



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I am as strong as
my connection to Jesus **01**

?

did you know...

living as a Christian is like a television plugged into the wall

If you are watching television and someone accidentally pulls the plug out of the wall, the picture disappears immediately. If you want sound and a picture, you have to have continuous power that stays at a constant level. That's why the plug is so important. The plug connects the power supply to the television.

living as a Christians is *not* like running on batteries

If you have a toy car using rechargeable batteries, you have to charge the batteries before the car will run. Once the batteries go flat, you have to plug the batteries back into the mains charger. Some Christians think that life with God is like that—charge your batteries with God in the morning by praying and reading the Bible, and then, and then recharge them later. But that can be a dangerous way of thinking about it.

Jesus says we are branches on a vine

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. When we are connected (like the plug), and his nature is able to flow from him into us, we will automatically bear fruit—because his character is now inside us. But we have to be connected at all times. Because the moment we are disconnected, fresh power cannot come into us. When this happens, we face the danger of trying to live like Christians, but without God's power!





the facts of his story

Jesus describes our relationship to him as branches in a grape vine. His character flows from him into us only as we are connected to him. In John 15:1-17, Jesus reveals four connection points—points where we remain connected to Him so that his character can continually flow into us.

1. First of all, what is the purpose and consequence of being connected to Jesus? (verse 8)

2. *Connecting to the mind of Jesus—through studying His word.* Look at the times in this passage where Jesus uses the term “words” or “commands”. What is He trying to tell the disciples?

3. *Connecting to the heart of Jesus—through communion with Him.* What three terms does Jesus repeatedly use to reveal intimacy with God in the following verses?

9-10 _____

11 _____

14-15 _____

4. *Connecting to the will of Jesus—by yielding our will to His.* In the passage, how many times is the word “if” used, and what does this mean?

5. *Connecting to the work of Jesus—by joining Him in service.* Why does Jesus say we must be willing to do in serving others? (verses 12-13) How convenient or easy do you think such service is for you?



thinking it through

1. What has your relationship been like with Jesus recently—constant like a TV, or more like a battery powered car? Why do you think this has been?

2. How connected have you been recently to the mind, heart, will, and work of God? Which is easiest for you? Which has been the hardest?



habits for reflecting Jesus ~ evaluating my connection to Jesus

Weeds may grow in our garden without any help from us, but as every gardener knows, beautiful flowers do not grow by accident! Roses and other flowers have to be pruned, have fertiliser added, and the weeds removed.

It is the same in our spiritual life. As we noted in an earlier lesson, we don't grow spiritually by accident! We have to be deliberate and thoughtful about how and where we grow.

To help us deepen our connection with Jesus in the future and bear good fruit, it can be helpful to evaluate our life with God every so often. As always, we will ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in this process because without Him, we will not be able to see our spiritual condition clearly.

Spend a moment to pray for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Then complete the questionnaire, “Connection Point Assessment: How connected am I to Jesus?”

When you have finished, consider the following questions:

1. What are my strongest connection points to Jesus?

2. What are my weakest connection points to Jesus?

3. Do I need to talk to someone about something I have discovered?

4. What do I need to do in the future to strengthen my connection to Jesus?



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we looked briefly at four points at which we connect to Jesus. We could call this, The Law of Fruitfulness: I am transformed into the character of Jesus when the nature of Jesus flows into me through my constant connection to him. This brings me new life and gives honour to the Father when people see I am related to Jesus. I bear fruit as I am filled by His Spirit which increasingly allows a) the opening of my mind to live according to his word, b) the craving of my heart for His intimate fellowship, c) the submission of all my choices to His will, d) the sacrifice of my life for serving the ambitions of His kingdom.

In "thinking it through" you had a chance to think about your own connection with God. The challenge is to live a life where we are continually connected to Jesus, so that his nature can flow into us at all times.

In "habits for reflecting the character of Jesus" you had an opportunity to examine your own connection to Jesus more closely. It is really helpful to spend times at regular intervals to evaluate our spiritual growth. Because remember, reflecting the character of Jesus doesn't happen by accident!

"If we really abided in His love, we would come away feeling so nourished, so cherished, so liked, that we would rush back to him whenever we could."

Bruce Wilkinson



my time with God

This week, spend some time each day to look at these questions based on John 15:1-17,

1. According to the text, what is the purpose of the vine and what does this mean for you?
2. Can you think of any problems that might happen if someone gets baptised before learning how to become a disciple who is closely connected to Jesus?
3. How many times is the word "remain" used? What is Jesus trying to teach us who want to be his disciples?
4. It is possible to know the words of Jesus but still not be connected to him. How is this possible, and how would you help someone in this situation?
5. Verse 8 says that when we bear fruit, the Father is glorified. What does this mean?
6. If you would have to make your own definition of a disciple of Jesus based on this passage, what would it be?



pass it on!

Can you teach someone about the four connection points to Jesus, and why these are so important?

"Hold out the word of life..."
Philippians 2:16



extra help

1. Secrets of the Vine by Bruce Wilkinson
2. Desire of Ages, page 674-680.



General

1	I can easily explain what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
2	I believe that honouring the Father through reflecting the character of Jesus is the most important purpose for my life.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
3	I can see I have been growing spiritually recently.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
4	I think that my church will reflect the character of Jesus more effectively when we are helping each other to do this.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree

Connection Point 1— Connecting to the mind of Jesus through his word

5	I can see the Bible as a single complete story and can explain the order and significance of the major events in this story.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
6	I am able to study the Bible on my own without any help.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
7	When I read the Bible, I find it enjoyable and relevant.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
8	I regularly spend time to study and apply the teachings of the Bible to my life.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
9	How many minutes have you spent each day in studying the Bible during the last week? <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> 15-30 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> More than 30 <input type="checkbox"/> 5-15 minutes I consider this enough time to maintain my connection to Jesus.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
10	I am familiar with the purposes, plans, and promises of God for me and can see them working in my life.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree

11	I can clearly see how the values, principles and laws of the Bible create a lifestyle which is very different from what I see around me in my culture.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
12	When I read the Bible, I sense the teaching and direction of the Holy Spirit.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
Connection Point 2— Connecting to the heart of Jesus by pursuing intimacy with him		
13	I am often aware of the Holy Spirit pointing out things I need to change.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
14	I think that praying for spiritual things is more important than praying for physical things.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
15	I regularly worship God during the week, and this fills me with joy.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
16	I regularly see God answer my prayers.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
17	I fast when I have a difficult issue to deal with or want to deepen my relationship with God, and I have seen the difference it makes.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
18	I see many reasons in my life and in the lives of others to thank and praise God.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
19	I generally have an attitude of thankfulness within me that draws me closer to God.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
20	I normally remember what I have been praying about.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
21	I use the Bible to guide the things I pray for.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
22	I regularly have time alone to pray to God each day	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
23	How many minutes have you had on average for personal prayer <i>each day</i> with God during the last seven days? <div><input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> 15-30 minute <input type="checkbox"/> 5-15 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> 30+ minutes</div> I think that this is enough time to maintain a personal and fruitful relationship with Jesus.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
24	I know what it means to have intimacy with Jesus.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
25	I know personally what it means to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
26	I can see that prayer really helps strengthen my faith and confidence in God.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
27	I can see that prayer helps me to resist temptation.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree

28	I can see that prayer helps me to serve others more effectively.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
29	There are a number of things I do not want to talk to God about.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
Connection Point 3— Connecting to the will of Jesus through submitting my will to Jesus		
30	Whenever I have a decision, I ask God what choice should make.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
31	Outside of my personal devotional times, I am conscious of the presence of God during the day.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
32	When trials or difficulties come, I am able to go through them with peace and confidence knowing that God is working everything out for my best.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
33	I make all my decisions based on biblical principles, and can explain where these principles are in the Bible, and why I live by them.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
34	I regularly take time to reflect on the things that are happening to me, and can often see the work of God through these events.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
35	I am patient while waiting for God or others to act, even though I would like them to act now!	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
36	How much do you agree with the statement, “I am who I choose to be.”	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
37	I understand quite well what Jesus meant when he said, “if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, pick up his cross and follow me.” (Mark 8:34)	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
38	I know what it means to be a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1)	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
Connection Point 4— Connecting to the work of Jesus through sacrificial service		
39	If someone asked me why I am a Christian, I would easily be able to tell them.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
40	I often take opportunities to talk about Jesus with people who have not heard it before.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
41	I know what my spiritual gifts are, and am active in using them in building up my local church.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
42	I regularly spend time with people who do not know Jesus.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree

43	I regularly spend time praying for people in need of help, or who have not yet become a disciple of Jesus.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
44	I am always available for God to use me to serve others who are in need.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree
45	I am able to sacrifice for others, even for people who hurt me.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree

When you have finished, go back and answer the questions inside the section "habits for reflecting the character of Jesus"



reflecting Jesus

BETA

when I am connected to Jesus,
his life and identity becomes mine **02**

?

did you know...

in Jesus I am loved

nothing can separate me from God's love

in Jesus I am secure

God promises to forgive me for everything I have ever done

in Jesus I am empowered

God himself lives inside me and He makes His power available to me

in Jesus I am valued

God considers that I am his "treasured possession"

in Jesus I am provided for

I will never need to worry about any of my needs

in Jesus I have a new purpose

I will never have to worry that my life is a waste of time

in Jesus I have a new family

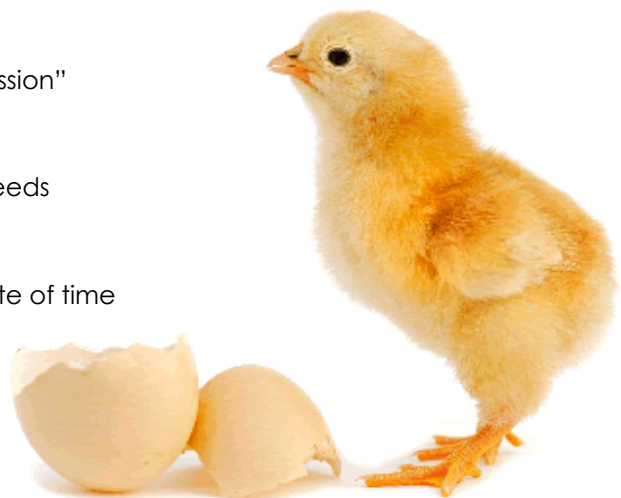
I will never have to feel alone

in Jesus I have new responsibilities

I am a co-worker with God Himself

in Jesus I have new future

I will never have to worry about my future plans



*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new
creation; the old has gone, the new
has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17)*



the facts of his story

Paul says, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). In other words, when we are connected to Jesus, we gain a whole new identity, for we are no longer identified with the things and attitudes of Satan's kingdom here on this sinful earth. This is a totally different way of looking at ourselves and our lives.

Read through the list below. Then look up the texts, beginning in the areas that most interest you. What is the most wonderful thing you can discover about your identity in Jesus?

I AM:	I HAVE:	I LIVE BY:
1. I AM LOVED <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Nothing can separate me from God's love Romans 8:37-39* I am loved and chosen by God 1 Thessalonians 1:4	1. I HAVE A NEW PURPOSE <ul style="list-style-type: none">* To glorify God by revealing God's character to others John 15:8* To do good works for God Ephesians 2:10	1. FAITH, NOT JUST SIGHT OR FEELINGS <ul style="list-style-type: none">* 2 Corinthians 5:7, Romans 1:17
2. I AM SECURE <ul style="list-style-type: none">* I am forgiven because of the riches of God's grace Ephesians 1:7-8* I am not condemned for my past sins Romans 8:1-2* I am sealed with the Holy Spirit Ephesians 1:13	2. I HAVE A NEW FAMILY <ul style="list-style-type: none">* I am a member of Heaven's family—a child of God John 1:12* I am a member of God's family on earth—His Church Romans 12:5	2. EXPERIENCE, NOT JUST THEORY <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Ephesians 3:16-19, 2 Corinthians 4:16
3. I AM VALUED <ul style="list-style-type: none">* I am God's treasured possession Deuteronomy 14:2* I am being transformed into the likeness of God 2 Corinthians 3:18	3. I HAVE NEW RESPONSIBILITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none">* I have been bought with a price 1 Corinthians 6:19-20* I am an ambassador for God's kingdom 2 Corinthians 5:20* I am a royal priest for God 1 Peter 2:9* I am a worker with God 1 Corinthians 3:9	3. SACRIFICE, NOT JUST GETTING <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Romans 12:1-2, Philippians 1:21
4. I AM EMPOWERED <ul style="list-style-type: none">* God lives in me as Jesus lives in the Father and the Father in Jesus John 17:20-22* I can do everything that God wills because he gives me strength Philippians 4:13	4. I HAVE A NEW FUTURE <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Where everything works for good Romans 8:28* I have an inheritance in Heaven 1 Peter 1:3-4	4. OBEDIENCE, NOT JUST KNOWING <ul style="list-style-type: none">* 1 John 2:5-6
5. I AM PROVIDED FOR <ul style="list-style-type: none">* I have direct access to God's throne for all my needs Hebrews 4:14-16* The God who died to save me will certainly give me everything I will ever need Romans 8:31-32		5. ABIDING, NOT JUST TRYING ON MY OWN <ul style="list-style-type: none">* John 15:1-4
		6. SERVING, NOT JUST LOOKING AFTER MYSELF <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Philippians 2:1-8
		7. RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, NOT JUST RULES <ul style="list-style-type: none">* John 15:15



thinking it through

1. What is the most important idea about your identity that you have read, and why?

2. What do you find the most difficult to believe or the most challenging to live, and why?



habits for reflecting Jesus ~ exploring my identity

where do you get your identity from?

What makes you "you"? Is it what you have? What you know? Who you know? What others think of you?

When we become Christians and are "born again" we take on a new identity. No longer are we identified by what people think of us, but how God views us.

Because it is easy to forget our identity in Christ, here is a survey to help you understand how you really look at yourself. This is helpful because understanding how we think and feel about life helps us to build in the right places in the future.

In the questions below, place a X on the line that is closest to what you really think. Be as honest as you can. Don't try and answer what you think should be the right answer, because you want to gain an accurate understanding of your own identity today.

1 I feel most loved when...

I know I am loved by friends or family I know that God loves me

2 I feel most secure when...

I know I am accepted unconditionally by God Other people like me

3 I feel valued when...

Other people think I am really special God thinks I am really special

4 I feel most confident when I rely on...

God's power Myself

5 The one who is going to take care of me is...

Me God

6 The purpose of life is to...

Honour God Enjoy myself

7 The family that is most important to me is...

The family of God My earthly family

8 The most important responsibilities in life are...

Those that have to do with God's kingdom Looking after my own needs

9 When I think about the future...

I know God is working everything out for my good at all times I feel scared

10 I live mostly by...

a	Faith	.....	What I can see
b	An experience of God	.....	The theory of God
c	Sacrificing for God	.....	Getting things for me
d	Obedience to God	.....	Knowing about God
e	Relying on what Jesus has done for me	.....	Doing things myself
f	Serving others	.....	Serving myself
g	A relationship with God	.....	Following rules

Look back over your answers. Are there any questions or answers that have surprised you about your identity? Anything you need to do? Ask further questions about? Pray about?



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we saw lots of texts, pieces of one large puzzle, that help us to understand our identity in Jesus. What matters most is not how other people see us. We don't have to think that we will only be loved if we look a certain way, or have the right clothes. What matters is how God views us, and he loves us very much as we are.

In "thinking it through" you continued thinking about your identity in Christ and how these texts relate to your own life.

Then in "habits for reflecting Jesus" you had a chance to evaluate how you really think about your identity. Evaluating how we relate to God is something that is helpful to do at regular intervals through our lives to make sure we keep thinking about ourselves as Heaven thinks about us.



my time with God

Each day this week, read one or two texts from "the facts of his story". Write them down in your journal and think about how life would be different for you if you were aware of this truth at all times. Pray that God will help you to remember this part of your identity in the future.



pass it on!

Can you explain to someone what it means to have an identity in Jesus, and what this means to you?



extra help

1. Steps to Christ Chapter 8, Growing up into Christ.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

character determines
destiny **03**

?

did you know...

people through history have claimed that character shapes our future

Around 2500 years ago, Heraclitus wrote that "Character is destiny". More recently, Samuel Smiles wrote, "Sow an act and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny." And Theodore Roosevelt, 26th president of the United States (1858-1919) declared, "Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike."

character is made up of our thoughts and feelings

This is similar to what D L Moody, a famous preacher, meant when he wrote, "Character is what you are in the dark". In other words, character is what we are inside when nobody is looking.



Dwight L Moody, 1837-1899

*"Character is what you are
in the dark"*

habits shape our character (thoughts + feelings)

And our habits—how we behave normally—shows what sort of people we really are. So if we want to change our characters, our habits will also need to change.

our characters grow depending on the choices we make and the self-control we exercise

Character does not happen by accident. And we are not born with a certain type of character. Character is made by the choices—often very small choices—that influence the way we live. In a world where we are often pressured to live in ways that go against God, we will have to exercise strong self-control, in order to honour God in the way we live which reflects a character like His.



the facts of his story

1. When Moses asked to see the glory of God, what did God reveal to him? (Exodus 33:18-34:7)

2. What was the consequence of Moses' seeing the glory of God? (Exodus 34:29)

3. Why do you think this happened to Moses, and what does it teach us?

4. When writing to the Galatians, how does Paul describe the consequence—the “destiny”—of someone who is filled with the Holy Spirit? (Galatians 5:22-26)

5. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 what is the destiny, or consequence, for people in whom the Holy Spirit is working?



thinking it through

1. What was the most important text you read about the glory of God, and why?

2. We have looked at what a number of people have said about the link between our characters and our destiny. What is your response to the following quotations?

- ☞ “A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next.” (Christ’s Object Lessons, 332)
- ☞ “Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now. Never before was any previous generation called to meet issues so momentous; never before were young men and young women confronted by perils so great as confront them today.” 1911. (Education, 225.)

Amy Carmichael took a group of children to see a traditional goldsmith at work in India. In the middle of a charcoal fire was a curved roof tile. On the tile was a mixture of salt, tamarind fruit, and brick dust, and embedded in this mixture was the gold. As the fire devoured the mixture, the gold became purer. The goldsmith took the gold out with tongs, and if it was not pure enough, replaced it in the fire with new mixture. But each time it was replaced, the heat was made hotter than before. The group asked him, “How do you know when the gold is pure?” He replied, “When I can see my face in it.” (Amy Carmichael, *Learning Of God*, (London: SPCK, 1983), 50.)



habits for reflecting Jesus ~ reflecting on character

why reflection is so helpful

It is helpful to reflect on our lives in order to become conscious of how we are growing as Christians, because reflecting the character of Jesus does not happen by accident! Socrates said that the “unexamined life is not worth living.” In other words, we have to first recognise what we are really like inside in order for us to have a chance to grow and change.

Imagine that you go to meet someone important without realising that have dirt on your face. That would be embarrassing. That’s why we have mirrors, so we can check how we look. God has given us the Holy Spirit to act as a mirror for our souls—so we can see what we are really like on the inside.

When we spend time to pause, think, and be silent before God, it gives the Holy Spirit an opportunity to communicate to us about the progress of our lives, and the plans God has for us to increasingly reflect His character.

how to use your Journal for reflection

Here is how you can use your Journal to help you reflect on the character of Jesus.

1. Find a quiet place where you can be by yourself.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide your thoughts, and bring to mind anything that He wants to share with you, for He is the one who will “guide you into all truth”

(John 16:12).

3. Consider the following questions to help you reflect on character. Use your Journal to write down your thoughts, questions, conclusions, and prayers from what you think about.
 - a. Do I really believe that it is possible to change the way I am?
 - b. Have I clearly seen the character of God revealed in the Bible so that I am inspired to grow to be like Him? If not, what can I do about that?
 - c. Do I really care about being more like Jesus?
 - d. How much time do I spend thinking about my looks, popularity, possessions, playing computer games, or watching movies, compared to the amount of time I spending thinking about and developing my character?
 - e. To what extent am I willing to spend time, thought, and energy to improving my personal character to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?

(Questions adapted from Russell Gough, *Character is Destiny*.)

You can use your Journal to reflect on any area of your life with God. What’s most important is that you can have regular times of quietness where you are not rushing around in order to be able to think clearly about your relationship with God. When you have the time and space to

do this, you will find that you will learn a lot quite quickly. Then your time with God will become increasingly interesting and meaningful.

If you and a friend or mentor can regularly share your reflections together, it makes the habit of

reflection even more enjoyable.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story", we saw that 1) the glory of God is not just bright light, but His character. 2) Like Moses reflecting the visible glory of God, so 3) God wants us all to reflect His character. 4 & 5) When the Holy Spirit is working in our lives, our spiritual destiny is to reflect the character and glory of Jesus. 6) Those who reveal Jesus will find that their geographical destiny is to be with Jesus in Heaven.

In "thinking it through" we read quotations about how important character formation is, for a character like Jesus' is the only thing that we will be able to take to Heaven with us.

In "habits for reflecting Jesus" we looked at journaling, which is a helpful way to become daily aware of God's work in us as we learn to reflect the character of Jesus.



my time with God

Reflect on the following questions this week:

1. Why do you think that God makes a link between our character and eternal destiny? (Matthew 25:31-46)
2. Jesus assured the thief next to him on the cross that his eternal destiny in Heaven was certain. If the thief did not need to spend time to reflect the character of Jesus, why should we? (Luke 23:39-43)
3. Why do you think that your will (choices) and self-control are critical to the development of your character?
4. Samuel Smiles wrote "Sow an act and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny." If your thoughts shape your character, based on the type of thoughts you think about most, what sort of person are you becoming? What thoughts do you need to fill your mind with in the future to reveal Jesus more fully?
5. In the story about the making of gold, Amy Carmichael told how the goldsmith knew that the gold was pure when he could see his face reflected in it. What does this story teach you? (Hebrews 12:11)
6. When Jesus left the disciples to go to Heaven, he told them not to be afraid. Indeed, Jesus said it was better for Him to leave and the Holy Spirit be in his place. Why do you think Jesus said this, and what does this mean for you as you pursue a life shaped by the character of Jesus? (John 16:5-15)



pass it on!

Can you explain to someone else why the glory of God is His character, and why reflecting His character is so important?



extra help

1. Character is Destiny, by Russell Gough
2. Child Guidance, Chapters 31-36, by Ellen White.
3. "Without a Wedding Garment", Christ's Object Lessons, 307, by Ellen White.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

God created me to reflect his glory
to the ends of the earth

04

?

did you know...

the purpose of life is not about us!

We often think that life is about us—about our plans and dreams. Sorry to break it to you, but it's not. You see, the world was not designed to revolve around us, but around Jesus. So the purpose of our lives is all about Him.

our lives have an incredible purpose...

Amazingly, Jesus designed our lives to reflect his own character—which is His own glory. This is the purpose of life for all human beings. And yours too. So whenever you meet people, God designed you to reveal Him.

reflecting Jesus is designed to bring us ever increasing joy

From what you see on TV, magazines, or on the internet, most people think that earning lots of money or becoming famous will make them happy. What God longs for us all to know is that happiness and joy is only found when we grow in reflecting His character.

God designed us to increasingly reflect His character for eternity!

Because joy is the consequence of reflecting God's character, it has always been God's purpose for us—and everything he makes—to reflect His character. For the rest of eternity, we will be learning to reflect His character. So our joy, and His, will continually increase.





the facts of his story

1. When God created our earth, who were you designed to look like? (Genesis 1:26-27)

2. Even after sin came into the world, what was God's plan for you? (Romans 8:29a)

3. What was it like for Paul to pursue God's plan for the people in Galatia? (Galatians 4:19)

4. What happens when you allow God to work freely in your life? (2 Corinthians 3:18)

5. What is the result of living a life that reflects the character of Jesus? (1 Peter 1:8-9 and Romans 14:17)



thinking it through

1. Which text that you have just read means the most to you, and why?

2. Is reflecting the character of God something you would really want to do? Why or why not? Is there anything preventing you from making the reflection of the character of Jesus the most important goal of your life?

how much is there to know about the character of God?

We often say that God is infinite. This means that there is no limit to God's greatness. We will therefore never get to the point where we can say, "I know everything there is to know about God". Let's try and begin to grasp the greatness of God by looking at the universe He has created.

Did you know that the sun is so large that one million earths could fit inside it? But there is a star called VV Cephei that is 1600 million kilometres in diameter. This means that it is 1220 times the size of the sun!

Now imagine that the thickness of this page is the distance from earth to the sun -- about 150

million kilometres. Using this scale, the distance to the nearest star which is $4\frac{1}{2}$ light years away would be a 21 metre high stack of paper. Again, using the same scale, the diameter of our own galaxy being 100,000 light years would be require a stack of paper about 310 metres high.

And to the edge of the universe? Our stack of paper, each sheet's thickness being the distance from the earth to the sun, would need to be about 50 million kilometres high.

And what is contained within these spaces? Gerald Colvin brought a few interesting facts together to try and explain. The Milky Way is our home galaxy. A nearby galaxy, the Magellanic Clouds, is at just 170,000 light years away and has 15 billion stars. Around 2.2 million light years

away from us is the Andromeda galaxy, twice our size, with 250 billion stars. Further away still is galaxy M87 with 750-1000 billion stars. We have mentioned just four galaxies, but Colvin says that if Adam had begun counting galaxies at 100 a minute and was still alive today, he wouldn't be finished counting. (Adventist Review, January 11, 2007)

That's a big universe! And that's just the things we know today. Now here's the point to think about: if God created such a huge universe, and the universe is a reflection of His greatness, then we can begin to see that it is possible to learn new things about God's character forever. Therefore, we will continually be growing into the character of God forever!



habits for reflecting Jesus ~ journaling

Keeping a spiritual journal is a practical way to help you grow as a Christian. Indeed, many of the greatest Christians through history have kept a regular record of their spiritual journey throughout their whole lives.

what is a spiritual journal?

A spiritual journal is like a diary in which you write about your life with God. To begin journaling, all you need is a book with blank pages, and a pen.

It's often called a spiritual journal because we are writing about our spiritual life with God. However, this may not be a good way to describe it, because ALL of life is about God! We can't separate our life with God, with everything else we are doing. So when we journal, we are writing about life, and how God is in it with us.

You can use your journal to write down:

1. Important discoveries from your personal Bible study, prayer, time at church, or other Christian meetings
2. Prayer requests for others and God's answers
3. Questions and problems for God
4. Private thoughts and feelings about your journey with God
5. Helpful quotations or Bible verses that you

want to remember

6. Things you learn about yourself, God and life
7. Successes and thanks to God
8. Anything else that relates to your spiritual growth—its completely up to you
9. Explore a particular subject related to your personal journey. For example, how does God communicate to me?

Sometimes you may not be too sure what to write. When this happens, you can pray and ask for the Holy Spirit to bring to mind anything that is important for you to remember and record in your journal.

It is really important that writing in your journal should be something that you enjoy and is helpful. If it feels too difficult, you will probably soon want to give up. Also, for some people, writing ideas down on paper may not come naturally or easily. You may prefer to think more than write. Even though this might be true for you now, try and persevere for a while. If you can learn to enjoy journaling, it will be an invaluable help to you the rest of your life.

the benefits of journaling

1. Encouragement as you are reminded later of what God has taught you
2. Confidence in God as you see how he has

- led you over time
3. A growing resource of discoveries, texts, and quotations, that will not be forgotten
 4. A safe place to explore your feelings and thoughts that are too private to share with others

when and where?

Some people write in their journals at the end

of the day. Others write in it the moment a new thought hits them. Others do it regularly at their Bible reading and prayer time. So find a time that fits you.

Journaling is normally something very private—only you may ever see what is written inside. So find a quiet place where you can be in peace; quiet enough to hear the Holy Spirit as you read, think, pray, and write.



putting the pieces together

In “the facts of his story” we saw that 1) it has always been God's plan for you to reflect his character. 2) Even though sin has affected us all, God is working to restore us in his image in us. 3) Paul worked so hard for others in this work that he says it was like giving birth, but the consequences are always that we will 4) reflect the glory of God, and 5) experience joy.

In “thinking it through”, following the priority of God for you, and the example of Paul, you were encouraged to make the reflection of Jesus your own ambition for your own life.

In “habits for reflecting Jesus” we looked at journaling, a tool to help you keep track of your spiritual journey, which is a tool that can help you for the rest of your life.



pass it on!

Could you teach this lesson? Living what we have learned is great, but passing it all on to another is even greater! Someone once said, “You know when you have learned something when you can teach it to your grandmother!” Can you?



my time with God

1. What do you think about the idea that the purpose of life is not about us but about God?
2. Where does purpose come from and why?
3. Do you experience joy in your life? What is joy, and where does it come from?
4. What do you think happens if you don't think about the purpose of life at all and just focus on enjoying yourself?
5. Do you think that God has good purposes even though you may face huge problems? (Romans 8:28)
6. Do you have any dreams and ambitions still that you may need to give up if you are to live completely for God?
7. What do you think about spending the rest of your life and eternity to grow more and more to be like Jesus?



extra help

1. *It's Not About Me*, Max Lucado, Integrity Publishers.
2. *“Creation”, Chapter 2, Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White, Pacific Press Publishing Association.
3. *“Without a Wedding Garment”*, Christ's Object Lessons, Ellen White, Review and Herald Publishing Association.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

when the Bible is studied
God's voice is heard

05

?

did you know...

we can be really confident that the Bible is reliable

Look at this comparison between biblical manuscripts and other documents that historians believe are accurate.

	Date of original document	Date of oldest surviving copy	Approximate date between the original and oldest surviving copy	Number of copies in existence today
Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian Wars	c. 431-400 BC	AD 900 plus a few earlier fragments	1300 years	73
Caesar's Gallic War	c. 58-50 BC	AD 825	875 years	10
Tacitus' Histories and Annals	c. AD 98-108	c. AD 850	750 years	2
The New Testament	AD 40-100	AD 350	310 years	14,000 approx.

From Christianity Explored, Study Guide: Leaders Edition, 2003, 60.

in 1947...

A shepherd accidentally made an amazing discovery. He was throwing stones up a cliff, when a stone flew into a hidden cave, making a strange sound. After climbing up to investigate, he found clay pots with scrolls inside. These scrolls were written around 1900 years ago. They demonstrated that as the Bible had been copied by hand over many hundreds of years, no significant changes had been made. These scrolls became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

so when we study the Bible, we can be certain that what we read is what God intended us to read

This means that when we study the Bible, we can be confident of hearing God speak. The question then is, will we believe it?



the facts of his story

Words are very important to God. He chose to reveal himself, not with pictures, but with words—the Bible. When we read these words, we hear him speak. When we hear what is on his mind for us to know, things happen...

1. What happened when God spoke?

Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26 _____

2. What happened when Jesus spoke? (In John's gospel, Jesus is called "the Word")

Mark 2:5-12 _____

3. What happened when God's people spoke and wrote down God's words for others to read?

Ezekiel: Ezekiel 37: 1-10 _____

Peter: Acts 2:40-41 _____

Paul: Romans 1:13-16 _____

Can you think of any other parallels between God's creation and our re-Creation?

When God spoke in Genesis 1, human beings were created in the image of God:

Instantly
Beautifully
Giving God great pleasure

When Jesus began to speak, human beings began to have the possibility of being re-created in His image:

Instantly
Beautifully
Giving God great pleasure



thinking it through

1. From what you have just read, what do you think is the most important thing that happens when God speaks?

2. How good are you at listening to God? What are the ways in which you "listen" to God?



habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus ~ Bible study using 8 critical questions

There are lots of ways to study the Bible so that we can hear God speak to us clearly and personally. Here is one way for you to try.

eight critical questions

Have you ever read the Bible and thought to yourself, "But what has this got to do with me?" or, "What difference does this make?" And of course, if we don't learn anything that will shape our lives to become more like Jesus, we will have wasted our time studying!

Applying the Bible to our own lives is the most important part of Bible study. So here are 8 questions to help you apply the meaning of the text to your own life.

1. Is there an example for me to follow?
2. Is there a sin for me to avoid?
3. Is there a command for me to obey?
4. What does this particular passage teach me about God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?
5. Is there a difficulty for me to explore?
6. Is there a promise for me to claim?
7. Is there something that shows me how to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?
8. Is there something in the passage for me to pray about today?

how to use the questions

1. Prayerfully choose a passage to read or continue on from where you finished reading yesterday.
2. Pray for the Holy Spirit to teach you as you read, claiming the promise found in James 1:5. Pray also that God will speak clearly to you so that your life can shaped by God's words in the Bible.
3. Read through your chosen Bible text a few times until you understand what you are reading as much as possible.

4. Once you have read through your passage, begin to ask these questions that will help you to apply the meaning to your own life.
5. As always, praying at the end of your study is really important. Pray for that the Holy Spirit will remind you of what God has spoken to you, and that your life will reflect the priorities and purposes of Jesus more and more!

Bible texts to start with

The stories about Jesus in the Gospels are great places to begin studying. Pray that God will guide you in the choice of a passage. You can start at the beginning of a Gospel and work your way through to the end.

If you want to move outside of the gospels, you can also use this way of studying to explore Acts and the writings of Paul. His letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are great texts to study.

using your Journal

It's great to keep a record of what you have learnt in your Journal. It will be a reminder in the future of how God has guided you and this will be encouraging. You may find that you still have questions about the passage. You can write these down as well so you can ask a spiritual mentor when you have the opportunity.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we saw how when God speaks, 1) things are created. But most importantly for us who affected by sin, 2) when Jesus speaks to us, we have the chance to be re-created—back into the way God designed things to be at the very beginning. So at the heart of transformation are the words of God. 3) We can see this as a result of the preaching of Ezekiel, Peter, and Paul.

In "thinking it through" you had a chance to think about the words of God in your own life. What matters most is that we can hear God speak clearly to each of us if we want to experience His change in our lives.

In "habits for reflecting Jesus", we considered one way to study the Bible to help the words of God re-shape our lives so that we begin to live as God originally intended.



my time with God

This week, practice the habit for the reflecting the mind of Jesus—the 8 questions—using the following Bible texts.

1. Mark 14:32-42
2. Psalm 103:1-14
3. 1 John 1:1-10
4. Ephesians 1:15-23
5. Ezekiel 37:1-14
6. Joshua 1:1-18

You can also practice with other passages if you like. A good place to start using this method of Bible study is the gospels and any of the stories that are found in the Old Testament.



pass it on!

Can you memorise the 8 questions for Bible study and teach them to someone?



extra help

1. Chapter 2, "The Sower Went Out to Sow", Christ's Object Lessons, Ellen White.
2. Chapter 37, "The Scriptures a Safeguard", Great Controversy, Ellen White.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

the Bible tells a cosmic story that teaches us
how to understand our lives

06



did you know...

the Bible was written by over 40 different authors across 1500 years

These authors included kings, shepherds, fishermen, doctors, peasants and many others.

these authors wrote from palaces, prisons, and deserts

who were scattered across the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa

the Bible consists of over 773,000 words

And is written in Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic,

**Together they all tell
ONE story...**



photo: sxc Lusi

knowing this story gives us glasses to wear

By looking through these glasses, this great story of a cosmic battle enables us to understand everything about why life is the way it is.

The story helps us see what God has, is, and will be doing...

...and helps us see how our own lives fit into his story...



the facts of his story

The “big story” of God’s work in our world hangs on the seven mini-stories explained below. They explain why reflecting the character of Jesus is so important.

“I’ve read the last page of the Bible.
It’s all going to turn out all right.”

Billy Graham

1

Fall of Satan and his angels from Heaven

Satan wanted to be like God. Because of this pride, Satan started a war in Heaven against God and His government. As a result, Satan and one third of the angels were expelled from Heaven. Satan’s pride and anger increased as he later began trying to destroy the people God made in His own character. As a fallen angel, Satan and his angels work invisibly to human eyes.

Isaiah 14:12-15
Ezekiel 28:14-17
Revelation 12:7-9
Ephesians 6:10-12

2

Creation

God created us in his image—his character. Everything God made was beautiful and caused great joy for Him and all in the Universe.

Genesis 1:26-27
Genesis 1:31
Job 38:4-7

3

Fall of Man

Soon after creation, Eve went to the tree of good and evil—the very place God told her not to go. It was there that Satan was able to tempt her. Once she and Adam disobeyed God, they suddenly realised that they were without clothes. Their sin had broken God’s character within them. It appears that bright glory had clothed them, and this represented God’s glorious character in them. But now that His character in them was broken, the glory around them vanished. But more than that, they were beginning to experience the consequences of their disobedience. They were beginning to die.

How could they, and all their children who would follow, be rescued from the consequences of their sin?

Genesis 3:1-12

4

Salvation

Sin always leads to death. As sinners we are condemned to die eternally. But Jesus came and died in our place. He took the punishment for sin that we should have taken. So when I put my trust God that Jesus has died in for me, God considers that I am saved from the consequence of my sins—eternal death. But most importantly, I am now free to work with God as He restores His own character back into me—the character that Adam and Eve lost in Eden. This salvation was symbolised for Adam and Eve when God re-clothed them with skins—representing the glorious righteousness of Jesus wrapped around again.

Isaiah 53:4-6
Romans 6:23
Romans 3:21-24

5

Judgement

Who can tell who is truly saved? Only God can. But as Satan has accused God of being unfair and unjust since the very beginning, God holds an open judgement, where the whole Universe can see that the decisions God has made are right, good, and fair. We are saved by our trust in Jesus. However, Jesus also makes it very clear that we are judged according to whether we have responded to His Salvation by partnering the Holy Spirit to reflect the character of Jesus in our lives.

Romans 14:10-12
Daniel 7:9-10
Matthew 25:31-46

6

Second Coming

Jesus promised that He would return to earth, and would do so physically—just as when He came the first time. This will not be a secret event but will be visible for all to see. At this time, in “the twinkling of an eye” our bodies will be clothed with the same glory that Adam and Eve wore in Eden.

John 14:1-3
Acts 1:9-10
Matthew 24:24-27
1 Corinthians 15:35-55

7

Destruction of Satan and the wicked and the re-creation of the Earth

After 1000 years with Jesus in Heaven, we will judge Satan, his angels, and the wicked. After this judgement has been announced, God will destroy the world by fire and recreate it as He intended at the beginning. We will then live on the earth, growing more and more in the character of Jesus for the rest of eternity.

1 Corinthians 6:3
Revelation 20:7-15
Revelation 21:1-5
2 Corinthians 3:18



thinking it through

1. What new things did you learn about the Bible’s story?

2. Why do you think it is important to understand the Bible as a single story?



habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus ~ God’s glasses

If you wear blue tinted glasses, everything you see through them is coloured slightly blue. We all look at life through different coloured glasses. These glasses are coloured by the things we believe.

If we look at life through biblical glasses coloured by the story we have been looking at, we will interpret life through Heaven’s eyes. These glasses are God’s glasses—the same glasses that God uses when He looks at us and our world.



Our challenge is to live life while wearing God's glasses. Whatever situation we find ourselves in, we can look through God's glasses to see how God looks the situation. When you wear God's glasses, what would you say to someone who says:

1. They can't believe in God because of all the suffering in the world
2. That he saw a UFO or a ghost

3. That all we have to do to go to Heaven is say, "I believe in Jesus"
4. That God doesn't mind the way I live my life

To help you answer accurately, relate each answer to one or more parts of the cosmic story.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we saw how 7 events explain the great story that has been unfolding from the beginning of time as we know it. If we want to understand the Bible clearly, we have to know these 7 events well. These 7 events not only explain the rest of the Bible, but they help us understand what is happening in our lives too.

In "thinking it through" you were challenged in your own understanding of this great story, for when you can explain this, you will be able to more understand many of the things that God is doing in your own life.

In "habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus" we practised applying the story in the Bible to understanding things that happen in our own lives.



my time with God

Imagine you have a close friend who is struggling to understand a number of things. In your Journal, write a short letter to them explaining the following: (Remember to relate each answer to Bible texts in the 7 part cosmic story.)

1. Why God doesn't take away the cancer that the doctor's have found in their best friend.
2. Why they may be experiencing a lot of discouragement recently and don't know why life should be worth living.
3. Why they always seem to do the wrong thing, when they want to do what is right.
4. How it can be possible to be restored into the character of Jesus, even though we are sinners.
5. What happens at the second coming of Jesus.
6. What God's plan is for our broken world.



pass it on!

Can you teach someone else how to wear God's glasses?



extra help

If you want to develop a deeper understanding of the Bible as a single story, read the five book set covering all parts of the cosmic story, by Ellen White. These are, Patriarchs and Prophets—from the fall of Satan to David; Prophets and Kings—from Solomon to the end of the Old Testament; Desire of Ages—the life and teaching of Jesus; Acts of the Apostles—the story of the early church after the resurrection; The Great Controversy—from the Fall of Jerusalem to the re-creation of the earth.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I am saved
to become like Jesus **07**

?

did you know...

salvation is not a ticket to Heaven

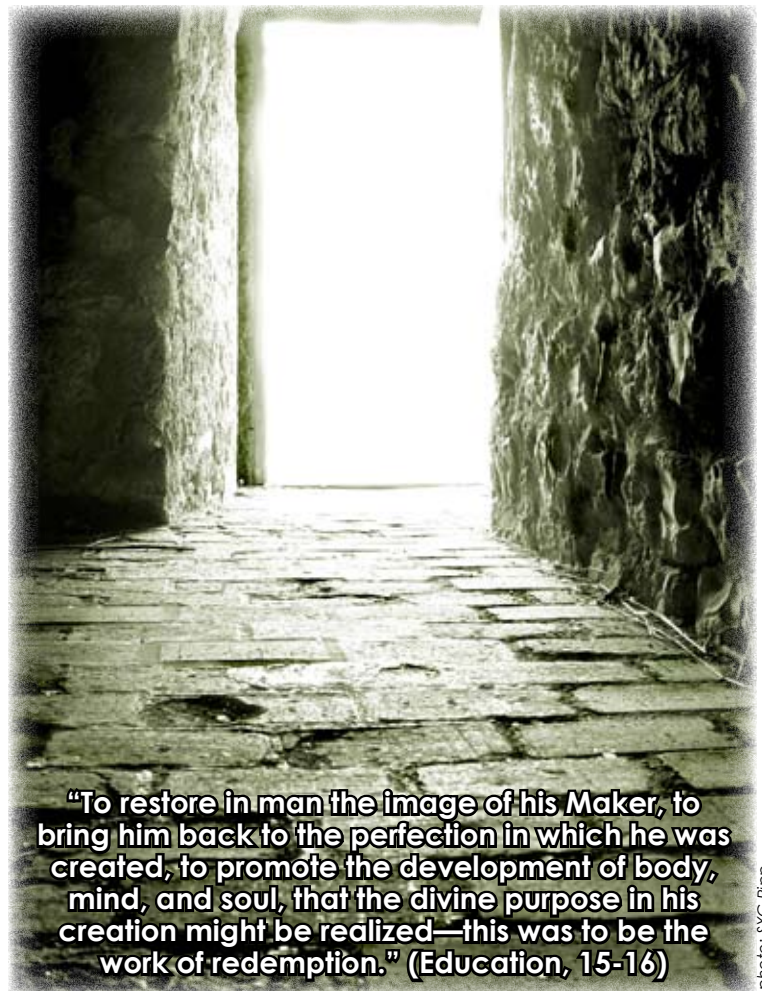
Nor is salvation a reward for following Jesus. Are you surprised? Ok, salvation certainly includes these important things, but these are not the most important. Rather, the most important consequence of salvation is the process where God is at work in us to restore what was broken when sin came into our lives—God's character in us.

so salvation is like a door

Salvation is the door into a life of reflecting Jesus.

salvation is all about becoming like Jesus

It is Jesus who saves us, as God begins to restore us into His image. So salvation saves us *from* the consequences of sin, and saves us *to* a character like Jesus'.



"To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption." (Education, 15-16)

photo: SXC Pipp



the facts of his story

In earlier lessons, we learned that God is in the process of restoring us into his image. Since the beginning of time, God designed us to reflect his character. Even with sin in the world, God “decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son.” (Romans 8:29, The Message) But God had a challenge. How could He restore us into His image, if we were full of sin—for this sin was destroying his image in us? The answer was simple but hard. The only way this could happen was for Jesus would come to earth, He would take our sin, and with our sin on Him, He would die in our place. Then, and only then could we have a chance to reflect the character of Jesus as the Holy Spirit works within us. This is salvation—saved from sin to reflect Jesus.

In the Old Testament, long before Jesus actually came as a baby, God used the tabernacle to explain to his people how Jesus would take away their sins. Look at the picture of the tabernacle and read through the six stages of how people could have their sins removed and their relationship with God restored.

In this process, Jesus is represented by the sacrificed animal—which dies for each person's sins, and by the priest—who is the only one who can offer forgiveness to the one who has sinned.

Jesus didn't die just so we could move houses—trading the one we have now for one that is bigger and nicer in Heaven. He died to take away our sin in order for us to live the life he intended for us, working with him, and living His character with great joy!

1. Read Titus 2:11-14. In verse 14, what two things does God do in us that are a direct result of the death of Jesus?

2. Read 1 John 1:9. What two things happen when we confess our sins?



thinking it through

1. How does 1 John 1:9 give you assurance of your salvation?

2. What do you think of the idea, “I am saved to become like Jesus”?

1. Recognising Sin

I recognise I have sinned against God.

2. Decide to trust in God's forgiveness

I realise that only God can help me, and I need to go and restore my relationship with Him.

3. Confession and sacrifice

A bull that I have brought as a sin offering is tied to the altar. I place my hand on its head. I then confess my sin and symbolically my sin is transferred from me to the animal. The I kill it. I feel the life of the animal disappear, and realise that my sin will cause the death of Jesus.

4. Trust in the work of the priest

I can't go into the tabernacle myself to complete the work of restoring my relationship with God by forgiving my sin. I have to trust that the priest is working on my behalf. This is the same as trusting in Jesus working for me.

5. Thanks for what God he has done for me!

The sin that was powerful enough to destroy me has been taken away and I am free. That is really something to thank God for. I am forgiven, and my relationship with God is restored.

6. Decide to live differently from now on

Because I know how much Jesus has done for me, and am certain of my salvation, I then choose to live a life that reflects the way He lives.



habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus ~ sanctuary restoration

The Old Testament tabernacle and sanctuary services were God's way of teaching his people how to have their sin removed, so that they could enjoy the life that God intended for them—a life of joy in close relationship with him. Their sin had to be removed in order for them to clearly reflect his character. Though these services were to explain to the Israelites what Jesus would do for them when he died on the cross, the process of forgiveness that was used for God's people then, is the same for us today.

the process of forgiveness

Imagine I am an Israelite who has stolen some money from my neighbour's tent. What would have to happen in order for me to receive forgiveness from God? I would need to:

1. **Recognise my sin.** Before anything happens, I have to realise that I have disobeyed God.
2. **Decide to trust in God's forgiveness.** If I

don't make a decision to trust in God, I will never go and restore my relationship with Him. But to go and do that, I have to believe that God has the power and the longing to help me. This decision to trust God would lead me to choose a bull calf without any imperfections, and go with it to the tabernacle to sacrifice it as a sin offering. (Different animals, not just lambs, were used for different types of sacrifices.)

3. **Repent of my sin and sacrifice.** Before God I tell him that I am sorry. To remind me that sin always kills, I have to lean my whole body weight onto the animal. Then with a knife, I cut the animal's throat. I watch it die and feel it's life disappear, knowing that I am the cause of its death. But repentance is more than feeling sorry. Repentance is a commitment to God to change the way I wish to behave in the future. From now on, no more stealing from my neighbour!
4. **Place my faith in Jesus to take my sin away.** My sin, confessed onto the animal, is now

on the animal. The priest, also representing Jesus, takes the animal's blood (with my sin symbolically in it) and drips it inside the tabernacle before the veil separating the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

5. **Thank God.** The sin that was powerful enough to destroy me has been taken away and I am free. That is really something to thank God for!
6. **Respond to God's grace by pursuing the character of Jesus in the future.** Now that I am forgiven of my sin and it has been removed from me, what shall I do now? Shall I continue sinning? No way! With God working inside me, I will choose to live according to his will for my life with full assurance of my salvation.

You can read about this forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament times in Leviticus 4.

what about when I sin today?

You can follow the same process to allow the Bible to shape your confession to God and restore your relationship with Him. Here are the steps again.

1. Recognise my sin (this happens through the work of the Holy Spirit in us, John 16:7)
2. Decide to trust in God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9)
3. Repent of my sin (Psalm 32:5)
4. Place my faith in Jesus to take my sin away (Romans 3:22-24)
5. Thank Jesus for what he has done for me! (Psalm 13:5-6)
6. Respond to God's grace by pursuing the character of Jesus in the future (Hebrews 4:14-16)

See how these steps can shape your prayers of repentance. Here is a sample:

Dear Father, I realise that lying about what I was doing last night was wrong (step 1). I know that you promise to forgive my sin and change my life (step 2). I really am sorry for doing this (step 3). I trust that Jesus' died in my place so my sins could be forgiven and I can be made totally clean inside (step 4). Thank you for what you have done for me (step 5). From now on, grant me the power and desire to live according to the character of Jesus (step 6). In Jesus' name, Amen.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we looked at the process of being forgiven in the Old Testament which is the same process we follow today. It shows how we are saved from the consequence of sin so that our relationship with God can be restored. Titus 2:14 emphasises this, saying that the death of Jesus is to both redeem and purify us.

In "thinking it through" you were challenged to consider how the death of Jesus affects your own life.

In "habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus" we saw how God's words about forgiveness and restoration can shape the way we pray to God when we need to confess sin.



my time with God

At the end of each day in the coming week, spend some time to reflect on your day. Each time, ask the Holy Spirit if there is any sin that you need to repent of that is affecting the health of your relationship with God. Follow the example of the Sanctuary Restoration prayer to confess any sin the Holy Spirit shows you. You can use your Journal to record your prayers.



pass it on!

Could you teach the Sanctuary Restoration habit to a friend?



extra help

1. How to Experience Revival, by Charles Finney.
2. Steps to Christ, by Ellen White.
3. The Tabernacle and It's Services, Patriarchs and Prophets chapter 30, by Ellen White.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I am an ambassador
for another world

08

?

did you know...

an “ambassador” is:

“a diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government or sovereign as the resident representative of his own government or sovereign or appointed for a special and often temporary diplomatic assignment”
(Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition)



God has called me to be His ambassador!

“So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘Come back to God!’” (2 Corinthians 5:20, NLB)



the facts of his story

The Bible is God's book to show his ambassadors how to live on earth while representing His Kingdom in Heaven. Before sin, we would have known how to live without having it written down because God's laws and principles would have been written on our hearts, that is, in our minds. But while we live with very forgetful memories, God has chosen to write everything down on paper for us.

1. What is the most important message that God's ambassadors are to carry to this world? (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

2. Though we represent the Kingdom of God, how will some of God's ambassadors be treated? (Ephesians 6: 19-20)

3. Matthew 5 is the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (from chapter 5-7) where Jesus is describing how ambassadors for the Kingdom of God should live. God had given laws to his people on Mount Sinai, but through the years, they had applied these only to their external behaviour—God's laws hadn't transformed their hearts. So in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is trying to show his disciples that God's law is intended to change their hearts—what is inside of them—how they think and feel. Read the first 12 verses of Matthew 5 and write down a list of how God's ambassadors are to be in their characters.



thinking it through

1. What was the most important thought you have just seen in the texts, and why?

2. How is living as an ambassador for the Kingdom of God different from the way most people live today? What challenges are there for you living a life that often goes against our culture?



habits for reflecting Jesus
~ become aware of the principles,
values and laws that shape my life

Why do you do what you do? What shapes the choices you make each day? What principles, values and laws do you live by? Perhaps you haven't thought about these questions before. But before we go further, what are principles, values, and laws?

A law is something we have to do because we live under someone else's authority. For example, the government of Iceland has decreed, "In Iceland no-one is allowed to drive faster than 90 km per hour." Because we live under the authority of a particular power, we have to obey their laws, or live somewhere else.

A principle is an idea that guides the way we behave. For example, "People matter more than things", or "All people are created equal".

A value is a quality of character that we think is desirable. Here is a list of some of the values that are important to Christians:

Attentiveness	Determination	Hospitality	Perseverance	Service
Boldness	Discernment	Initiative	Persuasiveness	Sincerity
Carefulness	Discretion	Joyfulness	Punctuality	Thoroughness
Commitment	Effort	Justice	Resourcefulness	Thriftiness
Compassion	Enthusiasm	Loyalty	Respect	Tolerance
Cooperation	Flexibility	Obedience	Responsibility	Truthfulness
Courage	Forgiveness	Orderliness	Sacrifice	Virtue
Creativity	Generosity	Patience	Self-control	Wisdom
Dependability	Gratefulness	Peacefulness	Sensitivity	

The Kingdom of God is full of principles, values and laws which are very different from the way people live today. That's because the principles, laws and values of Heaven are shaped by who God is Himself. Our challenge is to apply God's laws, principles, and values to our lives. By doing this, we reflect who God is—but living like this is always a choice. As we learn to do this, it is helpful to be conscious of the laws, principles, and values, that are shaping us today.

becoming aware of what shapes my life

Spend some time to think about the laws, principles, and values that are shaping your life—maybe even without you realising before! You can use your Journal to take notes.

To begin with ask yourself the following questions:

1. What laws am I aware of that are shaping my life today and where are they from?
2. What principles am I aware of that are shaping my life today and where are they from?
3. What values am I aware of that are shaping my life today and where are they from?

What's Changed?!

Time Magazine reported the following problems at schools in the 1940's compare to the 1980's. Why do you think there was such a change?

1940's	1980's
Talking	Drug Abuse
Chewing gum	Alcohol Abuse
Making Noise	Pregnancy
Running in halls	Suicide
Getting out of place in line	Rape, Robbery Assault,
Improper clothing	Burglary, Arson,
Littering	Bombings

Now think about the way God would like to shape your life in the future. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance as you answer the following questions:

In the future, what

1. laws
2. principles
3. values

do I want to shape my life as I pursue the character of Jesus? What Bible texts will each of my choices be based on?

Once you have some answers, make a simple action plan that shows how you want to begin to making these things a part of your life. Remember, it won't happen by accident, but as you work in partnership with the Holy Spirit. At the same time, as they also say, "Rome was not built in a day". So don't try to do too much at one time. Take one or two things at a time to begin integrating into your life.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we saw that choosing to live as an ambassador for the Kingdom of God is choosing to live a very different life to most people today, and often it might be quite difficult. However, living faithfully according to the laws, principles and values of God's government has an eternal reward!

In "thinking it through" you were challenged to think what it would be like for you to live as an ambassador for God. As always, this is a free choice, but there is no greater job on earth!

In "habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus, we looked at how important it is to know what laws, principles, and values are really shaping our lives. If we want to be successful ambassadors, we need to consciously live lives that are shaped by God's word.



my time with God

When we live out the values, principles and laws of the Kingdom of God, we are extending the influence of God's Kingdom here on earth—right in the middle of where Satan is trying to establish his kingdom.

During the next week, read one of the following passages each day, and ask yourself, "What principles, values and laws is Jesus wanting me to live by so I can live as an ambassador for his Kingdom?" You can use your Journal to keep notes.

1. Matthew 5:13-20
2. Matthew 5:21-42
3. Matthew 5:43-6:4
4. Matthew 6:5-24
5. Matthew 6:25-34
6. Matthew 7:1-29



pass it on!

Can you easily explain the differences between a law, principle and value—with examples!



extra help

In *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, Ellen White gives a helpful description of what it is like to live by the principles in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I believe God
by my faith **09**

?

did you know...

here are what famous people through the centuries have said about faith:

If you believe what you like in the gospel, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself.

—Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

Man prefers to believe what he prefers to be true.

—Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

It is so hard to believe because it is so hard to obey.

—Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

A man who has faith must be prepared not only to be a martyr, but to be a fool.

—G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

Don't be afraid to take a big step if one is indicated. You can't cross a chasm in two small jumps.

—David Lloyd George (1863-1945)

Faith and thought belong together, and believing is impossible without thinking.

—John R. W. Stott (1921-)

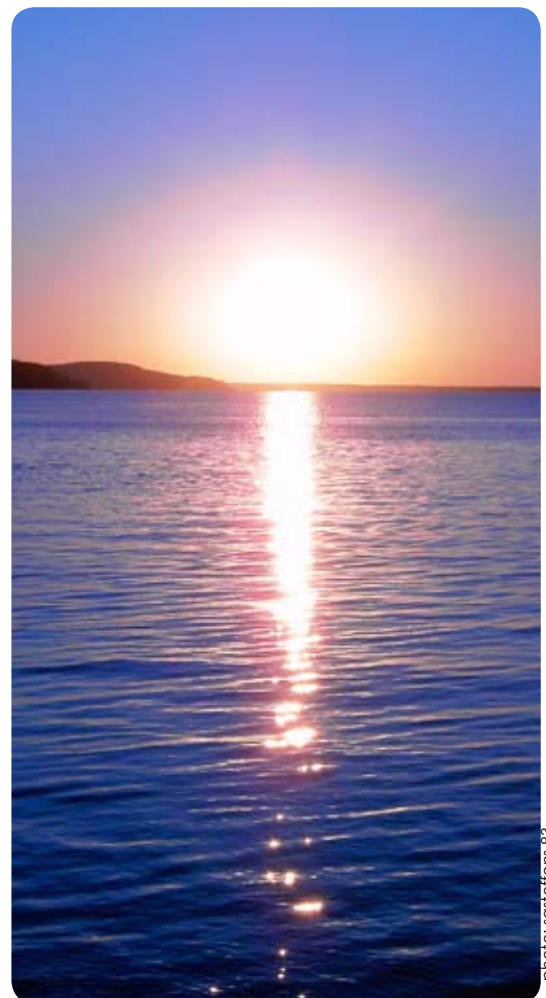


photo: sqstefens 83



the facts of his story

1. How does the author of Hebrews define faith? (verse 1-2)

2. What is our foundation for believing that God made the world and everything in it? (verse 3)

3. What two things must we do if we are to receive the reward that God offers us? (verse 6)

4. Read verses 7 to the end of the chapter. What do you think verse 39 means?

This story is told by the captain of a ship on which George Muller of Bristol was travelling. During his life he received more than 1,000,000 pounds from the Lord, without advertising—every penny came as an answer to prayer.

"We had George Muller of Bristol on board," said the captain. "I had been on the bridge for twenty-four hours and never left it and George Muller came to me and said, 'Captain, I have come to tell you I must be in Quebec on Saturday afternoon.' 'It is impossible,' I said. 'Then very well, if your ship cannot take me, God will find some other way. I have never broken an engagement in fifty-seven

years; let us go down into the chart room and pray."

"I looked at that man of God and thought to myself, 'What lunatic asylum can that man have come from, for I never heard of such a thing as this?'"

"Mr. Muller," I said, "do you know how dense this fog is?"

"'No," he replied, "my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God who controls every circumstance of my life." He knelt down and he prayed one of the most simple prayers. When he had finished I was going to pray, but he put his hand on my shoulder and told me not to pray. "As you do not believe He will answer, and as I believe He has, there is no need whatever for you to pray

about it."

"I looked at him and George Muller said, 'Captain, I have known my Lord for fifty-seven years and there has never been a single day when I have failed to get an audience with the King. Get up, Captain, and open the door and you will find the fog has gone.'"

"I got up and the fog indeed was gone, and on that Saturday afternoon George Muller kept his promised engagement."

—Sunday School Times
Tan, P. L. (1996, c1979).
Encyclopedia of 7700
illustrations



thinking it through

1. What is the most important idea about faith that you saw in Hebrews 11?

2. What would you say to someone who says that living by faith is foolish—it is just a jump into the dark.



habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus ~ why I believe what I believe

why do I believe that?!

Have you ever thought about *why* you believe the things you do? Is it because it's what your parents taught you? Or a teacher at school? Or the movies? Do you know?!

Often we go through life without thinking much about why we believe what we do. We believe because—well, we do! But if someone challenges us about our beliefs and we don't know what to say, it can be quite disturbing.

Peter writes to the churches, "if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it." (1 Peter 3:15, NLT) Peter wanted the Christians he was caring for to be prepared. If someone asked, "Why do you believe that God created the world", he wanted them to give a strong witness for why they believed the things they did. Only then could they make an impact for God. In the same way, we prepare to witness to others by knowing what we believe ourselves, and why.

Let's see how we can do this.

in your journal...

As always, before studying about spiritual things, pray that the Holy Spirit will guide your mind. Then in your Journal, make two columns. At

the top of the left hand column, write the title, "What I Believe". In this column make a list of the things you know you believe. It can include anything you want, about life, it's purpose, God, or yourself.

At the top of the right hand column, write the title, "Why I Believe This". For each item you listed, try and identify the source of what you believe. Is it because that is what you have always believed and never thought to question

it? Is it because you are certain that this is what the Bible teaches and that is true?

Here are some suggestions to help you get started thinking:

What do I believe and why, about...?

1. the origins of the earth
2. Jesus
3. the reason for suffering in the world
4. the second coming of Jesus
5. the reasons why God loves me
6. the purpose of my life, and the purpose of the universe

You may not have thought about some of these things before. That's ok. Now you have an opportunity to do so.

the critical question

Here is the critical question: for everything

you have written that you believe, can you see where it is rooted in God's word? Is there a text that gives you a reason to believe? For everything you believe, make sure you can find a place in the Bible that gives you a strong foundation for your faith. You can write these faith building texts in your Journal.

This is what faith is—knowing and believing what

God has said, even when we can't always understand why. So to live a life of faith, we need to know what God has said.

It is good to regularly think about you believe and why as you continue through life. For when you can see that your faith is firmly rooted in God's words, it will give you peace, confidence, and joy.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we began looking at the meaning and foundation of faith. We saw that we believe because God has said it, not just because we can prove it, for there may be times when we can't always prove what God has said.

In "thinking it through" you were challenged to join the many people who decided to live by faith and trust completely what God has said to us in his words.

In "habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus", we forced ourselves to examine our own beliefs. We need to make sure that everything we believe is supported by God's word, and not just our own thoughts or feelings.



my time with God

1. Read Hebrews 11:3. Why do you think we are first called to believe that the world was made God "by faith"? Why doesn't the author or Hebrews call us to believe that God made the world because of scientific facts? What do you think is the relationship between faith and facts?
2. Read Hebrews 11:6. Why do you think it is impossible to please God without faith? Why is God looking for faith in you today?
3. Read about Noah in Hebrews 11:7. How was it possible for Noah to build a huge boat when not even rain had never been seen before? How are you able to believe God about Heaven other things you have never seen? (You can read more about Noah in Genesis 5-9)
4. Read about Abraham in Hebrews 11:7-19. How many acts of faith can you see in these verses? What do you think enabled Abraham to live like this? How can you live like this also? (You can read more about these stories of Abraham in Genesis 12-25)
5. Read about Moses in Hebrews 11:23-28. Why was Moses able to reject all the wealth of the most powerful nation in the world at that time, and identify himself with a group of slaves? How are you, like Moses, able to "see the invisible"? (You can read more about Moses in Exodus 2-15.)
6. Read about many different people of God in Hebrews 11:32-38. What did faith enable these people to achieve? What could faith do in your life today?



pass it on!

Who can you challenge to test that what they believe has a secure foundation on God's word?



extra help

1. The Autobiography of George Mueller.
2. Patriarchs and Prophets chapter 7, The Flood; chapter 11, The Call of Abraham; chapter 13, The Test of Faith; chapter 22, Moses, "Faith and Acceptance", in Steps to Christ, & Chapter 13, "Victory" in Desire of Ages, by Ellen White.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

God's power for change
comes through God's promises **10**

?

did you know...

In August 1914, British explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton, and 27 men sailed with the ship *ENDURANCE* for the Antarctic. Their goal was to cross of the Antarctic Continent from ocean to ocean via the South Pole. They began on 7 December 1914, but their ship got stuck in pack ice with the coast still 80 miles away.

The *ENDURANCE* drifted in the ice. Repeatedly the hull of the ship was forced to withstand increasing pressure from the ice. The men waited ten months for the ice to loosen. Then on 27th October 1915, they finally had to leave the ship after the tremendous ice pressure sank the ship. Shackleton and his men were shipwrecked in one of the most desolate places of the world. For months they drifted north with the pack ice. On 9th April 1916, the castaways finally reached the edge of the ice. They got into the three life boats they had towed

behind them all the way. That was the beginning of a most unique journey in the history of polar exploration; a voyage over the most tempestuous ocean on earth in a life boat only 7 metres long.



On 24th. April 1916, after incredible exertion, the men reached the uninhabited Elephant Island. Shackleton decided that most of his crew and the two more fragile boats should remain there and wait for him. Taking the *JAMES CAIRD*, which was the best of the three life boats, he wanted to try to reach South

Georgia, 700 sea miles away. He chose five crew to go with him, and promised the rest, "I will return."

They sailed away through raging waters in one of the most spectacular events in the history of polar exploration. Despite all the storms and adversities, the *JAMES CAIRD* reached South Georgia on 10th. May 1916, nearly one and a half years after the *ENDURANCE* had first started out from this island. But the men, now completely exhausted, had come ashore on the uninhabited side of the island. So Shackleton and two of his companions climbed over this unknown terrain, interspersed with high rugged mountains and glaciers. After only 36 hours of near continuous climbing, they reached the whaling station. Shackleton then fulfilled his promise. In the rescue mission that followed, all members of the expedition were saved.



the facts of his story

1. According to 2 Peter 1:3-4, what two things do God's promises do for us?

2. What is the key for the promises of God to be fulfilled with amazing power in our lives? You also see this key at work in the life of Abraham in Romans 4:16-21.

3. What happens to the people in the parable of the seed who do not believe Jesus' words? (Luke 8:11-15)

v12 _____

v13 _____

v14 _____

4. What three things does Jesus say we have to do if we are to be transformed by his words? (v15)

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____



thinking it through

1. What is the most important thought you have read in the above texts, and why?

2. Is there anything that you find difficult when it comes to believing what God has said and promised? Why do you think this is, and what can you do about it?



habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus ~ praying God's promises

Have you ever prayed to be different inside, but ended up staying just the same? If so, what can we do about this lack of power? Here's a promise from God to you that can help:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Someone calculated that there are 1260 promises in the Bible. And did you know that God's promises are all ultimately focused on what Peter is describing—for us to reflect the character of Jesus and avoid being hurt by sin. For these promises to work however, James tells us bluntly that when we come to God, we must believe that God will do what he has promised, "But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave

power in that prayer! Why? Because nowhere in the Bible does God promise to give any of us a sports car! However, when we know what God does promise us, then we can pray with complete confidence that God will answer. There is power in such prayers.

*"Promises predict
the answers."*

Armin Gesswein

So when we pray according to the God's words, our faith grows, and this faith brings God's power into our lives for change. As you may know, Jesus is able to perform miracles in the gospel stories that brings change into people's lives because of their faith in his words.

So where can we find God's promises that bring the promise of His power to us? First, in the Bible there are promises that begin with words like, "I will...". Look at some of these in the box below.

Abundant life, John 10:10
A crown of life, Rev. 2:10
A heavenly home, John 14:1-3
A new name, Isa. 62:1-2
Answers to prayer, 1 John 5:14
Assurance, 2 Tim. 1:12
Cleansing, John 15:3
Clothing, Zech. 3:4
Comfort, Isa. 51:3
Companionship, John 15:15
Deliverance, 2 Tim. 4:18
Divine sonship, 1 John 3:1-2
Everlasting life, John 3:16
Fellowship of Jesus, Matt. 18:19
Fruitfulness, John 15:4-5

Gifts of the Spirit, 1 Cor. 12
Glory after death, Man. 13:43
God's protection, 1 Pet. 5:6-7
Growth, Eph. 4:11-15
Guidance, Isa. 42:16
Hope, Heb. 6:18-19
Inheritance, 1 Pet. 1:3-4
Joy, Isa. 35:10
Knowledge, Jer. 24:7
Liberty, Rom. 8:2
Peace, John 14:27
Power for service, John 14:12
Renewal, Titus 3:5
Rest, Heb. 4:9, 11
Restoration, Isa. 57:18; 1 John 1:9

Resurrection, Rom. 8:11
Rich rewards, Matt. 10:42
Spiritual fullness, John 6:35
Spiritual healing, Hos. 6:1
Spiritual light, John 12:46
Spiritual treasures, Matt. 6:19-20
Strength, Phil. 4:13
Temporal blessings, Matt. 6:25-33
Understanding, Ps. 119:104
Victory, 1 John 5:4
Wisdom, James 1:5

Willmington, H. L. (1987). Willmington's book of Bible lists. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House.

of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does." (James 1:6-8)

But how can we ask God and be confident that we are asking for the right things? We could ask God for a Ferrari sports car, but there is no

Secondly, descriptions of God Himself are also promises. Romans 8:29 tells us that it was God's plan that we become like his Son, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son...", Romans 8:29. So when we read descriptions of Jesus, these can become promises for our prayers to become like him. (This does not include

descriptions of God that belong to God alone, for example, that he is all powerful, all knowing, or everywhere at the same time etc.)

Characteristics of God alone—that can give us confidence that our prayers will be acted upon

Almighty, Isaiah 6:1-3; Isaiah 14:27
 Always present, Isaiah 41:10;
 Matthew 28:19-20
 Sovereign, 2 Samuel 7:22;
 Daniel 4:34-35
 Creator and Re-Creator, Isaiah 44:24;
 Isaiah 44:2-3
 Eternal and Infinite, Isaiah 26:4;
 Hebrews 1:10-12
 Praiseworthy and Glorious,
 1 Chronicles 29:10-13;
 Psalm 145:4-5

Characteristics of God that we share with him—as people whom he longs to restore into his image

Love, Exodus 15:13; 1 John 4:11-17
 Kind, Isaiah 63:7; Ephesians 2:6-7
 Compassionate, Psalm 103:13-14;
 Mark 1:41
 Gracious, John 1:6
 Merciful, Ephesians 2:4-5
 Patient, 2 Peter 3:9, 15
 Long-suffering, Matthew 23:37
 Peace, Isaiah 9:6; 2 Corinthians 13:11
 Humble, 2 Corinthians 10:1
 Meek, John 13:1-5
 Just, Psalm 45:6; Isaiah 5:16
 Saving and Restoring, 2 Samuel 22:3;
 1 Peter 5:10

Wise, Ephesians 1:17; 2 Timothy 3:14-15
 Pure and Holy, Exodus 3:2-5;
 1 John 3:2-3
 Truthful, John 14:6; Psalm 119:160
 Righteous, Psalm 119:75-76; 1 John 2:1
 Protecting, Isaiah 43:1-3; 2;
 Thessalonians 3:3
 Persevering, Judges 2:1;
 2 Thessalonians 3:4-5
 Joy, Nehemiah 8:10; Zephaniah 3:17
 Gentle, 1 Kings 19:12; Luke 18:15-16
 Self-controlled, Galatians 5:22-23
 Good, 1 Chronicles 16:34; Nahum 1:7
 Faithful, Deuteronomy 7:9;
 Psalm 71:22-23
 Sacrificial, John 3:16; 1 John 4:10-11
 Forgiving, Exodus 34:5-7; Psalm 86:5

You can use your Journal to write down your prayers together with the promise that assures you that God will answer—just as he has promised! And there are lots more for you to find.



putting the pieces together

In “the facts of his story” we saw how 1) God’s promises contain the power we need for change. However, change is not automatic, but 2) depends on whether we firmly believe God’s promises found in the Bible. 4) For God’s promises to change us, we have to hear the words, keep them in our minds, and persevere when it appears nothing is happening. If we don’t do this, Jesus says that 3) we may be deceived by Satan and be lost, give up when things get difficult, or never mature because the world shapes us rather than the Word.

In “thinking it through” you were challenged to think about your own trust in God’s promises.

In “habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus” we saw how God’s promises can shape our prayers. These promises provide the power for prayers that change us to reflect the character of Jesus.



my time with God

For each day this coming week, write one prayer request in your Journal. Next to it, find a Bible text that promises that God will answer your prayer, praying that God will fulfil his promise to you. You may want to ask someone to help you if you get stuck



pass it on!

People all around us struggle to apply God’s words to their lives. Is there someone you can encourage with a promise from God that can give them encouragement?



extra help

1. Praying God’s Word, by Beth Moore.
2. “The Parable of the Seed”, in Christ’s Object Lessons (p33), by Ellen White.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

meditation teaches me how to
listen and watch

11

?

did you know...

meditate

turn over in the mind

give serious thought

contemplate

deliberate

mull over

focus on

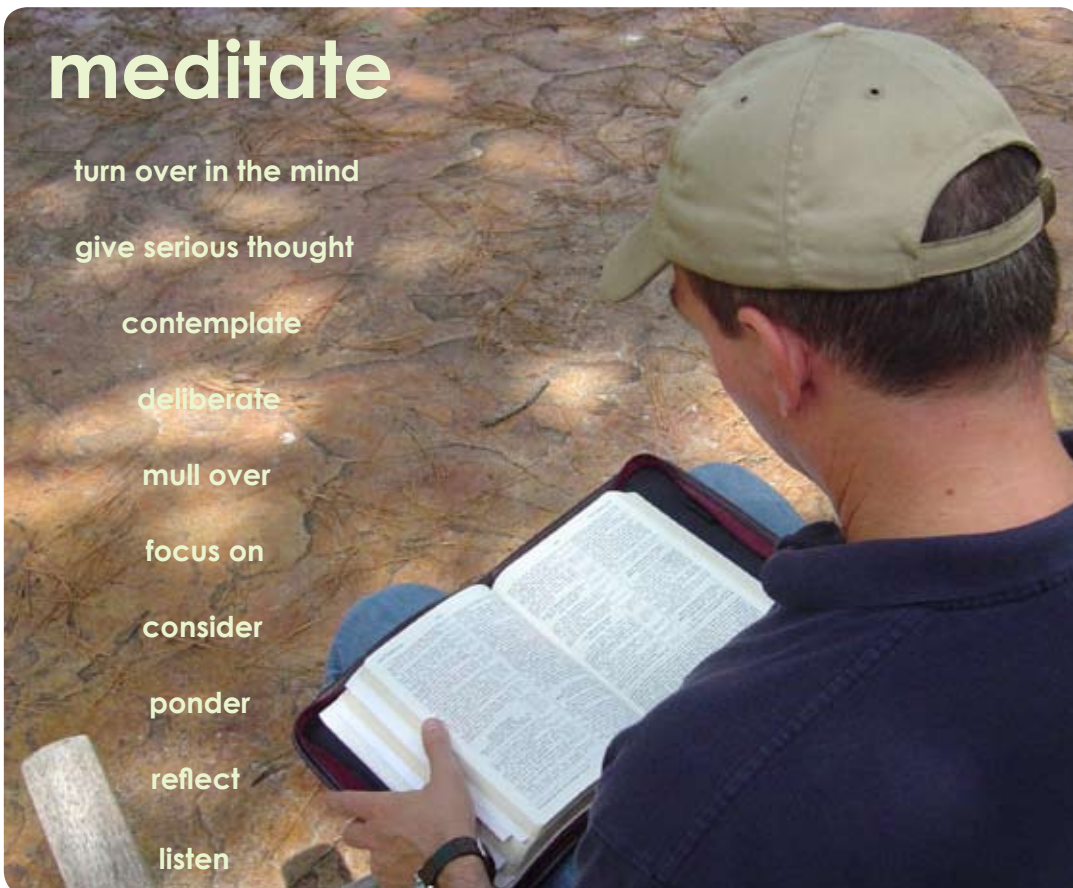
consider

ponder

reflect

listen

photo: sxc profile white





the facts of his story

Christian meditation is about listening to God's words by filling our minds full with thoughts about God. The more time we have to look and think carefully, the deeper our understanding of God will be. The deeper our understanding of God, the more we are able to accurately reflect who he is.

1. In the following verses, what do our minds focus on to get such thoughts about God?

a. Joshua 1:8 _____

b. Psalm 48:9 _____

c. Psalm 119:27 _____

d. Psalm 119:148 _____

e. Psalm 143:5 _____

2. What do you think Jeremiah meant when he wrote "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty." (Jeremiah 15:16) How do you think he "ate" God's words?



thinking it through

Meditating on God's words and works is perhaps a little like eating your most favourite food. You don't try to chew and swallow as fast as possible, but allow the food to rest on your taste buds so you can enjoy its full flavour for as long as possible.

1. According to the texts you have read, what should mediation be like to experience?

2. We are to meditate on nature, on God's work in history and in our lives. Why do you think it is important to meditate on these things as well as meditating on the Bible?



habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus ~ meditating on God's words

savouring God's words

We can study the Bible and ask questions about the text like a man digs up the ground to find treasure. With time and effort, the treasure is finally discovered.

But there is another way to hear and understand God's word which is more like tasting an expensive chocolate. You don't just gobble it down, but keep it for as long as you can in the mouth, to sense its texture—how it feels—and the different flavours. The Psalmist says, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103) We can learn how to savour God's words as we learn how to meditate.

As Joshua takes over from Moses to lead God's people into the Promised Land, Jesus appears to Joshua and says, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." (Joshua 1:8) Notice two things in the text. First, that God's word was to be in Joshua's thoughts continually. Secondly, as God's words were in Joshua's mind, it would lead him to obedience. Then Joshua would be as successful as God had called him to be.

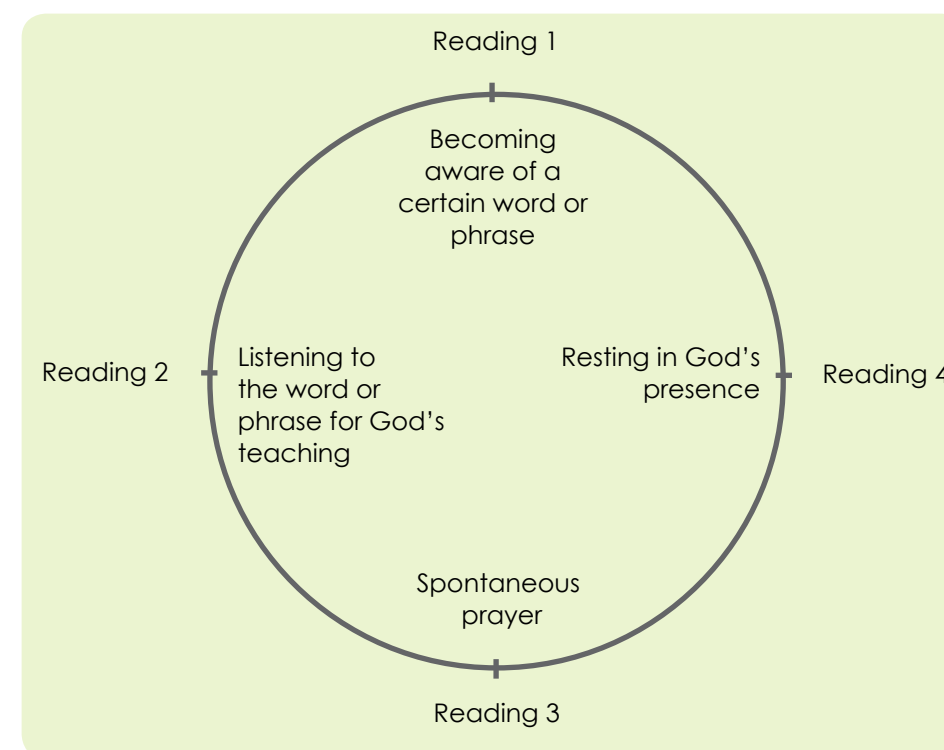
This sort of meditation is very different from what is found in Eastern religions. For example, in Buddhism meditation is a way of emptying the mind. Biblical meditation is just the opposite. In Biblical meditation we learn how to fill the mind completely with God's words. We do this as we

learn to listen to the words God speaks to us.

listening to God's words

Here is one way of learning to listen to God's words through scriptural meditation.

1. Pray for the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit before you begin reading.
2. Read a passage in the Bible. You may want to do this out loud. (It is suggested that you don't take more than 10 verses to begin with.) As you listen to the passage, try to become aware of a particular word or phrase that stands out.
3. Read the passage a second time. Return



to the word or phrase that you noticed after the first reading. Take time now to "listen" to its meaning. Don't rush or hurry. Don't try and force the text open but rather allow time for the Holy Spirit to open up the text to you. This is a time to pause and listen, observe, watch.

4. Read the passage a third time. Based on what you have seen and heard, respond

back to God in prayer. It could be a prayer of praise, thanks, or a specific request.

5. Read the passage a final time. Take time in silence to wait a little longer in God's presence. This prevents us hurrying off quickly to do the next thing on our agenda, and lose what God has just been teaching us.

You might find it more helpful to read the passage through an extra time at the very beginning so you become familiar with the

passage before you start focusing in on a particular word or phrase.

With practice, you do not have to follow the specific order for meditation, but you can move backwards and forwards between reading, listening, praying and resting.

using your Journal

You can use your Journal to jot down your thoughts or prayers at any time during your meditation.



putting the pieces together

In the introduction we saw that meditation is about thinking more slowly and deeply about God than we may normally do.

In "the facts of history" we saw how meditation is about filling our minds with the word and works of God. This means thinking deeply about 1) God's laws, 2) God's love, 3) God's promises, 4) God's creation, and 5) all the wonderful things he has done. As our minds are filled with these things, the Holy Spirit shapes our lives to reflect what we see.

In "thinking it through" you had a chance to think about meditation in your own life. This may be a new idea for many of us, but an important part of our Christian lives.

In "habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus" we looked at one way to practice meditation which emphasises listening to what God is saying in the Bible. We listen best as we pause to take time to think slowly and deeply, responding to God in prayer as meditate.



my time with God

During this week, practice using the method for meditation that we explored here. Here are some suggestions for your meditations:

1. Meditating on God's law: Exodus 20:2-11.
2. Meditating on God's instruction: Matthew 5:3-12.
3. Meditating on God's love: Isaiah 40:27-31.
4. Meditating on God's promises: Psalm 103:1-14.

Finally, use the same way of meditating, but this time meditate on :

5. something in nature that you can see that reflects God's character
6. something wonderful that God has done for you in the past



pass it on!

Can you teach someone how to meditate on Bible texts?



extra help

1. Eat This Book, by Eugene Peterson.
2. Ministry of Healing chapter 3, "With Nature and with God"



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I was designed
for intimacy with God **12**

?

did you know...

- ☞ Less than 1% of the water supply on earth can be used as drinking water.
- ☞ The total amount of water in the body of an average adult is 37 litres.
- ☞ Human brains are 75% water, bones are 25% water, and blood is 83% water.
- ☞ In a 100 year period, a water molecule spends 98 years in the ocean, 20 months as ice, about 2 weeks in lakes and rivers, and less than a week in the atmosphere.
- ☞ Ground-water can take a human lifetime just to travel a mile.
- ☞ A person can live about a month without food, but only about a week without water.
- ☞ If all the world's water were fit into a gallon jug, the fresh water available for us to use would equal only about one tablespoon.
- ☞ Each day the sun evaporates a trillion tons of water.
- ☞ A person must consume 2 litres of water daily to live healthily.
- ☞ Most of the world's people must walk at least 3 hours to fetch water.
- ☞ Each day almost 10,000 children under the age of 5 in Third World countries die as a result of illnesses caused by impure water.

(source: www.lenntech.com)



*As the deer longs for streams of water,
so I long for you, O God.
I thirst for God, the living God.
Psalm 42:1-2a (NLT)*



the facts of his story

We were designed to live continually in God's presence, but because of sin we are separated. However, this does not mean that God has stopped longing to be with us, nor does it mean that we don't long to be with him.

Consider these texts about God's longing for us:

1. What does Isaiah 40:11 tell you about God?

2. What does Matthew 23:37 say about the longing of God to help us?

Now consider these examples of man's longing for God:

3. Read Deuteronomy 6:5. What do you think it means to love God with all our heart, soul and strength?

4. Read Psalm 42:1-2. How would you describe how the Psalmist is feeling about God?

5. In Psalm 84:1-2, why does the Psalmist long so much for God? What do you think it would be like to feel like this?



thinking it through

1. From the texts you have read, how would you summarise the way God feels about you?

2. How important do you think it is to feel a deep hunger for God—that goes to the very depths of your souls—as we have seen illustrated in the Psalms? How do you think your life would change if this deep, passionate, longing for God was part of your own experience?



habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus ~ longing for God

does your heart long for God?

Do you have a longing to go on holiday in Malé?

Perhaps you are not too sure? Is it a hot place? Cold? Windy? Who knows?

What if I told you that Malé was a tropical coral island in the middle of the Indian Ocean. The Maldives island chain around Malé has beautiful white beaches with warm water, ideal for snorkelling where you can see all sorts of beautiful fishes. It is the definition of paradise on earth.

By now, maybe you're already planning to go there for your next vacation! But as you can see, longing comes as a result of knowing. We don't long for things we don't know anything about—even if they are wonderful.

It is the same with God. Our hearts will never long to be with Jesus and spend time in his presence if we don't know much about him.

the mind-heart link

There is a direct connection between the knowing of our minds and the longing of our hearts. The longing we have for God is not just a feeling that we can manufacture inside ourselves. These feelings of longing for God are the consequence of what the "eyes of our mind" see.

The Psalmist cried out, "My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." (Psalm 84:2) Why did he do that? Because he saw the beauty of where God "lived"—the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem.

What about you? What do you see in God that creates a longing within your heart to spend more time with him?

This is a challenge for all of us, because there are so many other things in our lives competing for our attention. Television, the internet, hobbies, work, the list goes on. So if our hearts are to truly long to be with God, we have to carve out time

where we can be alone with God to gaze upon him.

practising the habit

Our hearts begin to long for God when we see something wonderful about God. For example:

1. Descriptions in the Bible of God's longing to be with me
2. The Bible's descriptions of God's character and seeing how he is always working for my good
3. The promises he has made to me in the Bible to care for all my needs
4. His work for good in the lives of people around me
5. The assurance of the love, work, and presence of the Holy Spirit as I pray
6. God's goodness to me in the past
7. God's goodness seen in nature

However, if our morning and evening devotions are a couple of minutes rushing through a prayer before rushing on to the next thing, our hearts will never learn to long for God like the writer of Psalm 84. But if you would like to understand a little more of what the Psalmists were writing about, you could try the following:

1. Begin by setting aside time in the morning and evening for time with God. Choose times where you will not be rushed.
2. When you read the Bible, keep an eye out for:
 - a) Descriptions of how valuable God thinks you are,
 - b) God's desire to be with you
 - c) God's promises to care for you
 - d) God's promises to transform you
 - e) God's working for good in the lives of his people
3. Spend time in prayer to thank him for what you see—take your time. Don't hurry!
4. As you pray, be sensitive to the impressions of the Holy Spirit which affirm the truth of what you have read in the Bible.
5. As you go through the rest of your day, try to remember the things you discovered in your time with God.

in your journal

In your journal, record what you discover in your time with God, along with your prayers that express your longing to be with him.

Remember, as we said, we cannot manufacture a longing for God. But as we spend time observing his goodness, we won't be able to help it.



putting the pieces together

In “the facts of his story” we saw how God longs to be with us so very much, and when we understand this, we will long to be with God in return—for who would want to be separated from someone who loves us so much?

In “thinking it through” you were challenged about your own attitude towards God. Perhaps you haven't had such a longing for God before, but now you would like to have relationship with him in which you really want to spend time with him!

In “habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus” we saw how our longing for God is not something we manufacture, but it is a response to seeing the great love of God towards us as we read his words, and spend time in his presence.



my time with God

1. Read the texts below and spend a moment to think about what it means, and how it could apply to you. Is there anything in these verses that causes your heart long for God?
 - a) God's desires for his people: Exodus 19:4-6
 - b) One of God's promises to you: 1 Peter 5:7
 - c) God's actions towards you: Psalm 103:1-18
2. Go and find something that God has made. What can you see in this that makes your heart long for God?
3. Spend some time to think about how God is at work in the lives of those around you. Is there anything that causes your heart to long more for God?
4. Think back over the past months or years. What can you see that might cause your heart to long for God?
5. Have noticed anything in the news recently that causes you to long for God?



pass it on!

Are you able to explain to someone how deeply it is possible to long for God?



extra help

1. Steps to Christ chapter 1 “God's love for Man”, by Ellen White.
2. Enjoying Intimacy with God, by J. Oswald Sanders.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I live continually
in the presence of Jesus

13

?

did you know...

Photo: SXC wwskies

Footprints in the Sand

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.

In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only.

This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to the Lord,

"You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?"

The Lord replied, "The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you."

Author Unknown.



the facts of his story

God is always with us. Just because we don't see him, or because we don't feel that he is there, doesn't mean that he isn't. Even when we get hurt, or difficulties things happen to us, God is still present. Look at what the Bible says:

1. In Joshua 1:5-9, what does God promise Joshua as he is about to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land?

2. What is the promise God gives to us in Isaiah 43:1-4 when we are going through difficult situations?

3. What does the angel tell Mary that people will call Jesus, and why? (Matthew 1:23)

4. What is the very last thing that Jesus says to his disciples in the book of Matthew? (Matthew 28:20)

5. In Hebrews 13:5, what is the principle we should live by if we want to experience God's continual presence?



thinking it through

1. What is the most important idea you have just read about God's presence with us, and why?

2. Why do you think that many people believe that God has abandoned them? Have you ever thought that, and why?



habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus ~ practising the presence of God

brother lawrence

The term "Practising the presence of God" comes from a book written by Brother Lawrence. He lived in the 1600's, and having read many books about how to have a relationship with God, he found them a little puzzling. As a result, and because of his desire to live completely for God, he decided he would try and live as if only he and God were together in the world. In a letter, he describes how:

at all times, every hour, every minute, even at the height of my business, I drove away from my mind everything that was capable of interrupting my thought of God." (The Practice of The Presence of God, 32)

He tried to make this the habit of his life. This enabled him to remember consciously and continually that he was always walking in God's presence.

Of course, Brother Lawrence wasn't trying to avoid people or living real life. Rather, his intention was to let God's presence be so real and strong in his mind, that God's way of thinking and living would shape how he lived with people.

When in prayer, Brother Lawrence would often think of himself in different ways:

Sometimes I considered myself before Him as a poor criminal at the feet of his judge; at other times I beheld him in my heart as my Father, as my God.... Sometimes

I considered myself there as a stone before a carver, whereof he is to make a statue; presenting myself thus before God, I desire Him to form his perfect image in my soul, and may me entirely like himself." (Ibid., 31-37)

That was Brother Lawrence's focus—to reflect the image of God within. Is that your desire? Do you ever think about the reality that you are constantly living in God's presence? God wants us to remember this, because when we do, we will always be able to call for his help and guidance.

we all struggle with remembering

Because we all get busy and tend to forget God, Jesus was given a special name. The angel said to Joseph, "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us." (Matthew 1:23) "God with us"—God doesn't want you to forget that he will never leave

you. And as Jesus reminded his disciples as he went to Heaven, "surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) This promise of his presence is for you too.

using your habit

Our aim is to live continually conscious of God's presence. You could begin trying this for 5 minutes, and another time trying it for a whole day or more. The purpose is to always have a connection with God that allows

us to be open to the Holy Spirit's guidance, power and encouragement. In your journal, describe how practising the presence of God affected your thoughts,

how can God always be with us?

How can God always be with us, even though we are 6 billion people on the earth, all in different places? Here's one attempt to explain the possibility:

Where are you right now? Are you sitting down? If so, if I was to hit you on the leg, would you feel it? If I pinched your arm, would you feel that too? So are you "in" your arm and leg? Exactly where are "you" in your body? The reality is that "you" are everywhere inside your body. (See Dallas Willard's *The Divine Conspiracy*)

Now consider this: God is in the universe, as you are inside your body. As you are in your body—ever where at the same time, so is God everywhere in the universe.

That's a start at trying to understand this. When we get to Heaven, hopefully we can talk to God and understand this a little better!

choices, and actions during the day. Did practising the presence of God change the way you talked to people? Did it change how you spent your time or what you thought about? Did it affect the way you experienced God? Was it hard to do? If so, why was that? This may not be easy to do at first, but the more you practice, the easier and more rewarding it will be!

Did you know that in the book of Esther, the word “God” is never mentioned?

Yet the story is one in which God is tirelessly at work to rescue his people!

Enoch walked with God three hundred years previous to his translation to heaven, and the state of the world was not then more favorable for the perfection of Christian character than it is today. And how did Enoch walk with God? He educated his mind and heart to ever feel that he was in the presence of God, and when in perplexity his prayers would ascend to God to keep him. (Last Day Events, 71)



putting the pieces together

In “the facts of his story” we saw many examples of God's assurance to us that he is always with us, even when he doesn't appear to be. Even when we might be tempted to be very afraid, God is still with us.

In “thinking it through” you were challenged to begin thinking about your own awareness of God's presence, and to try and live consciously in God's presence.

In “habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus”, we looked at how to “practice the presence of Jesus” as Brother Lawrence did. The more we learn to do this, the more connected we will stay to God's power and direction for our lives. This means that even when life is difficult, we will become increasingly confident in the goodness and love of God.



my time with God

During this next week, try to remind yourself as often as you can during the day that you are living—at that very moment—in the presence of Jesus. At the end of each day, use your Journal to record your thoughts and observations about the difference this made to you during the day.



pass it on!

Can you teach someone how to practice the presence of God?



extra help

1. Practising the Presence of God, by Brother Lawrence.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

God will speak clearly
to anyone who is ready to listen

14

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did you know...

While elephants have big ears, researchers have found that they “hear” across long distances through vibrations that they feel with their feet.

photo: sxc lclark

it is similar when we listen to God—“hearing” God is does not necessarily happen through our ears... but how?



the facts of his story

Answer these questions about how God speaks to us:

1. Hebrews 1:1 tells us that God spoke to people through _____.
and more recently through _____. These messages have been written down in the Bible for us to read today.
2. God also speaks to us through _____ (Romans 1:20).
3. We understand that God is speaking to us because of the work of the _____ (1 Peter 1:20-21).
4. We are promised _____ as well to speak to us personally today (John 16:13).
5. The Psalmist says, "Those who are wise will take all this to heart; they will see in our history the faithful love of the Lord" (Psalm 107:43, NLT). From this verse we can see that God speaks to us through history and therefore our _____.

He who is made complete in Christ must first be emptied of pride, of self-sufficiency. Then there is silence in the soul, and God's voice can be heard.
Ellen White, Signs of the Times, April 9, 1902



thinking it through

1. Why do you think that God has chosen to speak in so many different ways, but he doesn't normally send an angel to appear and tell us things face to face?

2. What is the most memorable time that God spoke to you, and how did he do this?



habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus ~ listening for God

why doesn't God speak louder?

God loves us so much he allowed his only son to die for our sins. He did this so he could be in relationship with us, for he longs to restore us into his image.

So here is something to think about: would a God like this, in trying to communicate with us, speak so softly or so strangely, that we wouldn't be able to understand him at all?

Do you think God is trying to be difficult or awkward when he communicates to us? Why then do we often have such a hard time hearing him speak to us? Is God playing hard to get?

For God to have all the power in the universe, but then make it really difficult for us to hear him just doesn't make sense. So could there be other reasons why we don't hear God?

Could it possibly be that the reason so few people hear God communicate to them personally, is not because God is speaking too quietly, but because we are not listening carefully enough?

Perhaps so. Perhaps it's a combination of our lack of time to listen, but also because we create so much of our own noise, that God's voice is drowned out in the din. Such "noise" is not necessarily literal noise that we hear with our ears, but anything which distracts our attention from the voice of the Holy Spirit.

noise

So what noises do we create that might block our ability to hear God's voice? Here are some examples of "noises",

- ☞ **Physical noise:** playing music. Surfing the web. Watching TV or movies. Addicted to

the news.

- ☞ **Mental noise:** constant complaining, whining, feeling sorry for myself.
- ☞ **Emotional noise:** dreaming about what it feels like being in love, being successful; wanting revenge against people who have hurt me; following the gossip about celebrities or people I know; being hooked on following a sports team; wanting to own the latest things.
- ☞ **"Bad" spiritual noise:** in other words, sin. Sin in us blocks out the voice of the Holy Spirit.
- ☞ **"Good" spiritual noise:** always filling our time reading Christian books or even listening to Christian music. We may think that it is all very good and spiritual, but if we don't have time to reflect and hear

God because we are busy cramming our minds with new thoughts, it can still end up being just "noise".

Perhaps you have read through this list and thought, well that's not noise! I certainly don't have a problem with any of those!

If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch.

Christ's Object Lessons, 129

Well let's see. One of the ways to see how addicted we are to the noise around us is to take a break from it all—with a noise fast. Fasting is an important spiritual discipline because it begins to show us what we are really thinking and doing during the day. A noise fast helps show us what are own motives really are. So how does a noise fast work?

how a noise fast works

While a regular fast includes not eating, a noise fast includes choosing to take a break from the physical noise around us. Here's how.

For the next week, don't listen to any music, TV, radio, or movies. Don't surf the internet at all, or read any newspapers.

In their place, spend the same time you would have spent on these things in listening to God, in prayer, and reading your Bible.

You will be surprised how very difficult this is! However, if you can keep doing this for a week, you may find that the things you thought you just couldn't live without aren't as attractive as they once were. Importantly, you will get to know your own inner "noise", your own feelings and desires in a way you could never have imagined.

You may even find that you want to change the way you live. Most of all, you may begin to hear God communicate to you in much clearer ways.

using your habit

During your noise fast, use your Journal to keep

a diary of your experience. Write about your experience, the difficulties, your prayers, what you learn, and how you grow in becoming sensitive to the voice of God.

EXTRA: You may also like to try a normal fast. This is done when you want to pray about a special issue. An example of such a fast would be going without food, or eating only fruit, from 6pm one day to 6pm the next.

When we go without the food we are used to, it really helps to concentrate our minds on listening to God. It also helps us to understand ourselves better, particularly our motives. During this time, you would include the directions for the noise fast.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we saw that God has 1) spoken through history by his prophets, but most importantly through Jesus. All this has been written down in the Bible. Whenever we read the Bible, we have the opportunity to hear God speak to us. God also speaks to us about his character through 2) nature all around us. When God speaks, it is because of 3) the work of the Holy Spirit that we hear him. 4) The Holy Spirit impresses us personally about what is true, which will always harmonise with the Bible. God also speaks to us through 5) our circumstances. God may use friends, changes in our lives, hard times, things that happen at school or at work—all sorts of things—to teach us about himself.

In "thinking it through" you were challenged to reflect on the times and ways that God has spoken to you, and to think about how you might live in order to hear him more clearly.

In "habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus" we looked at one way to more clearly listen to God using a noise fast. It may seem difficult at first, but it will teach your ears how to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit more easily.



my time with God

This week, follow the instructions for the noise fast as described in the "habits" section. In your time with God, spend time particularly to pray, asking God to teach you how to discern his voice.



pass it on!

Can you teach someone the different ways in which God speaks to us and how to do a noise fast?



extra help

1. Celebration of Discipline, "Solitude" (chapter 7), by Richard Foster.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

worship is an attitude
of my heart

15

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did you know...

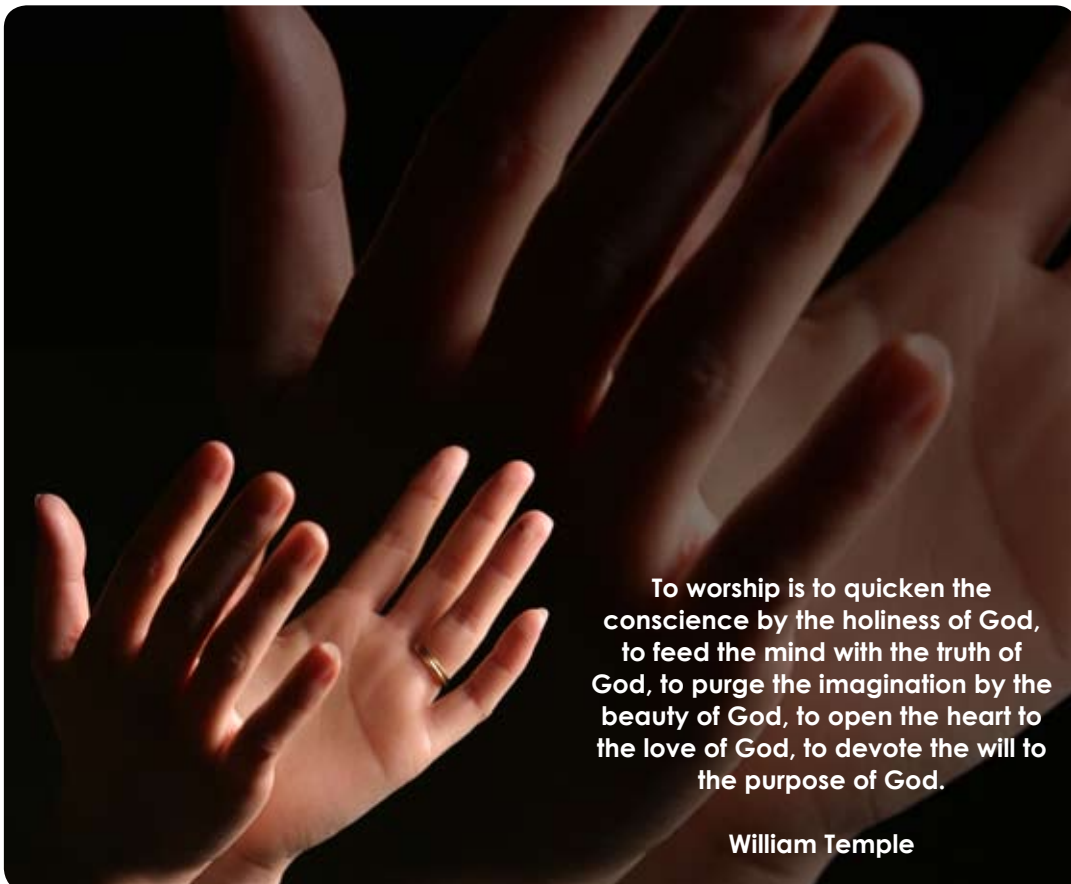


photo: socx jschutt

To worship is to quicken the
conscience by the holiness of God,
to feed the mind with the truth of
God, to purge the imagination by the
beauty of God, to open the heart to
the love of God, to devote the will to
the purpose of God.

William Temple



the facts of his story

1. What does Jesus say is the focus of our worship? (Matthew 10:4)

2. Who is it that causes us to worship God? (John 4:23)

3. What are the first two commandments in Exodus 20? Why do you think these are placed at the very beginning?

4. What does Psalm 95:6 call us to do? If worship is an act of the heart, why should it matter what position our bodies are in?

5. Read Revelation 13:11-12 and 4:6? What issue separates God's people from those who oppose God at the end of time?

the heart cannot not worship—it will worship something...

Why do you think this is?



thinking it through

1. What is the most important idea about worship that you have just read, and why?

2. How could it be possible to go to a church service and no-one be worshipping—even though they are singing and praying?



habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus ~ worshipping God alone

what is worship?

The dictionary defines worship as reverence and respect that is given to a divine being. But how do we do this towards God?

An expert in the law came to Jesus and asked him what the greatest commandment was. Jesus replied that it was to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30).

Notice two things in this verse. First, that our love for God is with our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In other words, our love for God includes all our feelings, thoughts, and actions.

Secondly, notice the repetition of the word “all”. We are to love God not with a part of our heart, soul, mind and strength but with all of it. In other words, there is no room at all to love anything which isn't focused on God. That's why the ten commandments begin with God saying,

You shall have no other gods before a me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God... (Exodus 20:3-5a)

Therefore, we worship God when we reverence and respect him—which is to love him, and him supremely, with everything we are. Such worship is not something that we do just in a church service. Worship is a complete lifestyle.

worship is...

Let's unpack this idea of worship so we can see how it works in practice. The Bible says that worship includes a number of different ideas that help us to understand what it means to love and worship God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. They are:

1. Acknowledging that God is our Creator.

“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he

is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.” (Psalm 95:6-7)

2. Acknowledging that there is only one true God. “Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.” (Psalm 96:6)

3. Praise. “Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.” (Nehemiah 8:5)

4. Sacrifice. “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.” (Romans 12:1)

5. Obedience. “Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.” (Daniel 7:27)

6. Service. “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” (Luke 4:8)

While I may want to do this, my heart, soul, mind, and strength naturally wants to put other things in God's place. Yes, I certainly needed to be reminded that God wants “no other gods before me”!

the habit: dealing with other gods

Are there other gods that have made their way into our lives and are distracting the attention of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength away from the only true God? This is what we will spend some time to think about now.

A god is anything or anyone who takes our time and energy away from Jesus. What gods are preventing your heart, soul, mind and strength from giving Jesus 100% devotion?

Stop and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts. Then ask the Holy Spirit, “what other gods do I...”:

- ☞ allow to direct my life?
- ☞ praise?
- ☞ sacrifice to?
- ☞ obey?
- ☞ serve?

God's method of dealing with other gods was clear. "Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains and on the hills and under every spreading tree where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their

Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places." (Deuteronomy 12:2-3) So how will you destroy your gods?

using your journal

Use your Journal to list the "gods" that have invaded your life. For each "god" that you list, what are you going to do about this? How will you "destroy completely" these things that are taking your heart's attention away from God?



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we saw that we are called to 1) worship God and him alone. Yet it is 2) God himself who is drawing us to worship him. This is because without God's influence in our minds and hearts, we would not naturally turn to worship him. 3) To remind us that God comes before everything else in our lives, the Ten Commandments begin with a call to put God first. 4) When we worship our physical position affects the way we think. So physically bowing before God powerfully reminds us that God is our creator, and we are his children. 5) Before Jesus comes, the world will be clearly divided into two groups of people: those who worship the true God in Heaven, and those who worship a man-made god.

In "thinking it through" you had a chance to begin thinking about who or what you really worship, because whether we think so or not, our hearts will worship—they cannot help themselves!

In "habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus" we took this further to really examine what it means to worship and to think deeply about the other gods that may have crept into our lives—and what we can do about it. Remember: worship is not something we do in a meeting, but an attitude towards God that we carry in our hearts at all times.



my time with God

This week we will focus on a different aspect of worship. Take one text each day and read it. Pretend that this text is addressed personally to you. Use the text to shape the way you pray back to God.

1. Acknowledging that God is our Creator. Psalm 95:6-7
2. Acknowledging that there is only one true God. Psalm 96:6
3. Praise. Nehemiah 8:5
4. Sacrifice. Romans 12:1
5. Obedience. Daniel 7:27
6. Service. Luke 4:8



pass it on!

Can you teach someone why worship is an attitude of the heart?



extra help

1. Celebration of Discipline, "Worship" (chapter 11), by Richard Foster.
2. Desire of Ages, (chapter 19) "At Jacob's Well", by E G White.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

revival springs from
repentance **16**

?

did you know...

since Bible times, the Holy Spirit has continued to work revival

Before electronic microphones were invented, George Whitefield preached the gospel



in the 1700's in the yards of factories, parks, and even a racecourse, to 20,000, 30,000 and 60,000—or more people at a time. One writer noted that as Whitefield preached to miners, "White gutters made by tears plentifully fell down their black cheeks as they came out of the coal pits." (Düwel, *Revival Fire*, 58.) As thousands listened late into the night, Whitefield describes how "for about an hour and a half there was such weeping, so many falling into deep distress... They were carried off and brought into the house like wounded soldiers taken from a field

of battle. Their agonies and cries were deeply affecting." Throughout the night people stayed in the fields praying and praising God.

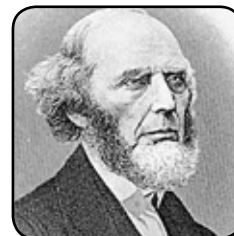
John Wesley, who preached at the same time and became the founder of the Methodists, had similar experiences preaching. Even after being forced to preach outside the church, Wesley spent days there. "By Saturday evening the people were under such conviction for their sins that 'many in the churchyard congregation dropped down as dead'. Wesley tried to preach, but the cries and praises of those repenting and receiving assurance of forgiveness almost drowned out his voice." (Ibid 78.)



So powerful was the impact of Whitefield and Wesley,

that historians believe that it was due to the preaching of Whitefield and Wesley that England did not have a revolution, like had been sweeping Europe.

Charles Finney in the 1800's has been described as a man "who probably influenced more conversions and saw the ushering in of more revivals than any other modern man."



His definition of revival is that "Revival is renewed conviction of sin and repentance" which was the very message

that was the cornerstone of the ministry of John the Baptist who preached "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins", and Jesus, who declared, "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15, NIV)



the facts of his story

A revival is what happens when the Holy Spirit breathes new life into our hearts. Hosea 10:12 gives us an insight into how and why revival occurs. Read the text and then answer the following questions:

1. What is the seed that is being sown? _____
2. What fruit does the seed eventually produce? _____
3. How does the seed get into the ground? _____
4. Who is to break up the ground? _____
5. What waters the seed to make it grow and bear fruit? _____
6. In the Bible, what does "rain" represent"? (You can see a parallel between physical and spiritual rain in Joel 2:23 and 28-29.)

There is a story from the Middle Ages about a young woman who was expelled from heaven and told that she would be readmitted if she would bring back the one gift God valued the most. She brought back drops of blood from a dying patriot. She collected coins given by a destitute widow for the poor. She brought back a remnant of a Bible used by an eminent preacher. She even brought back the dust from the shoes of missionaries who served many years in a distant land. Although she brought back these things and more, she was turned back repeatedly.

One day as she watched a small boy playing by a fountain, she saw a man ride up on horseback and dismount to take a drink. When he saw the boy playing, he thought of his own childhood innocence. But he looked into the water of the fountain and saw a reflection of his hardened face. He was overcome by the sin in his life, and in that moment, he wept tears of repentance. The young woman took one of those tears back to heaven, where she was received with joy.

-- Don McCullough, "Jesus the Judge," Preaching Today, Tape No. 129.



thinking it through

1. Why do you think that the first words that Jesus preaches are about repentance?

2. Why is repentance necessary before the Holy Spirit can change us?



habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus ~ honestly thinking about sin

No-one likes repentance. No-one likes to think that they were wrong, and that they have to admit it. Repentance is extremely hard, for it is the very opposite of what we naturally want to do.

But unless we confess our sin, and stop doing it, we will not find healing from God. Sins that we do not confess block our connection to God, and this prevents the power to reflect his character from coming into us. That is why David wrote,

If I had not confessed the sin in my heart,
my Lord would not have listened.
Psalm 66:18

But when we are bold enough to believe that God will forgive and restore us, the results are wonderful.

First, there is joy in Heaven. Jesus stated, "I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10)

Second, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:38)

Third, we receive a new heart. God declared, "Rid yourselves of all the offences you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!" (Ezekiel 18:31-32)

thinking about sin

There may be times when we know we have done something wrong because it's very clear to us. But occasionally there are times when things just aren't going well and we don't know why. Especially at times like these, it is good to spend time alone to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any sin that is blocking our connection with God. It is also helpful to make a habit of asking

God about this at the end of every day. Then we make sure that if there is anything we need to repent of in our lives, we don't allow the problem to continue.

Jeremiah says in Lamentations, "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord." (Lamentations 3:40) To examine ourselves is to think about ourselves carefully.

using your habit

To think honestly about repentance, you could do the following:

1. Go to a place where you can be by yourself.
2. Thank God for his promise to forgive you so that you can have a new start. (John says that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, NIV) This means that if we are truly sorry for going against God's design for our lives, he will forgive us and re-create us like new inside — no matter what we have done.)
3. Pray for the Holy Spirit to show you if there is anything that you need to repent of and change.
4. Use your Journal to make a list of these things. Keep praying and writing until you are sure that there is nothing more for the Holy Spirit wants to show you. Then put a line at the bottom of your list. For example:
 - a) For getting angry at John this morning.
 - b) For looking at things on the web that I shouldn't.
 - c) For not wanting to help those in need._____

5. Ask for God's forgiveness and for help to change the way you have been thinking and acting. Look at the first item on your list (Getting angry). Then pray and ask God to forgive you for getting angry and saying unkind words. When you are confident that God has forgiven you (Remember the text in 1 John 1:9), cross out that point. Then pray specifically about number 2 and do the same thing. Pray for everything on your

list individually. When you have reached the line, you know that from this moment on, you are ready to live in harmony with God.

Don't think there is anything you have done that

God cannot forgive. Like David who confessed his sin in Psalm 51 (sin which included adultery and murder), God is eager to restore everyone who asks. You may like to pray through Psalm 51 at the end of your time of confession.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we saw how Hosea 10:12 describes the process of repentance. God longs to see us 2) bear the supernatural fruit of unfailing love, but this fruit can only be reaped from plants that grow from 1) the seeds of righteousness. These seeds of righteousness that bear the fruit of unfailing love—which by definition is the very essence of the character and glory of God—can only grow when 3) the hard ground into which the seed must fall, is broken up. If the ground remains hard, the seeds of righteousness will not fall in. So Hosea says 4) to us, "break up your unploughed ground". The hard and stony ground must tilled, dug, worked, broken up, ploughed, turned over, for the sole purpose of enabling the rain of 5 & 6) the Holy Spirit to slip into the cracks and soak the ground, bringing the seeds of righteousness to fruitfulness. When our heart is opened through repentance, the rain of the Holy Spirit can enter.

In "thinking it through" you were challenged about repentance in your own life. Repentance is difficult because it is the very opposite of what we want to do, but it will bring us new energy as the Holy Spirit renews our hearts.

In "habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus" we looked at a practical way to repent of sin in our own life. When we learn to regularly examine ourselves before God, we keep our connection to him open at all times.



my time with God

Practice the habit at the end of each day this week. Use the handout to help guide your prayers.



pass it on!

Can you teach someone what Hosea 10:12 means?



extra help

- 1. Steps to Christ, (first four chapters) by Ellen White
- 2. How to Experience Revival, by Charles Finney

Preparing The Heart For Revival

...break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you. (Hosea 10:12)

The following material has been adapted from the book by Charles G Finney, *How To Experience Revival*. Before you begin this spiritual assessment, think about the text at the top of this page and how it applies to your own life. Then pray for the direction of God's Spirit. Ask Him to give you a true picture of yourself, but also with that, a glorious vision of the sort of person he wants you to become.

Don't hurry through this exercise. Spend time praying over each section asking for guidance and instruction. In the first two columns you will see various areas of our lives that need to be confessed. In the third column there is room for you to confess specific sins in your own life, and to ask for God's forgiveness and healing.

Let's finish with Finney's own words of instruction,

Examine your sins one by one. Go over them carefully as a merchant goes over his books. Each time a sin comes to mind add it to the list. General confessions of sin will never do, your sins were committed one by one, and they should be reviewed and repented of one by one... Get to work with your restitution, now! Go now! Do not put it off... Do not expect God to miraculously break up your fallow ground for you... you must submit your will."

So, "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord." (Lamentations 3:40)

Things I have not done, that I could have

Lack of thanks to God	Have I been blessed by God, but felt he has not done enough, and so have not thanked him?	
Lack of love for God	Have I loved things more than God?	
Neglecting Bible study	Have I hurried with Bible study, doing it more to "please" God than to learn from him?	
Neglecting prayer	Have I avoided prayer, or prayed only because it "should" be done?	
Times of unbelief	Have I not really believed that God's word or promises are true?	
Poor spiritual attitude	Have I done spiritual things, but my I really didn't want to do them?	
Lack of love and responsibility	Do I really care for the spiritual and eternal welfare of my friends, family?	
Lack of concern for unbelievers	Do I really have compassion for those that don't know Jesus? Do my actions really reflect what I say about how much I care?	
Family responsibilities	Do I fulfil my family responsibilities? What do I do for their spiritual good?	
My own life	How often have I rushed through my own work and left God until it was convenient—or forgotten him completely?	

Lack of self-sacrifice	Do I really sacrifice myself for others? Do I give others only out of what I have extra? What have I given that has meant I have had to go without?	
Something else?		

Things I have done that I should not have

Worldly thinking	Do I consider my money and possessions as my own? Do I work for my own ambition?	
Pride	When have I been acting out of pride? When have I been more concerned with what others think of me than God?	
Envy	When have I been envious of somebody else's money or talents? Have I thought more about their faults rather than their virtues?	
A critical spirit	When have I had a bitter spirit towards others and did not show them love?	
Slander	When have I spoken of other people's faults, real or imagined, for no godly reason?	
A lack of seriousness	When have I been light-hearted with God when I would never dare to be like that with an earthly ruler?	
Lying	When have I deceived someone—by what I said, or not said, by a look, or action?	
Cheating	When have I treated someone in a way I would not like to be treated? (This is cheating people of respect.)	
Hypocrisy	When have I been a hypocrite before God in the way I prayed? When have I prayed for things without sincerity, not even remembering what I said by the end of the prayer?	
Robbing God	When have I taken time for myself when I could have been working for God's kingdom and saving others. When have I withheld my talents, offerings or tithe from God's church?	
A bad temper	Have I been abusive or out of control—to family, friends or church members?	
Something else?		

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
(1 John 1:9, NIV)*



reflecting Jesus

BETA

private prayer
brings power

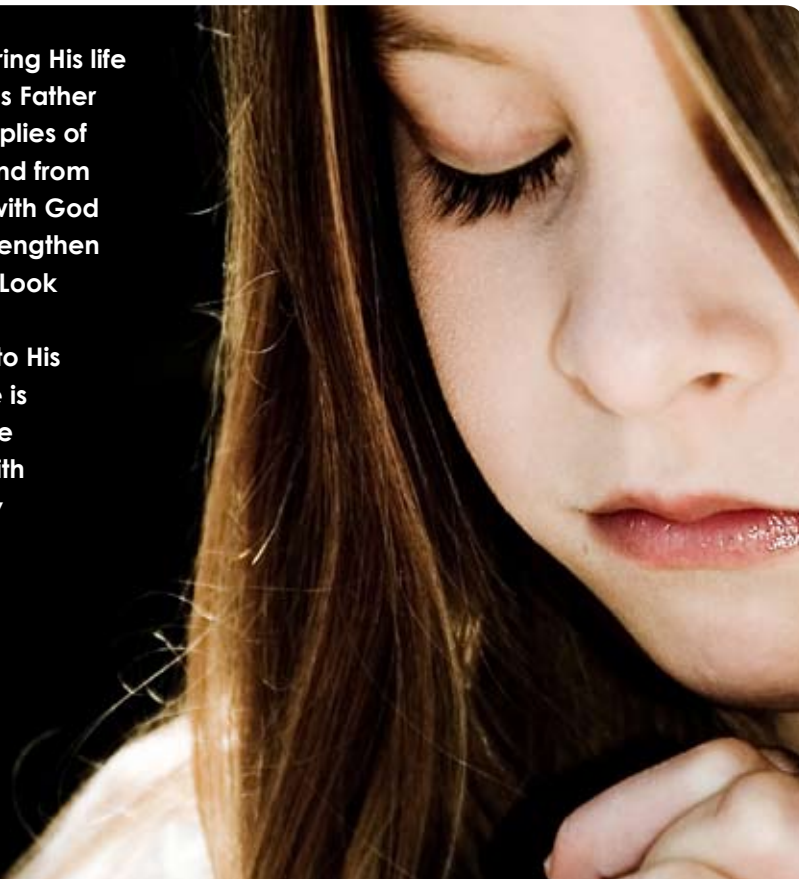
17

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did you know...

“...even Christ during His life on earth asked His Father daily for fresh supplies of needed grace; and from this communion with God He went out to strengthen and bless others. Look at the Son of God bowed in prayer to His Father! Though He is the Son of God, He strengthens His faith by prayer, and by communion with heaven gains for Himself power to resist evil and to minister to the needs of men.”

photo: sxc chriswalk





the facts of his story

Where did Jesus go to be alone, for how long, and why?

1. Luke 4:1-2 _____
2. Matthew 14:13 _____
3. Matthew 14:22-23 _____
4. Mark 1:35 _____
5. Mark 6:30-32 _____
6. Luke 6:12-13 _____

It has been said...
***"If Jesus prayed so much—and he was the Son of God
—can we afford to pray any less?"***

What do you think?



thinking it through

1. We can talk to God during the day. But as we see with Jesus, he spent time regularly praying in private. Why do you think this was?

2. Why do you think it would be important for you to spend lots of time in private prayer?



habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus ~ private prayer with God

In his book, *Power through Prayer*, E M Bounds writes the following:

"The men who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for him, have been men who spent so much time with God as to make it a notable feature of their lives. Charles Simeon devoted the hours from four till eight in the morning to God. Mr. Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. Of him, one who knew him well wrote: "He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining." John Fletcher stained the walls of his room by the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night; always, frequently, and with great earnestness. His whole life was a life of prayer. "I would not rise from my seat," he said, "without lifting my heart to God." His greeting to a friend was always: "Do I meet you praying?" Luther said: "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer." He had a motto: "He that has prayed well has studied well."

These people really believed that there was great power in their lives because of prayer. And this power is also available to us. God loves it when we ask him for the gifts he has promised us, for these gifts bring his supernatural power into our lives.

Here's a question: when you pray, what do you normally ask God for? There are all sorts of things we can ask for, but they all fit in two main groups.

The first group of prayers are physical requests. Most of our requests are for things like this. For example,

1. That we will have a good day at school or work

2. That we will have good weather
3. That God will heal a friend's bad back

It is good to pray about physical things, but there is something even more important.

The second, and most important group of prayers, are spiritual requests. Spiritual requests are directly related to the work of the Holy Spirit in us. For spiritual growth, these prayers bring power into our lives, and into the lives of others. Such requests would include:

1. A stronger trust in God's promise to guide me (Proverbs 3:5-6)
2. Patience (Colossians 3:12)
3. Love towards those who are difficult to love (John 13:34-35)
4. Self-control not gossip about others (2 Corinthians 12:20)

Did you know that every request you make to God for such things, the answer will always be "YES!"? He will never say no, because these requests are about reflecting his character.

Sometimes, it may not appear that he is answering yes at all. But as we know that there is nothing more important to God than for us to reflect the character of Jesus, we can be certain that he is at work to reveal himself through us.

using your habit

1. Make a two columns in your Journal. Label the first column, Prayers for Physical Things. Label the second column, Prayers for Spiritual Things.
2. Now go back over the last week and write in the appropriate column the things you can remember praying for.
3. Do you have a longer list for physical or for spiritual requests?
4. Now think about the next week. What spiritual requests could you make to God, both for yourself and for people you know?

When you pray, always think about the two groups of requests — requests for physical things,

and requests for spiritual things. Make sure you have at least as many requests for the spiritual things, because these are what will really make a difference to us — for eternity!

To see the spiritual requests Paul made for people, you can read his prayers in Ephesians 1:15-23, Ephesians 3:14-21, Philippians 1:1-11, Colossians 1:3-14, and 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13.



putting the pieces together

In “the facts of his story we saw how often Jesus goes away by himself to pray. 1) He prayed for 40 days as preparation to his ministry where he was also tempted by Satan. 2) After hearing that John the Baptist was killed, he went to be alone. 3 & 5) He also goes to be alone after spending a lot of time with the crowds, 4) at the beginning of the day, 5) and before choosing the 12 disciples who he also commissioned as apostles.

This was really important to give him spiritual wisdom and power for his ministry. He could not accomplish his ministry without so much time alone in prayer with his Father.

In “thinking it through” you were challenged to think about your own private prayer time. This may not be a strong point for all of us, but there really is something special that happens in us through the Holy Spirit when we have plenty of time to pray alone.

In “habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus” took time to examine our own prayers—to see if they reflect the spiritual priorities that God is hoping we will have for our own lives. It is when we pray such prayers during our time with God that God’s power, through his Holy Spirit comes into our lives.



my time with God

In your devotional time this week, we will look at some prayers that brought power into people’s lives. Take one passage each day and make a list of the spiritual things that are being prayed for. Then use this list and pray for these things for yourself and for those you know.

1. Ephesians 1:15-23
2. Ephesians 3:14-21
3. Philippians 1:1-11
4. Colossians 1:3-14
5. 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
6. John 17

What was it like to pray for these things?



pass it on!

Could you explain to someone why it is important to have time to pray alone?



extra help

1. Steps to Christ, The Privilege of Prayer
2. Celebration of Discipline, Prayer (chap 3), by Richard Foster
3. Power through Prayer chapter 7, E M Bounds

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Power Through Prayer

E M Bounds

Chapter 7

Much Time Should Be Given to Prayer

The great masters and teachers in Christian doctrine have always found in prayer their highest source of illumination. Not to go beyond the limits of the English Church, it is recorded of Bishop Andrews that he spent five hours daily on his knees. The greatest practical resolves that have enriched and beautified human life in Christian times have been arrived at in prayer. -- Canon Liddon

WHILE many private prayers, in the nature of things, must be short; while public prayers, as a rule, ought to be short and condensed; while there is ample room for and value put on ejaculatory prayer -- yet in our private communions with God time is a feature essential to its value. Much time spent with God is the secret of all successful praying. Prayer which is felt as a mighty force is the mediate or immediate product of much time spent with God. Our short prayers owe their point and efficiency to the long ones that have preceded them. The short prevailing prayer cannot be prayed by one who has not prevailed with God in a mightier struggle of long continuance. Jacob’s victory of faith could not have been gained without that all-night wrestling. God’s acquaintance is not made by pop calls. God does not bestow his gifts on the casual or hasty comers and goers. Much with God alone is the secret of knowing him and of influence with him. He yields to the persistency of a faith that knows him. He bestows his richest gifts upon those who declare their desire for and appreciation of those gifts by the constancy as well as earnestness of their importunity. Christ, who in this as well as other things is our Example, spent many whole nights in prayer. His custom

was to pray much. He had his habitual place to pray. Many long seasons of praying make up his history and character. Paul prayed day and night. It took time from very important interests for Daniel to pray three times a day. David’s morning, noon, and night praying were doubtless on many occasions very protracted. While we have no specific account of the time these Bible saints spent in prayer, yet the indications are that they consumed much time in prayer, and on some occasions long seasons of praying was their custom.

We would not have any think that the value of their prayers is to be measured by the clock, but our purpose is to impress on our minds the necessity of being much alone with God; and that if this feature has not been produced by our faith, then our faith is of a feeble and surface type.

The men who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for him, have been men who spent so much time with God as to make it a notable feature of their lives. Charles Simeon devoted the hours from four till eight in the morning to God. Mr. Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. Of him, one who knew him well wrote: “He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining.” John Fletcher stained the walls of his room by the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night; always, frequently, and with great earnestness. His whole life was a life of prayer. “I would not rise from my seat,”

he said, “without lifting my heart to God.” His greeting to a friend was always: “Do I meet you praying?” Luther said: “If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer.” He had a motto: “He that has prayed well has studied well.”

Archbishop Leighton was so much alone with God that he seemed to be in a perpetual meditation. “Prayer and praise were his business and his pleasure,” says his biographer. Bishop Ken was so much with God that his soul was said to be God-enamored. He was with God before the clock struck three every morning. Bishop Asbury said: “I propose to rise at four o’clock as often as I can and spend two hours in prayer and meditation.” Samuel Rutherford, the fragrance of whose piety is still rich, rose at three in the morning to meet God in prayer. Joseph Alleine arose at four o’clock for his business of praying till eight. If he heard other tradesmen plying their business before he was up, he would exclaim: “O how this shames me! Doth not my Master deserve more than theirs?” He who has learned this trade well draws at will, on sight, and with acceptance of heaven’s unfailing bank.

One of the holiest and among the most gifted of Scotch preachers says: “I ought to spend the best hours in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment, and is not to be thrust into a corner. The morning hours, from six to eight, are the most uninterrupted and should be thus employed. After tea is my best hour, and that should

be solemnly dedicated to God. I ought not to give up the good old habit of prayer before going to bed; but guard must be kept against sleep. When I awake in the night, I ought to rise and pray. A little time after breakfast might be given to intercession." This was the praying plan of Robert McCheyne. The memorable Methodist band in their praying shame us. "From four to five in the morning, private prayer; from five to six in the evening, private prayer."

John Welch, the holy and wonderful Scotch preacher, thought the day ill spent if he did not spend eight or ten hours in prayer. He kept a plaid that he might wrap himself when he arose to pray at night. His wife would complain when she found him lying on the ground weeping. He would reply: "O woman, I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them!"



reflecting Jesus

BETA

purity is not an action
but a direction of the heart

18

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did you know...

24 carat gold

is the purest, softest,
and most expensive
gold

18 carat gold

is 75% pure and has
been mixed with 25% of
a different metal, which
makes it stronger

14 carat gold

is nearly 60% pure, and
quite strong

10 carat gold

in some countries, gold
must be at least 10
carat in order to be
advertised and sold as
“real” gold. It is about
40% pure and very
strong

photo: sxc calcant

what does it mean to be pure in God's sight?



the facts of his story

God gave the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai so his people would know his character and the ways of his kingdom. But by the time Jesus came, many hundreds of years later, he found the people trying do right actions, without being pure in their hearts. Jesus knew that if they were to reflect his character, their hearts must work from pure and true motives.

In the left hand column are the 10 commandments. Read the text in the right hand column. What attitude of the heart do you find in this text that enables us to obey the corresponding commandment?

Living the 10 Commandments from the Heart	
The 10 Commandments (Exodus 20)	Attitudes of the Heart
1. You shall have no other gods before a me.	Deuteronomy 6:4-9.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them...	Deuteronomy 6:4-9.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.	Psalms 148:13
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work...	Isaiah 58:13-14
5. Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.	Ephesians 6:1-3
6. You shall not murder.	Matthew 5:21-22
7. You shall not commit adultery.	Matthew 5:27-30
8. You shall not steal.	Titus 2:9-10
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.	Colossians 3:9-10
10. You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."	Romans 13:9-10



thinking it through

1. From the texts that you have just read, how would you define purity in God's eyes?

2. How would you describe the heart the follows God's commandments?



habits for reflecting Jesus ~ the purity line

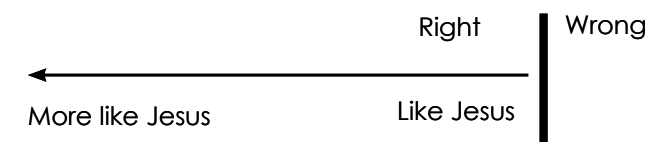
Jeremiah says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) So when we are thinking about living lives of purity before God, it is not our actions that we should think about first, but our hearts. That's where the problem lies. But when the heart is right with God, then the actions will be right towards him and each other also.

the purity line

When we think of purity, we often think of right and wrong on two sides of a line. "Right" is on one side, and "wrong" is on the other. But this can be dangerous thinking because we think that as long our feet are on the right side of the line we are ok. But our hearts can still be on the wrong side. For example, you could never buy a pornography magazine, but you could spend many hours fantasizing about other women.

Right	Wrong
My feet: Never buying pornography	My heart: Fantasizing about women

When we think about purity, it is helpful to think about the direction we are taking, rather than whether we are in the right or wrong place. We will continue to grow in purity for eternity, which means that we will continually find deeper ways to reflect the purity of Jesus. This means that our quest is not simply to "not be wrong" but to "increasingly reflect Jesus".



Remember that Satan and Adam and Eve were living in perfect places—Heaven and Eden—when they sinned. They were in the "right" places, but their hearts were heading in the wrong direction.

Now think about yourself. What areas do you need to think about more carefully when it comes to reflecting the purity of Jesus in your heart? Has your heart been struggling with sexually impure thoughts? Impurity when dealing with money issues? Anger or revenge? Anything else?

how to deal with an impure heart

One day, a man came to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:36-40)

We have seen that breaking the law within our hearts covers many different things. But Jesus says that these laws fall into just two areas, love for God and love for each other. So if we are to live lives of purity towards God and our neighbour, we must learn what it means to truly love God and our neighbour. Our hearts must learn to love with supernatural love. So Jesus says:

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And

if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)

We become pure, not by trying to stop being impure, but by longing more deeply to love and reflect the one who is pure: God himself. That longing causes us to call on God to fill us with a supernatural love that comes from outside of ourselves.

learning the habit

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the areas in your life where you struggle with purity—is it about sex? Honesty? Your motives? Anger? Something else? Or perhaps you need to pursue purity to the next level.
2. Ask God to give you a clearer picture of his own purity and love, so you can plainly see the sort of person he wants you to become.
3. Pray for purity. Pray for his love to fill you so that you can love him completely, and love the people you have difficulties with. The more God's love fills your life, the easier it will become to continue going down the purity line toward becoming more and more like him.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we saw how God longs for our hearts to be changed so that we can truly live lives of obedience that reflect the Kingdom of Heaven. The Ten Commandments are not just about what we do, but who we are inside.

In "thinking it through" you were challenged about your own heart and purity before God.

In "habits for reflecting the heart of Jesus, we saw that to become pure inside, we have to learn to love more fully, and this love can only come from outside of ourselves.



my time with God

Each day this week, think about one of the attitudes of the heart that guides the obedience of the corresponding commandment. Then think about "The Purity Line" What can you do to move further down this line towards an increasing reflection of the purity of Jesus? Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you as you do this.



pass it on!

Can you teach someone the purity line?



extra help

1. Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, by Ellen White.
2. The Divine Conspiracy, chapter 5, by Dallas Willard.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

the Holy Spirit transforms me
as I choose to co-operate with him

19

?

did you know...



God has all the power to change our lives
but that does not necessarily mean that we will change...

...do you know why?

SXC: befo_camin



the facts of his story

1. How eager is God in Luke 11:11-13 to give you his Holy Spirit?

2. What are the conditions that Jesus makes for receiving the Holy Spirit? (Luke 11:9-10)

3. God cannot make us repent and obey, only we can choose that. But what does God promise that the Holy Spirit will do for us?

1. John 16:8 _____

2. John 16:13 _____

4. Even while we are filled with the Holy Spirit, what will we have to struggle against throughout our lives? (Ephesians 6:12)

5. As you work with the Holy Spirit, what is the promise that you can always claim in Isaiah 41:10—even when life is tough?

Teach your children that it is their privilege to receive every day the baptism of the Holy Spirit...
Ellen White, CT 131



thinking it through

1. After what you have read, why do you think that growing under the power of the Holy Spirit depends on our choices?

2. Following God does not come easily to Paul. He is preaching the gospel and notes that "To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." (Colossians 1:29) Why do you think Paul has to "labour" when he is working under the power the Holy Spirit to do God's work? Are there any lessons for you here?



habits for reflecting the will of Jesus ~ working with the Holy Spirit for change

God has all the power to change our lives. He desperately wants to transform us to be like Jesus. We long to reflect the character of Jesus. So why do we so often feel such a lack of God's power in our lives?

Part of the answer is found in what Jesus taught his disciples about the Holy Spirit. He said that the Holy Spirit has two important tasks. First, he will show us what we are doing wrong in our lives—"when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin" (John 16:8, NLT) Second, he will show us what is right—"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13) But here is the bottom line: while the Holy Spirit will show you the sin in your life, and show you the right way to go, he is not able to make you repent or obey. Our lives will only change as we choose to repent and obey the leading of the Holy Spirit. If we don't do these two things, we won't change at all!

So how can we cooperate with the Holy Spirit for inner change?

working with the Spirit

Being transformed to be like Jesus does not happen by accident. Nor does it happen by just wanting it to happen really badly. It happens as we work together with the Holy Spirit. So let's look at how we work in harmony with God to pursue changed lives. As we explain the process, we'll highlight the process, and apply it to an example. Our example will be about

overcoming discouragement caused by hearing gossip which causes us to feel really bad about our situation. To help us remember this process, the first letter of each word forms the acronym, APCAT.

Admit your weakness. Tell God that you don't have the power or the intelligence to change yourself or to know what is right, and that you are in need of his supernatural power. (Psalm 6:2; James 5:15; Hosea 5:13) Example: "Lord, I feel discouraged, and I know that in my own power, I just don't have the strength change the way I feel."

Pray for the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

We will only change as we have help from Heaven. Ask God to show you what to do, or how to change. (Luke 11:13; James 1:5; Proverbs 3:5-6) Remember that the power of the Holy Spirit does not necessarily come with any sort of feeling, because it is by trusting in God that we grow. Example: "Lord, give me faith, discernment, and the power of the Holy Spirit, so I can overcome my discouragement."

Claim God's promise of help. It's one thing to pray for help, but it is another thing to believe that God will help you. But without faith—complete trust that God will do what he has promised—we won't experience a change. So it is helpful to quote God's promises back to him—to show him that you do trust what he has promised to do for you. You may like to begin

memorising God's promises for you to remember when you are in need. (John 14:26; Jeremiah 29:11-13; Isaiah 41:10) Example: Pray according to the promises that God makes that show us we don't need to be discouraged. "Lord, you say in Isaiah 4:27-31: "Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He

What we need is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Without this, we are no more fitted to go forth to the world than were the disciples after the crucifixion of their Lord. (1 SM 411)

will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." So Lord, I would like to claim your promise here to me."

Act. Do what you know to be right, according to God's word, no matter how you feel. Often we don't do the right thing because it "feels" hard. So don't trust your feelings to do the right thing, but trust God's direction

in the Bible and his promises. (Philippians 2:12-13) If you begin doing something and are worried that it is the wrong thing, don't worry. Talk about the matter with God and trust that he will guide you the right way. Example: when feeling discouraged it is tempting to begin treating other people differently, such as those who we think are making our lives difficult. But we have just claimed a promise that the Holy Spirit will bring help and strength. So act like this is true. Don't hole yourself in a corner and feel sorry for yourself, but go out knowing that God promises you power to lift the discouragement from your life.

Thank God for his work in you. Again, thank God no matter how you feel because thanks is faith in action! Thank God, not because you can

see how things will change, but because you are confident that God is working for you according to his promises to you—right now. (Philippians 4:4-6; Psalm 28:6-7; Psalm 56:12) Example: "Lord, thank you so much that you are with me and you promise joy in all situations. Whatever people may say, I am confident that I am in your hands." This is faith—believing that God will do for us what He has promised. And this faith, allows the Holy Spirit to act within us.

We can use this APCAT process for all sorts of things in our life where we desire to reflect the character of Jesus. Do remember that God's work in you is normally a process. Sometimes God does miracles for us that literally happen overnight, but most of the time, the Holy Spirit works in

us over time, so we learn how to cooperate with him. After murdering an Egyptian, it took Moses 40 years in the desert before he was ready to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. So don't get discouraged if change doesn't happen as fast as you would like. God has heard your prayers. He is at work for you right now. Trust him, and he—along with the whole of Heaven—will be working for you.

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son..." (Romans 8:28-29, NLT)



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we saw that 1) God eagerly wants us to have the Holy Spirit, but 2) we have to ask for him. However, our lives won't change unless we work in harmony with Him and 3) make the tough decisions to obey and repent which allows the Spirit to work in us. 4) Satan is always there to tempt us, but 5) God will always be there to give us whatever we need.

In "thinking it through" you were challenged to think about your own growth under the power of the Holy Spirit. Growing is not always easy or pleasant, but as we keep choosing to have the Holy Spirit within us, there is no power that can overcome us.

In "habits for reflecting the will of Jesus" we looked at APCAT, a simple process for dealing with things we want to change in our lives to more fully reflect the character of Jesus. This is a process of change where we are working in harmony with the Holy Spirit.



my time with God

Pray and ask God to show you something that he would like to do in your life. During each of your devotional times with God this coming week, follow through the APCAT process. Use your Journal to record your prayers, what you did (or didn't!), your thanks, and what happened through the week.



pass it on!

Can you teach APCAT to someone this week?



extra help

1. Messages to Young People chapter 40, "Exercise of the Will", by Ellen White
2. Desire of Ages chapter 17, "Nicodemus", by Ellen White. This is about the work of the Holy Spirit.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I am my habits **20**

?

did you know...

who I become depends on what I do

if I habitually do good things, I am good

if I habitually gossip, I am a gossip

if I habitually care for others, I am compassionate

so I cannot claim to be a certain type of person if my actions do not match!



I can become by doing

if I want to become kind, I have to habitually do kind actions for others

if I want to become fit, I have to habitually exercise

if I want to become loving, I have to habitually do loving actions for

if I want to do well, I have to practice doing well

doing things well does not happen by accident. We all have to practice

as a violinist becomes excellent by practising the violin

as an artist becomes excellent by practising painting

so as a Christian I become like Jesus by practising to become like Him



**but I cannot do anything that God desires,
unless His power is working in me**

**what do all these pictures
have in common?**



the facts of his story

In the following text, Peter tells us about the qualities of God that God wants to grow within us. Before going any further, read 2 Peter 1:5-7 in your Bible.

2 Peter 1:5-7	Explanation
For this very reason, make every effort to add to your	Effort is required to work in partnership with the Holy Spirit to grow in God's character
1. faith goodness	Goodness: moral excellence, like God, in our character
2. and to goodness, knowledge	Knowledge: of God and spiritual things
3. and to knowledge, self-control	Self-control: is to live by God's principles when our feelings want to do something else
4. and to self-control, perseverance	Perseverance: keeping going—when it is difficult or there is opposition
5. and to perseverance, godliness	Godliness: reverence to God
6. and to godliness, brotherly kindness	Kindness: caring for others people's needs
7. and to brotherly kindness, love	Love: wanting, and working, for the very best for others

We don't become like this overnight. Growing in the character of God happens over time. How successful we are depends not just on God, but as Peter says, on our effort also. Therefore, our habits, as well as our prayers, determine how successfully we reflect Jesus.



thinking it through

A habit is something we do so regularly that it eventually becomes automatic. So to make a new habit, we have to choose to do something differently than we did before. Often this isn't easy because our lives are full of other habits that get in the way. Now look through the characteristics in 2 Peter 1:5-7 that he wants you to reflect. Pause to pray for the direction of the Holy Spirit, and then think about habits you could develop to grow in these areas. You may just want to take 1-3 areas to begin with.

Goodness _____

Knowledge _____

Self-control _____

Perseverance _____

Godliness _____

Kindness _____

Love _____



habits for reflecting the will of Jesus ~ WWJD?

a famous story

There is a great story by Charles Sheldon called *In His Steps*. It is about a pastor who challenged his congregation to ask one question before every decision they made. The question was, "If Jesus was in my place now, what would Jesus do?" The story describes the great changes that God made in the people's lives when they began to take this question seriously.

By asking the question, "What would Jesus do?" (WWJD?) we open the door for the Holy Spirit to come in and guide us. The more we remember to ask it, the more opportunities God has to show us how to live like Jesus.

using your journal...

You can use your Journal to write about the decisions you need to make. Write about the answers you get when you ask the Holy Spirit, "If Jesus was in my situation now, what would Jesus do?" You can also write about what happened when you forgot to pray this, and the difference praying might have made!

example

June 13. I have a friend who really hurt me recently and I really don't want to have to talk to her ever again because it hurts to think about what she said behind my back. Yesterday I asked God, "What would Jesus do in my situation?"

Today I remembered what Jesus said in Matthew,

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:43-45)

I think I am going to start praying for her from now on.

Lord, sorry for being hard towards her. Help me to find a way to show her kindness as you have shown to me. Amen.

Important!

Remember: the more we live like Jesus, the better we can answer the question, "What would Jesus do?"

In other words, Jesus spent much of his time praying and reading the scriptures. He was also completely devoted to following the will of his Father in Heaven. So when he had a decision to make, he was in such close contact with God, God could show him just what he needed to do.

In the same way, the more time you spend with God, the easier it will be for you to know the answer to this important question at the times you need answers from Heaven.

Character does not come by chance. It is not determined by one outburst of temper, one step in the wrong direction. It is the repetition of the act that causes it to become habit, and molds the character either for good or for evil. Right characters can be formed only by persevering, untiring effort, by improving every entrusted talent and capability to the glory of God.

Child Guidance, 164



putting the pieces together

In the introduction, we began to see that “we are what we do”. If we want to be good, we have to learn to do good things regularly—by habit. Of course, we need to remember that only God’s power enables us to do good things.

In the “facts of his story” we looked at seven characteristics of Jesus that are to grow increasingly in our lives. These qualities do not mature in us just because we pray, but because we include effort also. But all growth begins with faith—believing that God will grow his character in us as we follow his instructions in the Bible, and the direction of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

In “thinking it through” you had a chance to think about these seven characteristics in your own life. The challenge for us all is to think, pray and plan about making who God is, part of us. Introducing new habits into our daily schedules can help these characteristics grow—because our habits shape who we are.

In “habits for reflecting the will of Jesus” we looked at the habit of asking for God’s help at every decision we have to make. We do this by asking, “In this situation, what would Jesus do?” This is a habit, but it is also a prayer for God to personally show us his will and give us his power to do the right thing.

*The second half of a man's life
is made up of the habits he
acquired during the first half.*

Fyodor Dostoyevski (1821-1881)

*Habits are first cobwebs,
then cables.*

*A nail is driven out by another
nail; habit is overcome by habit.*

— Latin proverb



my time with God

1. This week, practice asking the question “what would Jesus do?” for each decision that you are faced with. At the end of each day, use your journal to record your experiences.
2. Go back to the section “thinking it through” and look again at the areas in which you want to develop new habits. Use your journal to map out a plan of what habits you want to develop, and record what happens as you work and pray through this.



pass it on!

Could you teach a friend about the importance of habits, and how to make new ones?



extra help

1. Character is destiny, by Russell Gough, Chapter 6.
2. Child Guidance, Chapter 18.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I have nothing to fear because my Father is King of our Universe,
working everything out for my very best

21

?

did you know...

when we are connected to Jesus,
we never need to worry... ever



photo: sxc.greekgod



the facts of his story

What reasons does the Bible give us for not worrying or be fearful?

1. Do not worry about the things you need because... (Luke 12:22-28)

2. Do not worry about knowing the right things to say when people oppose your faith... (Luke 21:14-15)

3. Do not fear that God has rejected you because... (Isaiah 41:9-10)

4. Do not fear if God's plans appear too difficult because... (Joshua 1:6-9)

5. Do not fear that Satan is too strong for you because... (Romans 8:31-39)

6. Do not worry that you are not loved or special because... (Deuteronomy 7:6-8)

The weakest of God's children, when connected to God, can overcome the greatest attacks that Satan can bring. So Satan resorts to controlling us by worry and fear. He knows that if he can make us scared and fearful, and we begin to make decisions based on these feelings, we will inevitably begin to let go of our confidence and hold on God.



thinking it through

1. From the texts that you have just read, which do you find the most comforting, and why?

2. Why do you think Christians worry and are fearful, even though God tells them not to?



habits for reflecting the will of Jesus ~ eclipsing our fears

Every so often there is an eclipse of the sun. The moon covers the face of the sun, and the sky goes dark. The sun is still there, but it has been covered up so we can't see it. This idea will help us to understand how we can deal with, or "eclipse", our worries and fears.

the choice is ours

There is an old rhyme that goes something like this,

Two men looked through old cell bars,
One saw mud,
The other saw stars.

Both these men were in an unpleasant place, but they chose to look at different things. One was inspiring, the other depressing. It's the same with us. What we see and experience in life depends on what we choose to look at. The truth is that for all of us, we have the chance to look at either the positive, or negative—for both exist.

What do you choose to look at? When you look at a rose, what do you notice first, the beautiful scented flower or the sharp thorns? When you are handed half a glass of water, is it half full or half empty? When you get up in the morning, do you starting thinking of all the opportunities there are ahead, or are you quickly depressed by all the things you just know are going to go wrong?

The choice is ours.

worry and fear begins in the mind

Worry and fear occurs in our minds, and it is with thoughts of worry and fear that Satan tries to control us. Satan tries to control us by thoughts of worry and fear. He knows that if he can make us scared and fearful, and we begin to make decisions based on these feelings, we will inevitably begin to let go of our confidence in God.

However, while there are things all around that can make us scared or worried, there are plenty of positive things too. So if we want to live lives that are free from worry and fear, we have

to learn to think differently—avoid falling for Satan's temptations—and thinking differently depends on what we choose to look at.

But what if we find ourselves in really difficult situations where there is nothing around us that we can see with our eyes that is positive? Well let's imagine that is true. Can we still live without fear and worry then?

peace begins in the mind

Hebrews says that "By faith [Moses] left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible." (Hebrews 12:27) In other words, Moses succeeded because he looked around him with eyes of faith. This means

that when everything got difficult for Moses, he was confident that the promises of God to him would keep him safe and secure—so he didn't need to worry or fear. He could clearly see promises so wonderful that he didn't become depressed by

the anger, gossip, and infighting of the people all around him that he was leading to Canaan. Now we must be clear: the anger, gossip, and infighting were certainly there, but Moses was looking somewhere else, and that kept him positive and confident.

It was the same with Job. Job's children died when the roof of their house fell in, he lost all his wealth—his sheep, goats, and other animals to bandits and lightning. His wife nagged him to give up his faith, and he had painful boils. So how does anyone survive that?

At the end of the book of Job, God arrives to talk to Job, but God never offers one reason to explain why these things have happened. Instead, for four long chapters (Job 38-41) God



Which is easier to see, an ugly or a beautiful woman?

describes how wonderful, powerful, great and awesome he is, and when Job sees this picture of the greatness of his God, Job is content. The greatness of God had eclipsed this most painful of situations and brought Job peace.

practising looking up

Colossians 3:2 says "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." So this is what we are going to practice—looking up by faith at what God has promised for us.

1. First, pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts. Also be prepared to be as honest as you can about how you really think and feel.
2. Next, in your Journal make three columns across your page/s.
3. In the first column, make a list of the things that cause you to worry, fear, or feel sad. For example, "I worry that people don't really like me."

4. In the second column, write how you would naturally deal with this situation, if you were not thinking about God. For example, "When I get worried about people not liking me, I go shopping for clothes so I can feel better about the way I look."
5. In the third column, write a promise, or something about God that you can think about, that "eclipses" the fear, worry, or sadness you are faced with. For example, "Deuteronomy 7:6 reminds me that God considers me his treasured possession. He thinks that I am very special and of great worth."

The object of this exercise is to practice always looking for the goodness of God. When surrounded by difficulties, this can be hard to do, but if you determine to "keep your mind on things above", your worries, fears, and sadness, will be eclipsed by the great love of God.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story", we looked at a number of reasons from the Bible that God says we do not need to worry or fear. According to the Bible, there is not a single reason we need to fear or worry, because God lives in us.

In "thinking it through" we began to think a little bit more about fear in our own lives.

In "habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus" we looked at the idea of "eclipsing" our worries and fears with God's promises. We can't make difficult situations go away, but we can choose to fill our minds with all the good things that God has promised, and to remind ourselves of how great and wonderful he really is.



my time with God

What promises or truths about God from the Bible would you use to "eclipse" the following things:

1. Worry that I will not have enough money to pay my bills
2. Fear that others will not accept me
3. Worry that I am not good enough at my job, or in my studies
4. Worry for a future that seems depressing and without much hope
5. Worry that I am alone and without help
6. Fear that I am not good at anything to make a difference in the world



pass it on!

Could you teach someone the practice of "eclipsing" fear and worry?



extra help

1. Steps To Christ, chapter 13, Rejoicing in the Lord.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

death is the door
to life **22**

?

did you know...

If

anyone
would come
after me, he must
deny himself and take
up his cross and follow
me. For whoever
wants to save his
life will lose it, but
whoever loses his
life for me and
for the gospel
will save it.

Jesus

photo: sxc anaxagoras



the facts of his story

1. In Mark 8:34-36, Jesus tells potential disciples to pick up their cross and follow him. Where does Jesus expect them to follow him, and what will they do then?

2. In Romans 12:1-2, what must happen before we can know the will of God?

3. In John 12:24-26, Jesus says that his life is like a kernel of wheat. Why does Jesus say it is a good thing that this seed should die?

4. Read Philippians 2:1-8. Paul says that our attitude should be like Jesus'. In these verses what attitudes and actions does Jesus have that we should imitate?

5. In Luke 14:26-29, what does the story about building the tower have to do with following Jesus?

"Our permission is never asked as to what we will do or where we will go. God makes us broken bread and poured-out wine to please himself."

Oswald Chambers



thinking it through

1. When you look back over the texts you have studied, what do you think is the most important teaching of Jesus?

2. Why do you think Jesus teaches that it impossible to follow him unless we take our cross, and die on it—just like him?



habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus ~ learning to die

We don't want to die. We try to avoid it with all the energy we have. But if we want to live lives that reflect Jesus, Jesus calls us to die.

Baptism is a symbol of this. When we choose to follow Jesus and be baptised, we are laid completely under the water and are then raised back up. As Jesus was resurrected to a new life, so are we when we commit ourselves totally to God in baptism. As Paul writes, "don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:3-4)

But baptism is just a symbol. Baptism doesn't change us or save us. Becoming a church member doesn't change us or save us. The only thing that Jesus is watching and wanting to change is what happens inside our minds and hearts.

In the table below, you will see four ideas that help us understand what dying like Jesus is all

about. Read through this now.

Practically, dying like Jesus means to submit my will to God's will in everything. This includes:

1. Allowing God to choose in all of the decisions of my life, including:

- The purpose of my life and what I should do with it
- How I should use my money (all of it)
- Who I will marry
- The friendships that will only encourage me to increasingly reflect the character of Jesus or spread the gospel to others
- The small choices I have to make, even though they appear unimportant

2. Acting according to the Bible when I feel like doing the opposite:

- The choice to forgive, and do nice things (showing mercy and grace) for someone who has hurt me
- The choice to be silent when people are against me, rather than getting angry, wanting revenge, or trying to justify myself

The purpose of dying is to allow God unrestricted access to change my life	Romans 6:22-23 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in a Christ Jesus our Lord.
The purpose of dying is to serve others	Philippians 2:4-8 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature a God... made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant... he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!
The decision to die like Jesus is my choice alone, and should be thought about very carefully	Luke 14:27-30 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'
My usefulness to God only happens after I die like Jesus, but then it multiplies	John 12:24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.
Jesus never forces me to follow him and volunteer to die like him	Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
Dying with Jesus may appear like it is the end, but it is only the beginning	Mark 8:35-36 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?
Understanding the will of God only happens after I become a sacrifice like Jesus	Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual a act of worship. Do not conform any longer 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.

- c) The choice to initiate reconciliation when a relationship has broken down
- d) Obeying God's laws

3. Submitting to God's providence even though the situation is difficult or painful:

- a) Believing that even though the situation I am in is hard or painful, God is still good and working for good in my life
- b) I cannot quit what God has called me to do, just because the situation is hard or painful, because this very situation may be his choice to teach me something, or for me to help others

when do I become a living sacrifice?

The test of knowing whether we have truly died to ourselves, is if we can honestly go through every aspect of our lives and offer it to God to do

whatever he wants with it—and to do this with joy. We can't offer God even 85%, because then we would be 15% still alive! To find out how things are in our own lives, it can be very helpful to sit down from time to time and think about all of the choices I am making, to see if the choices I making today are for me, or for God.

Go through this list above and pray for each item individually. Can you pray and tell God that you are willing with all of your heart to do what is listed?

You may not feel like it right now, but the best beginning you can make is to say "God, I don't feel like living like this, but I would like to choose to live following you completely. Will your Holy Spirit change my heart so long for you to choose for me, and lead me wherever, and however, you desire? Amen."



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we saw how the 1) the call to pick up a cross and follow Jesus is a call to die, like he did. 2) Romans tells us that unless we do this, we will never know the will of God for us. 3) While dying like a seed is the end of life lived for our own pleasure, it is the beginning of a new life lived with God's power. 4) When we do this, serving others becomes our goal in life as we copy Jesus' example. 5) Because such a life is a choice. Jesus encourages us to seriously consider the cost of following him before we begin, so we will not be discouraged later when it seems hard.

In "thinking it through" you had a chance to begin to think about what it really means to die to yourself.

In "habits for reflecting the mind of Jesus" we really began to go deeper into how to practically live a life that has died and been resurrected with Jesus.



my time with God

This week we will reflect on the texts in this lesson. Take one text each day. In your journal, write the text out in full. Imagine this verse was just sent to you in a letter by God. Write a short letter in return, telling God what you think and feel about this, and how you will respond.

1. Romans 6:22-23
2. Luke 14:27-30
3. John 12:24
4. Mark 8:34
5. Mark 8:35-36
6. Romans 12:1-2
7. Philippians 2:4-8



pass it on!

Can you explain to someone what it means for you to die like Jesus, and why this is important?



extra help

1. Desire of Ages chapter 45, "Foreshadowing of the cross"
2. The Cost of Discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I can make all my moral decisions
using biblical principles **23**

?

did you know...

A compass in the Northern Hemisphere truly does point in a northerly direction, but not to the North Pole. Instead, the compass points to the North Magnetic Pole. In 1831, Sir James Clark Ross discovered that this is located at the northernmost point of the Arctic coast of North America. Similarly, a compass in the Southern hemisphere always points to the South Magnetic Pole, which is firmly planted south of Australia, in Antarctica.

The Northern Magnetic Pole chooses to move about in a 20 mile circle, and shifts its course between day and night.

(From http://www.myoan.net/facts/facts_compass.html)



photo: sxc digital_a

which way are your morals heading?



the facts of his story

1. Read 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17, and 1 Peter 4:10. Write out a sentence which summarises the principle behind these three verses.

2. Read Matthew 22:34-40. Why do you think Jesus says that "all the Law and the Prophets" (ie the whole of the Old Testament) "hang on these two commandments? Why does love guide all other laws and principles?

In her book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom tells about an incident that taught her the principle of giving thanks in all things. It was during World War II. Corrie and her sister, Betsy, had been harboring Jewish people in their home, so they were arrested and imprisoned at Ravensbruck Camp. The barracks was extremely crowded and infested with fleas. One morning they read in their tattered Bible from 1 Thessalonians the reminder to rejoice in all things. Betsy said, "Corrie, we've got to give thanks for this barracks and even for these fleas." Corrie replied, "No way am I going to thank God for fleas." But Betsy was persuasive, and they did thank God even for the fleas. During the months that followed, they found that their barracks was left relatively free, and they could do Bible study, talk openly, and even pray in the barracks. It was their only place of refuge. Several months later they learned that the reason the guards never entered their barracks was because of those blasted fleas. (John Yates, "An Attitude of Gratitude," *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 110.)



thinking it through

1. What is the most important idea you read in the texts, and why?

2. There are laws that we obey and then there are principles that guide us in how to live. What principles shape the choices you make today? Why have you chosen make your choices based on these, and not others?



habits for reflecting the will of Jesus ~ making moral choices

how do I know?

Have you ever wondered, "How do I know if I am making the right decision?" The Bible is clear about many things, but there are many other so-called "grey" areas where the Bible does not give direct answers. For example, the Bible does not talk about smoking or going to night-clubs. It does not tell us what music to listen to or what films to watch. And so on.

When the Bible appears not to give specific laws to direct our decision-making, we have to live by biblical principles. It is our responsibility to apply these principles to our own situation. This requires us to think carefully and prayerfully.

As we want to live safely inside God's kingdom, we are going to look at 7 biblical principles that will help us to make good, God-directed, moral choices. You can use these principles to help you answer any question that you have about these so-called grey areas.

building a safe-house with God

Here are the 7 principles to help us make godly decisions. Each principle is part of a building that creates a safe-house to live in with God.

the foundation

1. The Principle of a God-focused Life: *Because I choose to die to my own desires and ambitions, I will set both my heart and mind—my emotions and thoughts—on God alone.*

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. (Colossians 3:1-3)

the two-sided roof

2. The Principle of Judgement: *My responsibility is not to judge others but to judge how I am*

following God's radical lifestyle myself.

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? (Romans 2:1-4)

3. The Principle of Freedom: *My freedom is to be used to live for God, rather than only what I feel like doing.*

Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. (1 Peter 2:16)

the four pillars

4. The Principle of Running Lightly: *I will not do anything that will slow me down spiritually.*

Therefore, 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 perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)

5. The Principle of Usefulness: *I will only do what benefits myself, others, and God.*

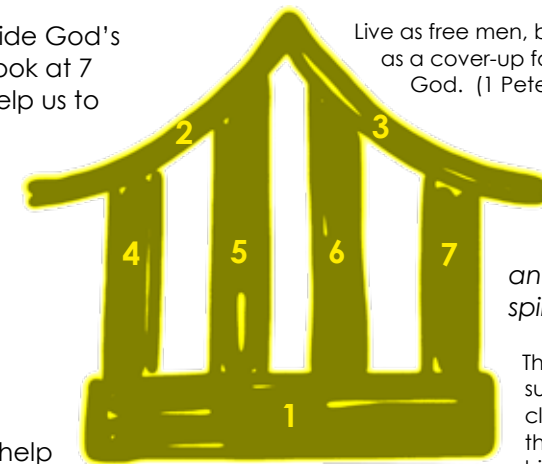
"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. (1 Corinthians 6:12a)

6. The Principle of Slavery: *I will only do those things in which I know the Holy Spirit can be my master.*

"Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything. (1 Corinthians 6:12b)

7. The Principle of Example: *I will only do what can set a Christ-like example for others to follow.*

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your



brother's way. (Romans 14:13)

using the habit

When you have a question about a moral "grey" area, ask the Holy Spirit to direct your thinking and go through each of these 7 principles. Which one can you use in your situation?

You can use your Journal to write about the moral choices you face, and the biblical principles that will help you.

🔗 This material is based on material originally created by Dick Duerksen and is adapted with his permission.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we looked at a number of texts from the Bible that emphasised that 1) every part of our lives is to glorify God. 2) Yet all of these different aspects of our lives are driven by love—love to God and love to our neighbour. This is because love is the very essence of the character of God.

In "thinking it through" you began to think about the principles that guide your own life. Some of them we are familiar with, but many we are not. The more aware we can be of the principles that are guiding us, the better prepared we are to make godly decisions.

In "habits for reflecting the will of Jesus" we looked at 7 biblical principles that can help guide us in making difficult moral decisions.



my time with God

Each day, consider one of the following moral issues and ask, which of the 7 principles would help me to come to a decision about what to do? (There may be some direct guidance in the Bible also on some of these issues.)

1. Are there any occasions when surfing the internet would become a moral choice?
2. What clothes would be appropriate or inappropriate to wear as a Christian?
3. As an employee in a food shop, is it ok to sell alcohol?
4. What activities are appropriate for me to on Sabbath, and which are not?
5. Out of the music that I own and listen to, which is honouring to God, and which is not?
6. If no-one asks, is it ok to take expensive purchases through customs without declaring them?



pass it on!

Can you teach someone the 7 principles that guide our decision making?



extra help

1. Right from Wrong: what you need to know to help youth make right choices, Josh McDowell.
2. The story of Solomon in the first five chapters of Prophets and Kings by Ellen White.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

“all things work together for good”
—even when life is painful **24**

?

did you know...

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

psalm 23 is the journey of our lives...



He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul.



4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, a I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.



5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.



6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (NIV)



the facts of his story

1. What does Peter say about suffering in 1 Peter 4:12? _____
2. What are the four main causes for suffering that we will experience during our lives?
 - a) Revelation 12:12 _____
 - b) Romans 6:23 _____
 - c) Jeremiah 9:7 _____
 - d) John 15:2 _____
3. When you read Matthew 5:10-11, does suffering for being a Christian seem optional? What do you think about what Jesus says?

"He who reads the hearts of men knows their characters better than they themselves know them. He sees that some have powers and susceptibilities which, rightly directed, might be used in the advancement of His work. In His providence He brings these persons into different positions and varied circumstances that they may discover in their character the defects which have been concealed from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to correct these defects and to fit themselves for His service. Often He permits the fires of affliction to assail them that they may be purified." (The Ministry of Healing, 471)



thinking it through

1. Why do you think many people, even Christians, are surprised when God allows them to go through times of pain and suffering? Have you been aware of the four causes of suffering?

2. When you think about your own life, when have you grown spiritually, the most—during the difficult or the easy times? Why do you think this is?



habits for reflecting the will of Jesus ~ choosing to remain faithful under fire

why difficult things happen

A goldsmith was purifying gold in the white-hot fire. "How do you know when the gold is pure?" someone asked him. He replied, "When I can see my face in it." (Amy Carmichael, Learning Of God, (London: SPCK, 1983), 50.)

Sometimes God does the same with us. God allows trials in our lives so that our sin can be burned away, enabling us to reflect his character more clearly. So it is important to know that experiencing difficulties does not mean that God has abandoned us. Rather, Peter writes,

These [trials] have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:7)

Ellen White agrees,

Through conflict the spiritual life is strengthened. Trials well borne will develop steadfastness of character and precious spiritual graces. The perfect fruit of faith, meekness, and love often matures best amid storm clouds and darkness. (Christ's Object Lessons 61)

"Someone put it this way, 'Whoever desires to walk with God, walks right into the crucible.' All who choose godliness live in a crucible. The tests will come."

Charles Swindoll

We suffer in this world because of the attacks of Satan (Revelation 12:12), and the consequences of our own sinful actions (Romans 6:23). We may also suffer when we ask God to remove our sin because the sin is so deeply entwined inside us (Jeremiah 9:7). But there is another type of pain that is the result of pruning.

pruning

Jesus says that his Father, "cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." (John 15:2) We may not have sinned in a specific way that we can think of, but as sinners, we know that we are still weak in our faith and trust and all the other qualities that

God wants to strengthen inside us. In *Secrets of the Vine*, Bruce Wilkinson writes,

"Are you praying for God's superabundant blessings and pleading that He will make you more like His Son? If so, then you are asking for the shears." (Bruce Wilkinson, *Secrets of the Vine*, 60.)

Think about Paul's thorn. Paul writes, "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me." (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) Notice that Paul considers that he was "given" this painful "thorn". He considers it "a messenger of Satan" yet he sees that it is intended to carry a holy purpose, for God permits the thorn to keep him humble.

But what was this thorn? Ellen White says that it was his bad eyesight. She writes that "He was ever to carry about with him in the body the marks of Christ's glory, in his eyes, which had been blinded by the heavenly light, and he desired also to bear with him constantly the assurance of Christ's sustaining grace." (Sketches from the Life of Paul, 34) So God permitted a physical problem to remain in Paul for a spiritual benefit—that he could grow increasingly to be like him, and be useful in his service.

never left alone

It is important to remember that we don't suffer alone. God has suffered since sin came into the world because his children hurt so much. And of course no-one on earth has suffered as much as Jesus. So this is why the book of Hebrews says,

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive

mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)

using your habit

As make choices to remain loyal to God under pressure, our challenge is to remember that trials come for different reasons. So when you face difficult situations, pray for the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom, and think about the following questions:

- a) Is this situation difficult, not because of anything I have done, but because Satan is at work in the world? If so, choose to persevere, knowing "that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)
- b) Do I hurt because I am reaping the consequences of my sin. If yes, choose to repent immediately, trust that God that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us

- from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)
- c) Could it be that God is working now to remove the sin from me? If yes, choose to hang on! For "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:11)
- d) Is this situation difficult because God is pruning me? If this is the case, choose to keep your ears open to the voice of the Holy Spirit. God may not explain everything to you today. Be patient and hold on to him, remembering his promise to you, "For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you." (Isaiah 41:13)

However, God may not always think it best to explain the reasons at the time we want them—or even at all! When God is silent, it is his invitation for us to hold on and keep trusting his goodness.



putting the pieces together

In the introduction, we saw how Psalm 23 describes our lives. Life not only includes the pleasant times, but also the unexpected, and sometimes painful. However, the good news is that Jesus, the Shepherd will stay with us until the very end.

In "the facts of his story" Peter says 1) not to be surprised when bad things happen to us. 2) This is because a) Satan is at work in the world causing pain everywhere he goes, b) we reap the consequences of our sin, c) God is working to remove the sin in us, and d) God "prunes" us, to increasingly reflect his character. Therefore, as Jesus says, 3) suffering for the Christian is not optional, but will certainly happen if they remain faithful to God.

In "habits for reflecting the will of Jesus" we looked at the idea of "pruning"—where God uses difficulties in our lives to mature us spiritually. We also saw that it is helpful to keep in mind the different reasons we may face trials, so we know how to respond.



my time with God

This week, read through the stories of the following people and try and identify the reasons for their suffering, and what kept them faithful to God.

1. Abraham (Genesis 22)
2. Job (Job 1-2)
3. Jesus & us (Hebrews 12)
4. Paul (2 Corinthians 1:3-11)
5. Moses (Numbers 16)
6. Hosea (Hosea 1 & 3)



pass it on!

Can you explain to someone the four reasons why we experience painful times in our lives?



extra help

1. Hinds Feet on High Places, Hannah Hunnard.
2. The Meaning of Trials by Ellen White, Review and Herald April 10 & 17, 1894
3. Secrets of the Vine, by Bruce Wilkinson
4. The Refiners Fire, by Gavin Anthony

The Review & Herald
April 10, 1894

The Meaning of Trials.
By Mrs. E. G. White

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years." {RH, April 10, 1894 par. 1}

A refining, purifying process is going on among the people of God, and the Lord of hosts has set his hand to this work. This process is most trying to the soul, but it is necessary in order that defilement may be removed. Trials are essential in order that we may be brought close to our heavenly Father, in submission to his will, that we may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. God's work of refining and purifying the soul must go on until his servants are so humbled, so dead to self, that when called into active service, they may have an eye single to the glory of God. Then they will not move rashly from impulse, and imperil the Lord's cause because they are slaves to temptation and passion, because they follow their carnal desires; but they will move from principle and in view of the glory of God. The Lord brings his children over the same ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility fills the mind, and the character is transformed; then they are victorious over self, and in harmony with Christ and the Spirit of heaven. {RH, April 10,

1894 par. 2}

The purification of God's people cannot be accomplished without suffering. God permits the fire of affliction to consume the dross, to separate the worthless from the valuable, in order that the pure metal may shine forth. He passes us from one fire to another, testing our true worth. True grace is willing to be tried. If we are loath to be searched by the Lord, our condition is one of peril. God is the refiner and purifier of souls. He places us in the heat of the furnace, that the dross may be forever separated from the true gold of Christian character. Jesus watches the test. He knows just what fire of temptation and trial is needed to purify the precious metal, in order that the radiance of divine love may be reflected. {RH, April 10, 1894 par. 3}

It is by close, testing trials that God brings his people near to himself; for in trial and temptation he discovers to them their weakness, and teaches them to lean upon him as their only help and safeguard. When this result is attained, his object is accomplished, and his tried servants are prepared to be used in every emergency, to fill important positions of trust, and to accomplish the grand purposes for which their powers were given them. God takes men upon trial, and he proves them upon the right hand and upon the left, until they are educated, trained, and disciplined for his use. {RH, April 10, 1894 par. 4}

Trials will come upon us that are originated by the prince of evil. The enemy will contend for the life or the usefulness of the servants of God, and will seek to mar their peace as long as they remain in the world. But his power is limited. He may cause the furnace to be heated, but Jesus and holy angels watch the precious ore; and to the trusting Christian, grace will be found sufficient, and nothing but the worthless dross will be consumed. The fire kindled by the enemy can have no power to destroy the true gold. At times the powers of darkness gather about the

soul and shut Jesus from our sight, and we wait in sorrow and amazement until the cloud passes over. While under the trial, these seasons are terrible. Hope seems to fail, and despair seizes upon us. But in these dreadful hours we must learn to trust, to depend wholly upon the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, and cast our souls in their helplessness and unworthiness upon him who is mighty to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him. We shall never perish while we do this, never. {RH, April 10, 1894 par. 5}

We need not be astonished at trial. Peter says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." {RH, April 10, 1894 par. 6}

Jesus says: "I am the true vine, and my father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." There is a constant tendency among the trees of the Lord to be more profuse in foliage than in fruit. Just as the strength and nourishment of the grape-vine are taken up in abundant foliage, and the fruit is not brought to perfection unless the vine is pruned, so the strength of the Christian will fail of its true end, unless the heavenly husbandman prunes away the useless growth. In prosperity the followers of Jesus often turn their thoughts and energies toward gratifying themselves, to securing worldly treasure, to the enjoyment of ease and pleasure and luxury, and they bring forth little fruit to the glory of God; then the heavenly husbandman, in order to promote the fruitfulness of the branches, comes with the pruning-knife of disappointment, loss, or bereavement, and cuts away the hindering growth. {RH, April 10, 1894 par. 7}

One evening a gentleman who was much depressed

because of deep affliction, was walking in a garden, where he observed a pomegranate-tree nearly cut through the stem. Greatly wondering, he asked the gardener why the tree was in this condition, and he received an answer that explained to his satisfaction the wounds of his own bleeding heart. "Sir," said the gardener, "this tree used to shoot out so strong that it bore nothing but leaves. I was obliged to cut it in this manner; and when it was almost cut through, it began to bear fruit." {RH, April 10, 1894 par. 8}

Our sorrows do not spring out of the ground. In every affliction God has a purpose to work out for our good. Every blow that destroys an idol, every providence that weakens our hold upon earth and fastens our affections more firmly upon God, is a blessing. The pruning may be painful for a time, but afterward it "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness." We should receive with gratitude whatever will quicken the conscience, elevate the thoughts, and ennoble the life. The fruitless branches are cut off and cast into the fire. Let us be thankful that through painful pruning, we may retain a connection with the living Vine; for if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him. The very trial that taxes our faith the most severely and makes it seem as though God had forsaken us, is to lead us more clearly to him, that we may lay all our burdens at the feet of Christ, and experience the peace which he will give us in exchange. Let no Christian feel that he is forsaken when the hour of trial comes upon him. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your heavenly Father's notice. God loves and cares for the feeblest of his creatures, and we cannot dishonor him more than by doubting his love to us. O let us cultivate that living faith that will trust him in the hour of darkness and trial! Living faith in the merits of a crucified Redeemer will carry men through the fiery furnace of affliction and trial, and the form of the Fourth will be with them in the furnace,

however fierce its heat; and they will come forth from its flame with not even the smell of the fire on their garments. {RH, April 10, 1894 par. 9}

Joseph was sold into Egypt. He was put into prison. The enemy strove to overwhelm him in darkness. The darkness was so great that it seemed every ray of hope was extinguished; but his faith took hold on God, and it was rewarded. God brought him out of the dungeon, and made him a light to the world. Our heavenly Father sees the hearts of men, and he knows their characters better than they do themselves. He sees that some have capabilities which are not directed in the right way, but that if they could be turned into the right channel, they would bring glory to his name by advancing the cause of truth in the world. He places these persons on trial, and in his wise providence brings them into different positions, into a variety of circumstances, where they are tested in order that they may reveal what is in their hearts and make manifest the weak points of their characters, which have been hidden from their own eyes. God gives them opportunities to correct these defects, to polish off the rough corners of their natures, and to fit themselves for his service. If they do this work, then when he calls them into active service, they are ready so that the angels of heaven co-operate with them in their labors, and the purpose is fulfilled for which God called them to his service. {RH, April 10, 1894 par. 10}

It is in mercy that the Lord reveals to men their hidden defects. He would have them critically examine the complicated emotions and motives of their own hearts, and detect that which is wrong, and modify their dispositions, and refine their manners. God would have his servants become acquainted with their own hearts. In order to bring to them a true knowledge of their condition, he permits the fire of affliction to assail them, so that they may be purified. The trials of life are

God's workmen to remove the impurities, infirmities, and roughness from our characters, and fit them for the society of pure, heavenly angels in glory. Then as we pass through trial, as the fire of affliction kindles upon us, shall we not keep our eyes fixed upon the things that are unseen, on the eternal inheritance, the immortal life, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? and while we do this, the fire will not consume us, but only remove the dross, and we shall come forth seven times purified, bearing the impress of the Divine.

	The Review & Herald April 17, 1894
	The Meaning of Trials
	By Mrs. E. G. White

This world is not the Christian's heaven. It is the place in which to fit up for heaven. It is the scene of our life-battles, our conflicts and sorrows. While here we must, if we would be successful, have a firm grasp of the better world, where, when the warfare is ended, will be found peace and everlasting joy. {RH, April 17, 1894 par. 1}

Through all our trials, which have never been fully revealed to others, we have had an unfailing Friend, who has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." While upon the earth, Jesus was ever touched with human woe, and although he is now ascended to his Father, and is adored by angels who swiftly speed to obey his commands, yet his heart, which loved, pitied, and sympathized with men, knows no change. It remains a heart of unchangeable tenderness still. "We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are." Jesus is acquainted with all our trials, and he does not leave us to struggle alone with temptations, to battle

alone with sin, and to be finally crushed with burden and sorrow. Through his angels he whispers to you, "Fear not; for I am with thee." "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore." "I know your sorrows; I have endured them. I am acquainted with your struggles; I have experienced them. I know your temptations; I have encountered them. I have seen your tears; I also have wept. Your earthly hopes are crushed, but let the eye of faith be uplifted, and penetrate the veil, and there anchor your hopes. The everlasting assurance shall be yours that you have a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." {RH, April 17, 1894 par. 2}

God has always tried his people in the furnace of affliction, in order to prove them firm and true, to purge from them all dross and unrighteousness. It was after Abraham and his son Isaac had borne the severest test that could be brought upon them, that God spoke through his angel to Abraham, and said: "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." {RH, April 17, 1894 par. 3}

The work of pruning and purifying the people of God for heaven is a great work, and it will not be accomplished without great suffering on the part of the servants of God, because it will cost them something to bring their wills into harmony with the will of Christ. We must go through the furnace till the fires have consumed the dross, and we are purified so that we reflect the divine image. Those who follow inclination, and judge from appearances, are not good judges of what God is doing. They are filled with discontent. They see failure where there is indeed triumph, a great loss where there is only gain; and like Jacob, they are ready to exclaim, when trial comes upon them, "All these things are against me!" when the fact is, that the very things of which they complained, were working for their good. {RH, April 17, 1894 par. 4}

"No cross, no crown," One cannot be strong in the Lord and never experience trial. To have strength, we must have exercise. To have strong faith we must be placed in circumstances where our faith will be called forth. Just before his martyrdom, the apostle Paul said to Timothy: "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God." It is through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom of heaven. Our Saviour was tried in every possible way, and yet he triumphed continually in God. It is our privilege under all circumstances to be strong in the strength of God and to glory in the cross of Christ. {RH, April 17, 1894 par. 5}

Every follower of Christ will have a cross to bear; and when he takes it up resolutely, though in weakness and trembling, he will find that that which seemed so terrible to him is a source of strength and blessing and courage. It will be a staff to him to help him on in his weary pilgrimage through this earth. Then shall the professed follower of Christ drop his cross, and seek to please those who are deriding his Lord? Shall he, for fear he will not receive honor of men, reject and despise the cross of Christ? {RH, April 17, 1894 par. 6}

What if you do suffer, dear fellow-Christian? The Master of the house suffered before you. Jesus, our Redeemer, representative and head, endured the testing process. He suffered more than we can be called upon to suffer. He bore our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are. He did not suffer thus on his own account, but because of our sins, that we, relying on the merits of our Overcomer, might be victorious in his name. Christ was the exalted and glorious commander of heaven, before whom the angelic hosts bowed in adoration, yet he condescended to give up his glory that he had with the Father, that he might save a fallen race; and shall we, in our turn, refuse to deny ourselves for his sake and the gospel's? Let the words of Paul

be the language of our hearts: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." {RH, April 17, 1894 par. 7}

Christ requires all. His sacrifice was too great, too dear, to make it possible that we should give less than all, and be accepted. Our holy faith cries out, Separation. We should not be conformed to the world, or to dead, heartless professors. The Scripture says, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." The way to heaven is a self-denying way. But when you think the way is too strait, and there is too much self-denial in the narrow path; when you say, How hard to give up all, ask yourselves the question, What did Christ give up for me? This question puts anything that we might call self-denial in the shade. Behold him in the garden of Gethsemane. Look upon the great drops of blood that are forcing themselves from his pores while he is bearing the inexpressible agony of soul. Look upon him in the judgment hall while he is derided, mocked, and insulted by the infuriated mob. Behold him clothed in that old purple robe, and hear the coarse jest and cruel mocking. See them place the crown of thorns on that noble brow, and smite him with a reed, causing the thorns to penetrate his holy temples, so that the blood-drops trickle down his face and fall upon the ground. Hear the murderous throng eagerly crying for the blood of the Son of God. He is delivered into their hands, and pale, and weak, and fainting, he is led away to the hill of crucifixion. They stretch his form upon the cross, and drive the nails through his tender hands and feet. Behold him hanging upon the cross through dreadful hours of agony until angels veil their faces from the scene, and the sun hides his light, refusing to shine upon the dreadful sight. Think of these things, and then ask, Is the way too strait? {RH, April 17, 1894 par. 8}

O that every one might realize that Jesus has something in

store for him vastly better than that which he would choose for himself! Would that all might come to understand the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the blessedness of righteousness! Would that all might see how powerless is all effort to contend with Omnipotence! Man is doing the greatest injury to his own soul when he thinks and acts contrary to the mind and will of God. He is sowing to his flesh, and of the flesh he will reap corruption. No real joy can be found in the path forbidden by God, who knows what is best, and who plans for the good of his creatures. In order to be happy ourselves, we must live to make others happy. We must yield our possessions, our talents, and our affections, in grateful devotion to Christ, and in this way we may find happiness here and immortality hereafter. {RH, April 17, 1894 par. 9}

The most trying experiences in the Christian life may be the most blessed. The special providences of the dark hours may encourage the soul in the future attacks of Satan, and equip the soul to stand most fiery trials. The trial of your faith is more precious than gold. But in order to endure the test, you must have that faith, that abiding confidence in God, that will not be disturbed by the arguments and temptations of the deceiver. Take the Lord at his word. Study the promises, and appropriate them as you have need. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Happy is the man, who, when tempted, finds his soul rich in the knowledge of the Scriptures, who finds shelter beneath the promises of God. "Thy word," said the psalmist, "have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." We need that calm, steady faith, that undaunted moral courage, that none but Christ can give, in order that we may be braced for trial and strengthened for duty. {RH, April 17, 1894 par. 10}

While on earth there will be no escape from conflicts and temptations; but in every storm we have a sure refuge. Jesus has told us, "In the world ye

shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The forces of Satan are marshaled against us, and we have to meet a diligent foe; but if we take heed to the admonition of Christ, we shall be safe. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." There are foes to be resisted and overcome, but Jesus is by our side, ready to strengthen us for every attack. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith sees Jesus standing as our Mediator at the right hand of God. Faith beholds the mansions that Jesus has gone to prepare for those who love him. Faith sees the robe and the crown all prepared for the overcomer. Faith hears the song of the redeemed, and brings eternal glories near. We must come close to Jesus in loving obedience if we would see the King in his beauty. There is peace in believing, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Believe! Believe! My soul cries, Believe! Rest in God. He is able to keep that which you have committed to him, and will bring you off more than conqueror through him that has loved you. {RH, April 17, 1894 par. 11}

But remember that every one who shall be found with the wedding garment on will have come out of great tribulation. The mighty surges of temptation will beat upon all. But the long night of watching, of toil, of hardship, is nearly past. Christ is soon to come. Get ready! The angels of God are seeking to attract you from yourself and from earthly things. Let them not labor in vain. Faith, living faith, is what you need; the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Remember Calvary and the awful, the infinite sacrifice there made for man. Jesus now invites you to come to him, just as you are, and make him your strength and your everlasting Friend.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

the king of the Universe
eagerly offers to guide my life **25**

?

did you know...

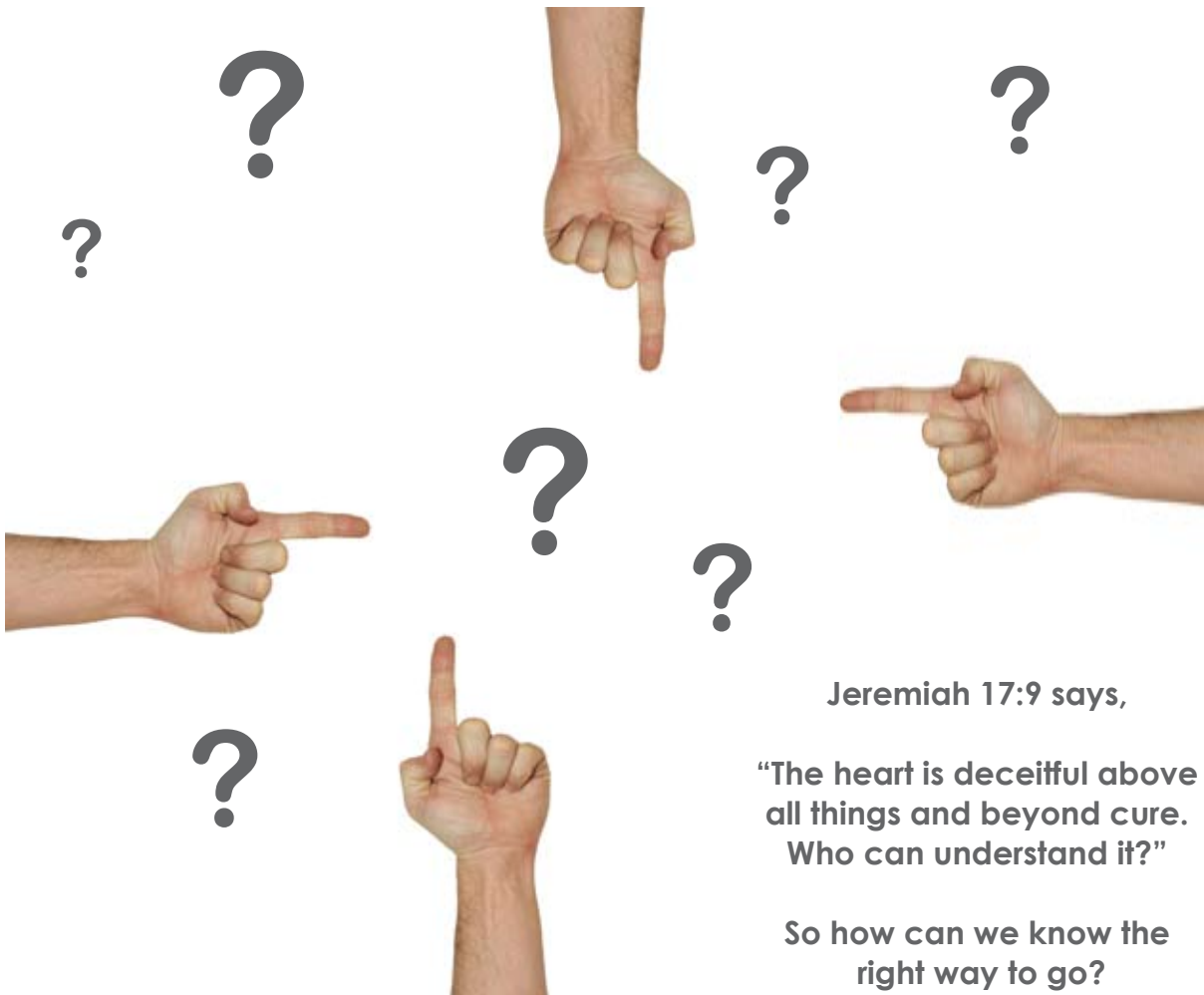


photo: sxc craigj

Jeremiah 17:9 says,

“The heart is deceitful above
all things and beyond cure.
Who can understand it?”

So how can we know the
right way to go?



the facts of his story

1. What problems does God say we face in knowing his will for our lives in Jeremiah 17:9 and Proverbs 14:12?

2. In what ways does God reveal his will to us?

a) Psalm 119:105 _____

b) John 16:13 _____

c) Nehemiah 6:15-16 _____

3. What are some of the conditions to knowing God's will for our lives?

a) Proverbs 3:5-6 _____

b) Proverbs 9:10 _____

c) Romans 12:1-2 _____

Ultimately, learning God's will is not about doing the right thing, or going to the right place, but becoming the right person—a person who reveals the character of God to the world.



thinking it through

1. Which of the texts that you have just read is most important to you, and why?

2. Why do you think God offers to guide your life? How do you think life changes when we allow God to do this?



habits for reflecting the will of Jesus ~ living inside God's Providence

what is "providence"?

Providence has been called "God's invisible hand". Providence is God guiding the events in our lives—but we don't necessarily see God clearly, or at all.

Take the example of Joseph. At the age of seventeen, Joseph was sold by his brothers to some traders, Ellen White notes that "for a time Joseph gave himself up to uncontrolled grief and terror. But, in the providence of God, even this experience was to be a blessing to him." And as Joseph reflected on his life, a new determination filled him. "His soul thrilled with the high resolve to prove himself true to God—under all circumstances to act as became a subject of the King of heaven. He would serve the Lord with undivided heart; he would meet the trials of his lot with fortitude and perform every duty with fidelity." (PP 213-214)

For ten years, Joseph remained a slave. He had no contact with his family and his father believed him to be dead. Joseph could have found lots of good reasons to become depressed working so long as a slave. But he did not give in to bitterness. Ellen White comments again, "Joseph's gentleness and fidelity won the heart of the chief captain, who came to regard him as a son rather than a slave. The youth was brought in contact with men of rank and learning, and he acquired a knowledge of science, of languages, and of affairs—an

Following God is not like walking a tight-rope.

Eleanor C. Vandevort

Often when we pray for the graces of the Spirit, God works to answer our prayers by placing us in circumstances to develop these fruits; but we do not understand His purpose, and wonder, and are dismayed. (COL 61)

education needful to the future prime minister of Egypt." (PP 217)

The next three years were spent in prison because Joseph was falsely accused of attempted rape. To add insult to injury, someone he had encouraged in prison and who promised to help him later, forgot. Joseph's attitude under pressure was remarkable, and the consequences far reaching. "He found a work to do, even in the prison. God was preparing

him in the school of affliction for greater usefulness, and he did not refuse the needful discipline. In the prison, witnessing the results of oppression and tyranny and the effects of crime, he learned lessons of justice, sympathy, and mercy, that prepared him to exercise power with wisdom and compassion." (PP 218)

So Joseph's 13 year journey of suffering became the very means that God used to prepare him to rule Egypt with wisdom. Yet Joseph would not have seen or understood God's guidance until he was able to see all the jigsaw pieces of his life come together. God was at work, but invisible to Joseph's eyes. So while he could not understand, he could still trust.

how do we live inside God's Providence?

1. **Trust that God is working for your very best, even though your life may currently be difficult or confusing** (Romans 8:28-29).
2. **Consider your circumstances as God's will for you.** God is sovereign over everything in our Universe, including everything happening in our lives (Matthew 10:29). This does not mean that everything is from God, but God ultimately is guiding everything for your good.
3. **Learn to see life as a school.** God uses the things that happen to us as opportunities to grow in reflecting his character. For example, if you pray to learn meekness, you may well find yourself in a situation where you are being unjustly and falsely accused. This does not mean you have done something wrong, but that God permits you to face opposition to grow closer to him. It is only when we are close to God that we receive the grace to reflect him. We must also never forget that we live in a world where God permits Satan to work. When we experience supernatural opposition, it reminds us that we need to go to God for his supernatural help.
4. **In the school of life, going to the next grade depends on passing the current tests.** If God wants to teach you about honesty, he may bring you into a situation which challenges

you to be honest. If you fail, he will bring other things into your life to test your honesty until you pass. Obey God's directions immediately according to what the Bible and the Holy Spirit says.

5. **Consider opportunities to work for God as personal invitations from him to join with him in his work.** We don't need to be confused if this or that is from God or not. Like the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, God always clearly leads from the front. As long as our eyes and ears are open, we just have to follow him promptly wherever he leads.
6. **Don't try and force open doors that are closed—or remain miserable because they are closed.** When God knows when the time is right for the next part of his plan, then he will open the closed doors for you himself.
7. **Like Paul, continually pray for spiritual understanding.** Paul regularly prayed that

"the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit a of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better." (Ephesians 1:17) Only the Holy Spirit can teach us the meaning of the things that happen to us—if that is God's will for us.

using your journal

You can use your Journal to draw a time-line of your life. On the time-line, mark some of the significant events that have happened to you. Then think about the spiritual impact each of these events had. What did God teach you at these times? Were there any lessons that you didn't notice at the time that you can see now? What lessons can you learn from your past to guide your future? Can you see certain lessons being repeated as you look back?



putting the pieces together

In "did you know...?" we reminded ourselves that by ourselves, our hearts long to go in all the wrong places.

In "the facts of his story" we saw that while 1) our hearts naturally lead us away from God, God 2) offers to guide our lives through the a) Bible, 2) work of the Holy Spirit in us, and our c) circumstances. However, 3) in order to recognise God at work, we must a) trust him completely, b) show reverence towards him, and c) be prepared to die to our own desire to live for ourselves.

In "habits for reflecting the will of Jesus" we explored Providence, the work of God in our lives that we may not always notice immediately. Our challenge is to remember that God is still sovereign, and we can trust that he is working through our circumstances, and in spite of our circumstances, to teach us about growing to be like him.



my time with God

This week, read through the whole book of Esther. God is never mentioned in the book, but it is a book where God is tirelessly working for his people. In your Journal, list of all the times that you think God might have been influencing events. You may like to plot these on a time line. What can you learn about the way God is guiding the ways of his people? How does this apply to your own life?



pass it on!

Can you explain how to follow God's Providence?



extra help

1. See reflectingJesus.org for a compilation of quotations on Providence.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I am the light of
the world **26**

?

did you know...



photo: sxc mike-photo

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

Matthew 5:14



the facts of his story

1. What does Paul say we are like to others? (2 Corinthians 2:15-16)

2. Jesus says that "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) But in Matthew 5:14, Jesus turns this around and says that we are the light of the world. What is the light that others will see from us? To get an idea, read Matthew 5:3-16.

3. Because of their sin in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve lost their clothing of glory that God created them to wear (this light disappeared because the character of God inside them was broken). For those who are being restored by Jesus, what clothes does Paul say we should now put on in Colossians 3:12-14?

Al Masters lives at the other end of our state. He's married and had a little boy and a small business. He considered himself very blessed. And then just before Christmas some years ago, his little boy was killed by a 15-year-old kid driving a car without a license. Al Masters was filled with a deep desire for revenge. And even though that youngster--15 years old--could not be brought before the full power of the law because he was a juvenile, Al Masters wanted the very book thrown at him.

Then, on Christmas Eve, his wife got him to come to the church. He listened to the story of the Word coming to the shepherds. He recognized that he was one of the world's ungood. And he began to weep. When he went out of the church, the next day, on Christmas, he set out to find out more about the boy who killed his son. He found that he came from a broken home, that he lived with his mother, who was an alcoholic. He went and he met the boy. He gave the boy a job in his shop, and then later took him into his home. And that boy, now a young man, says that Al Masters is the most saintly person he'd ever known.

Bruce Thielemann, "Glory to God in the Lowest," Preaching Today, Tape No. 75.



thinking it through

1. We have looked at 3 pictures that describe our impact on the world -- a fragrance, light, and clothing. Which of these images is most powerful in describing how we reveal Jesus?

2. What would you most like to reveal about Jesus through your own life?



habits for reflecting the work of Jesus ~ building bridges for grace

sin breaks relationships

Sin breaks relationships. When Satan sinned, it broke his relationship with God and the whole of Heaven. When Adam and Eve sinned, it broke their relationship with God, and the relationship between each other. And this is how it has been throughout the whole of human history. Sin comes into our lives and it breaks our relationship with God, with our friends and family, and the relationships within our churches. Sin breaks things.

Jesus' model for restoring broken relationships

So how do we begin to rebuild the bridges to mend broken relationships? Jesus gives us the model to use:

1. **The wounded one takes the initiative to restore the broken relationship.** The Bible tells us, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) Jesus did not wait for us to repent before he died for us. He died for us in the hope that we would repent.
2. **Our unconditional love is the most powerful tool to melt hardened hearts.**

When we see this love of God for us, love which is eagerly held out to us before we have even thought about repenting—this is what melts our hearts and leads us to repentance. In the same way, when someone has hardened themselves towards us, offering them grace—a love that we may feel they don't deserve—is the most effective power to open their hearts to restore their broken relationship with us.

But doing this is so hard! This is because reaching out to those who hurt us goes against everything we are feeling inside. We think that if someone has hurt us, then they should come and

apologise. That's right and just! And anyway, we feel so hurt, we don't feel like restoring any sort of relationship with them. But as Paul reminds us, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:8)

four things to remember

Here are five things to remember when we face a breakdown in our relationships:

1. **Everyone is a child of God—God still loves those who hurt us, no matter what they have done to us.** Indeed, God probably feels the pain more than we do because he made them and has been caring for them since the day they were born.
2. **Satan is behind every breakdown in relationships—he is the real enemy, not the person who has hurt us.** This is hard to remember, but if we forget this we will only feel worse inside about the other person.
3. **The one who has hurt us, is probably in a worse situation than we are.** Sure, we are hurt, but how deep is the hurt in the one who hurt us? People who hurt others have often been hurt very hard themselves. It is quite possible that

when we offer grace to the one who hurt us, this will be exactly the medication they need for their own hurts. We may be their only opportunity for healing.

4. **Make a commitment to act from biblical principles rather than how you feel.** Like the parting of the River Jordan before the children of Israel went into Canaan, God may wait to change our situation until after we begin to take the first step. Miracles begin when we act on faith—according to the promises that God has given us.
5. **We cannot give to others what we have not first received from God.** If we are empty of grace and love, we won't be able to pass

anything on to others except our frustrations. Sometimes we get very tired trying hard to do the right thing towards others. We are often surprised that the harder we try, the more tired we become. This is because the power to overcome our feelings and the attacks of Satan on our broken relationships will only be experienced when we are on our knees. The more broken the relationship, the longer we may need to spend in God's presence, being filled by his power.

making the habit

What relationships do you know about that are

broken? Who do you know who is needy for grace that God could give them through you?

When it comes to restoring relationships, bold action is needed! But when we set out as agents of God's grace, we won't be working alone—for the God of grace will walk with us.

Try to learn the 5 things we need to keep in mind about broken relationships. Pray that God will guide events so that he can mend your broken relationships.



putting the pieces together

In the "facts of his story" we looked at three pictures that describe the Christian's influence in the world. 1) a wonderful fragrance, 2) light, and 3) clothes. All three represent the character of Jesus that we are to show to the world made visible by the way we treat each other.

In "thinking it through" we had a chance to think about how we represent Jesus to those around us.

In "habits for reflecting the work of Jesus" we looked at how to build bridges of grace, so that even those who have hurt us can receive the grace of God, as God pours grace through us. This is not easy, but there is nothing like grace to restore broken relationships.



my time with God

1. Spend some time to ask the Holy Spirit if there is anything inside that is preventing you from being reconciled to someone who used to be a friend.
2. Read Matthew 18:21-35. What does God want to teach you through this story?
3. Jesus gives us some practical advice as to what to do when someone hurts us in Matthew 18:15-17. How do you think your life and the life of the church would change if we followed his advice? Why do you think we don't want to follow this counsel?
4. What sort of things happen inside you when you refuse to forgive?
5. Read Colossians 3. What characteristics of God do you most need to "put on"?
6. Read Matthew 5:3-11. Which of the characteristics mentioned most reveal to you the character of God? Which one would you most like to see revealed more clearly in your own life?



pass it on!

Can you explain why we should initiate building bridges for grace—even towards those who have hurt us very much?



extra help

1. *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, Ellen White.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

Jesus calls me to
join him in his work **27**

?

did you know...

Jesus has been working continually in our world...

**1. Jesus
created our
world**

(Colossians 1:16)

**2. Jesus
appeared to
many people
in the Old
Testament
including:**

Abraham (Genesis 18), Hagar, (Genesis 16:7) Jacob (Genesis 32), Moses (Exodus 3:2), the whole

of Israel (Judges 2:1-4), Gideon (Judges 6:11)

**3. Jesus
came to
earth as a
baby**

(Matthew 1:21)

**4. Jesus is at
work for us
right now**

(Hebrews 4:14)

**5. Jesus is
returning
again**

(John 14:1-3)



photo: sxc Avalore

**...and he's longing for us to
join him in his work**



the facts of his story

God works around us in many different ways. How does God get his work done in the following situations?

1. Exodus 23:20-21 _____
2. Acts 16:7-10 _____ and _____
3. Acts 8:26-29 _____ and _____
4. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 _____
5. 1 Corinthians 12:27-28 _____ and _____
6. Genesis 16:7-13 _____

How does God invite me to join him in what he is doing? This is how Jesus thought about this: (from John 5:17, 19-20)

1. The Father has been working up until now
2. God now has me working
3. I do nothing on my own initiative
4. I watch to see what God is doing
5. I do what I see the Father is already doing
6. I remember that my Father loves me
7. He shows me everything he is doing

From Experiencing God, Henry Blackaby



thinking it through

1. What do you think God might be doing around you at the moment, and why?

2. How does it make you feel to think that the King of the whole universe wants you to work with him? Why would such a God want you to help him?



habits for reflecting the work of Jesus ~ adventures with God

what Heaven is doing

Right now, God is at work. His Holy Spirit and angels are tirelessly working to prepare people to meet Jesus — who is coming very soon. God's angels are around us all the time. They are very busy, and they don't waste any time.

God is always at work in our world. So the question Henry T. Blackaby likes to ask us is, "Will we join God in what he is doing?" And of course, what God is doing is to point people to see his Son, Jesus, and the salvation he brings.

As we can see all around us, there is plenty of work for us to do for God's kingdom. So if you are willing to reveal Jesus, God will definitely use you — no question about that. As long as you are willing to do whatever he asks you, God can use you!

God will never say...

God will never say to you, "You are not old enough" (or "too old") or, "You are not clever enough", or "I can't use you because you don't know enough yet." God specialises in using people who don't think they are good enough — like Moses who asked "O Lord, please send someone else to do it." (Exodus 4:13) . Or who think they are too young — like Jeremiah who complained, "'Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.'" (Jeremiah 1:6)

Do not insist that God give you something that you think you are ready for. That could lead to your ruin.

God is far more interested in accomplishing His kingdom purposes than you are. He will move you into every assignment that He knows you are ready for. Let God orient you to Himself.

Henry Blackaby

God chooses the weak things of the world...

The reason God chooses people who don't think they can do the job is because only such people are willing to depend on God 100% for their ideas and strength. We normally like

Two important factors that will enable me to recognise when God is at work around me are:

1. I need to be living in an intimate love relationship with God
2. God must take the initiative to open my eyes so I can see what God is doing

Henry Blackaby

to think we are really clever and strong, but as humans living in the middle of a battle between two supernatural superpowers, we don't have what it takes to live for God without complete dependence on his power.

This is why Paul says, "we have this treasure [the glory of God] in jars of clay [us] to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." (2 Corinthians 4:7) Later Paul notes God's promise to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9) So no matter who you are or how weak you think you are, God can use you. And he is ready to start the moment you are willing.

getting into the habit of being on an adventure with God

God's willingness to use us makes every day an adventure with God. If you want to have an adventure with God, when you wake up each morning, you could do the following:

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit and the angels will guide you to serve or witness to someone today.
2. As you go through the day, keep a prayerful attitude, asking God to open

your eyes to the service and witnessing opportunities around you.

3. Be bold to move forward when God opens up an opportunity, but don't be frightened about what to do or say. God will make this clear to you as you step out.

You can use your Journal to write about your adventures. How did God use you? How did the Spirit direct you? If you couldn't see that

God did, think back to the places you visited, the people you spoke with, the things you did. Were there any times that God used you, but you didn't realise? Or were they any chances to serve him but for some reason you missed the opportunity? Why was that?

The good news is that every time we will pray to be used, God will bring us together with people to serve—we can count on that!



putting the pieces together

In “did you know...” we began to see that Jesus has been at work on our earth from the very beginning. Nothing happens in our world without him knowing.

In “the facts of his story” we saw many ways in which God is at work around us. He is at work 1) as he directs the circumstances of his people, 2) through the Holy Spirit directing our circumstances and through visions, 3) through angels that speak directly and by the words of the Holy Spirit to us, 4) by words written down on paper, 5) giving us spiritual gifts to use for the church body, and by 6) his personal appearance.

In “habits for reflecting the work of Jesus”, we looked at a simple way to join Jesus in what he is doing all around us. To be involved in working with the God of the whole universe will always be an adventure!



my time with God

As you go through this week, try to practice the habit of having an adventure with God each day.

Also, you can read the follow passages to explore how God uses us in more depth. In each situation, what was God wanting to do, and why did he communicate with his people in this way? What can you learn from these situations yourself?

1. God's promise to personally walk with his people to the promised land in Exodus 23:20-32.
2. The Holy Spirit's direction of Paul's trip and the vision to go to Macedonia in Acts 16:1-16.
3. The Holy Spirit's involvement in Philip's ministry in Acts 8.
4. God's personal appearance to Hagar in Genesis 16.
5. The importance of writing down God's thoughts and instructions in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
6. God's giving of spiritual gifts in the church in 1 Corinthians 12:12-30.



pass it on!

How would you explain to a friend how to have an adventure with God?



extra help

1. Experiencing God, by Henry Blackaby.
2. Steps to Christ chapter 9, *The work and the Life*. Ellen White.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I am **28**
God's message

?

did you know...

Every man has three characters – that which he exhibits, that which he has, and that which he thinks he has.

- Karr

Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway.

- Mother Theresa

There is no wisdom save in truth.

- Martin Luther

We lie loudest when we lie to ourselves.

- Eric Hoffer

"The truth is more important than the facts."

- Frank Lloyd Wright



photo: sxc torii

who am I really?



the facts of his story

Jesus is coming very soon. But just before he arrives, there is a final message of warning given to prepare the world. It is found in Revelation 18:4, "Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues". This call to "come out" is an echo of earlier calls to come out all through the Bible.

1. What was the problem with the current culture that caused these preachers to call their hearers "out" from it?

a) Noah (Genesis 6:11-13) _____

b) Elijah (1 Kings 18:21) _____

c) John the Baptist (Luke 3:3 & 7-14) _____

d) Peter (Acts 2:36-40) _____

2. If these preachers encouraged for their hearers to "come out" what were they to come "into"?

While driving my boys to swimming lessons, Michael, age eight, saw a book my husband had left in the car. He picked it up and read the title. "What's this book about?" he asked. "It's a book to help us become authentic Christians," I replied. He said, "Oh yea, that's what we are, right, Mom! Pathetic Christians!"

Connie Schmotzer, Bellingham, Wash., Today's Christian Woman, "Heart to Heart."

When I am finishing a picture, I hold some God-made object up to it—a rock, a flower, the branch of a tree or my hand—as a kind of final test. If the painting stands up beside a thing man cannot make, the painting is authentic. If there's a clash between the two, it is bad art.

Marc Chagall, 1887-1985



thinking it through

1. What is the most important lesson you learned from the texts you have just studied, and why?

2. When you think about your own culture, what are some of the things you need to be separated from? Why is this important, and how can you do this?



habits for reflecting the work of Jesus ~ living the message

"the medium is the message"

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan wrote, 'The medium is the message'. For example, if we listen to a lot of music on an ipod, we are influenced not just by the music we hear, but also by the fact that we have headphones in our ears and can't really talk to people and listen to our music at the same time.

If we apply this idea to us as Christians, we would say that what we share about God is shaped by the sort of people we are (for in this case, we are the medium). For example, if we say that God is love and he can change us to be like him, but are not loving ourselves, people will tend not to believe us. However, if we say God is loving and can change us to be like him, and we are also loving, we (the medium) harmonise with our message (God is love). This is what it means to be an authentic Christian. When we are authentic, what we share about God is communicated with power.

Jesus was "the message"

God speaks to our world most powerfully through *who* we are. This is what Jesus was trying to say to his disciples. He wanted them to see that they could know his father by seeing him.

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work." (John 14:6-10)

It is exciting to think that Jesus wants people to know the Father when they meet us too.

truth is a person

Jesus says that when people meet him, they can know his Father. It was not a question of people meeting people and telling them about his Father. His life was an accurate reflection of the Father. So when Jesus says, "I am... the truth", what he meant was, "who I am is really what my Father is like." Truth is a person. Truth is not simply a right idea, but is linked directly to who God is.

We reveal truth to others in the most important way by revealing who God is in our own lives. When we (the medium) match the message (the truth—who God is), there is a great power in our witness to others.

preparing the world for Jesus' return

As we prepare the world for the second coming of Jesus, the most important thing that people need to know is that God really does exist, and what sort of God he is. They will understand this most powerfully when God reveals himself through us. There will be times when the message that God wants us to tell others with our mouths may appear difficult for them to believe. But when our lives reflect the truth about who God is, the Holy Spirit is able to convict their hearts when we speak.

a God-revealing authentic life
+
a God-given message
=
powerful impact

am I authentic?

Am I authentic? That's a very important question to ask ourselves. Is what I say and do the same as who I am? I tell people this or that about God, but is God able to confirm that "truth" through who I am?

making the habit

Make a list of all the things you want to share about God as you work to prepare others for the return of Jesus. How will you will, in your own life, show others that what you are saying really is

true? You can use a table like the one below to help you.

Sample table:

things I want to share about God	how will I show this is true with my life?
eg. that God loves everyone, even those who don't care about him.	I want to grow in showing love to those who don't necessarily like me by...



putting the pieces together

In "did you know" we began to look at the idea of authenticity. Does what I say and do match with who I really am?

In "the facts of his story" we saw how God has been sending prophets to call his people to live a life of authenticity—to truly live the values of the kingdom of God, even though the culture around them has chosen a different way of living. 1a) Noah called people out of a violent society that had abandoned God. b) Elijah called out people who were compromising with other gods to make a clear decision for the true God. c) John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by calling his listeners to moral living—to treat people with compassion, with honesty and sacrifice. d) Peter called his hearers to separate themselves from the corrupt religious government of his day. Through these four men, God was calling his people to live a life of integrity which went against the way the whole of culture was thinking and behaving. God was calling for counter-cultural living. 2) He wanted his people to separate themselves from everything that was against the values and principles of his kingdom. This is a call we must make to everyone today—to come out from a culture that is increasingly turning it's back on God, and live the values and principles that represent God's Kingdom.

In "habits for reflecting the work of Jesus" we looked at how God wants to communicate through us—not just using our lips to speak, but becoming authentic witnesses who reveal in themselves, the character of himself.



my time with God

What more can you learn about the problems in the culture that the following people faced?

1. Noah (Genesis 6)
2. Elijah (1 Kings 18)
3. Malachi (Malachi 4)
4. John the Baptist (Luke 3)
5. Peter (Acts 2)
6. God's people living before Jesus comes (Revelation 14 & 18)



pass it on!

Can you explain why truth is a person, and why this is important when it comes to preparing people for the return of Jesus?



extra help



reflecting Jesus

BETA

eventually, witnessing requires
opening my mouth

29

?

did you know...



photo: iStock Rosmary Gearhart

what would the world be like if we
never opened our mouths?



the facts of his story

A lot of our influence for God comes from our unspoken example. But words still matter. If we want to work with Jesus in preparing the way for his second coming, we will have to open our mouths!

In Revelation 14, the first five verse describe God's people in Heaven who have witnessed at the time just before the second coming. Then three angels come and shout loudly across the earth. They are the messages that these witnesses have repeated to prepare the world for Jesus' return.

Read Revelation 14:6-13. Make a list of all the things the angels say and try and summarise their message in one sentence.

Luigi Tarisio was found dead one morning with hardly a comfort in his home, but with 246 exquisite violins, which he had been collecting all his life. They were crammed into his attic with the best violin in the bottom drawer of an old rickety bureau. In his very devotion to the violin, he had robbed the world of all that music all the time he treasured them; others before him had done the same, so that when the greatest of his collection, a Stradivarius, was first played it had had 147 speechless years. In our very love of the church, do we fail to give the glad tidings to the world? In our zeal for the truth, do we forget to publish it? When shall we all learn that the Good News needs not just to be cherished, but needs to be told? All people need to hear it!



thinking it through

1. What is the most important part of the messages you read from these three angels, and why?

2. Many people feel embarrassed talking to others about God. But if we don't, how will our friends and others know about him? What would help someone who is embarrassed talk about Jesus?



habits for reflecting the work of Jesus ~ opening our mouths for God

God needs willing mouths

We are all called to reflect the character of Jesus in our actions. But everyone who has been born again by the Holy Spirit is also called to be verbal witnesses for him too. As we prepare for Jesus' return, people also need to hear the importance of Jesus' life and death and second coming explained. We are God's mouthpieces, as Peter announces, "you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)

The only way to "preach the gospel to every creature" is to go to every creature.

So as we practice being verbal witnesses, it can be helpful at the end of each day to ask ourselves, "Have I been a verbal testimony to God and his truth today?"

Paul's testimony

Part of declaring the praises of God is to share what Jesus has personally done for us. In Acts 26, knowing that he is facing almost certain death, Paul gives a helpful example of how he shared his personal testimony with King Agrippa. Paul's testimony is split into 3 parts:

1. What his life was like before he met Jesus. (v4-11)
2. How he met Jesus (v12-18)
3. What his life was like after meeting Jesus. (v19-23)

Though Paul's testimony was quite short — perhaps just 2 minutes — the Holy Spirit was able to use it to impress the king's mind, for "Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?'" (v28) This shows that when we are faithful in being a verbal witness, the

Angels cannot preach the gospel, only beings such as Paul and you and I can preach the gospel.

Oswald Chambers

Holy Spirit will work through us.

Like Paul, when you have been born again by God's Spirit, you will have a testimony to share. So when you suddenly find yourself in a situation where it is possible to talk about God, you can use your own experience as a testimony to God's power to transform our lives.

making my testimony

Like Paul, think of your life in 3 sections. Use the following questions to help you develop a verbal testimony, that you could share in less than 2 minutes, of God's work in your life.

1. **What was my life like before I was born again in Christ?** What sort of person were you like without having asked Jesus to save you and his Spirit to work within you? How did you think and feel about life? How did you live and behave?
2. **How did I come to know Jesus as my own Saviour and have his Spirit begin to work within me?** Where were you? What happened that caused you to change from not believing or trusting God, to knowing that he is real and alive, and at work in your own life? What caused you to accept Jesus as King and Lord and to follow the laws of his Kingdom rather than the habits of the world?
3. **What difference has God made in my life?** Compare and contrast your life now with how it was before you knew Jesus. What has God done that has made the biggest impact on the way you think, or the way you behave today?

using your habit

To help you prepare, you may find it helpful to write out your testimony word for word in your Journal. Ask God to help you remember the things that are most important for you to share, and pray for opportunities to share what God has done in your life.



putting the pieces together

In “the facts of his story” we were reminded that to prepare the world for the second coming of Jesus, we have to open our mouths. This is what the three angels in Revelation 14 do, and we are called to open our mouths with that same message from God.

In “thinking it through” we had a chance to reflect on the messages that are shared with people before Jesus comes. Sometimes we may feel nervous talking about Jesus, but God will provide opportunities for us to talk and guide our thoughts. We can trust his leading.

In “habits for reflecting the work of Jesus” we looked at how we can share our own personal testimony of what Jesus has done in our lives. This is where our influence begins—when we can share with those around us how God has made a difference in our lives. When people can see this, they will be more open to hear about how they can be connected to God, and become ready for the second coming.

For several months, I'd been trying to lead Sharon, a co-worker, to the Lord. One day, she asked, “How does God speak to you?” Hesitantly, I answered, “Through Scripture and prayers. He ... he ...” Then my mind went blank, and Sharon left.

It never failed—every time Sharon asked about God or salvation, I'd answer her question, then become tongue-tied. I felt like a failure at witnessing.

But one morning, Sharon excitedly told me, “I accepted Jesus last night. Thanks for not preaching when I asked questions. Everyone else told me too much at once, and I became confused. You simply answered my questions.”

God's ways are mysterious, I suddenly realized. He even uses silence to his advantage.



my time with God

1. As you go through this week, ask God at the beginning of the day to make you a verbal witness. God may want to say different things to different people, so be watching and listening to the Holy Spirit.
2. Read the following stories about witnessing. Notice what was said by the person witnessing, why it was said, and the consequences on those listening. What can you learn about witnessing from these events, particularly when those listening become angry or antagonistic?
 - 🔗 John the Baptist in Matthew 3.
 - 🔗 Jesus in John 4.
 - 🔗 Peter in Acts 2:14-41.
 - 🔗 Peter in Acts 4:1-22.
 - 🔗 Paul in Acts 26.
 - 🔗 Paul in Romans 1:1-14.



pass it on!

Can you teach someone how to make their own testimony to share?



extra help

1. Desire of Ages, chapter 86, “Go teach all nations”, by Ellen White.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

God has given me gifts
to use for his church **30**

?

did you know...

not one spirit-filled follower of
Jesus is without gifts given by
Heaven





the facts of his story

1. When God has a work to do, what type of person does he look for?

a. When God called Jeremiah, Jeremiah thought he was... (Jeremiah 1:6)

b. When God called Moses, Moses thought that he was... (Exodus 3:11)

c. When God called Isaiah, the first thought that came to Isaiah's mind was... (Isaiah 6:1-5)

2. What is the purpose of the spiritual gifts God gives us? (1 Corinthians 12:7)

3. In order to use a spiritual gift, what has to happen first? (1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

[The Lord] chooses His agents not because they are perfect but because, through a connection with Him, they may gain perfection.

Christ's Object Lessons, 330



thinking it through

1. From the texts you have just read, why do you think God called people to work for him who felt they were totally unprepared? What is the lesson for you?

2. Why do you think that many people are afraid to work for God, and what could you say to encourage people who feel like this?



habits for reflecting the work of Jesus ~ using Heaven's gifts

God has given us gifts

While every Christian is called to give a verbal witness for God, God gives special gifts to every Spirit-filled person in God's church also—including you! The purpose of these gifts is for an important purpose:

to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:12-13)

paul's pyramid

Here's Paul's text in a pyramid. Notice that God first gives the people in his church spiritual gifts. These will always lead to serving others, which always leads to growth, then unity, maturity, and finally the ultimate goal is achieved — the church reveals the fullness of Christ to the world!

Fullness of Christ

Maturity

Unity

Growth

Service

Gifts

So how do we become prepared to receive and use the gifts of the Spirit? Jesus says, "how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13) If you ask God to be used, he will send you exactly what you need from the Spirit to serve him. So we could say that prayer the foundation of Paul's

pyramid.

Sometimes people take tests to try and find their spiritual gifts. While these may be helpful to see what we are already good at or like doing, they don't necessarily tell us what God is preparing us to do. Like Jonah, God may call

If you have any question as to your post of duty, pray to God for guidance, and your work will be assigned. God has told us expressly that He has placed every man at his post.

Ye Shall Receive Power, 220

us to do something we don't want to do. Or like Moses, God may call us to do something we feel unable to do.

It is important to remember that spiritual gifts and talents are two different things. Someone may have a great talent as a teacher, but they may not have the spiritual gift of teaching that results in the church being strengthened. While both talents and spiritual gifts are from God, we can choose how we use our natural talents. However, the Holy Spirit is the one who directs how his gifts are used, as he is the one at work in our lives.

start using your gifts

1. Begin to pray for God's direction, for a place for you to serve in the building up of his church.
2. Immediately offer yourself to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1)—which means to be willing to do anything God asks, not matter the cost to you personally!
3. Share your desire to serve with someone who has the spiritual gift of wisdom and discernment. Ask them to pray for you for God's direction. God may also use them to give you advice.

Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard. It is the theatre of His grace, in which He delights to reveal His power to transform hearts.

Acts of the Apostles, 12



putting the pieces together

In “the facts of his story” we saw that 1) God calls people to work for him even though they feel inadequate. God called a) Jeremiah even though Jeremiah thought he was too young and inexperienced. He called b) Moses when Moses felt incompetent. God called c) Isaiah, but the first thing Isaiah felt was his deep sin and unworthiness. But God called these people anyway, because they were willing to be used and trained by Him. 2) The purpose of the gifts God gives us are for the strengthening of his Church, so increasingly the church—even though it may appear very imperfect—may reveal the character of Jesus. 3) In order to use a gift from the Holy Spirit, we first have to receive the Holy Spirit, and have the Spirit directing our lives.

In “habits for reflecting the work of Jesus” we saw that the use of spiritual gifts in the church enables the whole body to reflect the character of Jesus. It is one thing to reflect Jesus by yourself, but it is a powerful witness, when people who have nothing naturally in common, join together in harmony to show love to each other, and those around them. If we want to be part of God's work, we can begin to pray, for God to equip us to work with him.



my time with God

1. Do you long to be useful to God? Spend some time to pray for the Holy Spirit to direct your life and put you in a place where you can serve the Kingdom of God.
2. Read Jeremiah 1. What was Jeremiah afraid of, and what promises does God give him as an encouragement? What can you learn from this story?
3. Read the story of Moses in Exodus 3 and 4. What is Moses struggling with and why do you think he ends up trusting God?
4. Read Isaiah 6:1-8. How does Isaiah overcome his fear that he is too sinful to be useful to God? What would you say to someone who feels that they are too sinful for God to use?
5. Read Romans 12:3-8. How does Paul say we remain unified? What do you think about being part of the unified body of Jesus in your local church?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 12 again. What is the most important teaching in this passage for you?



pass it on!

How would you explain to someone how to find and use their spiritual gifts?



extra help

1. Christ's Object Lessons, “Talents”, by Ellen White.
2. Experiencing God, by Henry Blackaby.



reflecting Jesus

BETA

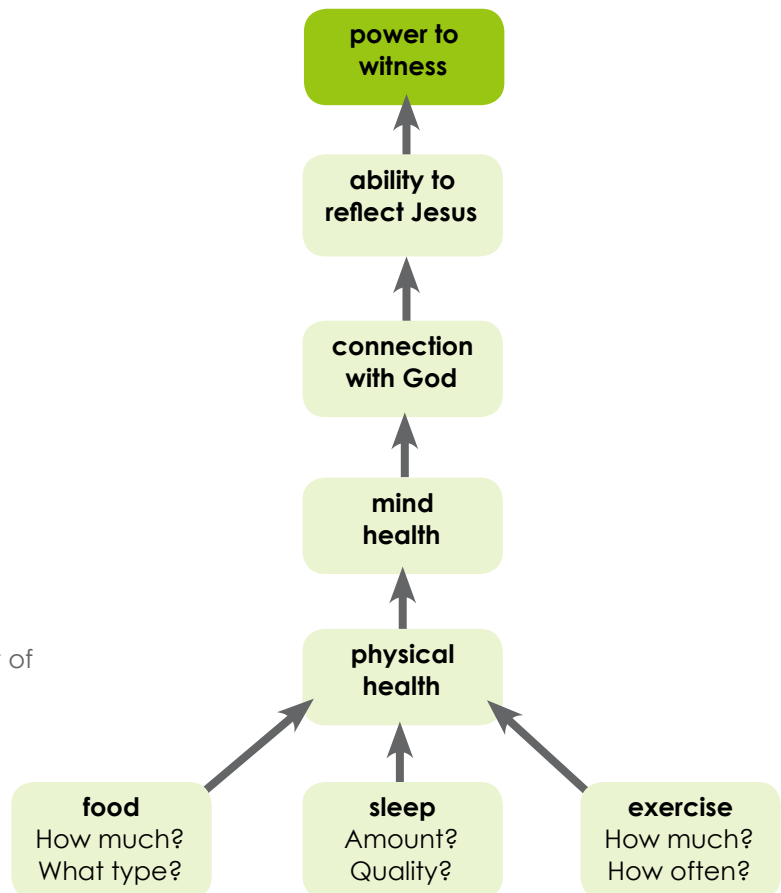
my body matters **31**

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did you know...



how I treat
my body really does matter...
for there are implications for the rest of
eternity!





the facts of his story

1. When God created human beings, what did he make them out of, and why is this important when we are studying health? (Genesis 2:7)

2. Eating and drinking is not just about staying alive. What does Paul say it is about in 1 Corinthians 10:31?

3. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20:

a. Why is my body important? _____

b. Who does my body belong to? _____

c. Why does my body not belong to me? _____

d. What do I do with my body? _____

They risk of diastolic hypertension ranked 40% lower among people who attended religious services at least once a week, and prayed and studied the Bible at least daily.

International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine, vol 28, no. 2, p189-213.



thinking it through

1. What do you think about the idea that your body does not belong to you but God?

2. Paul also writes, "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18) Why do you think it is important to remain sexually pure—what impact do you think sexual immorality has on our spiritual growth?



habits for reflecting the work of Jesus ~ body matters

it's important!

God is very clear about the importance of our physical health, "Do you not know that your body is a temple 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 honour God with your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) So our goal is clear: our bodies are to be in the best possible condition for the Spirit of God to live in. Indeed, because Jesus died for us, every part of our lives, including our health, is focused on honouring God.

the connection

When Adam was created, Genesis 2:7 says that he was made as follows:

dirt + spirit = living being or soul

God designed as a combination of physical (dirt) and spiritual (spirit) and these two things need each other to make us who we are.

Our bodies are important because of the connection between physical health, and our ability to honour God. What I eat and how much I exercise affects my ability to think clearly. How much I sleep can affect if I am happy or grouchy the next day, and so on. If my body is in bad shape, chances are, my mind will be too. And it is my mind that enables me to connect to God. If I can't think clearly, I will struggle praying, studying my Bible, and discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit. If I struggle doing these things, I will also struggle to grow spiritually, and so my witness for God will be limited.

the barrier

Because of the direct connection between our physical and mental health to our spiritual growth, the level of our physical health can put a barrier on further spiritual growth.

"the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."

Genesis 2:7

That's why we need to think carefully about our physical health. Our ambition is to honour God in all that we do, so we may need to think a little differently about the things we do every day.

the principle

For example, do I eat what is healthy and good for my body, or just what feels good? Do I exercise when I feel like it, or because this is what my body needs?

We may also have to make some serious lifestyle decisions if our goal is to honour God in everything. Do I need to cut down my work in order to have enough time to be with God? Do I need to get another job because this one is too stressful and is damaging my spiritual growth?

Though God is longing to fill us with all spiritual wisdom, his hands are tied if we are not doing what we can to be as healthy as possible. Remember that spiritual growth does not happen by accident, but in cooperation with God.

using the habit

Here is a very simple chart to help you over the next week get into the habit of thinking about your health. Once you have finished the week, the is one main question to ask: are there any changes I need to make so I can say my lifestyle is shaped "for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)

There are 330 voluntary muscles in the human body. That doesn't count muscles like the heart that require no thought or conscious effort.

Every day your heart beats 104,178 times. Your blood travels 171,000 miles. You breathe 23,172 times, inhaling 438 cubic feet of air. You move 752 major muscles and exercise 8,000,000 brain cells. You do this every day.

Number of chemical reactions occurring in the brain each second: 100,000.

It is possible to throw our lives away foolishly by burning the candle at both ends. When Robert Murray McCheyne, only thirty years old, lay dying, he said to a friend at his bedside, "God gave me a message to deliver and a horse to ride. Alas, I killed the horse, and now I cannot deliver the message." The horse was, of course, his body. Christian workers should accept it that their service will be costly if it is to be effective, but they should be careful not to kill the horse.

J. Oswald Sanders



putting the pieces together

In "did you know" we saw how connected our physical health is to our spiritual witness.

In "the facts of his story" we saw that 1) God created us out of dirt and breath. Both the physical and spiritual parts of us are important as they were designed to function together. Therefore, we saw that our eating and drinking is done 2) to honour God. 3 a) Our bodies are also important because the Holy Spirit lives in us. b) So my physical body belongs to God, c) also because as Jesus died for me, so now everything that I am belongs to him. d) Because of his sacrifice for me, everything I do with my body is for God's glory and purposes.

In "habits for reflecting the work of Jesus" we saw that it is good to regularly think consciously about our lifestyle habits, If honouring God is really a priority in our lives, we need to be aware that the lifestyle choices we make should be influenced by principle, rather than just our feelings.



my time with God

1. Remember this week to fill out the lifestyle survey.
2. Read Daniel 1. Why do you think there is a story about food at the beginning of a book about prophecy?
3. At creation, God created us to eat seed-bearing plants and fruit with seed in it (Genesis 1:29). Why were we designed originally to be vegetarians?
4. Before Noah went into the ark, God had made a difference between animals that were clean and animals that were unclean (Genesis 7:2). Later, the Israelites were reminded not to eat unclean animals (Leviticus 11). Can you find out why God said that certain animals should not be eaten?
5. During his ministry, Jesus prepared fish for the crowds and his disciples to eat. If God created us as vegetarians, why does Jesus eat fish? What principle do you think guided how he ate?



pass it on!

Can you explain why our bodies are important to take care of?



extra help

1. Ministry of Healing, by Ellen White.

reflecting Jesus

This form is to help us think consciously about they way we treat our bodies.

	Breakfast	Lunch	Supper	Exercise	Sleep	Work & Relaxation
Day 1	Did I eat food that I felt like eating or because it was healthy? Felt / Healthy Did I eat too much? Y / N			Did I exercise? Y / N	Did I get enough sleep? Y / N Did I get to bed early enough? Y/ N	Was I over-stressed today? Y / N
Day 2	Did I eat food that I felt like eating or because it was healthy? Felt / Healthy Did I eat too much? Y / N			Did I exercise? Y / N	Did I get enough sleep? Y / N Did I get to bed early enough? Y/ N	Was I over-stressed today? Y / N
Day 3	Did I eat food that I felt like eating or because it was healthy? Felt / Healthy Did I eat too much? Y / N			Did I exercise? Y / N	Did I get enough sleep? Y / N Did I get to bed early enough? Y/ N	Was I over-stressed today? Y / N
Day 4	Did I eat food that I felt like eating or because it was healthy? Felt / Healthy Did I eat too much? Y			Did I exercise? Y / N	Did I get enough sleep? Y / N Did I get to bed early enough? Y/ N	Was I over-stressed today? Y / N
Day 5	Did I eat food that I felt like eating or because it was healthy? Felt / Healthy Did I eat too much? Y / N			Did I exercise? Y / N	Did I get enough sleep? Y / N Did I get to bed early enough? Y/ N	Was I over-stressed today? Y / N
Day 6	Did I eat food that I felt like eating or because it was healthy? Felt / Healthy Did I eat too much? Y / N			Did I exercise? Y / N	Did I get enough sleep? Y / N Did I get to bed early enough? Y/ N	Was I over-stressed today? Y / N



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I am a link in
God's eternal chain **32**

?

did you know...



what will happen if the link snaps?



the facts of his story

When Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he was probably writing from prison in Rome. He knew his life was soon to end, and as he looked ahead, he saw that it was quite possible that the young Christian church would experience even more suffering. So he writes encouragement and advice. Read Philippians 2:12-18 and answer the following questions.

1. Who does Paul say is responsible for the future spiritual growth of his readers? (verse 12-13)

2. What is the reason why the Philippians are able to “shine like stars in the universe”? (verse 14-15)

3. What does Paul ask his readers to do in verse 16?

4. Why does Paul make this request? (verse 16)

5. Even though the outlook appears bleak, why does Paul say that the Philippians should be glad and rejoice? (verse 17-18)



thinking it through

1. What is the most important idea you saw from the text in Philippians, and why?

2. Someone has “held out the word of life” to another ever since Adam. What do you think about the idea that if you don’t hold the word out to another, the chain stops with you? Do you find this idea frightening or exciting, and why?

King Edward appointed William Wickham to build a stately church, and William Wickham performed his duty and finished by writing in the windows, “This work made William Wickham.” When chastised by the king for assuming the honour of that work for himself as author, when he was really only the overseer, he answered that he did not mean that he made the work, but that the work made him: before he had been poor, and now he was well established financially. Lord, when we read in thy Word that we must work out our own salvation, thy meaning is not that our salvation should be the effect of our work, but our work the evidence of our salvation.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon



habits for reflecting the work of Jesus ~ passing it on

passing on a new way of living

When Paul calls his readers to “hold out the word of life”, he is not just urging them to pass on a message, but message that is wrapped up in a lifestyle. What is being passed on is a totally different way of thinking, feeling and living that is marked with the atmosphere and character of Heaven—of God himself. It’s a message which calls us to become people. The message calls us to look at the world in a radically different way than before we met Jesus, and agreed to live according to the ways of the Kingdom of God.

Learning to live lives which are so different to what we see around us takes time. There are many parts to this picture. And in the same way we put a jigsaw puzzle together piece by piece, so we do this with the gospel in our lives.

However, if you imagine that you have a jigsaw puzzle in front of you in the box, it’s not much fun looking at all the pieces heaped up in a pile. The pieces only make sense, and we only see the beauty of the picture, when we see the pieces connected to each other.

This is our challenge as Christians. We want to be able to look at God, our lives, and the world, and see them in a single coherent picture. This is what we get a chance to try and begin to do now.

instructions

1. On a separate sheet are all the principles we have been exploring during this course. Cut between each square so you can move each one around by itself.
2. Find a large space where you can arrange all the squares together.
3. Your challenge now is to arrange the squares in such a way that you can tell the story of what God wants to do in our lives. If you have a very large sheet of paper, you can also draw add pictures to help you share the story.
4. To help you begin, imagine that you are talking to someone who does not know anything about what it means to reflect Jesus. Share your story so they will understand the big picture of what God wants to do in their lives.



using your habit

As you continue growing as a Christian, look out for more pieces of the puzzle. As you do, your picture of God's work and plans in your life will become clearer and more beautiful. It is this picture, and the beauty of it, that gives meaning

and purpose to our lives, and it is this that Paul calls us all to pass on to those around.

You can use your journal to help you map out your view of God, your life, and how they work together.

When Luther became a priest and celebrated his first Mass, in 1507, he trembled so much he nearly dropped the bread and cup. He became so terrified of the presence of Christ in the sacrament that he tried to run from the altar.

By the end of his life, Martin Luther wrote 60,000 pages, yet he hoped that "all my books would disappear and the Holy Scriptures alone be read."

On his way to the ecclesiastical hearing at Augsburg, when he feared the heretic's stake lay ahead, Luther's thoughts turned to the welfare of his mother and father. "Now I must die," he said. "What a disgrace I shall be to my parents!"

"Martin Luther—The Early Years," Christian History, no. 34.



putting the pieces together

In "did you know..." we looked at the picture of a chain and saw how in a spiritual sense, we are all links, connecting the past and the future together in one, unbroken story.

In "the facts of his story" we read about Paul encouraging his readers to keep going with their spiritual lives. He reminded them that 1) Both they and God, together in a partnership, were responsible for spiritual growth. God would provide the power, but they must work with him. 2) The purpose of God's work within them was so that they would shine out like stars in the moral darkness. They would be able to do this as they reflected his character in practical, daily living, with each other. 3) Paul also encourages his readers to pass on "the word of life" 4) so that he would not have worked for nothing—for if they did not pass on the good news, the effect of his work would suddenly stop. 5) Even though Paul faced death, and his Christians readers faced many trials ahead, he rejoiced, because both his and their sacrifice was being offered, as an offering, to God.

In "habits for reflecting the work of Jesus" we began to try and pull together all the pieces of what it means to live as a Christian in an intimate connection with God. This picture, which is not just a message we share with our mouths, but a lifestyle that reflects the character of God and his Kingdom, is what we are to pass on, as we link the next person into God's great salvation story.



my time with God

Spend some time this week to review what you have learned during this course. What are the most important lessons you have learned? What do you want to do now, to continue your life-long pursuit of revealing the character of Jesus?



pass it on!

When you look back over the whole course, what would you most like to pass on?



extra help

- 1. Go Teach All Nations, chapter 86, Desire of Ages, Ellen White.

Ultimately, witnessing requires opening my mouth	God has given me gifts to use for his church	My body matters	I am a vital link in God's eternal chain
The King of the Universe eagerly offers to guide my life	I am the light of the world	Jesus calls me to join him in his work	I am God's message
I have nothing to fear because my Father is king over our universe,	Death is the door to life	I can make all my moral choices using biblical principles	All things work together for good—even when life is painful
Private prayer brings power	Purity is a direction, not a place	The Holy Spirit changes me as I cooperate with him	I am my habits
I live continually in the presence of Jesus	God longs to speak to anyone who will listen	Worship is an attitude of my heart	Revival springs from repentance
God's power for change comes through his promise	I believe God by faith	Meditation teaches me how to listen and watch	I was designed for intimacy with God
When God's word is studied, God's voice is heard	The Bible tells a cosmic story that teaches us how to understand our lives	I am saved to become like Jesus	I am an ambassador of another world
I am as strong as my connection to Jesus	When I am connected to Jesus, his life and identity becomes mine	Character is destiny	I was designed by God to reflect his character to the ends of the earth

