

WEEK 7 (March 22-28) TRANSFORMATION, HABITS- an acquired behavior pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary, a dominant or regular disposition or tendency; prevailing character or quality.

OPTIONAL READING: John Chapters 16-20

“Virtue is what happens when wise and courageous choices become second nature.” N. T. Wright

Day 1 Read the following scripture:

John 17:13-26 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹³But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them ^[a]from ^[b]the evil *one*. ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

²⁰“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may ^[c]believe that You sent Me. ²²The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected ^[d]in unity, so that the world may ^[e]know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. ²⁴Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵“O righteous Father, ^[f]although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; ²⁶and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

Jesus teaches that we were made for a commitment to one another in a transforming relationship and to be satisfied in this commitment of giving ourselves and not living for ourselves. This is the ministry of reality, only this truly satisfies. If we live a “false self”

you can never be fully satisfied because we are trying to be someone we are not, never feeling real. Spiritual practices developed as habits will help us live in reality.

A grandfather is walking with his grandson, and the grandson says, "I feel I have 2 wolves inside of me, at war with each other. One of them is a good wolf, full of love, kindness and beauty. The other is a bad wolf, full of greed, lust and fear."

The grandson suddenly stops walking and looks up to his grandfather. "Grandfather," he says, "Which one will win?"

The grandfather quietly says, "Whichever one you feed," and begins walking again.

Things to consider: are you living as a "false self" and not in reality?

Prayer: ask God to help you live for others and not yourself, what habits will help you live in reality as the person you are in Christ.

Day 2 Read the following scripture:

Matthew 6:1-21 New American Standard Bible
(NASB)

6 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

²"So when you ^[a]give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ³But when you ^[b]give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your ^[c]giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you. ⁵"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners ^[d]so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you. ⁷"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

⁹"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹'Give us this day ^[e]our daily bread.

¹²'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from ^[f]evil. ^[g][For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.] ¹⁴For if you forgive ^[h]others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive ^[i]others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. ¹⁶"Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites *do*, for they ^[j]neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ¹⁷But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face ¹⁸so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you. ¹⁹"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where

moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

There are several habits prescribed by Jesus: giving to the poor, praying, forgiving & fasting. They must not only be done regularly but with the right motive, in secret. We don't do any of these habits/practices for our benefit, not to be praised by others, but for the benefit of others, even though we do benefit ourselves by doing them.

Things to consider: are your spiritual habits/practices done selfishly or unselfishly?

Prayer: ask God to let love for others motivate your spiritual habits/practices.

Day 3 Read the following scripture:

Romans 5:1-4 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

5 Therefore, having been justified by faith, ^[a]we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and ^[b]we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but ^[c]we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

We get character from Christ. He uses not only peace, grace and hope but also trouble and perseverance. Perseverance is the idea of energetic resistance, steadfastness under pressure, and endurance in the face of trials. Spiritual practices/habits undergird perseverance.

1 John 3:2 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

²Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

Our character is to be like Christ's:

1) Compassionate

Jesus never looked away from people; He always looked upon them and had compassion (Matthew 9:36).

2) Servant

In Mark 10:45, Jesus even tells everyone: *"the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve"*

3) Loving

Jesus claimed that there is no greater love than to die for one of your friends—and He did just that.

4) Forgiving

Luke 23:34, when Jesus is on the cross and proclaims: *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

5) Committed

Despite praying fervently in the garden of Gethsemane to avoid having to bear the cross and all that physical torture, He knew it was the only way to pay for everyone's sins, so He stayed completely committed to His goal.

6) Prayerful

Whether it is in the garden of Gethsemane, across a river, or on a mountaintop, Jesus disappeared for a while in order to pray to the Lord.

7) Gentleness

Children seemed to love coming to him, and He made sure the disciples knew not to hinder them when they did so. When speaking with His disciples, mother, or other ladies, He could be very kindhearted and gentle.

8) Patience

Throughout the gospels, Jesus clearly gets portrayed as a very patient man.

9) Self-Control

Before His ministry was launched, Jesus spent time being tempted by the Devil in the wilderness. Although He was offered food, power, and many other things, Jesus controlled His desires and submitted them all to the will of the Father.

10) Humble

Even when the crowds sought to make Him king, He rushed away from their grasp.

Things to consider: do you have the same characteristics as Christ?

Prayer: ask God to help you identify those characteristics that you need to improve and ask for His help.

Day 4 Read the following scripture:

John 16:12-15 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹²“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. ¹³But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. ¹⁵All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

John 17:22-25 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

²²The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected ^[a]in unity, so that the world may ^[b]know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. ²⁴Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵“O righteous Father, ^[c]although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; God’s goal in life is not for you to be a good Christian, but to enjoy your relationship with Him. If you enjoy your relationship with Him, you will be a good Christian without even thinking about it.

Things to consider: how is your relationship with Christ?

Prayer: focus today on praying to God like talking to your best friend.