

## Becoming Like Jesus

The Bible speaks of the predominance of the human heart and mind:

*“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flows the springs of life”* (Proverbs 4:23),

*“As a man thinks within himself, so he is”* (Proverbs 23:7).

The Biblical heart and mind of man compose the very center of an individual's being. The heart and mind have much to do with what psychology calls “the subconscious.” The term “inner compass” may also be used to describe the predisposition or inclination of a person's heart. The bearings of this compass direct the course of an individual's life – even when the person is not aware of it. Often, the term “self-image” is used to describe the setting of a person's inner compass.

A person's self-image consists of the way he sees himself from the very core of his being. The picture one has of himself consistently guides all thoughts, decisions, and behaviors in one way or another. Hence the truth: *“As a man thinks within himself, so he is”* (Proverbs 23:7). Deviation from this inner compass' setting, or self-image, seldom occurs; and when it does it must always be very temporary. Therefore, any permanent change in behavior must come from a change of the person's inner compass. Truly, one's answer to the question “Who do you think are?” becomes of profound importance and consequence!

This inner compass, the conception one has of himself, is formed early in life. Many secular experts estimate by the age of 5 years, or earlier, a person's self image becomes permanently set. The Bible itself instructs parents: *“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). And the longer thought patterns and habits are reinforced, the more entrenched they become.

But the Bible indicates that the blood of Christ can effectually change the setting and direction of one's inner compass. Christians are told: *“...you were not redeemed with perishable things like gold or silver from your **futile way of life** inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ”* (I Peter 1:18-19). Without the blood of Christ being applied, people are held captive by, stuck in, the way of life as molded by their up-bringing and cultural environment.

Jesus makes it clear that an accurate determination of the bearings of a person's inner compass can be made by what comes out of his mouth. Statements such as: *“For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart”* (Matthew 12:34) bear this out clearly. By listening to a person's speech, one

can see the condition of his heart and understand how he sees himself. This is especially true under conditions of stress or pain when the subconscious over-rides the conscious mind's refinements. During these times a person's true character and nature are revealed.

So, in effecting permanent behavioral change at any level, a person must have in fact a change of "heart" or direction of his inner compass. This constitutes the Biblical process of transformation. The modern English term "transformation" as used in the Bible comes from the Greek word metamorphoo. Two New Testament (NT) passages describe this spiritual metamorphosis as follows:

*"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove [demonstrate] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect"* (Romans 12:2), and

*"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit"* (II Corinthians 3:18).

The Word of God, and especially the NT Word of Christ, is specifically designed to change a person from his innermost being. The Word effectually works in the mind and heart of the Christian. I Thessalonians 2:13 states: *"For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."* At the deepest spiritual level, God's Word claims healing for the human soul: *"...in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls"* (James 1:21b). In this sense, the Word of God redials and correctly aligns a person's inner compass; his heart, mind, and even soul.

The Word produces faith: *"Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"* (Romans 10:17). The Scriptures define this faith as the *"conviction of things not seen"* or even *"the conviction of things not yet seen"* (Hebrews 11:1). One Bible passage even submits that Christians are to recalibrate their inner compasses to embrace the faith that Jesus Himself had: *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me"* (Galatians 2:20). Another passage shows how this faith affects behavior and performance: *"...[that I] may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of*

*my own derived from the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Philippians 3:9). So, the Word of God produces faith, which provides new ways of seeing and valuing one’s self; thereby changing behavior in healthy, permanent ways.*

In conjunction with the Word, the indwelling presence of God’s Holy Spirit works within the Christian’s heart to adjust the inner compass. Romans 2:29 depicts an ongoing heart transplant operation going on within the Christian as the Holy Spirit operates: *“circumcision is that which of the heart, by the Spirit.”* Romans 5:5 further indicates that the Holy Spirit is pumping massive amounts of God’s love into the Christian’s heart as He works: *“the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”* This love turns the self-centered person away from himself and outward to embrace the needs of others. Christian service for others provides the most stable form of happiness and satisfaction, affording healing of both heart and mind. Such is the way of Jesus, the Great Physician.

The indwelling Holy Spirit also produces a transformation, or metamorphosis, of the mind. As stated earlier, Romans 12:2 describes the Christian as being *“transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* Ephesians 4:24-25 further explains this process: *“that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind”* then adds: *“and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”* This renewal is accomplished by the Holy Spirit and revealed in the following Scripture regarding salvation in Christ: *“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and **renewing by the Holy Spirit**”* (Titus 3:5). Not coincidentally, one Bible passage after describing how the Holy Spirit inspired men to write the Word of God makes this telling statement: *“FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ”* (I Corinthians 2:16)!

The predicted results of the Word of God and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit working on the Christian are that he will be transformed into the image, or likeness, of Christ. Both II Corinthians 3:18, as given earlier, and Romans 8:29 yield this conclusion. Romans 8:29 specifically states: *“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the first born among many brethren.”*

Here the word “predestined” indicates a predetermined process and result that God had designed beforehand.

But this end result, that of having a re-directed inner compass resulting in an individual being conformed to the image of Christ Jesus, requires the active, conscious participation of the one being transformed. He must be led by the Spirit, instead of grieving or quenching the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will not accomplish this transformation for the Christian by Himself. The Christian must be continually devoting him or herself to the Word of God: reading, studying, meditating, hearing, and memorizing. The Spirit of Christ and the Word of God will faithfully accomplish their God-given task. But the Christian must do his part as well.

All three participants involved in this grand spiritual metamorphosis: the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Christian himself, must work in Biblically-coordinated unison. When this happens, effective permanent change results within the inner person: his heart, mind, and eternal soul. The properly-realigned inner compass not only points to Christ, but transforms a person into the very image of Jesus. Oh, to be like Him!

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