

Living It Up

The Mind Set for Life

October 2, 2022



Today we're talking about how to *live it up* way down here. So, let's start with the crucial question at the core: **How Christian is your life?** And better yet, what do you think that *means*? Well, as we've seen through the *lens* of Christian giving, Christian *living* is all about putting our money where our mouth is. Or *rather*, our *treasure* where our *heart* is; and vice versa. **It's the outer indication of our inner condition**, because:



As water reflects the face, so one's *life* reflects the *heart*. – Proverbs 27:19 NIV



Because *everything* earthly, is just a vehicle for *showing, knowing, and growing* our true *heart*. And God gave it such high priority because **everything eternal hinges on the health, wholeness, and holiness of our heart**. So, the Christian life is one ongoing *examination* because we're dead set on having healthy hearts to live out our longest life:



Above *all* else, *guard* your heart, for everything you *do* flows from *it*. – Proverbs 4:23 NIV



And so, we've been *given* this life down here to *live in* – because *it's* where we can *recognize* and *repair* the *one* heart condition that's both *universal* and *terminal*; *sin*. In all its various forms. And **seeing the sin in our life as the symptom of our heart's disease, is the way we take our spiritual temperature**. And from there – we can gauge how close to the dose we



are – in God's given treatment plan, which is to:

Trust in the *Lord* with all *your* heart *and* lean *not* on your own *understanding*. – Proverbs 3:5 NIV

Now, our *heart* defect *is* the killer, but our mind is its *partner* in crime. And the mind *matters* because **things, good or bad, can't touch our heart without making it through our thick skulls first!** Which is why we have to change our *minds* – to change our *hearts* – to change *ourselves* – to change our *lives*. And *that's* how we get to the *new you* with a *healed* heart that can survive in Heaven's high altitude! Here's how Paul says it simpler:

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

This life was deliberately designed to challenge *and* change our hearts and minds. It's where we see the symptoms that compel us to find a cure. And our *earthly lives* pull this off by pushing us through three *key* spiritual steps: **identification**, **motivation**, and **transformation**.

And we *all* begin with **identification**. *Who am I? Who are we? And where did we come from?* From the moment we're born, we're instinctually *obsessed* with our origin story and individual identities because we naturally know these answers would help *explain* everything else. *But* we need to be *careful* because the identity's *illuminating* influence also means that **wrong answers have the power to confuse everything**.



Early scientists started with the *reasonable* but *wrong* assumption that the sun revolved around the earth. So, everything they built on that principle *didn't* work out – *until* they challenged and changed their minds to see it was the *sun* that was at the center. Well, the search for our *origin* and *identity* has puzzled people for eons because, like those early scientists, **we typically begin with the reasonable but wrong starting point – ourselves**. But the universe *doesn't* revolve around us. And, in an *us-first* approach, we are only defined by what we have seen in what we have been. We need a superior *outside* perspective for an *objective* answer. Trouble is, **that means trusting someone other than ourselves**. And right there, in *step-stinking-one*, God set us up for a change of heart and mind. **He'll give you an answer, in exchange for your trust**. Because He loves you and:

If you *live* according to the *flesh*, you will *die*; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body **[in the old self]**, you will *live* **[a new life, by His Spirit and your mind]**. For those who are led by the Spirit of God *are* the *children of God*. – Romans 8:13-14 NIV

Well, we walked right into that one! We *are* children of God the *moment* we trust *Him* as that superior authority that we were born looking for. And that means **our identity is defined relative to God because we're created as a relative of God**. And we don't *DO* a thing to make that true. Being God's child isn't something we undertake, it's something we understand. **We don't attain it, we accept it**. But if we stay stuck on believing it's our *behavior* and *not* our state of mind that matters, we can miss our chance to make our change.

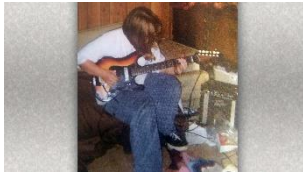
He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him **[their minds were unchanged]**. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him **[their hearts weren't humbled]**. Yet to all who *did* receive Him, to those who *believed* in His name **[as the Son of God]**, He gave the right to become children of God **[by adopting the Son's way of life as their own]** – John 1:10-12 NIV



Because when you know *you* as a child of *you-know-Who*, you know His Son is the picture of what you do! Which is why **God was so intent on providing Jesus as an unflinching example to explain exactly who we are**. Jesus was the role model that reveals our full *potential* and true *identity*:

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

And our identity inevitably leads to the next spiritual step in healing our heart; **motivation**. Because *all* of life's choices are *driven* by identity. And it happens two ways: **we do some things because of who we hope to be** and **some things because of who we actually are**.



When I was 12, I thought I knew who I hoped to be; I was gonna be the lead guitarist for the band that changed music *forever*. So I got a *job* to get the *guitar* and grew my *hair* to get the *look* and got an *attitude* to get the *attention*. And yet, *somehow*, it didn't ever happen. Cuz the *old* me and *his* priorities hung *around* and held *back* the *new* me I'd *hoped* to be.



However, the moment I had kids, I *became* a full-fledged father. I didn't have to *hope*, cuz I instantly *was*. So I got a *crib* cuz I *had* the kid; I got some *diapers* cuz I *had* the mess; and I got some *pacifiers* cuz I *had* a headache! And the *old* me couldn't hold anybody back cuz he was shot dead on the spot. Noah was now a new *father* first and foremost... who still just *happened* to play in a band.



And this is what makes *Christian* living so unique; **we don't do things because of who we're trying to be, we do things because of who God made us to be**. And most identities, even in other *religions*, go the other direction. They're built on behaviors that change who we *are*, while the *Christian* identity says **who we are is what changes our behavior**.



Because God's grace *made* you His *full-fledged child* the moment you made Him your Dad, through Christ. And **that's the ultimate identity which we put on over all things**. *That's* the new self, which is *Christ*, who is *love*. And Paul pounds that home in several other letters:

Put on the *Lord* Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the *flesh* – Romans 13:14 NKJ

Above *all* these things put on *love*, which is the bond of *perfection*. – Colossians 3:14 NKJ

You're not a *teacher* or a *dentist* anymore. You're a child of God who loves *through* teaching and you're a child of God who loves *through* dentistry! And even though this sounds like rudimentary stuff – I *gotta* say it because we *rarely* act like it. And we need to get our *mind* right, because **buying into our identity is how we convince ourselves to do things differently**.

Change your *mind* and the rest will follow. Because *acknowledging* means *accepting* and *accepting* means *acting*. And when you really *know* something, it moves from your *head* to your

heart, and inevitably shows up in the work of your *hands*. And that's where we see the *third* step in the healing of our heart; **transformation**.

Even if we're *already* His *kids*, **we gotta grow up spiritually just like Jesus**; which is not automatic. It requires a lot of *work* and *effort* to *transform*. Because, **God's earthly goal for us isn't comfort, its character**. Because character means harmony between our *head*, *heart*, and *hands*. And we should see *three things* in our character when our life is being lived out by a *healed* heart; **courage, consistency, and conviction**.

And to see *courage*, once again our *mind* has to make the first move, because **courage happens when we trust what we know over what we can see**. Remember this scene in Indiana Jones?

Our life becomes more Christ-like when we put *on* faith and put *off* fear. So, how *Christian* is your life? **Do you have the courage to share your true identity in your daily life?** Or is there a part of the *old* you hanging around and *holding* you back with *worries* about how the *new* you will be received? Well don't forget how your role model handled it:



For the joy set before *Him* He endured the *cross* – Hebrews 12:2 NIV



Now, **how about consistency?** It *also* begins with our mind, because it takes *deliberate, daily*, dedication to reliably *choose* the things that *only* the *new* you does. And **we can't claim to be new until it's consistently true**; a husband who's faithful *most* of the time isn't faithful *at all!*



And our life becomes more Christ-like when we put on *holy habits* and put off *conflicting* choices. So how Christian is your life? **Do you choose to do what you know the new you should do?** Or do you *pick* and choose to hang on to both versions of you? Well, knock it off and keep it *simple*:

Whatever you do, do it *all* for the glory of God. – 1 Corinthians 10:31 NIV

And when you *don't*, repent! Because lastly, **there should be conviction in our character**. What we believe as true has to be backed up by thorough *thought* and actual *action*. Yet if we're *honest* with ourselves, we'll *often* find that we turn a blind eye to the truths we *don't* like. **But willful ignorance is just another way to say stupid on purpose**.

And our life becomes more Christ-like when we put on total *truth* and put off even the little *lies*. So how Christian is your life? **Do you bend your will to accommodate truth?** Or do you bend the truth to accommodate your will? Remember what Jesus *prayed* for His disciples? He asked *God* to:



Sanctify them *by the truth*; Your Word *is* truth. – John 17:17 NIV

Listen, **the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make us like the Son of God.** And *that* means the Bible *must* become the sole standard for *our* measure of truth and the bedrock of your *belief* in the new you.

[So, to sum up:] Do *not conform* to the pattern of this world [that's not what it's *for!*], but be transformed [into the new you] by the renewing of your *mind* [that comes with *actually accepting your true identity*]. – Romans 12:2 NIV

Y'know, **we can survive decades of religiously going through Christian motions – and never live a single moment of Christian life.** And that's *heartbreaking*. Because there's so much more *joy* in a *living* room than there is in a *waiting* room. And it's high time to believe we've been cured of death. So, let's get our mind set for *life* and start living it up!

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.