

Soul Care | Spiritual Basics for Hungry People

Week 2 – The Goal: True Spiritual Change



Corporate Prayer

The Morning Prayer: from *The Valley of Vision*

Review from Last Week

Hunger

This process begins by becoming aware of our need for God, the hunger of our soul:

- Discovering our insatiable hunger for Jesus (the God-shaped hole),
- “You have formed us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.” Augustine, Confessions, AD 397
- Understanding our hunger and how we have filled ourselves with:
 - *false things/junk food*: (secular idols, things of the world), our idols, sinful tendencies, our Turkish Delight (Edmund in LWW, and the DCB song), or
 - *good things/good food*: that are inadequate (my children, my marriage, *more* quiet times, spiritual experiences, attending conferences, listening to podcasts and Christian radio), which in themselves are good, but may not truly address our relationship with Jesus.

Growth

We can capture the idea of spiritual transformation in a number of different terms: Spiritual Formation; Growing in Christ; growing in grace; Discipleship; Christ formed in us; A relationship with Jesus; Intimacy with God; all of these indicate a desired spiritual change in one’s soul.

Mindy Caliguire states that spiritual growth is more appropriately termed: “full devotion” and that *full devotion is a state of our hearts when our understanding of truth is equal to our level of surrender*. We will never reach full perfection here in this life, we will always fight against sin, Satan and our fleshly desires, **but we can grow in our responsiveness to the Holy Spirit**.

Being

Being is more of a mind-set and heart-set as opposed to a description of our activity or non-activity. This is not an impotent passivity, rather, it is the whole person’s engagement with life (heart, soul, mind and strength; Dt. 6:5; Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27). *Being* is a spiritually-transformed awareness of how we are in Christ, how we are united with him, it is the very nature of our relationship with Jesus. Consider your marriage or a close friendship...

How do we compare and contrast *doing* and *being*?

- The *Doing* approach believes that soul transformation happens through actions and the will, it *defines* the spiritual life by doing more “spiritual things”.
- The *Being* approach defines the spiritual life by a deepening relationship with God, and subsequently *expressing* itself through spiritual practices, being will inevitably lead to action, but action or the volition of the will can do little to change one’s heart toward God

Mystery

The contrast of being and doing begins to unpack the *mystery* of our relationship with God: *God has created us for relationship with him, yet that relationship is mysterious, it is gracious and merciful, we are not treated as our sins deserve; the Most High has condescended to us in order that we might be in relationship with him*.

This relationship already IS, it is not something we attain to, or gain/acquire. We bring our knowledge and experience in line with what God has already done and is doing through Jesus, we have it, we have Jesus, we have a relationship with him, we have the ongoing presence of the Spirit with us (John 17); We are not

aiming at something that is out there, over there, or that someone else has, we are rather cultivating, responding to, nurturing our relationship with God. He is near to us, he is not far away from us.

It is a mystery because it is hard to name and to articulate how this mystery works. The relationship is not transactional (I do this and God does that), it is not for any other purpose (to be a better person). The purpose is *to actually have Christ*, to (as Paul writes) be found in him (Philippians 3:8-9), to be in union with him (Romans 6).

Nate's Experience

- Personal experiences (Nate) expanded – my area of *true spiritual change*
 - Issues and indicators of *soul neglect*: angry, harsh words, defensive and argumentative, condescending
 - Where I was then...
 - What in our life revealed our need to tend to our souls: Sonship Week 2007
 - How it has shaped our thinking then and now
 - Permission to speak into my life about my sin
 - Sensitivity to my heart's desire to control
 - The change of my *spiritual reflex*

What is True Spiritual Change?

Our true spiritual change is rooted in our union with Christ.

Last week we talked about mystery of our relationship with Jesus, what we called union with Christ. We discussed that our pursuit of Jesus and our intimate relationship with him as the goal; a changed life (demonstrations of fruit, disciplines, etc.) is simply the result. If we see our Christian walk as a way to manage sin, or doing good deeds, then we are missing the point. If we are united with Christ, if we are in union with him, the fruits of the Spirit are a natural outcome. We are to love God with all our heart soul strength and mind. We are to find satisfaction in him alone, he welcomes us into this growing relationship, to be satisfied with him, not with the things that he offers.

Union with Christ:

There are two ways in which we see our union with Christ:

1. *Identity – the representative union: Christ is our federal representative*: Romans 5:12-21, we are united with Christ who is the new head. Adam was our federal head who brought sin to our race, Christ is the new federal head who has brought spiritual (and physical; 1 Corinthians 6:15-17) life in him.
 - a. Romans 6, we have died with him and we live with him;
 - b. 2 Corinthians 5:4, we have died with him
 - c. Galatians 3:26-29, we are sons and daughters, we share in the promises by faith in Christ
2. *Indwelling – the vital union: We are mystically united with Christ*: we are connected to him, our growth in grace is a result of him living in us and through us
 - a. John 15, the vine and the branches, we bear fruit in our connection with him
 - b. Romans 6:3-11, sin no longer is our master
 - c. Romans 8:9-11, we are not controlled by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit
 - d. Philippians 3:10, we share in his sufferings as well

There are two conclusions as a result:

1. Indicative: we are a new creation in Christ. We have a *new genetic structure* – just as we have inherited broken DNA (original sin) from Adam, now we have a new spiritual structure as a new creation in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 2:10-11
2. Imperative: we are to live differently, in response to the above declaration. We have a *new power within* us for the possibility of change – Jesus has not left us alone to fight against sin and brokenness, rather it is his life in us that gives us the power to overcome sin; Galatians 2:20

Therefore, the net result of our relationship with Jesus is “*true spiritual change*”, a change that is not conformity to external standards, or a willing of our minds, but a true inward change, a renewal by the Spirit of Christ. Her spiritual reflex is changed, and her conscience is remade. She is the new woman described in 2 Cor. 5:17; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:1-17.

Theological Shtuff:

Sanctification (true spiritual change) – is becoming more like Christ by responding to the gracious work of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of doing good works to the glory of God. This change is possible through the work of the Spirit

Definitive Sanctification (indicative) – we are already sanctified, we are already washed by Christ, cf. 1 Cor. 1:2 and 6:11. He writes to the Corinthians and tells them that they ARE sanctified, they are washed. The verbs in 1 Corinthians 6:11 are in the aorist tense, meaning an action happened in the past. The verbs used in Acts 20:33 and 26:18 are in the present tense.

Progressive Sanctification (imperative) – this ongoing change is an imperative, a command, for believers. Ephesians 4:22, says “you were taught to put off your old self...and to put on the new self (v. 24). This is a work of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer, 1 Thess. 5:23.

J.I. Packer, author and Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, B.C., writes, “God’s method of sanctification is neither activism (self-reliant activity) nor apathy (God-reliant passivity), but God-dependent effort (2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 3:10-14; Heb. 12:14). Knowing that without Christ’s enabling we can do nothing, morally speaking, as we should, and that he is ready to strengthen us for all that we have to do (Phil. 4:13), we ‘stay put’ (remain, abide) in Christ, asking for his help constantly—and we receive it (Col. 1:11; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 1:7, 21).”¹

What Change Looks Like:

In Christ, there is a true spiritual change that takes place. True spiritual change is a God-dependent effort of refraining from sinful activities, and a God-dependent effort to actively fulfill God’s Law. Remember that the Bible talks about sin being both our *outward actions* and our *inner dispositions* (Matthew 5:21-30).

The power of the Holy Spirit effectively provides the power to:

1. freely obey the law of God (John 15:10; 1 John 2:3-5),
2. freely love others (Galatians 5:13),
3. put on the “new man”, and put off the works of the “old man” (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:7-17),
4. put to death the works of the body (Romans 8:13),
5. present our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2),
6. put on Christ (Romans 13:14);
7. show the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25)

Theological Comments:

The joy of the Lord will arm us against the assaults of our spiritual enemies and put our mouths out of taste for those pleasures with which the tempter baits his hooks.

-Matthew Henry

This is the great business of life—to “put our mouths out of taste for those pleasures with which the tempter baits his hooks” I know of no other way to triumph over sin long term, than to gain a distaste for it, because of a superior satisfaction in God...God remains all-satisfying. The human heart remains a ceaseless factory of desires. Sin remains powerfully and suicidally appealing. The battle remains: where will drink, where will we feast? Feast on God.

¹ Packer, J.I. *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs*. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1993), 170-171.

Isaiah 55:1-2 (ESV)

¹“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Psalms 37:4 (ESV)

⁴Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

How do we feast on God?

- In READING Scripture, the very words of God; we are and recount his work in the world, his promises to those whom he loves, his provision for sinful, weak men and women like us.
- In WORSHIP we call to mind the glory of God, his wonder, our awe of him, his presence with us, and his work of salvation in Christ.
- In PRAYER, we are mentally and spiritually present, giving him our attention, our ear to listen to what he might say, and to share with him what is happening in our hearts.
- In what other ways:

Journaling Today

1. In what areas of your life are you unwilling to surrender to the Spirit? *Recall our definition: full devotion is a state of our hearts when our understanding of truth is equal to our level of surrender.*
2. What “tastes” are suicidally appealing to you? *Share those with God, name them*
3. Write a prayer to God requesting the Spirit give “new taste buds”, a preference for righteousness rather than wickedness?
4. Looking backward at your life, what *true spiritual change* have you noticed, what results of God at work?
5. How have you cultivated your relationship with Jesus in the past? *How have you feasted on God?*
6. Capture what the fruit of the Spirit might look like in your life (Galatians 5:22-25). *List the fruits for the Spirit, then do a systematic appraisal of your heart in those areas.*

Journaling This Week

1. Spend time with your journal at least once drawing insights from experiences during the day/week.
 - a. What areas in your life do you feel God wanting to work true spiritual change?
 - b. How were you cultivating a taste for lesser things rather than for God?
2. Call to mind the superior satisfaction in God alone by capturing your wonder, awe, your worship of him.
3. In what areas and ways do you long for freedom, growth, change, newness of life?
4. Review the verses below and capture in your journal your prayer to God to enable you in these areas—to be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit in these areas—particularly as it relates to dealing with your spouse, children, and/or co-workers.
 - a. Romans 15:1-3
 - b. Ephesians 4:22-5:2
 - c. Philippians 2:5-11
 - d. Colossians 3:1-17
 - e. 1 Peter 2:21

Journaling Space:

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