

Purpose Driven Life, VII

Changing My Mind (Chpt 22-24)

March 28, 2004

WE'RE VERY BECOMING

- We were all created to *believe in* something.
- We were each created to *belong to* something.
- And, we're created to *become like* something.

This is the aspect of our created purpose that we'll be looking at today; the fact that you were created to become like God.

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. – Ephesians 4:22-24 NIV

Now, we weren't created to become little gods, but to become *godly*; to bear His image by taking on His values, His attitudes, and His character.

- And He gave us His Son as the perfect role model to follow.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ... The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being ... – Hebrews 1:1-3 NIV

God wants us to grow up spiritually and become like Jesus; which is not automatic. It requires a lot of work, a lot of effort, a lot of transformation.

- God's earthly goal for us isn't comfort its character

Every time we forget that character is one of God's purposes for our lives, we can become very frustrated by our circumstances.

- We wonder, "Why is this happening to me? I'm a Christian!"
- The truth will set you free but first it'll make you miserable.

God's Word exposes our motives, points out our faults, and rebukes our sin. God expects three things that'll change us from the inside out.

STEPPIN' OUT

1. To become like Christ we must step out in faith

Remember when Joshua was leading the Israelites and the Ark of the Covenant across the JORDAN RIVER (at flood stage)? God performed a miracle and parted the water for them.

But, there was a little something that God expected from them first:

And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD – the Lord of all the earth – set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap. – Joshua 3:13 NIV

The floodwaters of the Jordan River receded only *after* they stepped into the scary rushing current - in obedience and faith.

The Holy Spirit has the job of producing Christ-like character in us – it's called sanctification. And we give Him the opportunity to work every time we do the right thing in spite of our fears and feelings.

There's a perfect illustration of this in "The Last Crusade" when Indiana Jones has to cross a deep gorge in order to save his father.

[2:00 video clip: Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade]

God waits for us to act first; to move ahead in our weakness, and choose to do the right thing when we don't think we have the power, strength, perseverance, wisdom, or love, to pull it off.

- He releases His power only *after* we take a step of faith

This is how we cooperate with Him in the process of our sanctification, and it is how Christ-like character is developed in us.

GODLY HABITS

2. To become like Christ we must develop godly habits

- Our character is essentially the sum of our habits
- It's how we *habitually* act.

You can't claim to be kind unless you're *habitually* kind (kind without even thinking about it). You can't claim to have integrity unless you're *habitually* honest (honest when it's not convenient).

A husband who's faithful *most* of the time is not faithful at all!

- Your habits *define* your character

And there is only one way to develop the habits of Christ-like character: practice. Character-building habits are called “spiritual disciplines.” And they take time to establish.

- There are no instant habits.

As Paul said to Timothy concerning Timothy’s spiritual growth:

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. – 1 Timothy 4:15 NIV

Christ-likeness is the result of making Christ-like choices and depending on His Spirit to help you fulfill those choices.

- Consistent choices (good or bad) produce habits

Every choice has eternal consequences. Commitments can develop us or destroy us, but either way, they will define us. We eventually become whatever we’re committed to - because our commitments become choices and our choices become habits.

REPLACING THE LIES

If we’re going to change our habits we’ll have to change/renew the way we think (our autopilot), because:

- Every behavior is motivated by a belief

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. – Romans 12:2 NIV

Change starts in your mind. The way you think determines the way you feel; the way you feel influences the way you act. Therefore, sanctification requires revelation.

3. To become like Christ we must replace lies with truth

When Jesus prayed for His disciples he asked God to:

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. – John 17:17 NIV

The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make us like the Son of God. Rick Warren says that millions of believers are plagued with “spiritual anorexia” starving to death and yet choosing not to feed themselves on God’s Word.

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” – Mathew 4:4 NIV

To “live on” God’s Word requires a couple of things:

1. (First) I must accept its authority

Forces like our peers, parents, coworkers, and culture will try to mold us and shape us into their image. And many of our troubles occur because we base our choices on unreliable authorities:

- Culture (Everyone is doing it)
- Tradition (This is how we've always done it)
- Reason (It seemed logical); or
- Emotion (It just felt right)

The Bible must become the counsel I listen to for making wise decisions and the benchmark I use for evaluating everything.

2. (And second) I must apply its principles

The parable of the sower is a good illustration of how good intentions can yield poor results if we're not intentionally grounded.

There's the superficial seed that fell on shallow, rocky ground:

But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. – Matthew 13:21 NIV

There's the sidetracked seed that fell on thorny ground:

... the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it ... - Matthew 13:22 NIV

There's the steadfast seed that fell on good, rich soil:

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. – Matthew 13:23 NIV

Q: Which seed are you: superficial, sidetracked, or steadfast?

Q: On Sunday mornings do you ever write down how you intend to respond to what God's Spirit reveals to you during the service (a simply, practical action item)?

Satan doesn't mind us going to church or reading our Bibles, so long as we don't do anything with what we learn. But, he hates it when we:

- Step out in faith - and trust our Father.
- Develop godly habits - by imitating Jesus.
- Replace his lies with God's truth.

Because, that's when we begin to grow up in Christ, and to change & cleanse our mind, and to develop the character of Christ.

- It's when we fulfill our created purpose of becoming like God.