

The Transforming Work of the HOLY *Spirit* the pathway to change

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A Resource of Christian Assembly Women [] www.caeaglerock.com/women
 Study Guide by Cheryl Fletcher cheryl@caeaglerock.com
 Teaching to accompany this study can be found at iTunes (go to podcasts and search
 "Women at Christian Assembly" for both audio and video

The People in my group.



Why Change?

Week One

Connecting with One Another and The Holy Spirit

To get to know one another this first week, take a few minutes to share the following with your group:

- What was the highlight of your holidays?
- What are you hoping to get out of this study?
- Share one way in which you are different than you were 5 years ago.
- What makes change difficult?

When the **Holy Spirit** comes upon us, he changes us. It is the work of the Spirit that brings us to salvation, and it is the work of the Spirit that continues to transform us throughout our life. Read the following verses together as a group and **share what they reveal about the changes the Holy Spirit is making and will make in us.**

To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ . . .

1 Peter 1:1-2

. . . where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as first fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

Final Question: What is one thing you long for the Spirit to change in you today?





Notes: Why Change?

*But whatever were gains to me
I now consider loss for the sake of
Christ. What is more, I consider
everything a loss because of the
surpassing worth of knowing Christ
Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have
lost all things. I consider them
garbage, that I may gain Christ
and be found in him, not having a
righteousness of my own that comes
from the law, but that which is
through faith in Christ.*

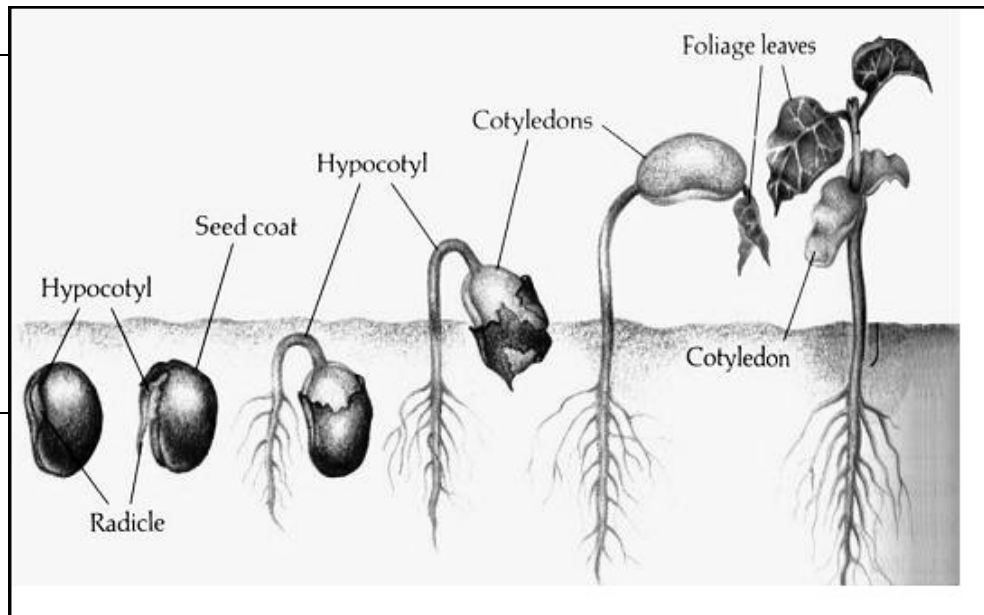
Philippians 3:7-9

*. . The only thing that counts is faith
expressing itself through love. . .
serve one another humbly in
love. For the entire law is fulfilled in
keeping this one command: "Love
your neighbor as yourself."
If you bite and devour each other,
watch out or you will be destroyed
by each other. So I say,
walk by the Spirit . . .*

Galatians 5:6, 13-16

Getting the Most Out of this Study

How We Change & Why it Matters



Change can be excruciating. It requires risk and courage and vulnerability. When we change, others don't always like it. When we change, we tend to make mistakes along the way. Sometimes we are afraid to even enter the process because we've known change to be fleeting and temporary. But we do want to change. All of us desire something in our personality or character to be different. We want to be more patient or less timid. We desire to be more encouraging and less critical (especially with those closest to us). We long to move toward others with greater compassion and less anger. We don't want to continue in the destructive patterns we've established over the years. We do want to change, but we wonder if it's even possible.

This is a study about the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to change us forever. This isn't a study about changing our circumstances; it's about changing our lives. To be a Christian is to be different. Scripture describes us as those who were lost but are now found, blind but now see. We are now born-again and a new creation. Behind all this change is the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. He regenerates our hearts so that we hear the message of the gospel and place our faith in Christ. Then the Holy Spirit indwells us and empowers us to be more and more like the One we follow — Jesus.

In this study we want to commit each week to three very important aspects of Christ-exalting change:

Knowing LOVE as the Motivation for Change

REJOICING in the Transforming Work of the Spirit

COOPERATING with the Work of the Spirit

These three things will guide our time in prayer, meditation on Scripture and personal application. Change doesn't just happen; it requires that we join in the work of God. Remember, the gospel is opposed to *earning* (we can do nothing to *earn* our salvation according to Ephesians 2:1-10), but the gospel is not opposed to *effort*. For you to get the most out of this study, it will require *effort* on your part. It will mean showing up, taking a risk, being brave and being vulnerable. We pray that this study doesn't just produce more knowledge but that it will ultimately produce changed lives. Join us in praying toward this end and commit to leaning in to lasting life-change!

Check out the next page for a summary of the three points of focus for this study.

Knowing LOVE as the Motivation for Change

Ultimately, the Christ-exalting motivation for change is love — the love of God and the love of people. Change must be rooted in the worship of God and his goodness for it to be lasting and joyous.

Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Philippians 3:8

Jesus replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:37-40

For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love.

Galatians 5:6

But the fruit of the Spirit is love . . .

Galatians 5:22

REJOICING in the Transforming Work of the Spirit

This is *some* of what the Holy Spirit does in us:

He assures us of our adoption into relationship with God and pours God's love into us. [Romans 5:5, 8:16]

He is our Advocate and leads us in all truth. [John 14:26, 15:26]

He anoints us and guarantees our salvation. [2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:13, 2:18]

He baptizes us. [Acts 11:16]

He brings about new birth in Christ. [John 3:8]

He empowers us to preach the gospel and be witnesses of Jesus. [1 Peter 1:12; Acts 1:8]

He indwells us thus guaranteeing the constant presence of God. [1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Eph. 2:22]

He encourages us. [Acts 9:31]

He brings us freedom. [2 Cor. 3:17]

He gifts us so that we might serve God and the community of believers. [1 Cor. 12, et al]

He guides us, helps us and illuminates the truth for us. [Acts 20:23; 2 Timothy 1:14; Eph. 3:5; John 15:16]

He gives life and peace. [Romans 8:6]

He prays for us. [Romans 8:26-27]

He raised Jesus from the dead and this same power now lives in us. [Romans 8:11]

He is making us holy/sanctifying us. [1 Cor. 6:11; Romans 15:16]

He gives wisdom. [Colossians 1:9]

He enables true worship. [John 4:23-24]

He makes us look like Jesus. [Galatians 5:22-26]

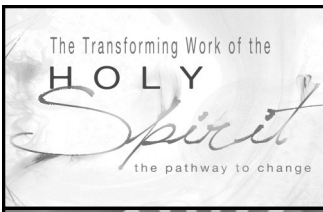
COOPERATING with the Work of the Spirit

. . . continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Philippians 2:12-13

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:7



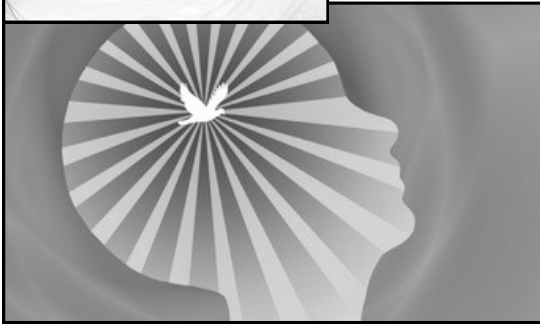
First, Change Your Mind

Week Two

Rejoicing in the Transforming Work of the Spirit

Change begins in our mind. How we think is how we live.

One of the transforming works of the Spirit is that he leads us into truth [Romans 8:14; John 16:13] and illuminates our minds to understand the mysteries of Christ [Ephesians 3:4-6; Job 32:8]. This week we focus on renewing our minds and following the Holy Spirit as he leads us toward the truth about ourselves and about Jesus.



Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:1-2

How would you define “the pattern of this world”?

When and how are you most tempted to “conform to the pattern of this world”? Why?

What is one thing you can do this week to help “renew” your mind?

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Philippians 4:8

Knowing and Believing the Truth about You

Read through this passage and circle or underline everything that is true of you as one who belongs to Christ.

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.
In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance
with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.
In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of
God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the
mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect
when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.
In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works
out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first
to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ
when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed,
you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit
guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are
God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.*

Ephesians 1:3-14

From this passage, what surprises you the most about yourself?

If you really believed what is true about you in this passage, how do you think you would live differently?

Why is knowing and understanding our identity in Christ crucial to moving forward in change?



Cooperating with the Work of the Spirit

We cooperate with the Holy Spirit when we listen to his voice through the Scripture and his gentle (and not -so-gentle) nudges. We cooperate when we follow him and trust him. Each week we will lean into a spiritual formation exercise to help us follow the Spirit.

Today we want to invite the Holy Spirit to renew our minds and change the way we think about ourselves and others. One of the best practices for renewing the mind is Scripture memory. Don't freak out. Many of us are terrible at memorizing — especially Scripture! But, we can do this!

A Practice for Spiritual Formation: Scripture Memory

1. **Write Ephesians 1:3-5 on a card** that you will carry with you at all times. Or you can make one card for your bathroom mirror, one for your car, one for your desk, one for your Bible, one for your . . . you get the idea!
2. **Say the verse out loud at least 3 times a day.** One suggestion when memorizing Scripture is to put the verse in your car and make yourself repeat it every time you get in and out of the car. You can also put the verse on your mirror and repeat it each time you enter your bathroom. Figure out what works best for you. The key is repetition.
3. **Try this for just one week of your life.** It probably won't kill you. Brush off all the excuses you have: I'm terrible at this; I'm not going to be a legalist; I'll just do 5 push-ups a day instead . . . You can do it; you can memorize Scripture!

Summary

Key Concept: Renewing our Minds with Truth

Key Verse: Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Key Practice: Scripture Memory

Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life, I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs. 'This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth.' That's where you need it!

How does it get in your mouth? Memorization!

Dallas Willard

Going Deeper

Read the following passages and record what they reveal about who you are in Christ and God's grace toward you.

1 Peter 2:9; Psalm 139:13-16; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 2:13-14; Galatians 4:6-7; John 15:15; Romans 5:1-2; Colossians 3:3-4; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 1 John 3:1; Matthew 5:14; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

Write a love letter to God expressing your gratitude for all he has *already* done for you and in you!

For My Group

List three things you want to remember to share with your group this week.

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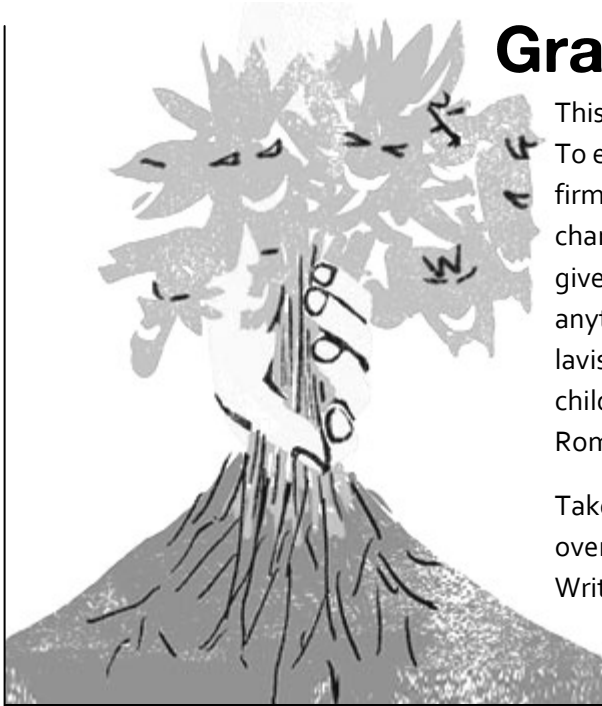


Notes: First, Change Your Mind



Reality Check: Making a Real Change

Week Three



Grace. Grace. More Grace.

This week we want to get to the root of the things that keep us from change. To enter this journey, we need courage and vulnerability. But first we need a firm and solid understanding of God's grace and love toward us. Christ-exalting change is never-ever-ever an attempt to earn the favor of God. We've been given God's favor because of his goodness, not ours. To think that we can do anything to prove ourselves to God or to get him to like us is not Christian. He lavished his love on us and made us his adopted, dearly-loved, specially-chosen children because of his kindness, not because of our goodness [1 John 3:1-2; Romans 8; Ephesians 2:1-10].

Take a moment to let this truth sink into your mind, heart and soul. Look back over last weeks' lesson and rejoice in all that God has *already* changed in you! Write out a prayer of praise. Sing a song. Sit in silent awe.

Rejoicing in the Transforming Work of the Spirit and Cooperating with Him

The Spirit of God is committed to growing us into the likeness of Christ [2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:22-26]. To be like Jesus is one of the main goals of our transformation. The Holy Spirit changes us by bringing about conviction when we are wrong and leading us to truth (John 16:7-15). He sanctifies us, which means he makes us holy [1 Corinthians 6:11]. When we trust the work of the Spirit, we can cooperate with him with great joy. But, beware because this cooperation will require brutal honesty.

Typically we are most motivated to change when things aren't working. So we need to discover what isn't working in our lives and relationships. Notice: we often continue in destructive patterns because in some way they *do* work for us. For instance, we may continue in anger when it makes us subconsciously feel in control. This is subtle, but we need to keep this in mind as we explore the areas of our life in which we desire change. Here we go! Step into some transformational honesty and get ready for change.

First, consider what it is you most long for in your relationships with your spouse, children, friends, family, bosses, co-workers and God. What are two relationships in your life right now in which you desire change? What do you long to become in these relationships?

Relationship

What I long to become in this relationship*

①

②

*Here are some words to prompt what it is you might desire to become: intimate, trusting, encouraging, empowering, respectful, loving, kind, romantic, gracious, joyful, fun, patient, gentle, faithful, vulnerable, authentic, bold, courageous, attentive . . .



The Real Reality Check. Three Questions.

Three questions, honestly answered, have the potential to change our lives. Unfortunately we are tempted to skip them and move on to happy, happy, joyful thoughts. But don't do that. Don't skip this. If you really want happy, happy, joyful, it's helpful to start here.

Question #1

How do those closest to you experience you? Not how do you think they *should* experience you, but how do they really experience you? For instance, you may think you are being "helpful" but they experience you as controlling. Even if your intent is to be helpful, you will never accomplish this if they experience you as controlling/nagging/negative (Hint: It doesn't help to say "but, I'm just trying to be helpful!"). To know the truth you will have to ask (ugh). Ask no more than two people how they experience you in three positive ways and in one not-so-positive way. When they respond, thank them and determine not to defend or justify yourself. Just thank them.

Question #2

What behaviors or attitudes are not working in your life right now? What is keeping you from the relationships with others and God that you desire? Circle the traits from this list that seem to fit your current reality.

Impatience	Talking too much	Not listening	Fear
Passivity	Controlling	Dominating	Anger
Addiction	Passive aggressiveness	Self-pity	Negativity
Critical-spirit	Hate	Unforgiveness	Gossip
Arrogance	Competitive	Envy/jealousy	Slander
Disobedience	Immorality	Lying	Keeping Score
Defensiveness	Self-justification	Self-righteousness	Selfishness
Unwillingness to serve	Laziness	Victim-mentality	Hurtful sarcasm
Narcissism (it's all about me)	Lack of kindness/gentleness	Unfaithful	
Lacking in self-control	Meanness	Stingy	Nagging
The need to be right	Idolatry (of stuff, people, reputation, career, etc.)		

Question #3

What keeps you from change?



A Practice for Spiritual Formation: Gospel-Centered Repentance and Forgiveness

Our God is wonderful because he is slow to anger, quick to forgive and forever patient [Psalm 103]. Because of this, we can approach him freely, frequently and honestly.

To repent literally means to “turn around; to go in another direction.” The beauty of Christianity is that when we are in Christ there is “no condemnation” [Romans 8:1]. We do not repent to gain God’s approval or to keep him from punishing us. We repent because we already have his approval and there is no fear when we approach him. We know that when we sin it is destructive to us and to those we love. The gospel makes it possible for us to approach God and others. Here is an exercise to guide us in the practice of confession, repentance and forgiveness.

1. Set your mind on the empathy, goodness and safety of Jesus.

Meditate upon this passage until you believe it to be true, and you find your heart at peace.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:14-16

2. Confess to God the things for which you are sorry.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8-9

Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.” And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Psalms 32:1-5

3. Receive the forgiveness of Christ.

The gospel does not only say that we are forgiven, it shows that we are forgiven — in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Do not rush through this step of receiving his forgiveness. Sit with this truth until you believe it in the deepest part of your soul.

For God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13-14

I think that if God forgives us we must forgive ourselves.
Otherwise, it is almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than Him.

C.S. Lewis

4. Do it differently.

To repent means literally to “turn around,” and to do it differently. Just understanding “why” we continue in a pattern doesn’t always change us. That can be helpful but, at some point we have to choose to do it a different way. They say that doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results is foolishness. Today, commit to trying a different way.

[Continue on next page]

5. Move toward others in love and humility.

Now you are ready to move toward those you have hurt. Go to them and ask for their forgiveness. This requires humility, selflessness, wisdom and courage.

Asking for forgiveness means:

1. Letting the other person know that you know you have hurt them — without being defensive or justifying your action.
2. Asking how your actions impacted the other person and then listening with no other response than, "I'm so sorry."
3. Clearly asking for forgiveness but not forcing them to offer their forgiveness. It may take time.



Asking for forgiveness is not:

1. Suddenly, out of nowhere, telling someone that you have been mad at them/didn't like them/held a grudge against them, and now you need them to forgive you. To say, "forgive me for not liking you," is not helpful to anyone. You can keep that to yourself and just start demonstrating love and care.
2. A cathartic moment for you to appease your guilty conscious at the expense of the other person. Forgiveness is for the purpose of reconciliation. It is not just about you.
3. A chance for you to defend and justify yourself and in some back-handed way hurt the other person by suggesting that it was really their fault for not responding differently/understanding your heart/reading your mind/etc.
4. Note: Never ever, ever, deal with conflict over email, text or any other form of social media. Do not place passive-aggressive statements on Facebook (i.e. "I'm glad I have some TRUE friends," etc.). Deal with all conflict face-to-face unless this is completely impossible (i.e. they live in Tasmania or Istanbul and you will never see them again). If you have to write it out, write it, and then read it to them face-to-face.

Summary

Key Concept: Honestly Facing our Need to Change

Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 3:18

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Key Practice: Gospel-Centered Repentance and Forgiveness

To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.

C.S. Lewis

Martin Luther [tells us] that repentance is the way we make progress in the Christian life. Indeed, pervasive, all-of-life repentance is the best sign that we are growing deeply and rapidly into the character of Jesus.

Tim Keller

Going Deeper

Google and then read the article by Tim Keller, *All of Life is Repentance*.

Read and meditate upon **Galatians 2:20**. Record in your journal how this passage encourages you to think and live differently.

Do it differently. Pick one thing you will do differently this week. If you talk too much without listening, listen. If you nag, encourage. If you are defensive, let it go.

For My Group

List three things you want to remember to share with your group this week.

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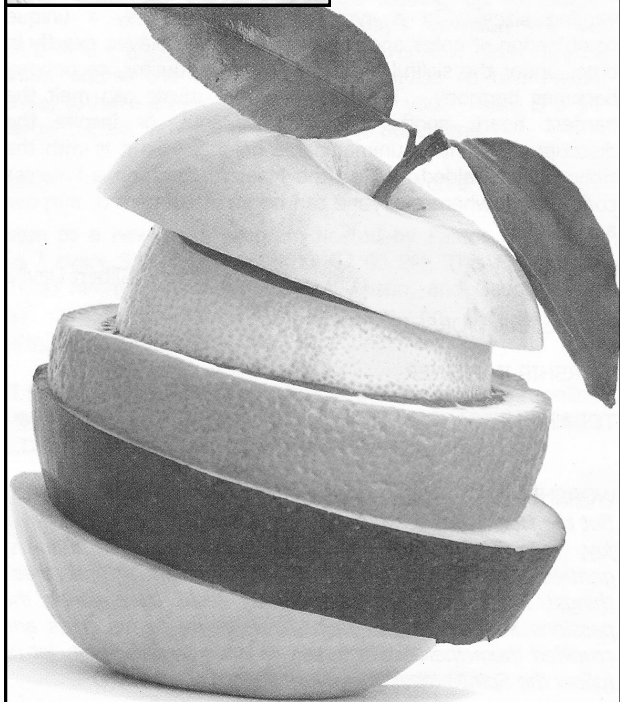


Notes: Reality Check: Making a Real Change



The Fruit of Transformation

Week Four



Rejoicing in the Transforming Work of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit produces change in us that looks like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. This is the promise of Galatians 5:22-23. This week we look at this passage and the verses that surround it. But, before you dive into this study of Scripture, pause to consider how Jesus is these things to you. Light a candle to remind you of the presence of Christ. Then slowly whisper this prayer to him.

Jesus, thank you that you love me. Jesus, thank you that you bring joy to me and that you delight in me. Jesus, thank you that you are my peace. Jesus, thank you that you are patient with me. Jesus, thank you for being so kind to me. Jesus, thank you that you are good and you are good to me. Jesus, thank you for your faithfulness to me for so many years. Jesus, thank you for being gentle even though you are powerful. Jesus, thank you that you show me self-control and wisdom. Jesus, I love you. Jesus, I love you.

A Practice for Spiritual Formation: Inductive Bible Study

This week and next, we dive right into the spiritual practice of Inductive Bible Study [IBS]. Here is a brief overview of IBS:

What is Inductive Bible Study?

It is a method of study designed to draw from the Scripture its true meaning as well as personal application. Often our temptation is to impose upon the Scripture what we *want* it to say. The aim in IBS is to let the Scripture speak for itself and to come to know its true meaning. There are three steps in IBS: (1) Observation; (2) Interpretation and (3) Application. We will spend the majority of our time this week in observation.

Observation – What do I see?

In this step we simply ask lots and lots of questions of the passage or verse and record direct observations of what we see.

When making observations look for—people, places, times, promises, commands, lists, relationships, contrasts, key words, progressions, questions, answers, details, warnings, repeating words, cause and effect, comparisons, verb tense, themes, emphasis, exhortations, and what's not said. **Always ask:** who? what? where? when? why? and how?

We take this step because it forces us to move through the passage **slowly** and **thoughtfully**.

The hardest part of the observation stage is to not jump too quickly to interpretation. When making observations you record exactly what you see in the text. Here's an example of an observation from the following passage:

For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18

An **incorrect** observation: "Non-Christians can't understand the word."

A **correct** observation: "To those who are perishing, the word of the cross is foolishness."

The **incorrect** observation is incorrect because it's an interpretation. The correct observation simply records what the passage says. Discipline yourself to make good observations directly from the Scripture, without trying to interpret its meaning too quickly.

Observation – Ask, what do I see?

Begin by reading through the passage. Circle or underline key words and phrases. Write observations and questions to the right. **Look for:** people, places, times, promises, commands, lists, relationships, contrasts, key words, progressions, questions, answers, details, warnings, repeating words, cause and effect, comparisons, verb tense, themes, emphasis, exhortations, and what's not said. **Always ask:** who? what? where? when? why? and how?

Galatians 5:13-26	Observations
<p>¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.</p> <p>¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.</p> <p>¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.</p> <p>²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.</p> <p>²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.</p>	

List the Acts of the Flesh	List the Fruit of the Spirit



Galatians 5:13-26 & The Transforming Work of the Spirit

Record your general impressions and thoughts of Galatians 5:13-26.

What encouraged you? Challenged you? Disturbed you? Caused you to worship?

Why do you think Paul uses the metaphor of fruit to describe what the Spirit produces in us?

What is true of fruit and how it grows?

Some theologians believe that Paul used the singular word “fruit” on purpose to indicate that all of the attributes fit together to form one singular fruit (or attribute) and that you can’t have one attribute without the others. This being true, record how love express itself in:

Joy —

Peace —

Forbearance —

Kindness —

Goodness —

Faithfulness —

Gentleness —

Self-control —

Take a moment to go back through each of these traits (including love) and consider how they each fit together and rely on one another. Record your observations here.



The Invitation

Pause. Reflect. Pray.

Look back over **Galatians 5:13-26**. As you read, ask the Spirit to speak to you. What change do you sense him nudging you toward? What is God's invitation to you today? Record your thoughts and prayers here.

Summary

Key Concept: The Holy Spirit Changes Us

Key Verse: Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Key Practice: Inductive Bible Study

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season . . .

Psalms 1:1-3

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

Psalms 119:14-16

Going Deeper

Choose one of the attributes of the fruit of the Spirit and do a mini-word study on it. This is another practice for spiritual formation.

1. Choose the word.
2. Go to www.biblegateway.com and search for every time this word appears in the Bible. Then record your observations.
3. Go to www.dictionary.com and discover the definition of the word. How does this impact your understanding of it?
4. What is one thing you can do today to cooperate with the Spirit as he seeks to grow this attribute in you?

For My Group

List three things you want to remember to share with your group this week.

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Notes: The Fruit of Transformation



Cooperating with the Holy Spirit

Week Five



Rejoicing in the Transforming Work of the Spirit

This week we return to **Galatians 5:13-26** to continue our discovery of how the Holy Spirit transforms our lives and how we cooperate with him. We'll make more observations as well as enter into interpretation before making application. Read back through this passage, but this time focus your attention on what it reveals about the Holy Spirit and how we cooperate with Him.

Galatians 5:13-26	Observations on The Holy Spirit
<p>¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.</p> <p>¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.</p> <p>¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.</p> <p>²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.</p> <p>²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.</p>	
	How do we Cooperate with the Holy Spirit?

Interpretation. An important step in the interpretation phase of IBS is to look up other passages that use similar words or concepts from the key passage. The first place to start is in the book that the passage is in. Look up these verses in Galatians that also speak about the Holy Spirit and record what you learn. **Galatians 3:3, 4:6-7, 5:5-6, 6:1, and 6:7-9.**

Cooperating with the Holy Spirit

More interpretation. The following questions are also part of the interpretation phase of IBS. Paul says in Galatians 5 that we are to “walk by the Spirit,” “live by the Spirit” and “keep in step with the Spirit.” Considering the context of these verses [Galatians 5:1-26] and another key passage [Galatians 2:19-21] what do you think these expressions mean?

How can you “walk by,” “live by” and “keep in step with” the Spirit this week?

Colossians 3 is considered a parallel passage to Galatians 5.
Read through this passage and answer the corresponding questions.

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand.² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.

³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.

⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

⁵ So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don’t be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. ⁶ Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. ⁷ You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. ⁸ But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. ⁹ Don’t lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds.

¹⁰ Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. ¹¹ In this new life, it doesn’t matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. ¹² Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³ Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

Colossians 3:1-15

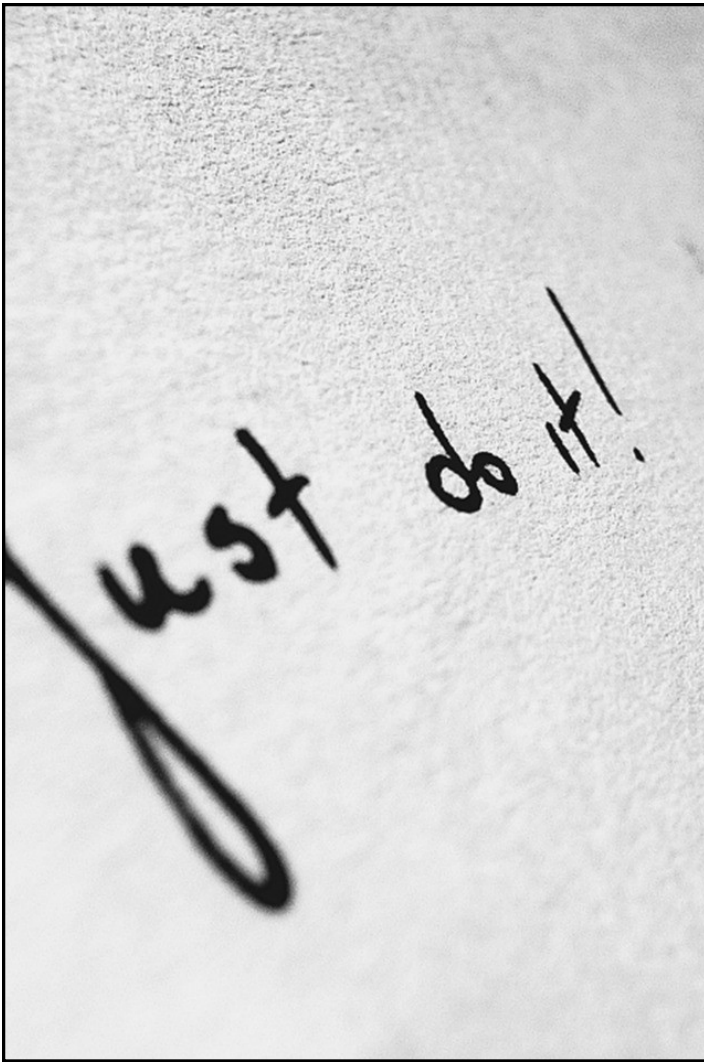


What is true about your new identity in Christ (v. 1-4)?

What are we to put to death (v. 5-9)?

What are we to put on (v. 10-15)?

What does this passage reveal about Jesus?



A Practice for Spiritual Formation: Inductive Bible Study Application

For two weeks you've been faithfully studying the Scripture. Now it's time to take the final step of Inductive Bible Study and apply what you have learned to your life. Here's what the Application Phase looks like:

Application: Look back over your observations and interpretations and ask God to help you apply these truths to your life. Remember, the desire in application isn't to come away with a new list of rules to manage your life. The ultimate desire is to draw near to Jesus, living in greater dependence upon him and cooperating with the Holy Spirit so that you might look more like him.

When seeking to apply the Scripture, look for at least one of the following:

1. An action to take.
2. A point of prayer.
3. A sin to confess and repent of in a way that leads to a knowledge and experience of God's lavish grace and forgiveness.
4. A sin to avoid and thus experience freedom.
5. A command to keep by the grace of God and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
6. A promise to hold onto throughout your day.
7. A verse to memorize to work truth into your mind and soul.
8. An opportunity to be like Jesus.
9. A leading of the Holy Spirit to follow.
10. An attribute of God to worship.

Don't rush into the Application Phase. Stop. Pray. Ask God to lead you to an application that is from him. Then, filled with faith, grace, worship and expectation — step into action!

How will you apply to your life what you have learned from the Scripture?

Summary

Key Concept: Transformation happens when we cooperate with the Holy Spirit

Key Verse: Galatians 5:25

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Key Practices: Inductive Bible Study — the Application Phase

One step forward in obedience is worth
years of study about it.

Oswald Chambers

Apply yourself to the whole text (of Scripture),
and apply the whole text to yourself.

J. A. Bengel

*... since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of
witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the
sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with persever-
ance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on
Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.*

Hebrews 12:1-2

*I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the
heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus,
is calling us.*

Philippians 3:14

*Physical training is good, but training for godliness
is much better, promising benefits in this life
and in the life to come.*

1 Timothy 4:8

*We proclaim Christ, admonishing and teaching everyone
with all wisdom, so that we may present
everyone fully mature in Christ.*

Colossians 1:28

Going Deeper

Step into a Spiritual Formation Practice called
“Labyrinth Prayer.” You’ll find an outline of this
practice on **page 30**. The name may sound freaky but
the practice is helpful for those of us who need to slow
down so that we can really hear from God.

Slow down. Hear God. Be blessed. Enjoy.

*Yet I am always with you,
you hold me by my right hand.
You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.
Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.
Those who are far from you will perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
But as for me, it is good to be near God.
I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge;
I will tell of all your deeds.*

Psalms 73:23-28

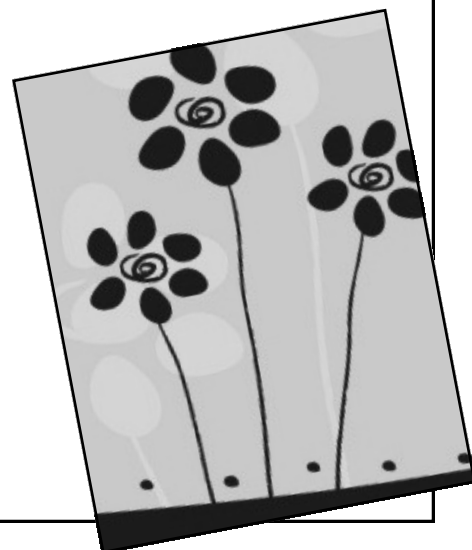
For My Group

List three things you want to remember to share with
your group this week.

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Notes: Cooperating with the Holy Spirit

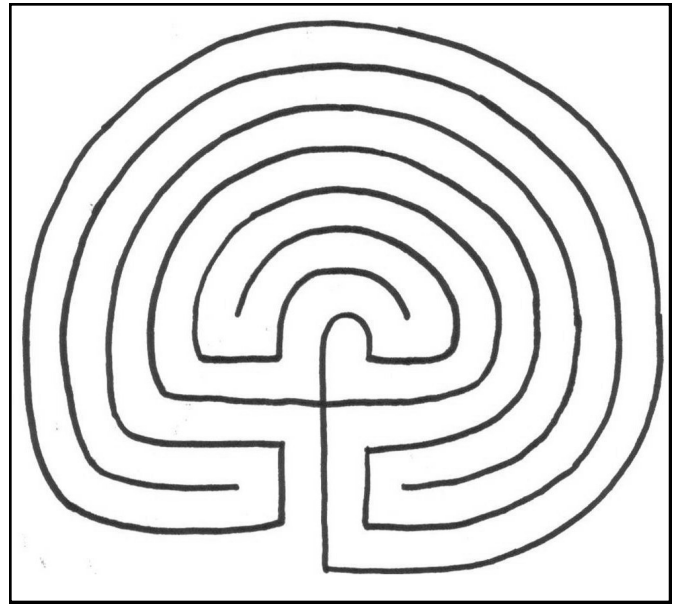
A Practice for Spiritual Formation: Labyrinth Prayer

This might seem like a ridiculous practice, but Labyrinth Prayer has helped followers of Jesus slow down, pray and meet Jesus since around the twelfth century. There is a Labyrinth in Pasadena at Arlington Gardens, on the corner of Arlington Drive and Pasadena Avenue, but you can also experience Labyrinth prayer without leaving your house. The following description and application of Labyrinth Prayer is taken from *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun.

"Labyrinths are not mazes, nor are they something magical. Walking the labyrinth is not a newfangled technique to jump-start your spiritual life. It is a slow, quiet, meditative practice that has historically attended to the desire to make a journey toward God . . . In walking the labyrinth you leave behind the noise and hurry of life. Just as you would pack simply for a pilgrimage, you offer your load to Jesus as you begin your prayer journey. The prayer-path structure moves you slowly toward the center and toward God. At times you are close to the center, further along the path you may be farther from the center. This represents the reality of the spiritual journey. But as we keep moving, we are always getting closer to the center and to God, no matter how far away it looks in real space. At the center of the walk you can stop and rest in the presence of God, listening for his word to you. With his word in your heart you begin your journey back to the world."

Labyrinth Prayer

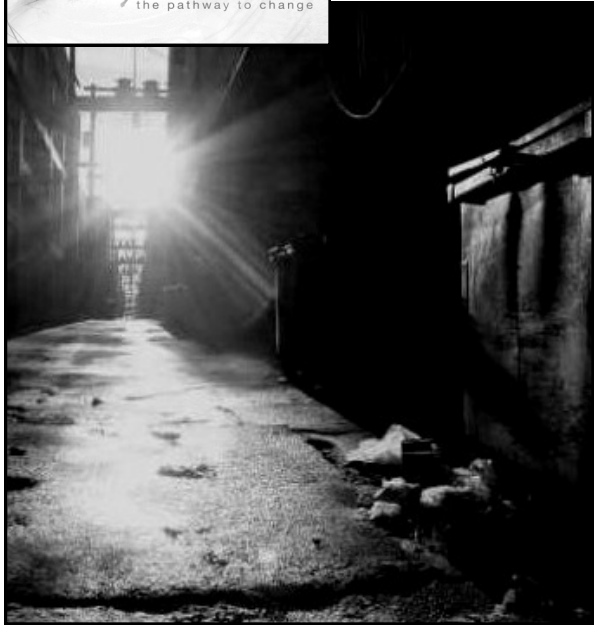
1. Either go to a physical labyrinth and walk slowly through it, or use this picture of a labyrinth. To use this picture, take a pen and slowly mark your path. Imagine yourself actually walking. Go slowly. The process should take at least 15 minutes.
2. At the entrance to the labyrinth, intentionally leave behind the noise and haste and clamor of your life. Prepare your heart to listen. Consider carrying a piece of paper with some of the significant verses from your study this week. Glance through them. Be patient. Pay attention. Listen to God.
3. As you move intentionally toward God and the center of the labyrinth consider what you might need to surrender in order to live more fully in the love and fullness of his presence. Is there bitterness, addiction, expectation, pride, selfishness, or past hurts that you want to leave behind as you walk toward God? Move slowly. Don't rush. Leave these things along the way as you journey toward him.
4. Once in the center, abide in the presence of Christ. Thank him for the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Meditate on the fruit of the Spirit he is growing in you. Ask for the grace you are seeking for your return to life in the world. Receive the comfort, the inspiration or the word the Spirit has for you. When you sense that it is time to leave, slowly and with a quiet mind make your way from the center back to the world, listening and stopping as you are prompted by the Spirit. How can you consciously live out the word God has given you on your prayer walk?
5. Be sure to write down any word and/or Scripture you received from God for your daily journey. Hold on to it. It has been given specifically for you, specifically for now. Don't move away from this word too quickly. Return to it throughout the week.





When Darkness Brings Change

Week Six



The Transforming Work of the Spirit

We cannot talk about change without talking about suffering. To live is to experience pain, disappointment, sorrow and loss. Unfortunately, many come to Christ as one comes to a rabbit's foot or a crystal, hoping that it will keep them from all affliction. But Christianity isn't an invitation into superstitious fantasy, rather it is a relationship with the true and living God.

Scripture tells us that suffering falls on the rich and poor, the faithful and the prodigal—and this can be so disconcerting. Why does it seem that good people are the ones plagued with great pain while the arrogant and vindictive seem to skate through life unscathed? We do not know. But we do know this: when we face troubles of many kinds, we can either move away from God, or we can move toward him. Those who choose the path toward him often become people of greater peace, patience, kindness, compassion and influence. They look a little more like Jesus, and they often have a deep and profound intimacy with him that can never be manufactured or put on.

Jesus says, "In this world you will have trouble." We hear this and we nod our head. Yes. This is true. Life does not always go the way we planned. There is loneliness, conflict, abuse, addiction, singleness, divorce, infertility, death, misunderstanding, jealousy, gossip and fear. Nations face war, genocide, poverty, homelessness, hunger, trafficking and more.

"Yes," we say. "Yes, Jesus, there is trouble." Then Jesus continues and says, "But, take heart, I have overcome the world!" [John 16:33]. Jesus offers reality *and* hope. But, in seasons of darkness and loss, we do not see the hope.

We live in the time in-between. Between the first coming of Jesus — when he demonstrated his love for us by dying for us even when we were still bound up in our sin [Romans 5:8] — and the second-coming of Jesus— when he will make all things new and bring perfect justice and peace to all of creation [Revelation 21-22]. The question for us today is: how do we live Christ-exalting lives in this in-between time when we face what seems like endless ache?

We won't answer all aspects of this question, but today we will consider the fruit of the Spirit that equips us to move toward God and enter into a life of change when suffering comes. We will look at the necessity of peace, forbearance, faithfulness and self-control in the life of a Christ-follower.

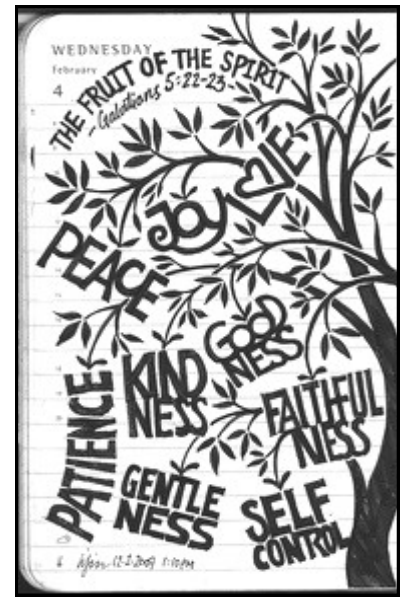
God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

C.S. Lewis

“In this world you will have trouble . . .”

Consider the “troubles” you are currently facing. Don’t diminish them by comparing them to more horrific things. They are your troubles, your concerns. You cannot bring them to Jesus and have him meet you in them if you deny or diminish them. List them here.

What do you wish others understood about your troubles?



And the fruit of the Spirit is . . .

Look up the dictionary definitions of the following fruit of the Spirit and record their definition. Then answer the corresponding questions.

Fruit	Definition	How does this attribute help during difficulty?
Peace		
Forbearance [Patience]		
Faithfulness		
Self-Control		

Transforming Peace

Let the following Scripture about peace fill your heart and mind. Jot down in the margins anything that speaks to you as you make these passages your prayer and impetus to worship.

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 14:26-27

For he himself is our peace . . .

Ephesians 2:14

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

Suffering Transformed

God is in the business of redeeming all things for our good, the good of others and his glory. Read the following passage and answer the corresponding questions.

2 Corinthians 1:3-11, 21-22	Questions for Reflection
<p>³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. ⁶ If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. ⁷ And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.</p> <p>⁸ We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, ¹¹ as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.</p> <p>. . . ²¹ Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.</p>	<p>What does this passage reveal about God?</p> <p>What does this passage reveal about suffering?</p> <p>What does it mean to share in the sufferings of Christ? How have you experienced this?</p> <p>How does Christ comfort you?</p> <p>How have you been able to use your own suffering to comfort someone else?</p> <p>What “is to come” that the Spirit guarantees (v. 22)? [Also see: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 42-44, 52-57]</p>

Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.

Corrie ten Boom [Holocaust Survivor]

God, who foresaw your tribulation, has specially armed you to go through it, not without pain but without stain.

C. S. Lewis

The Dark Night of the Soul

Christians will often refer to a season of spiritual dryness and even despair as “the dark night of the soul.” It’s a reference to the poem and book that St. John of the Cross wrote to describe the spiritual crisis that many believers experience as they are drawn more intimately toward God. In this season, doubt about God often arises. The Christ-follower wonders if God is indeed real, and, if he is, why he seems to have abandoned her. The temptation in this season is to run far from God, but the invitation is to come even closer and know him in a much deeper, authentic way.

Consider these stages of growing faith:

Stage One: Loving God for what he does

In this stage, the new believer is in awe of what God has done for her. She can barely comprehend his grace toward her in the midst of her selfishness and life lived apart from him [Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 5:8, 8:1]. She delights in all that God provides: forgiveness, freedom from guilt, new community, etc.

Stage Two: Loving God for our relationship with him

As a believer grows, she learns new things about God and delights in depending upon him. She comes to him more readily in prayer and finds him to be the source of wisdom and true life.

Stage Three: Loving God for God

Ultimately the journey of faith takes the Christ-follower to a place where she continues to delight in what God does and in the relationship she has with him, but her faith becomes more and more about worshiping God simply because of who he is and not just what he provides.

Augustine says, “Many cry to the Lord to avoid losses or to acquire riches, for the safety of friends or the security of homes, for temporal happiness or worldly distinction . . . Alas, it is easy to want things from God and not want God himself; as though the gift could be preferable to the giver.”

The Spiritual Crisis known as the Dark Night of the Soul is often the spiritual impetus to bring us to this place of radical intimacy. There is no way to manufacture this experience; it is something God does. We don’t want to try and *make* this happen, but we do want to lean into it when it does. The following spiritual exercise is not meant to create this experience, but it is meant to walk you through what the Dark Night of the Soul often brings about — the stripping away of idols and daily coming back to Jesus.

A Practice for Spiritual Formation: Naming the Idols and Embracing Christ

① Name the Idol

Tim Keller says that idolatry is making a good thing an ultimate thing. It is the thing or relationship that has to come through for us; we believe we must have it (relationships, career paths, safety, stuff, certain behavior by a spouse/child/friend, etc.) for a satisfying life. A sign that something might be an idol is when the loss of it or the lack of it makes us inordinately mad/jealous/afraid, etc. What are your current idols (don’t worry — we all have them!)?

② Embracing Christ: Invite Jesus to fill that Place

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust [inordinate desire], evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Colossians 3:1-5

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6



*I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.
I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.
Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:
Because of the LORD's great love
we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."
The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him,
to the one who seeks him;
it is good to wait quietly
for the salvation of the LORD.*

Lamentations 3:19-26

Summary

Key Concept: Suffering can bring transformation.

Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 4:6

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Key Practice: Naming the Idols, Embracing Christ

All that we call human history--money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery--[is] the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.

C.S. Lewis

Worship is pulling our affections off our idols and putting them on God.

Tim Keller

Our Father will refresh us with many pleasant inns on the journey, but he would not encourage us to mistake them for home.

C. S. Lewis

Until our passion for finding God is deeper than our other passions, we will arrange life according to our taste, not God's.

Larry Crabb

Going Deeper

Choose one of the attributes of the fruit of the Spirit from this study (peace, forbearance/patience, faithfulness, self-control) and do a mini-word study on it.

1. Choose the word.
2. Go to www.biblegateway.com and search for every time this word appears in the Bible. Then record your observations.
3. Go to www.dictionary.com and discover the definition of the word. How does this impact your understanding of it?
4. What is one thing you can do today to cooperate with the Spirit as he seeks to grow this attribute in you?

For My Group

List three things you want to remember to share with your group this week.

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Notes: When Darkness Brings Change



The Transforming Power of Joy

Week Seven



JOY!

The fullness of joy is to
behold God in everything.

Julian of Norwich

After recording the definition of joy below, let the following verses (on this page and the next) be the focus of your meditation, pointing you to the goodness and beauty of a God who created such a thing as "joy." Record any observations, thoughts or prayers about joy to the right. Note the connection of joy and the Holy Spirit.

Look up the definition of joy in your dictionary. **JOY IS . . .**

[Jesus said to the disciples after they returned from a successful mission:] "... do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

Luke 10:21-22

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.

Romans 14:17-18

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

... because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

1 Thessalonians 1:5-7

MORE JOY!



We have God's joy in our blood.

Frederick Buechner

Finding joy is the hardest of all spiritual tasks. If the only way to make yourself happy is by doing something silly, do it.

Rebbe Nachman

Joy does not simply happen to us.

We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.

Henri J.M. Nouwen

Laughter is carbonated holiness.

Anne Lamott

[Jesus said:] As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

John 15:9-12

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:6-9

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

James 1:2-3

For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

Evildoers are snared by their own sin, but the righteous shout for joy and are glad.

Proverbs 29:6

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Psalms 100:1-3

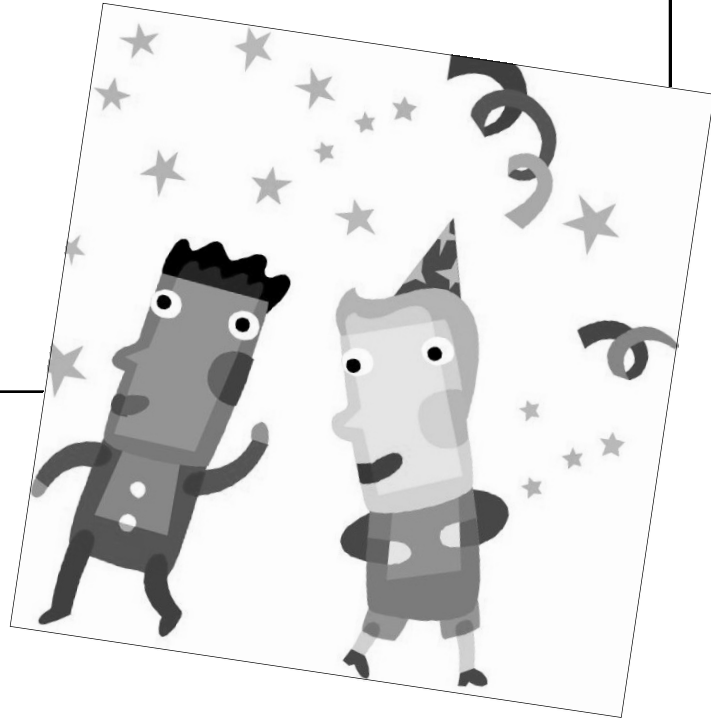
The Transforming Work of the Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit is joy! How does the Holy Spirit produce joy in us?

What do you allow to steal your joy? Why?

How do you bring joy to others?

Do you ever steal the joy of others? How? Why?



A Practice for Spiritual Formation: Celebration

This week we want to focus on celebrating others.

1. Ask the Lord who he desires you to celebrate this week. Sit with this question until you believe God has prompted you toward a particular person. If you don't feel like you are hearing from God, pick a person and go for it (you really can't make a mistake on this one!).

2. Consider this definition of celebration and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you toward the way he might have you celebrate the person you have chosen.

cel·e·brate

+to make known publicly; proclaim.

+to praise widely or to present to widespread and favorable public notice.

+to perform with appropriate rites and ceremonies; to throw a party; to acknowledge.

3. How will you celebrate this person? When?

4. After the celebration, record what you did and how it felt to celebrate this person. What was their response?

To wholeheartedly rejoice in another's good can deliver us from the chains of competition.

While polite congratulations may be socially correct, it is not liberating.

It takes a wholehearted delight in another's accomplishments or good fortune to free us and enlarge our hearts.

Edward Hays

Looking Back

Since this is the last week of this session, look back over your notes and consider the three most important things you want to take away from this study. Record them here.



Summary

Key Concept: The Fruit of the Spirit is . . . JOY!

Key Verse: Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Key Practice: Celebrating Others

Celebrate, Celebrate, Dance to the Music.

Three Dog Night

The older brother became angry and refused to go in to the party. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'" "My son," the father said, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

Luke 15:28-32

For My Group

List three things you want to remember to share with your group this week.

①

②

③

Going Deeper

The Spiritual Practice this week is to celebrate another person. This isn't usually difficult if you really enjoy the person or the celebration involves something you also possess. Celebration gets difficult when the Spirit whispers that we need to celebrate someone who is hard to celebrate or a person who has something we deeply long for (a child, a marriage, a new job, financial security, etc.).

Press into Jesus today and ask him to give you the grace to sincerely celebrate a person who can be difficult or an aspect of a friend's life that you don't have. If you are single, celebrate their marriage, etc.

But, DO NOT make this about you. You can't say, "I'm not married, and I'm really depressed, but I want to celebrate your amazing marriage . . . blah, blah, blah." Or "you're really difficult but God told me I had to celebrate you." Make sense? Don't say anything about you — make this about them. That's true celebration!

Remember how God delights in you, even in your weakness, and ask him to empower you to delight in another. This is an opportunity to cling passionately and fully to God and to step into something truly holy.



Notes: The Transforming Power of Joy

Prayer requests.