

Connect with the worship - pray, particularly for the anointing and convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Pray that we would understand the way to be truly transformed to Christlikeness.

Pray for the Lesotho team.

As I speak, listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit in your own heart. Remember what He says to you, and know that He is convicting you of it because He loves you, and wants you to be transformed into the image of Christ - the One Who showed us the way.



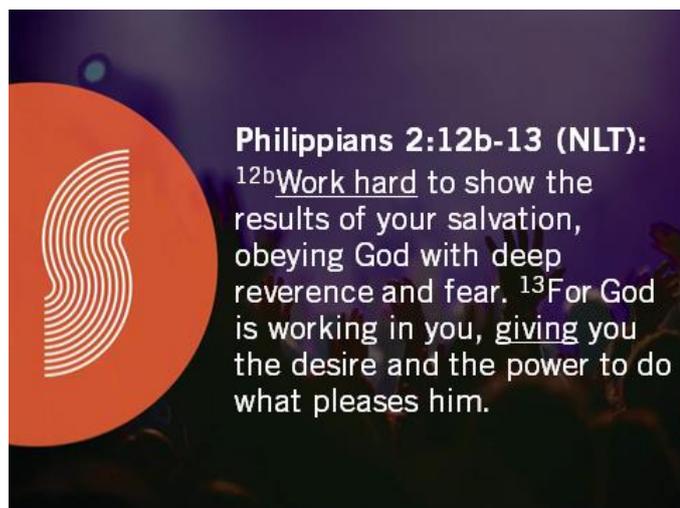
Last week I spoke about true transformation. If you were not here last Sunday, the audio recording and notes are available on the shofarsermons.org website.

This was the final slide of the day last Sunday, and summarised what was said about true transformation:



I said that this Sunday we would become a little more practical about how we actually DO the process of true transformation, and what tools are available to help us in the process, hence the title of this message "The DIY guide to true transformation".

Now, to confirm that we DO have a part to play in the process of our true transformation into Christlikeness, let's read one of the Scriptures that we read last week:



We are exhorted by Paul to "work hard" to show the results of our salvation - what would those results properly be? The process of our transformation into Christlikeness... God is working in us, giving us the desire and power to do what please Him - but we need to exercise our wills (work hard) in response to these gifts. If we do not have the desire and power, we need to ask Him for them - and He will give them to us! And remember that He will never grow impatient with us - we may ask as often as we need to!



Do everything without complaining and arguing - this also implies action!

It is as we live clean innocent lives that the world sees Christ in us - there is no more powerful tool to convict the world of their need for the Lord than this. Now, let's look at some of the "how-to's"...

If we want true transformation to the image of Christ - or Christlikeness, we need to ask what Christlikeness is. Well, what is Christ like? How did He live while in human form? Does that not define Christlikeness?

To imitate Christ, or to become like Him; we need to know Him and to know what He did while He lived here on the earth. The best source for that knowledge is the Scriptures. They are filled with a wealth of accounts of what He did and how He did it. The New

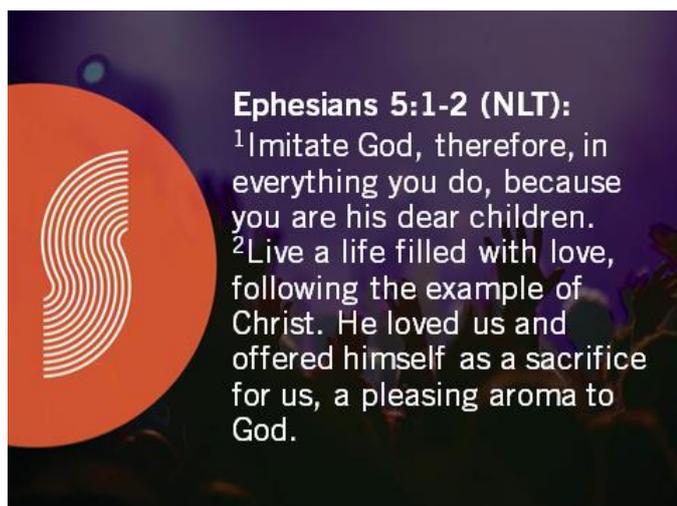
Testament is filled with practical advice on how to live. We simply need to tap into this well of knowledge.

At this point I would like to say that it is important for us to look at the Bible translation that we use. Remember that there are different methods used in translation - which is freely communicated by the Translators. A literal translation will attempt to communicate the ideas in contemporary language - good examples are *The Message* and *Die Boodschap*. The old *Living* translation and *Lewende Vertaling* are another example of this approach. While Biblical scholars may sometimes be dismissive of these translations, they do a very fine job of helping us to understand the Scriptures. The *Ou Vertaling* and the *English Standard Version* are examples of word-for-word translation. Bible Scholars prefer the accuracy of these translations, but they are sometimes more difficult to read and understand. It is therefore a good idea to read at least one of each type of translation. Personally, I find that reading many different translations help to keep the Scriptures fresh and stimulating.

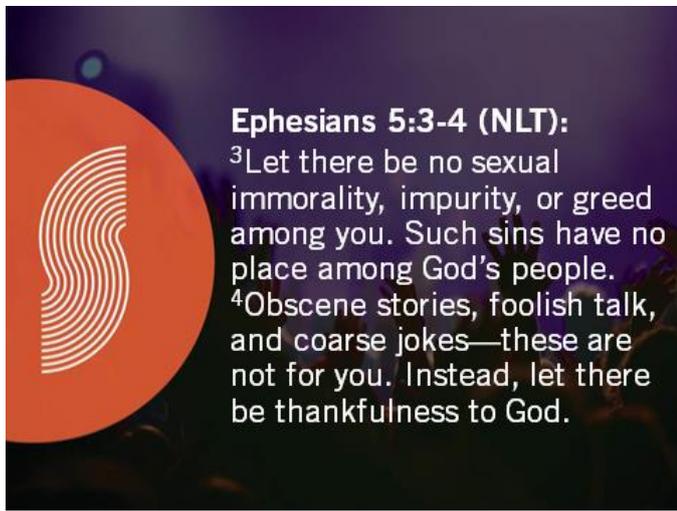
Now, as an example of how we look for practical advice for true transformation in the Bible, we'll have a look at a few short passages of Scripture...

As we do this, it is important for us to remember that God knows best - He created us and knows us better than we know ourselves - so if He has an opinion on how we should live, we can take it that it is the very best way! With this in mind, we can take it that when the Lord says that we should avoid, or not do, something; He has a very good reason for it. Let us read all of Scripture with this attitude.

Now having said all of that, we'll get practical by looking at the first few verses of Ephesians 5 - this is one of many Scripture passages that has practical guidelines on how to live a Christian life in a way that results in our becoming more and more Christlike:



Imitate God - that is our goal of true transformation. Then it describes something of how this works in practice. Walk in love - we know something of what love is by reading 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, but also know that Jesus; as the Son of God, always manifests pure and perfect love - ultimately demonstrating it by giving His life for every person. He expects no less from me and you...



Verse 3 tells us that sexual immorality, impurity and greed are not acceptable for us. We will read in a moment in verse 5 that such things can cause us to lose our inheritance in the Kingdom - but why, you may ask?

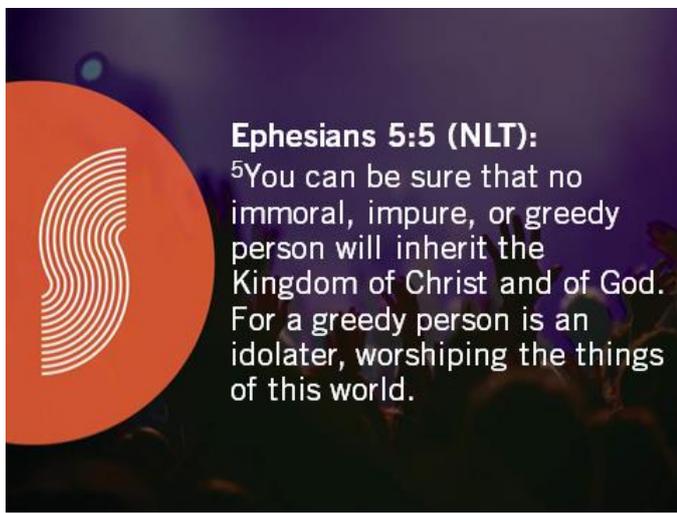
Well, taking sexual immorality first; God intends the sex act to be within the loving communion of a husband and wife - He finds no other context acceptable. Why? In the first place, sex outside the commitment of marriage is simply an expression of lust (and is lust not "all about ME"?) - there is no true love involved (remembering that true love places the needs of others before our own). If the couple truly loved one another, they would not want one another to run the risk of incurring the displeasure of God. Secondly, the sex act can, and often does, result in a child. The child IS the responsibility of his or her parents - not the state or the Church or a granny or an aunty. We live in a time when an immense number of children are fatherless because of the selfishness of one or both of their parents. And I think that we will all agree that the fruit is NOT good. It is extremely easy, and not at all admirable, to achieve the physical fathering of a child - most men are naturally able to do this. However, fathering in the sense that the Lord speaks of is an entirely different matter!

Impurity has the effect of keeping us from the purity that we are called to - I think that we all know that sin has the effect of placing us onto a slippery slope... Impurity and greed, just like sexual sin, are rooted in self-gratification - ultimately self-worship, the sin of Satan.

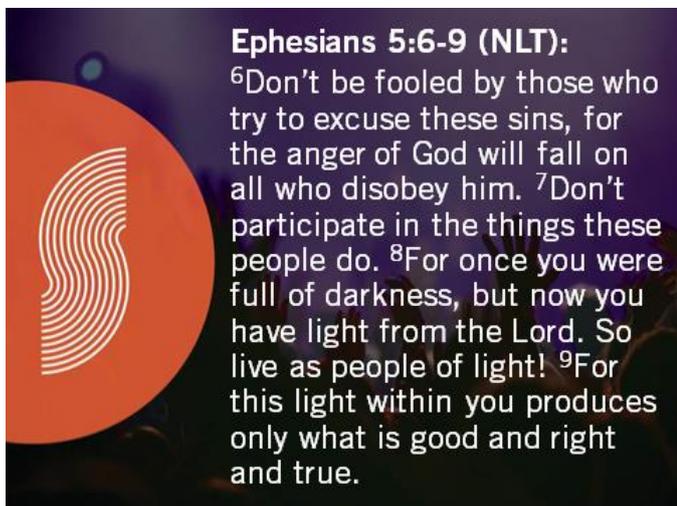
Looking at the first part of verse 4, Jesus might ask us: Why do you entertain yourself with that which I died to save you from?

What makes you and me different from the "world"? Is it not the evidence of a changed life? Where we may be seen to be "In the world, not of the world" in our behaviour and speech?

The second part of verse 4 reminds us to be thankful to the Lord - this helps us to remember what He has done - not only for us, but for those around us.



As we have just discussed around verse 3, we can see that the wrong kind of behaviour will lead to a great loss for us. Greed is further defined for us here as worshipping the things of this world, and we all know that the things of this world have at their heart rebellion against God and all that He stands for.



No matter how anyone may try to justify sinful behaviour, or a falling short of God's standard - it will not please the Lord when we behave in that way. And as for those who actually lead others into sin - eish!

Jesus' disciples were profoundly changed by the time that they spent with Him. It is notable that one of them - Judas Iscariot - did not allow himself to be truly transformed, which resulted in his thoughts leading him to betray Jesus. This clearly demonstrates that while each disciple had the same opportunity to be transformed, they had to choose to be transformed.

Christ ate with sinners, He didn't sin with them. They were convicted and changed by His being with them - He was not changed to be like them in their sin. Look at Zacchaeus! Jesus did what His Father showed Him.

John 5:19-20 (NLT):

¹⁹So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. ²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished.

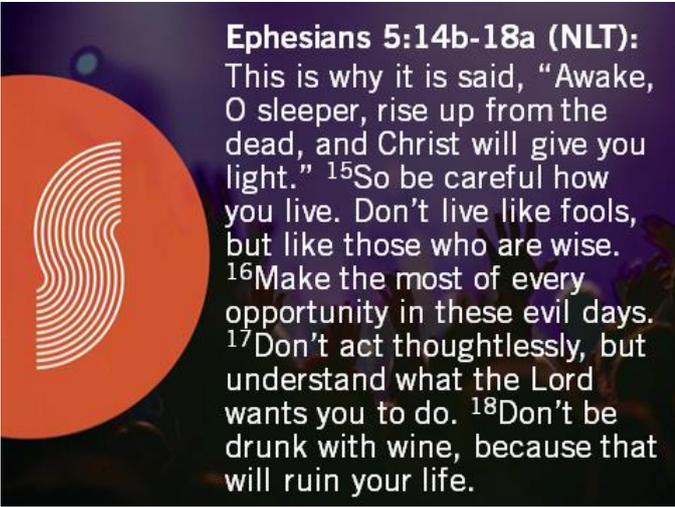
Does this not imply that when Jesus did spend time with sinners, it was because He had heard His Father? About who He should be with? Clearly He was always among sinners while on the earth. But He NEVER sinned! His life of holiness (purity) challenged the people around Him - their response was up to them.

So the lesson for us is this: we should keep company with those who will influence us towards Christlikeness, and with those who the Lord directs us to, so as to influence them to Christlikeness. THEN we will be full of light!

Ephesians 5:10-14a (NLT):

¹⁰Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. ¹²It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. ¹³But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, ¹⁴for the light makes everything visible.

How do we determine what pleases the Lord? Well, that is what we are doing as an exercise right now. Note that the deeds of evil and darkness are exposed by the light of Christ. In other words, we do not go looking for such things to expose them - our lives do it naturally.



Ephesians 5:14b-18a (NLT):

This is why it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light." ¹⁵So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. ¹⁶Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. ¹⁷Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. ¹⁸Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life.

We need to activate our wills - wake up in other words, from our old sinful way of life where we allowed ourselves to be led by the world. This entire section is an exhortation to "take every thoughts captive" (2 Cor 10:5). Why? Because our actions always start with a thought. We need to recognise that not every thought that we think is motivated by the Lord - some are sown by the enemy, some are a result of our own fallen nature. So we need always to pause and examine a thought before acting on it - comparing it with the absolute standard of Scripture, and consulting the Holy Spirit for His guidance on our response to the thought.

Video clip: 1h 33m 47s. This is a depiction of taking our thoughts captive by focussing on "the one thing". Let's watch it...

It is notable that some of the distractions in this depiction were right there - the crowd, the competitors, the challenge of the course and the weather. But another distraction was that of the baggage from his past. ALL of that was put aside as he focussed on the goal, and it lost its power to distract him. Remember that we can only be distracted by that which we give permission to distract us.

Verse 18: Being drunk with wine will ruin our lives simply because when we are drunk with wine, we allow our minds to become passive. This is why you will see that most satanic and religious rituals are accompanied by some sort of orgy - either sexual, alcoholic, or drug. Every one of these is centred on self-gratification - where is the love in that? Even for self?

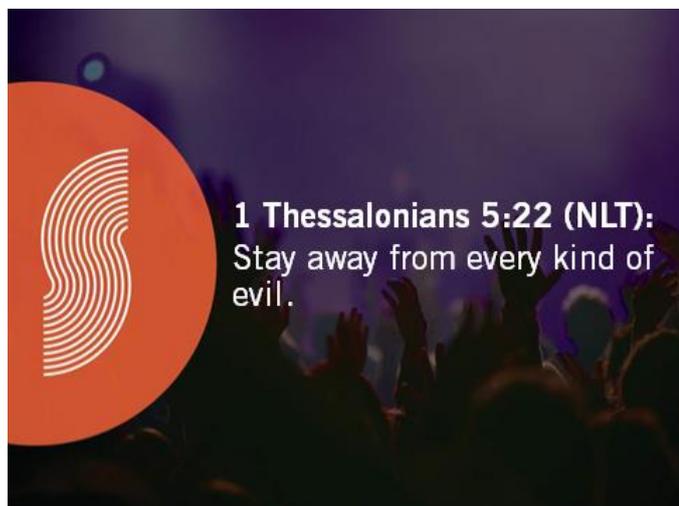


Ephesians 5:18b-21 (NLT):

Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁹singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. ²⁰And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

These verses describe the safe place - the Holy Spirit IS our Comforter and Counsellor and Guide. We need to be full of Him! Singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs reminds us of Who God is and what He has done for us - our focus is where it should be. Submitting to one another implies that we spend time with one another and serve one another - surely a practical expression of love?

There are a LOT more Scripture passages that give us practical advice on how to live Christlike lives - for example:



Short and simple! We have probably all heard the saying: "If you stand near a fire you will smell of smoke". Well there we are then... This is where my love for the people around me costs something, as we'll see in the next Scripture.



Even though I might consider something to be good, for the sake of another believer, I should not partake. That is an act of love.



2 Timothy 2:20-21 (NLT):

²⁰In a wealthy home some utensils are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions, and the cheap ones are for everyday use. ²¹If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work.

Wouldn't you like to be an "expensive utensil" used for special occasions and honourable use? Well, all we need to do is keep ourselves pure. And the next verses remind us of how we do that...



2 Timothy 2:22-23 (NLT):

²²Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts. ²³Again I say, don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights.

Run! From sin, towards the Lord! Keep company with the right people. Sound familiar?



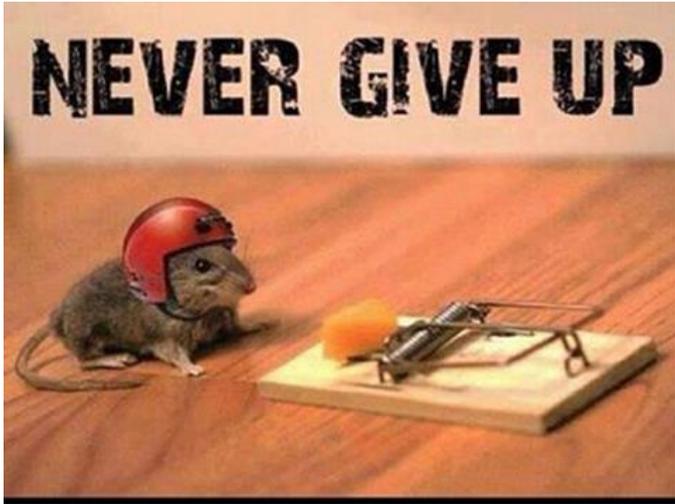
2 Timothy 2:24-26 (NLT):

²⁴A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. ²⁵Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. ²⁶Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.

Such simple, practical guidelines! Our work is not to convict or convince people of their need for the Saviour, that is the Holy Spirit's work. John 16:8 (NLT): ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment.

Our job is to apply this Scripture prayerfully.

So there we have it.

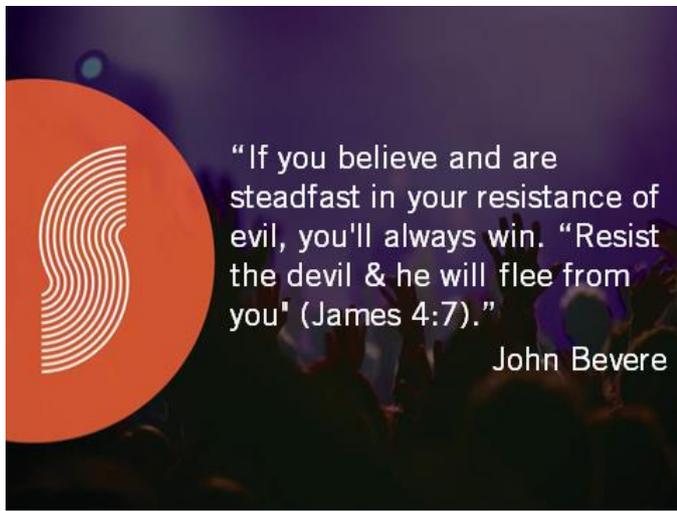


Never give up! Jesus is cheering you on from His position at the right hand of the Father in heaven, wanting with all His heart for you to succeed! Remember that He is not on the side lines, He is truly with You - as the Holy Spirit is in you.

Pray:

Pray for each other in groups of 2 to 4 people (of the same gender)?

- If we do not yet want true transformation into Christlikeness - ask for the desire and power from the Lord.
 - Commit to the process of true transformation.
 - Ask for the Lord's help, wisdom and guidance for the process.
 - If you want to, ask someone here to help you to stay focussed and accountable.
-



David's mighty men were originally riff-raff, but they were changed by being with him. Joshua spent his time with Moses - and led the Israelites into the promised land - his testimony does not end there - his generation and the one following served the Lord.

Joshua 24:31 (ESV)

³¹ Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel.

The people served God while Joshua and his successors lived. What happened after that? The people who reminded the Israelites of Who God is and of what He had done for them; died. The next generation did not "think on these things" and allowed their minds to be filled with the "things of the world" that was around them - a world shaped by foreign gods...

Holiness - what does it mean? How do we achieve it?

Radical = going back to the roots - or basics.

Romans 12:1-21 (NLT):

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.* ² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

³ Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.* ⁴ Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, ⁵ so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

⁶ In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. ⁷ If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. ⁸ If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

⁹ Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰ Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹ Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. ¹² Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. ¹³ When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. ¹⁵ Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

¹⁷ Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸ Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

¹⁹ Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the LORD.

²⁰ Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."

²¹ Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

Joshua 9:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the LORD. ¹⁵ And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them.

Gibeonite's treachery.

Joshua 24:16b (ESV)

But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

As for me and my house...

Ps 103

Think on these things

Scripture giving practical guidelines for Christian living

Romans 6:1-14 (NLT):

6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

The end does not always justify the means. We have to remember that God knows everything - we have to trust Him to show us the best way to live in every circumstance and situation. No matter how tempting it might be to tell a "white lie" or to take a shortcut - we dare not compromise on His standard. We might be surprised, too, at how well-received we are when we are completely truthful. Would you and I not rather be known as a man or woman of integrity, than as an unreliable person, or as a liar?

How often are we presumptuous, presuming that we know better (than God?!)? Or not even thinking of consulting Him before we make a decision on any action?

Solomon's wives

Temple or personal?

Law and grace are not in opposition to one another. Paul is eloquent on this point.

Image of Christ

Is my love for the Lord sufficient to cause me to consider His will to be more important than mine? No matter the cost to me?

Am I recognisable as my father's son? Why? Is it not because there is some physical resemblance, but also because the way that I behave is modelled on his example?

Passive versus active.

From this list, it may be seen that we do have a part to play in our transformation - which is why "DIY". However, we need to remember that part of being a successful "DIY-er" is knowing when to call in the professionals, and when to ask for help (or read the instructions(!)).

With this in mind, what I want to do this morning is to have a look at each of the points in this list, and talk about the "how to do" of each one.

How will we know that something is a lie if we do not know what the truth is?

Basic
Instruction
Before
Leaving
Earth

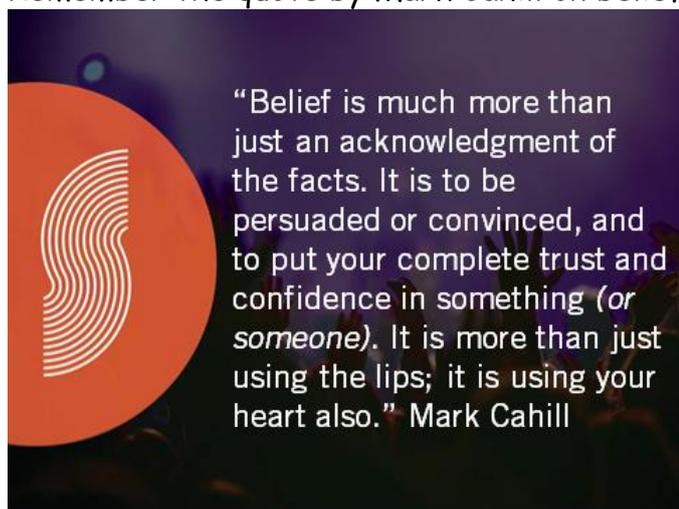


Remember how we said that the term "born-again" implies a new beginning? It means that we are born of the Holy Spirit (God). That means that once we have been born-again He is our Dad (Father) and we are His son or daughter.

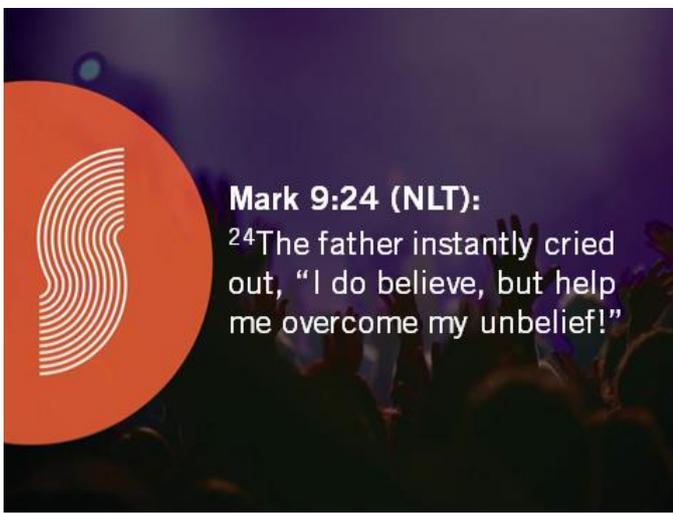
I hope that the fact that you are with us this morning means that you have been born again. However, if you have not, or are not sure about it; PLEASE come and speak to us at the end of the service so that we can help you to take this exciting first step into eternal life, or make an appointment to see Phillip when he returns from Lesotho.



Remember the quote by Mark Cahill on belief - here it is again:



We need to examine ourselves to check whether we really do believe - and if we don't, we need to ask the Lord to help us to believe, as in the following example:



The result? Jesus healed his son! So we can ask, and He will answer.



As I said earlier, part of being a successful "DIY'er" is to know when to call in the professionals, or to read the instructions. We saw an example a moment ago of how we can ask the Lord to help us, and He does. This applies to every area of our transformation. Often, He will arrange "divine appointments" for us so that we can grow to the next stage of transformation into Christlikeness.



When we have asked the Lord for help, or to change us, we need to listen for the answer. We need at all times to listen for the Holy Spirit - He is our Counsellor, and has ALL wisdom for every situation.

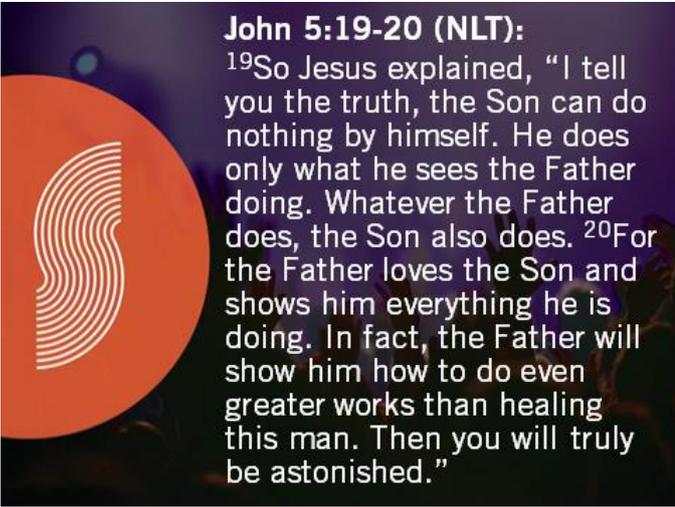


Why do we need to renew our minds? It is because everything that we do starts out as a thought - so if we want to behave in a Christlike way, we need to think in a Christlike way. The most effective way to renew our minds is to take the next few steps that we'll look at now.



Jesus' disciples were profoundly changed by the time that they spent with Him. It is notable that one of them - Judas Iscariot - did not allow himself to be truly transformed, which resulted in his thoughts leading him to betray Jesus. This clearly demonstrates that while each disciple had the same opportunity to be transformed, they had to choose to be transformed.

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How are we truly transformed into Christlikeness?

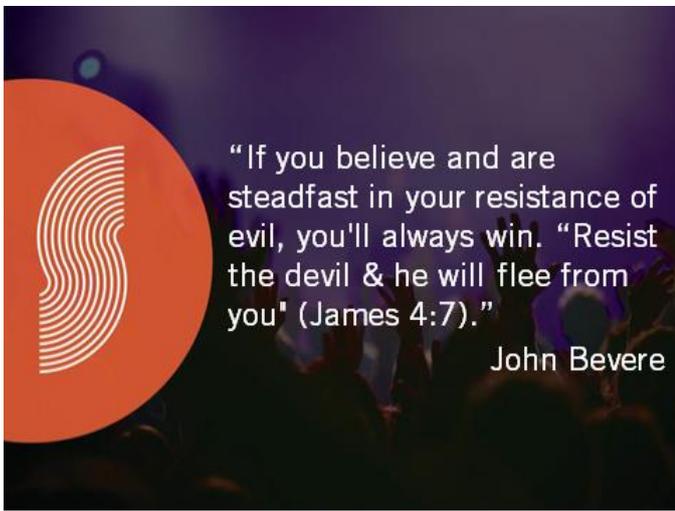
We need to fill our minds with the truth.

One of the most effective ways to renew our minds is to fill them with the truth. The source of truth? Scripture! As revealed by the Holy Spirit.

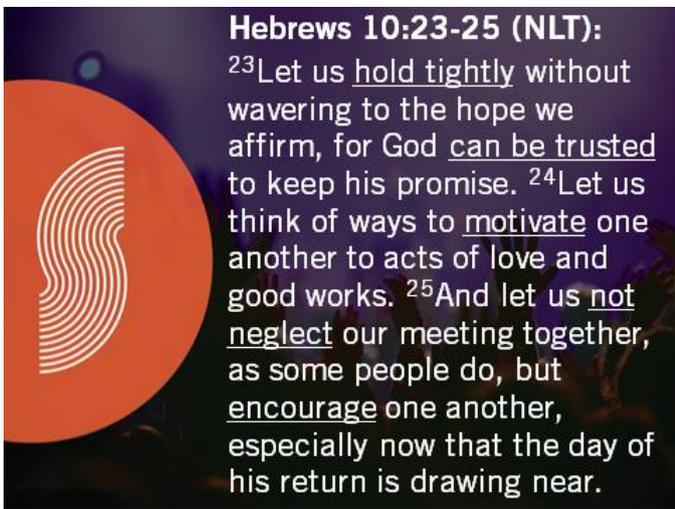


How are we truly transformed into Christlikeness?

We need to persevere.



This takes us back to some of the steps that we have already looked at - we need to know what it is that we are aiming for - so that we cannot be distracted from our path, and we need to keep company with like-minded Christians who will help us to stay focussed on the goal.



Preaching good morals without Jesus is completely pointless, from an eternal perspective. It is a correct relationship with Jesus that is the key.