and with our understanding (our native language).

1 Corinthians 14:14-15 — For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. [NKJV]

1 Corinthians 14:39 — Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. [NKJV]

References:
- Building Blocks of Life session #3, “The Person, Work, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit"
- Building Blocks of Life session #4, “Misconceptions About Tongues”

3. To Pursue Transformation – Replace Error with Truth

We all need to renew our minds. Since not one of us is perfect, we all have some lies we believe. The best way to identify a lie is to know the truth. Rather than studying various lies that we might believe, the best approach is to be so thoroughly familiar with God’s Truth that any lie becomes immediately obvious. [Illustration: When bank tellers are sent to learn how to detect counterfeit money, they only handle real money. There are lots of different counterfeits, but only one that’s real.]

Romans 12:1-2 — I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. [ESV]

After salvation, growth primarily takes place in your soul—your mind, will, and emotions. Your mind is where the battle rages. Once your spirit is renewed (born again) by salvation through the power of God, renewing the mind becomes a major focus for the rest of your life. You will also need to expend significant effort to present your bodies as living sacrifices—slaves to serve God’s will. [Remember the linked arms example of Spirit, Soul, and Body, and how they “vote.”]

When we are born again, we come to God with a lot of stinking thinking, bad programming, messed up methods, and corrupted conclusions. Our minds need to be radically transformed. This primarily takes place as we replace the lies we believe in our hearts with God’s truth from His Word. Unlike the instantaneous transformation of our spirit from death to life which takes place at salvation, the transformation of our mind is a life-long process requiring regular attention, effort, and major lifestyle changes.

If you are not regularly and systematically flooding your mind with God’s Word—flushing out the lies with God’s living water of truth, then you will not see significant, ongoing transformation in your soul and heart. [Remember the Heart Bucket example. Taking a bath cleans off dirt, but it must be repeated regularly since dirt accumulates as we walk through life.]

Ephesians 5:26 — that He [Jesus] might sanctify and cleanse her [the Church, us] with the washing of water by the word. [NKJV]

James 1:21-22 — Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. [NKJV]
The truth of God’s word implanted in your mind and allowed to shape your lifestyle saves (transforms) your soul (mind, will, and emotions) over a process of a lifetime.

As you read the Bible, develop the regular habit of asking yourself, “What is God saying to me in this passage?” “What changes should I make based on what I am reading.” Then, as you go through the day, meditate on the things you learned and look for opportunities where you can practice following God’s ways. It’s somewhat like exercising or eating properly. At first it may not seem to make much difference. But when you make it a lifestyle, the changes can be astounding. [Green beans are no respecter of persons. The nutrients in them help our bodies whether or not we like the way green beans taste.]

4. To Pursue Transformation – Develop New Habits for Living

We generally have developed some bad ways of acting or reacting in certain ways that are ungodly. We have done this so often, it becomes a habit. For example: I used to have a habit of being rude to someone if they were rude to me. When I first began to want to change that, I purposely planned to not respond rudely. But in most cases, I found my habitual response would just blurt out before I had a chance to think of a better response. So I began working on a new habit to push out the old one. My plan was to work at consistently responding in a kind, patient way no matter how someone addressed me. Part of the new habit was to work to see everyone the way God sees them. Though I sometimes slip back into the old habit, I am much more successful than before at giving a kind, loving response to people.

Luke 11:24-26 — “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.” [NKJV]

In a similar way to getting permanently rid of a demon, it’s difficult to just quit a habit. They just seem to keep coming back. It works best to aggressively replace ungodly habits with new, God-honoring habits. By filling your soul (your “house”) with godly habits, you don’t leave room for the ungodly habits to return.

Actively and regularly choosing to follow and obey truth rather than lies is a way to develop a new habit, which has the power to supplant an old habit. Basically, you are purposely and regularly choosing to go in a different direction, while choosing to follow God’s ways of truth rather than your old ways which were founded on lies. Then you will begin to bear godly fruit in your day-to-day life. Galatians 5:22-25 is our life target showing what we are aiming for in our lives.

Galatians 5:22-25 — But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. [NKJV]

Transformation requires seeking truth, learning truth, and applying truth. It is not enough to just learn the truth. You must also act on the truth. It’s when you apply the truth in your own life that you actually choose to stop believing lies and to begin truly believing truth. At that point the truth begins to fundamentally change who you are, which includes your character and your motives. This change results in a new way of seeing, thinking, talking, and doing—all of which more closely matches the ways of Jesus.

James 1:21-25 — Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. … But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. [NKJV]

When you find yourself failing to speak or act in a godly way, ask what lie you believe that led to that failure. Then ask what God’s truth is related to that situation. Then ask for forgiveness for
following a lie, and choose to purposefully follow God’s truth. Repeat the choice regularly until it becomes a habitual way of life for you. This process requires that you humble yourself.

[For example: When someone asks for a favor and you respond impatiently or rudely, what lie may you believe? — Maybe you feel that your plans are more important than God’s command to love and help others.]

It is important that we get to the heart of the matter when it comes to our lives. We can’t afford to make decisions based on how we feel. Feelings come and go. But a heart grounded in God’s truth is stable and produces godly fruit in our daily lives.

Proverbs 23:26 — My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways. [NKJV]

Proverbs 22:17-19 — Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, And apply your heart to my knowledge; For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; Let them all be fixed upon your lips, So that your trust may be in the LORD; I have instructed you today, even you. [NKJV]

It is not enough to just keep the bad stuff out of our hearts. We must also have truth in our hearts that will bring power and deliverance. [Watching reruns of the Roadrunner cartoon may not be filling your heart with bad information. However, if you have a crisis and all you can bring out of your heart for help is, “Beep, beep!” then you have a problem.]

Matthew 12:36 — But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. [NKJV]

Romans 14:19 — Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. [NKJV]

We need to feed on and speak words that edify and build up ourselves and others. We cannot afford to feast on or speak idle words—words that don’t accomplish anything of value.

**Faith and Endurance are Needed**

Contending in the faith is important if you want to achieve ongoing transformation.

Jude 3 — …I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. [NKJV]

Hebrews 10:35-36 — Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: [NKJV]

God values our faith more than our results. Often, deep transformation results when you successfully endure a hardship or challenge to your faith.

Hebrews 11:13-16 — These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. [NKJV]

Hebrews 12:1-2 — Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [NKJV]

**Homework:**

—Read the book of Philippians for treasures (insights, blessings, or other things that speak to you). It may be helpful to read slowly with another person sharing insights and questions along the way. Be prepared next week to share some of your insights with the group.
—Intentionally love several people this week. Share the target (person) of your love, the “act” of love (what you did to love them), and your own heart’s attitude afterward.

God’s Truth

Introduction

In pursuing transformation, one of the steps is to replace any lies we believe with truth. The best way to spot a lie is to be thoroughly familiar with the truth. You don’t need to study all the various lies. Rather, study the Truth so that you know it very well. Then any lie that comes along will be obvious.

This is accomplished by developing a lifestyle of purposefully getting to know God and His ways. As you begin to assimilate God’s truth into your heart and life, any lies will become increasingly obvious so that you can properly eradicate them and their influence in your life.

[Illustration: Put so much of Jesus in your heart that there’s no room for trash. Fill your heart and soul with God’s Word and Truth to reveal and push out any lies that you may unknowingly believe.]

Following are a few significant truths that need to be studied, understood, and embraced for transformation to take place in a deep way.

1. God is Good and Trustworthy

The first truth we need to be thoroughly convinced about is that God is good and trustworthy.

Some Common Lies about God’s Goodness

Lies about God’s goodness and trustworthiness have been told since the day Adam and Eve sinned in the garden. Fundamentally, Satan claimed that God was hiding something good from Eve and that God should not be trusted.

Genesis 3:2-5 — “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’ ” “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.” [NLT]

Some of the lies that people believe related to God’s goodness include…

- God doesn’t truly care about my wellbeing. He just wants to make me follow His unreasonable rules, and then condemns me at the slightest infraction without considering my perspective.
- God lets babies suffer with cancer and other diseases when He could stop it if He wanted to. So He is either impotent or He is uncaring and evil.
- God doesn’t change my circumstances or get rid of my problems when I ask. So He is uncaring or He doesn’t exist.
- God can’t be trusted to do what He should do.
**Consequences of Error**

Sometimes people reject God or doubt His existence because they believe lies which say that He is not good or trustworthy. At the very least, they are disappointed or confused when they encounter difficulties in their lives, which they think God should have prevented.

Our God is good and trustworthy.

**Exodus 34:6** — And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, [NKJV]

Unfortunately, our culture is aggressively redefining “good” as being that which is easy, pleasant, tolerant, and non-confrontational. They also call evil things good.

**Isaiah 5:20** — Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! [NKJV]

**God is the Very Definition of Good**

God is the actual definition of goodness. Where do you think we got the concept of “good” if not from God? Where else could that idea come from? That which is good is that which conforms to God’s nature and character. So by default, God cannot be anything other than good—His true nature and character. To be anything other than good would require God to deny who He is at the very core of His being.

**2 Timothy 2:13** — If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. [NKJV]

One of my friends mentioned recently that the world has worked to diminish the meaning of the word “good.” As he pointed out, our culture often uses the terms “good,” “better,” and “best,” where good becomes average or just okay. When God pronounced creation to be “good,” He definitely wasn’t talking about anything other than the very best. Again, this seems to be an attack on the definition of “good,” which is God Himself.

Evil is basically the absence of good. Since God is the very definition of good, evil is essentially the absence of God. It is similar to how we define darkness as an absence of light. Light can dispel darkness, but darkness cannot dispel light. You create darkness by removing light, not by adding darkness. Darkness cannot overcome light.

**John 1:4-5** — The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. [NLT]

God is the source of everything that is good. There is no evil or darkness in God. There cannot be! There can be no mixture of good and evil or of light and darkness in God.

**James 1:16-17** — Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. [NKJV]

**1 John 1:5-6** — This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. [NKJV]

Some claim that if God was good, He would not send people to Hell. Unfortunately, there is no place else for a person to go if that person chooses to reject God’s invitation and provision to spend eternity with Him. It is not that God desires for anyone to go to Hell, but He allows anyone free will to choose to not be in His presence. Since everything good is with God, to choose to be somewhere other than with God is to choose to be someplace where there is absolutely nothing that is good. Can you imagine being in a place where there is absolutely nothing good and no light? That would be the definition of what Hell is.
2 Peter 3:9 — The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. [NKJV]

We Must Put Our Trust in God as Good and Trustworthy

We can tend to define what is “good” from a self-serving position. We deem something good if it benefits us, even if it might cost others. [Illustration: We think we are blessed when we find an excellent parking spot at a crowded store, taking it without regard for others who may need it more than us.] If it inconveniences or harms me, then I consider it “bad.” But if it makes my life easier or happier for the moment, I consider it to be “good” and desirable even if it may do great damage to me or others in the future. Our perspective and definition of good is seriously flawed. [Illustration: One version of a Chinese farmer’s son story says:

“Long ago, there was a farmer who lived in China. This was a poor farmer who had but one horse. He used his horse to plow the fields so that he could make a living. One day, the horse ran away. “Oh no!” cried the neighbors, “That is terrible!” The old farmer shrugged and said: “Good news, bad news – who knows”.

Several days later, the farmer’s horse returned to the farm with several wild horses following behind. The farmer and his son managed to capture the horses, all of them of great beauty. “Oh, how wonderful!” cried the neighbors. Once again, the farmer simply shrugged and said: “Good news, bad news – who knows”.

The next day, the farmer’s twenty-year-old-son managed to capture one of the wild horses, but while attempting to break the steed, was thrown and his leg badly broken. The neighbors rushed over, peering at the young man in bed, “Oh, this is awful news!” they cried. The farmer shrugged, “Good news, bad news, who knows?”

A few weeks later, the Chinese army came by, conscripting all the area’s young men for war raging in the south. They couldn’t take the young man with the broken leg… “]

We really are in no position to make judgments against God based on our opinion of how well life is going.

Isaiah 55:9 — “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. [NKJV]

It is true that we will have circumstances that are truly bad in how they affect us. Jesus said we would have problems in this world. Fortunately, He has overcome the world—and we have overcome the world in Him.

John 16:33 — These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." [NKJV]

1 John 5:4-5 — For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? [NKJV]

God can also work even bad circumstances out for our ultimate good.

Romans 8:28 — And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. [NKJV]

So, when things happen that we perceive as not good or evil (in our limited understanding or limited time frame), we must not charge God with being evil. We must trust God and His goodness more than we trust our own limited understanding.

Proverbs 3:5 — Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. [NLT]
2. The Bible is God’s Word and Trustworthy

The second truth we need to be thoroughly convinced about is the fact that the Bible is God’s Word and it is trustworthy.

The truth that the Bible is God’s Word to us and it is trustworthy must be firmly established in your heart. It is also important that you be able to explain to others the reason for your confidence in the trustworthiness of the Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 — All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. [NKJV]

Detailed information to help you properly understand this truth is available in the following resources. Therefore, the details are not covered in this class. Some of the topics included in “Why Trust the Bible” (referenced below in Finding Light in Darkness) include…

- Bible Authority
- How We Got the New Testament
- Good Questions—Good Answers
- The Bible is Geographical Accuracy
- The Bible is Historical Accuracy
- The Bible is Archaeological Accuracy
- The Bible is Prophetic Accuracy
- The Bible is Scientific Accuracy
- Doesn’t Evolution Disprove the Bible?

References:

- Finding Light in Darkness specifically… session #2 “Why Trust the Bible”
- Building Blocks of Life session #1 “The Authority of God’s Word”

3. Salvation is Only by Faith in Jesus Alone

The third truth we need to be thoroughly convinced about is the fact that salvation is only obtained by faith in Jesus alone.

Common Lies about Salvation

Following are some frequent lies people believe about salvation…

- People must live good lives or perform religious rituals to be acceptable to God.
- As long as a person is true to his own beliefs, he is acceptable to God.
- There are many different ways to God.
- The gods of various religions are just different representations of the true God.
Consequences of Error

A person may mistakenly trust his own good works as the way to make himself acceptable to God and worthy of entrance into heaven. That can result in a feeling of rejection since all of us sense that we just are not good enough to meet God’s perfect standards. As we continue to work toward that perfection with the inevitable failures, we often purpose to try harder to get it right. Then we can become discouraged. That can be followed by developing an offense toward God and the Church for demanding what is impossible, resulting in us giving up and walking away from God. All this results from seeking to achieve right standing with God by our own inadequate good works and efforts.

Some people claim it is too narrow and unkind to tell people that Jesus is the only way to be right with God. Suppose that you were poisoned by something for which there was only one effective antidote. Would you be offended if someone told you where to find that antidote and then offered to even pay for it? Jesus is the only way that works, so it is not unkind or narrow to say He is the only way. If there is only one bridge across the canyon, it is unkind NOT to tell someone that there is only one way available while letting them wander around looking vainly to find some other way to get across!

John 14:6 — Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” [NKJV]

Acts 4:12 — Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” [NKJV]

Good Works Can’t Make Us or Keep Us Right with God

Good works cannot save you, and they cannot keep you right with God after your salvation. Only faith in Jesus makes you right with God and only faith in Jesus keeps you right with God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 — For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. [NKJV]

Galatians 2:16 — knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. [NKJV]

Galatians 3:1-3 — This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? [NKJV]

[Illustration: Having a leaky, poopy diaper does not make a baby any less a member of the family. Nor do our leaky, poopy messes make us any less of God’s adopted children.]

Good Works are Fruit

Good works are the natural outworking of our renewed mind and growing love for God and others.

Matthew 5:16 — Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. [NKJV]

Philippians 2:13 — For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. [NLT]

Additional information to help you properly understand this truth is available in the following resources.

- Building Blocks of Life session #5 “Righteousness: Set Free from Sin’s Power”
- Finding Light in Darkness session #18 “Major Doctrines: Man, Sin, and Salvation”
4. This is Not Our Home!

The fourth truth we need to be thoroughly convinced about is the fact that this world is not our home. We have a home, but it’s not here.

Common Lies about Our Residency

Following are some frequent lies believed concerning our residency and eternity…

- YOLO – You only live once, so grab all the enjoyment and pleasure you can.
- I must look out for myself first.
- This world is only material, so it doesn’t matter what I do here.
- There is no real purpose in life and no larger story (metanarrative).

Consequences of Error

If we do not understand that we will live somewhere for eternity and this world is not our home, we can come to some seriously wrong conclusions. We may believe that we have no purpose or meaning in this life, which can cause us to pursue a goal to live a life that is free of problems, full of calmness, and full of happiness. Our focus becomes our self. When we encounter hard times, we can get offended at God and resent His failure to meet our expectations for an easy life. For example, we may expect God to insure we have a problem-free life. Then when we face difficulties in this broken world, we get offended and shout, “Where is God?”

Proper Perspective

Hebrews 13:14 — For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come. [NLT]

From time to time, I see the letters “YOLO” on T-shirts and other places. These letters stand for “You Only Live Once”, and it is another way to say carpe diem (used to encourage someone to make the most of the present rather than dwelling on the future). YOLO represents a philosophy that encourages people to focus on getting the most they can out of each day rather than be concerned about the future. While it is good to take advantages of opportunities available today, YOLO ultimately is a self-centered focus that values things and activities based on their immediate personal benefit to us with little regard for the future.

Back in the 70’s during the Jesus Movement, we had a declaration that we often stated which could sound similar to the idea of YOLO—but it was just the opposite. If we had texting back in those days, we probably would have shortened it to IAGB. Our frequent declaration was, “It’s all gonna burn!” We got this from…

2 Peter 3:7, 10-13 — But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. … But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. [NKJV]

We used this phrase often in greetings with other Christians—especially among the younger ones and the so-called “Jesus freaks.” We also proclaimed it when we ran into difficulties, life got hard, or we simply wanted to refocus our attention and goals on the things that really matter.
in eternity. “It’s all gonna burn” was a way for us to proclaim that current benefits and discomforts matter little in the context of eternity. In those days, we were keenly aware that this world and this life is not our home.

**Philippians 3:20-21** — For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. [NKJV]

We knew that we have a heavenly home reserved for us. This understanding reinforced our motivation to center our attention and actions on God, while valuing people and relationships more than material things and earthly pleasures. This is important to always keep focused in our minds.

**We Have a Job to Do**

Jesus left us here as ambassadors to reach others who do not know Him. Ambassadors live in a country that is not their own.

**2 Corinthians 5:20** — So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” [NLT]

One day, I realized an important truth. The main purpose of Jesus’ death was to bring me into relationship with God and to adopt me into His eternal family (Gal 4:4-6). While the enjoying of our relationship (between God and me) is already available now, it is limited somewhat due to my unrenewed mind and my dying body.

**1 Corinthians 13:12** — For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. [NKJV]

At the end of my time here on earth, I will go to be with God and will see Him clearly. Our relationship will not be hindered as it is now. So it would be best for me to go on to be with the Lord now so I could fully enjoy the relationship He provided.

**Philippians 1:21-26** — For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again. [NKJV]

So why doesn’t God just take His people home the minute they get saved? Wouldn’t that be the best thing for His relationship with each of us? Then I realized (like Paul in the verse above) that God needs us here as ambassadors to reach out on His behalf to let people know He loves them and that He has made a way for them to spend eternity with Him. As we understanding that, we should no longer view our lives with the goal of being blessed, comforted, encouraged, and problem free. We are sojourners here and we should live like sojourners!

**Homework:**

—Read Romans 1-6 for treasures (insights, blessings, or other things that speak to you). See last week’s homework, but with Book of Philippians rather than Colossians. It can be helpful to read the passages slowly with another person sharing insights and questions along the way. Be prepared next week to share some of your insights with the group.

—Intentionally love several people this week. Share the target (person) of your love, the “act” of love (what you did to love them), and your own heart’s attitude afterward.
Other Foundational Truths
The following are recommended for further study of some other important truths we need to understand.

- **Building Blocks of Life**, Session 5 – “Righteousness: Set Free from Sin’s Power”
- **Finding Light in Darkness** #16 “Part 1 Introduction, Scripture, God, & Jesus”
- **Finding Light in Darkness** #17 “Part 2 Introduction, Trinity, Jesus, Holy Spirit”
- **Finding Light in Darkness** #18 “Man, Sin, and Salvation”

Developing Godly Character Traits and Goals

A critical aspect of pursuing transformation is for the Truth of God to change our fundamental character traits and our goals. If our knowledge of God and His ways resides only in our heads and does not change who we are (how we see, how we think, and how we live), then we have not been transformed. In this final section we will discuss a few significant character traits that need continuing development in the on-going transformation of a Christian’s life.

1. Learning to Love with God’s Love

**The Love Connection**

Prayer over the group…

**Ephesians 3:14-19** — When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. [NLT]

**Agape Love**

If we all walked in agape love, many of our conflicts and problems would be resolved.

**1 Peter 4:8** — And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” [NKJV]

There are different kinds of love, and all have value in their proper place. But the kind of love God desires to cultivate in us is His agape love. Agape love is an others-focused love that is described in…

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8** — Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. … But love will last forever! [NLT]

Agape love has the power to transform both the one who loves and the one who is being loved. People often recognize it when they encounter someone who loves them even when they know they are being unlovable. They instinctively know this kind of love is unusual in our world. It can
also give them hope that maybe God can also love them. Learning to love others graciously [with godly grace] is an essential part of the transformation process of your own mind/soul.

1 Peter 1:22 — Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart. [NKJV]

**Love Motivated God and We Need to Learn to Let It Motivate Us**

John 3:16 — For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. [NKJV]

**Greatest Commands – Love God, Love Others**

Matthew 22:36-40 — “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” [NKJV]

Unfortunately, “love others as you love yourself” is not an adequate model for understanding God’s agape love. We can avoid doing harm to others without doing much to build them up and without it costing us too much. Nor are we required to confront sin or harmful attitudes in others if we simply love others as we love ourselves. Our love for ourselves is sometimes tolerant and excusing of sin. It can also be self-serving. Therefore, Jesus gave us a new commandment with a new model.

John 13:34 — A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. [NKJV]

John 15:12-13 — This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. [NKJV]

This is a “new” commandment because it could not been given in the Old Testament times. It was only after the coming of Jesus that we could see an adequate example of agape love. Until then, there was no sufficient model that God could point us to which would help us understand God’s kind of love. God desires us to love from a heart that is purified by love for Him and transformation by His truth.

1 Timothy 1:5 — Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, [NKJV]

So we are to keep all three of these great commandments.

Ask: If someone says “I just don’t love them anymore.” about their spouse, what do you think they mean?

True (agape) love is not something you just fall into or out of. Nor is it a feeling as many seem to believe. Agape love can lead to some wonderful feelings, but don’t mistake the feelings as the actual love.

**Love is a Choice You Make**

John 15:12 — This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. [NKJV]

There are two important things we need to learn from this verse. 1) If God’s kind of love came automatically, it would not be a command. 2) If we could not actually choose to sacrificially love people, then God would not have made it a command. Moment by moment and day to day, we must learn to consistently choose to truly love God and others.
Why Don’t We Love Others More?

Ask: What are some reasons you think people don’t love others more?

Following are a few of the reasons we don’t love others with godly love more like we should.

a. We don’t love because we are distracted.

We can fail to love others because we are too busy and care too much about other things.

Luke 8:14 — The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity. (NLT)

b. We don’t love because we have forgotten the sin and death that we were delivered from.

When we forget what Jesus did for us, we tend to become unthankful and begin focusing mainly on our own desires and needs.

2 Peter 1:5-9 — In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins. [NLT]

[Note: “brotherly affection” in this verse is the Greek word “Philadelphia” meaning brotherly love or affection. The “love for everyone” here is the Greek word “agape” referring to God’s kind of love. Notice the sequential building up of character traits and personal qualities in the following verse where moral excellence is added to faith…]

c. We don’t love because we haven’t really known God or His love.

We must cultivate a thankful heart that consistently values and appreciates God’s love and sacrifices for us. As we do that we will see people the way God sees them.

1 John 4:19-20 — We love each other because he loved us first. If someone says, “I love God,” but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? [NLT]

When we see people as God sees them, we can love without conditions and genuinely care about what God cares about, which is people. We begin to move from self-focus (all about me) to others-focused.

Focus On and Follow Jesus!

To better understand what God’s agape love looks like, closely observe and follow Jesus’ example.

1 Peter 2:21 — For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: [NKJV]

John 13:12-17 — So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. [NKJV]

Hebrews 12:2 — looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [NKJV]
Love Dies to Self-Serving and Self-Promotion

God’s kind of love dies to (puts away, gives up, kills) self-serving and self-promoting. Agape love functions with the main purpose of serving and building up others.

2 Corinthians 5:15 — and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. [NKJV]

1 John 3:16 — By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. [NKJV]

Romans 15:1-3 — We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; ...[NKJV]

Luke 9:23-24 — Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. [NLT]

Dying to yourself takes place naturally when you value what God values. God highly values people and relationship with them, and so must we.

Hebrews 12:2 — looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [NKJV]

Jesus didn’t primarily die just to keep us from going to Hell. The goal of His death and resurrection was to bring us back into relationship with God as adopted sons and daughters. He saved us “to” something rather than “from” something. Dying to self is a foundational characteristic of love in the Kingdom of God to which we now belong.

“If there is any freedom you are not willing to give up for the sake of the Kingdom of God or others, then that freedom becomes the chains of your bondage.” – SB

2. Walking in Humility

James 4:10 — Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. [NKJV]

Colossians 3:12 — Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; [NKJV]

So what does godly humility look like?

Being Honest with Yourself and Others

Being humble requires that you have a clear, accurate, and honest evaluation of yourself where you understand both your strengths and weaknesses. It includes being willing to be known for just who you are—no more or no less. When you are humble, you do not praise your strengths or promote yourself. Nor do you bemoan your weaknesses or condemn yourself. In proper functioning, humility focuses more on others than on self.

Romans 12:3 — For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. [NKJV]

Galatians 6:3-5 — For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load. [NKJV]

We sometimes struggle with trying to “be humble” when someone pays us a complement. We can fear being prideful so much that we actually end up rejecting the person’s compliment. That comes from being self-focused rather than focused more on the other person (who gave the
compliment). The results can be insulting to the other person. When someone compliments you, simply thank them for it. It is also okay to say something like, “Thank you. I appreciate that.”

[Illustration: Someone once complimented a minister saying, “That was a good message!” The minister not wanting to be prideful said, “Well, it was all God.” Then the person said, “It wasn’t that good!”

We can mistakenly try to achieve humility by focusing on our short-comings and belittling ourselves. But those efforts focus our attention on ourselves and produce pride rather than humility. Also, they stunt our growth and maturity in the Lord. True humility focuses on others rather than self. Humility is willing to be honest, open, and vulnerable before others with our shortcomings when it is helpful to their obtaining victory in Jesus.

As you begin to work on humility, you often need to take an honest look at yourself to see who you really are—and who you are not. But after that, you need to shift your focus outward toward loving and serving God and others. At that point, you will begin to judge circumstances and actions more on how they impact others rather than on how they impact yourself.

There is a strong connection between humility and agape love. It’s hard to have one without the other. They also grow well together in that as you grow in agape love, you also develop deepening humility.

**Humility Embraces God’s Personal Correction and Chastisement**

We tend to generally avoid correction and chastisement out of shame and fear of rejection. However, Jesus paid for our shame and He made us acceptable to God—adopting us into His family. As children of God, we must embrace the idea that He loves us enough to correct and discipline us. I personally remember the point when I decided that it is better to be right than to simply look right. When I reached that understanding, I welcomed God’s correction into my life.

*Hebrews 12:5-11 — And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. [NKJV]*

**Humility Does Not Seek to Please People**

An important aspect of humility is that we seek to please God alone and not to please people. When we seek to please people, we are not pleasing God. We also need to be willing to be known for who we are and not try to portray ourselves as the person we think other people expect us to be.

*Galatians 1:10 — For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. [NKJV]*

*1 Thessalonians 2:4-6 — But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness— God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. [NKJV]*
One way to begin to practice humility is to watch for times when you get defensive or attempt to justify your actions. For example, suppose someone questions why you said or did something. If you are like me, I can feel attacked and get defensive. That is evidence of pride and people pleasing. At times like that, I work to simply explain my reason as an answer to the question rather than as an effort to justify myself.

At work, my goal is simply to work as if Jesus is my boss and leave the results to Him. If I have truly worked my very best as to the Lord, it means little whether people praise or belittle me, promote or fire me. My job is to be pleasing to the Lord. When my work pleases the Lord, it often pleases my supervisors and coworkers also.

**Colossians 3:23-24** — And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. [NKJV]

**Ephesians 6:5-8** — Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. [NKJV]

Another thing to watch out for is times when you want to be sure your get credit for your part in some successful situation. Again, that is self-serving and prideful. In cases like that, I choose to keep quiet and let others be blessed rather than promoting myself. You don't have to actively avoid recognition, but you should not seek it out. The goal is to look to the Lord for any reward He may choose to give rather than seeking reward from people.

**Humility Submits to Authority**

**Titus 3:1-2** — Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. [NKJV]

**Romans 13:1-7** — Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves, … Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. [NKJV]

**1 Peter 5:5-6** — Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, [NKJV]

**1 Samuel 15:23** — For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king.” [NKJV]

When there is a conflict between authorities, always obey the highest one involved. Then be prepared to deal with any consequence from disobeying the lower authority. Be respectful but firm in your stand to do what is right without being condescending or judgmental toward anyone else.

**Acts 4:18-20** — So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." [NKJV]

**Acts 5:40-42** — And they agree with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. [NKJV]
3. Faithfulness

Faithfulness is an important character trait of God. It is also expected of us.

Deuteronomy 7:9 — “Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;” [NKJV]

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 — Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. [NKJV]

Trustworthy

One aspect of faithfulness is to be trustworthy—worthy of trust. Trust is earned over time by those who are consistently trustworthy. You cannot be “part-time” trustworthy. Don’t expect to be trusted if you are not always trustworthy or if people haven’t had time to see if you really are trustworthy.

Proverbs 20:25 — Don’t trap yourself by making a rash promise to God and only later counting the cost. [NLT]

Ecclesiastes 5:5 — It is better to say nothing than to make a promise and not keep it. [NLT]

If you say something, then do it even if it costs you more than you expected. If you might not do what you say, than don’t say it! [Illustration: We may agree but later fail to pray for someone. Failing to follow through and actually pray for them means that we have broken our word to them. Instead, pray for them right away when asked. Don’t say you will continue praying for them unless you commit to regularly pray. It may be better to say something like, “I will pray for you whenever the Lord brings you to mind.” But be sure to follow through.]

Integrity

Another aspect of faithfulness is integrity. We are called to be people of integrity.

Proverbs 10:9 — He who walks with integrity walks securely, But he who perverts his ways will become known. [NKJV]

Proverbs 11:3 — The integrity of the upright will guide them, But the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them. [NKJV]

Integrity means uniform, without defect. It can also be understood as being pure, without mixture. God has integrity, and there is no mixture in Him.

1 John 1:5-6 — This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. [NKJV]

When we have integrity, we don’t divide (compartmentalize) our lives into “spiritual parts” where we follow the ways of God and “practical parts” where we follow the ways of the world. A person of godly integrity follows God’s ways in every part of his life, no matter what. Integrity requires being faithful in little things.

Luke 16:10-13 — He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own? “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” [NKJV]

[Example: There was a small integrity issue when some of the heat resistant tiles on the Space Shuttle Columbia were damaged during launch. All went well until the shuttle was exposed to...
the extreme conditions of reentry. As a result of that small integrity problem, the entire shuttle was destroyed.]

To be a person of integrity is to be a person of character—godly character. Lies and deception erode and corrode integrity. You cannot do God’s work using the devil’s methods. Satan is the father—source and inspiration—of lies. Even so-called “white lies” or “little lies” have no place in a believer’s life. Can you imagine Jesus ever telling a “little lie?”

John 8:44 — You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. [NKJV]

We must be people who say what we mean and mean what we say. We must also be people of integrity who are the same when everyone is watching or when no one is watching.

Homework:
—Read the Romans 7-12 for treasures (insights, blessings, or other things that speak to you). See last week’s homework, but with Book of Philippians rather than Colossians. It can be helpful to read the passages slowly with another person sharing insights and questions along the way. Be prepared next week to share some of your insights with the group.

—Intentionally love several people this week. Share the target (person) of your love, the “act” of love (what you did to love them), and your own heart’s attitude afterward.

Other Godly Character Traits and Goals to Develop
The following are recommended for further study of important character traits and goals we need to develop in our lives.

- Building Blocks of Life, Session 2 – “The Lordship of Jesus”
- Building Blocks of Life, Session 8 – “Forgiven to Forgive”
- Building Blocks of Life, Session 13 – “Being a Follower of Jesus”

Pursuing Transformation

To pursue transformation requires that you develop a lifestyle where you work to get God’s truth down into your heart so that it changes you fundamentally and thus affects the way you see things and the way you think, talk, and act. Godly transformation actually changes your core character. As your heart is transformed over the process of a lifetime, it will progressively change who you really are! Transformation is all about learning to truly love God and love people.