

What Does
Christianity Look
Like?

or

How do you change the
essence of a person?

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Thread #1

What Is The Nature Of Truth?

The truth is neither:

- popular or unpopular
- politically correct or incorrect
- liberal or conservative
- contemporary or traditional
- left or right

The truth is what it is and these are merely human labels, our judgments, we use to group and judge those who do not accept what we believe the truth to be. Truth stands alone and on its own. Our aid it does not need.

Truth is:

- a body of statements or propositions; it is what it is
- the state of being the case; that is the way it is
- the body of real things, events, or facts
- transcendent or fundamental or spiritual reality
- a judgment or proposition that is true or accepted as true
- the property of being in accord with fact or reality

Revealed truth or the truth of God given to his creation as it appears in His written word, the Holy Bible, carries this added aspect as "truth" is used in its text:

- the true teaching of a body of real things, facts, or events
- the true teaching of a body of true statements or propositions
- manifested, veritable essence of a matter

There are three bodies of truth:

- natural truth
- revealed truth
- personal truth

A fourth body of truth is really no truth at all -- "my truth" → nothing is truth because I or you believe it to be so or because I or you think it is. So, truth is not determined by:

- my opinion → what I or you think
- my knowledge → what I or you know
- my perspective/perception → what I or you judge

Truth determines these.

Our concern here is with revealed truth or spiritual truth.

What is the nature of revealed truth?

- Source is absolute (John 1:1-18, John 14:6-8) → truth is in Jesus. Truth in all its fullness is embodied in Jesus. He is the perfect expression of the truth. God's revealed truth was given to us in a person of whom the document tells. Jesus is the truth, the word itself, "the Logos". This is what makes it true, makes it the truth.
- Undeniable (1 John 1:8, 2:4) → no matter what I think or believe, what I say or do, it cannot change the truth.
- Life (John 1:1-18) → this truth does something that no other truth can do, give life that cannot die.
- Light (John 3:18-21) → this truth exposes all of the statements and claims that are not truth
- Freedom (John 8:31-32, 44-46) → this truth gives us the power to overcome that which destroys us and lives and our world

Our commitment to God's truth:

- Buy the truth and sell it not (Proverbs 23:23)
- It teaches us righteousness -- to follow it and refuse the way of the world (Titus 2:11-14)
- Will not be fooled and tricked to follow what is not in/of the truth, no matter what they claim (Titus 1:10-16)
- Will always love the truth and hate what is not, no matter how appealing "that which is not the truth" may be (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11)
- Always teach the truth no matter what others may think or how they may react or respond (2 Timothy 4:1-5)
- Remain loyal and true to the truth, no matter how tempting it may be follow the world (2 Timothy 3:1-17)
- Devote yourself to the saving relationship with the truth, never betray it no matter how "respected" any person may be, and humbly teach it to those who do not know the truth or have betrayed it (2 Timothy 2: 15-25).

In all of these, note the contrast between the nature of the way of the world and the nature of the way of the truth.

- the world
- the truth

Thread #2

The Created Life

The world of man is ruled by his desire to exalt himself. He then becomes his own god, his own truth, and his only hope.

That is why man is making every attempt to remove all awareness and acknowledgment, and acceptance of God. It takes many forms: hedonism, humanism, skepticism, materialism, modernism, etc. Each of these is manifested in a variety of forms. This is the greatest tragedy of -- the denial of God and His truth, and man's accountability to God and God's judgment of man.

Fundamental to the denial of God is the denial that life is created. Fundamental to Christianity and the conviction of God -- His truth and existence -- is that God is the Creator of all life. God is our Creator and that binds us together for life. God is our Redeemer from what we have done with his creation and that binds us together forever.

Man's place in the universe is divine submission and not self exaltation (Psalms 8). So, man's purpose -- what he was created to do -- is to worship and serve his Creator, God. Always remember and never forget that this submission is by choice and not by force or coercion (Matthew 6:33-34) and man will make a choice (Matthew 6:19-24). To choose submission is a choice of love (Matthew 22:34-40), choice of humility (James 4: 7-10), a choice of hope (John 14:1-6), and a choice of faith (John 6:66-69).

Paul describes the fundamental nature of the Creator/created relationship (Acts 17:22-34):

- Verses 22-23 → Man has a need to believe but he tries to ignore this; to what peril?
- Verses 24-27 → God created us with this need to seek Him and provides the opportunity and means to reach out for Him, seek Him out, and find Him.
- Verses 28-29 → Man is God's offspring!!!!
- Verses 30-31 → So, what are you going to do about it!?

What are the life lessons?

- God has given man a design (Psalm 139)
- God has given himself a refuge for man (Psalm 121)
- God has given man a shepherd (Psalm 23)
- God has created or given life and He will end it (Revelation 1)
- God rules life (Colossians 1:15-16)
- There is an absolute truth and we will be judged by it!
- Without God, life is like dust in the wind -- an aimless wondering, a merciless survival of the toughest while everyone else is left to die, only death for a destiny so what is the point anyway, and there is no right or wrong so leave me be I will not listen.
- Perhaps, most tragic of all; without God, there is no redemption!

Consider the following hymns of praise and hymns of prayer for discussion:

- We Will Glorify → Only God can be worshipped!
- How Great Thou Art → Praise God and be humbled by the marvelous wonder of God's creation and be assured by the almighty power that sustains it.
- Lord We Come Before Thee Now → We will seek God in worship and beseech him for blessing for the joy that comes from giving him praise and knowing he will respond to us.
- The Lord's My Shepherd → By his power and love, God will not fail to provide, protect, and prosper me because God is always living with me; God is my constant companion because he is my shepherd! God is a part of my life.
- Doxology → God takes care of the life that he gives, the life that he has created
- Humble Yourself in the Sight of the Lord → So, place your life before Him and His throne and in His hands and he will lift you up above the darkness and pain of this lost world.

Thread #3

God's Promises

The line that separates the Christian from the world is his faith in God to follow Jesus Christ, the Son of God, his Lord and Savior. It is the Christian's will to live in the path of God's will. The first of two essential characteristics of that faith is the conviction of God's truth and His will which it gives us all. The second of two essential characteristics of that faith is a trust in God that gives him the strength, the boldness, and the humility to obey God's truth and His will.

So, the disciple of Christ lives by his trust in God and His promises. He has given a sea of promises by which to live our lives of faith. What are some of those promises?

- Matthew 7:7-11 → God has promised that he knows just how to take care of you and that he will always respond to you (with Hebrews 13:6-7)
- Romans 8:31-39 → God has promised that there is absolutely no one or nothing that can beat you; Satan and this world where he rules cannot raise even one finger against Christ! God's love in Christ is the greatest force in the universe; the world's (Satan's) greatest power crumbles to dust before the power of God's love! (with Ephesians 3:14-21)
- John 14:1-6 → God has promised that it will be worth it!
- Philippians 4:6-7 → peace of mind is a protect against any fears or anxiety about following Christ
- John 15:18-19 → the world will hate you because it hates Christ whose name we wear; no way around it!
- Revelation 19:11-16 → you have won; it does not matter what any one will do to you because you follow Christ or what circumstance will come to you, you are victorious! you have beaten Satan because Christ has already beaten him and will destroy him. (This is the reality of the promise that we have won repeated 7 times in Revelation 2-3)

Christ demonstrates His power and will to keep His promises:

- Mark 4:35-42
- Matthew 14:22-33
- Matthew 28:1-8

Thread #4

Our Culture in the World Today

How does this culture manifest itself in the church today when God's people are influenced by the world, when we think and feel and reason and act the same way?

1. *"It is all about me!"*

- Self-centered, self-absorbed, self-serving
- We lose the ability to connect with each other and one another!
- Gone is the sense of:
 - loyalty
 - respect
 - self-discipline
 - self-respect
 - compassion
 - responsibility
- Gone then is the ability or willingness to:
 - listen
 - respond
 - forgive
 - forbear

2. *"I am not responsible for my actions. You are not responsible for your actions."*

- Gone is the judgment to hold me and you accountable for our own actions.
- The world owes me. You owe me.

3. *"The right thing to do does not matter."*

- If it is popular, then it is good or even right; if it is unpopular, it is not good and of no value or it is even wrong.
- I must be politically correct.

4. *"True success for a meaningful life is the attainment of status, pleasure, wealth, power, and possessions."*

- The rules do not apply to me.

Some thoughts about our relationship with God through Christ and the impact that has on our relationship with this world in which we must live:

- "Many need to be reminded, I think, that when they gave the good confession they in effect made an oath to be loyal to Christ, and then it was sealed by baptism. The soldier takes an oath of allegiance to the constitution and country. The Christian has taken an oath to Christ and the Bible in which is included the church" (Paul Mobley). The Christian has taken an oath to live a life that has dedicated him to a cause that is greater than he.
- The elders, deacons, preachers, ministers, or another living person can live and keep that oath for me!
- The truth is not ignored. There have always been those who reject it and there will always be those who reject it.
- There is no choice to change God's Word, only the individual's choice of believing or not believing. I do not wrench God's word around to suit self and what self wants. The church must teach God's Word and the Christian must live God's Word.
- God will reward those who "stick with Him" in the face of every effort to turn them away from Him.

Question: Do I really want to be like this?

Thread #5

I Am Going Home!

This world is not the place that God's people want to be. The child of God lives for something that he can not see with his eyes or hear with his ears or hold with his touch until he is dead. We live for what is not even here. We can only experience it in a meager fashion in the church. Once we believe and become Christ's disciple, our lives are devoted to God and we can't feel at home in this world anymore. If we deny and forsake that devotion, we forsake our home.

God's Word begins with God in Heaven and ends with His people in Heaven with Him. Everything else is a map for the journey to get us home to be with our Father. Our lives are a journey home. The journey will not end until we die. We must to reach we have lived for. But we must live to make the journey.

No matter what we may achieve, no matter what we may possess, no matter the status we may attain, no matter the breadth of my influence, we will always use it to make this world a better place for our being here. Brighten the corner where we live for that is our father's charge. That is how we make our journey home.

So, this world or this life must not be allowed to keep us from our journey's end. All of the alluring wonders and pleasures of this world and all of the hardships of this life must not be allowed do detour us on our journey. All of the difficult choices and all of the struggles we will face must not be allowed to influence us to take a path that does not lead us home. If we do take a wrong path, we must stop and make the right turn to the right path for as long as we are living the journey is not over.

Each new day is another day on this living journey. Each new day is another day closer to home. We will live on faithful to the journey and focused on home.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

- Lesson 1→ What is the Essence of Christianity?
- Lesson 2→ What Does It Look Like?
- Lesson 3→ How Do You Change the Essence of a Man or Woman?
- Lesson 4→ It Defines Me!
- Lesson 5→ Soul of Integrity
- Lesson 6→ Spiritual Mind
- Lesson 7→ Independent Will
- Lesson 8→ Quiet Spirit
- Lesson 9→ Pure Heart
- Lesson 10→ Hope Vision
- Lesson 11→ Disciplined Flesh
- Lesson 12→ Peaceful Feet
- Lesson 13→ Ministry Hands
- Lesson 14→ Embracing Arms
- Lesson 15→ Listening Ears
- Lesson 16→ Single Eyes
- Lesson 17→ Slow Tongue

Final Thought: Christian Living

What Is the Essence of a Christian?

Question: Do I look like God or the World? How do you change the essence of a Christian man or woman?

1. What people have had a significant impact on the kind of person you became?

- As a child I wanted to be like my parents.

Explain.

- Even now, and I am 53 years old, I still do not want to disappoint them, as I have all of my adult life.

2. What does a Christian look like? How are you distinct from the world?

The world has these basic essentials for life but its source is not the same so the "truth" is not the same.

- In moral reasoning, belief system, moral values which directs you
- In where you put your trust
- In life's purpose which moves you
- In identity which defines you
- In your hope that sets/frames your expectations
- In truth that gives you absolutes

3. How does a Christian become like Christ?

How were you socialized? What influenced you as you grew up? What changes and guides you as an adult (your thinking, decision making, choices, values, priorities, and works)?

→→→*What makes the difference is my relationship with God!*

- Titus 2:11-14→the power and influence of God's Word
- Ephesians 6:1-4→the power and influence of the godly home
- 2 Corinthians 10:1-6→the power and influence of our thinking
- Ephesians 4:11-16→the power and influence of the church

4. What hinders your growth to become Christ-like? Why do we look like the world and not like Christ?

Are you nurturing your relationship with God? What is His influence on you and in your life?

- Failure to understand that I have no power to correct my sin
- Environment you are living in
- Seeking approval of others
- Way others have treated you
- Response to situations/circumstances
- Do not listen to God

What Does It Look Like?

Question: Do I look like this?

Romans 1:16-17 (Galatians 2:16-20, 3:24-28 → My relationship with God!)

Consider these hymns:

- Christ We Do All Adore Thee →
- There's Just Something About That Name →

1. ***How is a Christian distinctive from the world?***

- Philippians 2:1-4 → humble and compassionate spirit in cruel world
- Colossians 3:1-11 → focused on Christ not the flesh in an obsessed world
- 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 → cut self loose from the world!
- Ephesians 4:1-10 → absolutes in a confused and blind world
- Matthew 6:19-34 → life's purpose not of this world

∞ All in a self-absorbed uncaring world that is driven by physical senses and the lust of greed.

Romans 12:1-2

2. ***How does a Christian look like Christ?***

- Philippians 2:5-18 → become Christ's life
- Colossians 3:12-17 → become Christ's spirit, mind, and character
- Ephesians 4:11-24 → become Christ's stature
- Matthew 5:1-12 → become Christ's thinking

∞ All in a world that hates God and is afraid of Him, that does everything it can to erase any thought, awareness, or presence of God.

Romans 12:3-8

3. ***How does all of this impact how brethren treat one another?***

- Philippians 2:19-30 → serve to minister to (look after) one another
- Colossians 3:18-4:6 → love, respect, humble integrity
- Ephesians 4:25-32 → not evil but good
- Matthew 18:1-20 → make: repent, forgive, not offend

∞ All in a world that is feeding on itself.

Romans 12:9-21

Romans 6:1-14, 15-23 → My intimate relationship with God!

What Does It Look Like?

Question: Do I look like this?

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Romans 12:9-21

Romans 6:1-14, 15-23 → My intimate relationship with God!

How Do You Change the Essence of a Man?

Question: Do I walk with my God?

The Sermon on the Mount is about our relationship with God (Matthew 5-7)

Consider these hymns of prayer:

- Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind → Seek God's mercy, forgiveness, compassion, and wisdom to make of you what he wants you to be.
- O, Master Let Me Walk With Thee → It is not a passive thing, this conversion we call Christian living/growth, that alters our approach to every aspect of our lives.
- My Eyes Are Dry → Life is a trail and test of our spiritual essence and we find that we need to change; it can't be done without God's grace!!!

1. What is "essence"?

- "Martha, tell me I've lived a good life. Tell me I'm a good man." (Jack Ryan, final scene from "Saving Private Ryan")
- "He walked with God and God took him." (epitaph for Enoch, Genesis 5)
- *Essence* -- It is the real nature of a thing: that which makes a person what he really is: it is the very core of what makes a person what he is.

2. What is the essence of the world?

The world is a place that has turned from God and would be void of Him!

- Self-absorbed uncaring place that is driven by the physical senses and the lust of greed
- Place that hates God and is afraid of Him (John 5:19-22)
- A place that feeds on itself

3. How do you change the essence of a man?

You change what influences you and what goes in you.

- By changing your relationship with God: by cutting yourself loose from the world and nurturing an intimate relationship with God (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)
- By changing what you are made of and your relationship with God becomes your way of life (Titus 2:11-14, Ephesians 4:11-13)

4. How do you nurture an intimate relationship with God?

This intimate relationship with God is born in you by God.

- Surrendering to the new birth of a new life (Romans 6:1-14)
- Living that new life for it is a new way of life (Romans 6:15-23)

5. How do you live that new life, live that relationship with God? How do you change what you are made of? By changing:

It will change the way you think and feel, your attitude and behavior, and the way you look at yourself, others, life, death, God, and the world. It will change your decision making and choices, your values and priorities!

- your point of reference (Matthew 5:13-20, Colossians 3:1-4)

- how you see things (Matthew 7:13-14, Philippians 1:21-23)
- how you discern things (Philippians 1:6-9)
- what you live for (Matthew 6:19-24)
- what you want most of life (Matthew 7:21-28)
- who you trust (Matthew 6:25-34, 1 Peter 5:6-10)

6. **Why does all of this work?!**

- #1 → the true nature of a Christian, what makes him what he really is, is his intimate relationship with God!
- #2 → helps to explain what the nature of the world is and why it is not like the Christian
- #3 & #4 → briefly identifies what must happen for that to change
- #5 → briefly examines how that will impact us, what will change
- Yet, the big question still remains: how does all of that happen? Why does it happen? Why does all of this work that way?!

∞ Conversion

∞ God makes me different/unique; it is God's effort and work, God's power/energy that is working in me; God is changing me!
(Philippians 1:6-9, Ephesians 3:14-21, Matthew 13:1-8)

∞ How is the essence of a man or woman changed? God must make the change happen.

∞ How does he do it? Consider, at least, the work and impact (power and blessing) of prayer (me and God talking), study (God's Word), fellowship (church), and service (ministry).

It Defines Me

Question: Who defines me, the world or God?

I Am Not Ashamed To Own My Lord

1. How is a person identified? By:

A person is identified by what people think they know about him.

- Name (Matthew 1:21-23)
- Reputation (Matthew 4:23-25)
- Own witness (Luke 4:17-31)
- Influence (John 9, Luke 5:1-14, Luke 19:1-10)
- What he does (Matthew 5:13-16)
- How does a worldly man define himself (who/what he is)?

2. What defines the Christian?

The Christian is defined by his relationship with God because God has saved him sin and its ruin!! The more intimate the relationship the greater God's influence to shape and mold him into the person God wants him to become. God wants to make somebody of him!

- Why did God change the names of his people? (Abraham-Sarah-Jacob Peter-Paul) God changed their identity when their life changed, when he caused their lives to change.
- God redeemed me and adopted me into his family (Ephesians 1:5-7, Isaiah 6:1-11)
- God separated me from the world to make me his son (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)
- God has delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love (Colossians 1:9-14)
- God has made me dead to sin but alive to righteousness (Romans 6:1-14)
- God has given me a life lived by faith and not sight (2 Corinthians 5:1-7)

3. How does all of this impact the Christian?

The Christian owes the world nothing but he owes God everything because God saved him from sin and its ruin!! He becomes attached to God and God is invested and involved in him!

- I belong to God (1Peter 2:5-11) -- All in Christ by His own boundless mercy, God will have his people on earth who will worship and serve him.
- I will be purified by God (Titus 2:11-14) -- God means to teach and train me to live without the sin that corrupts and condemns, ruins and destroys, me and to become sober, righteous, and godly in my self and my life.
- I count the cost (Luke 14:25-32) -- I invest myself and my life into this life changing relationship with God that will make me a disciple of Christ
- Moses (Hebrews 11:23-29) -- How did his choice affect him?
- Marines slogan -- "We don't accept applications, only commitments." How might that explain the Christian life, church membership, and our relationship with God? You can't refuse it if you don't want it once you have chosen it. Once you choose it, it becomes your way of life, it becomes who/what you are. It is not just your name. It gets inside you.

Soul of Integrity

Question: What is the condition of my soul's health?

Matthew 6:24, Joshua 24:15

⊕ *Integrity*→ unimpaired condition, firm adherence to a code, quality or state of being complete or undivided, unaltered or unadulterated: soundness, incorruptible, complete, honest, and pure.

1. How does the world deal with personal integrity?

The world does not accept personal responsibility so too maintain the appearance of integrity in order still influence and control and its hold on people it has devised techniques to deal with their personal responsibility.

- Explain it away→ rationalize their behavior and decisions and choices (the 12 spies)
- Blame it away→ want others to be responsible for their actions and decisions and choices (Adam and Eve)
- Hide it away→ seek justification for their behaviors and decisions and choices (David and Uriah)

2. Where is the Christian's integrity?

The root of the Christian's integrity is his loyalty to God and his kingdom and his truth. Of course a loyalty to God produces a loyalty to his kingdom and his truth.

- John the Baptist (Matthew 3, John 1)
- In a godly influence from your life (Matthew 5:13-16)
- In God's Word living in you and becoming a living manifestation of its truth (Colossians 3:12-17)
- In your love for the church (Romans 1:13-15, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-18)
- In the world but not of the world (Mark 8:34-38)

3. What will threaten or damage a Christian's personal integrity?

A Christian will loose his integrity when he engages in anything that violates God and his relationship with Christ. He belongs to God and does not owe anyone anything!

- Do not want to accept the truth (John 6:66-69)
- Unwilling to serve and follow Christ (Luke 9:57-62)
- Ashamed of who you are, ashamed of Christ to whom you belong (Mark 8:34-38)
- Fear (Numbers 14)
- Lying to protect yourself and hide sin (Acts 5)
- Betrayal (Luke 22)
- Doing good or right, serving, for your own agenda or for what you can get out of it
- Not faithful to your word
- Violate trust placed in you

- Loose self-control

4. How does a Christian restore his personal integrity?

Forgiveness is the wine of God's love that heals the damaged soul. The Christian must never forget that Christ is not only his Lord. Christ is also his Redeemer! God will never fail to forgive because Christ is His Son who is our Redeemer.

- God forgave David (2 Samuel 12)!
 - God confronted David and David owned his sin
 - David then turned over to God and allowed God forgive him
 - David then forgave himself as he accepted the consequences of the sinful behavior *and* got on with the rest of his life

Allow God to forgive you and forgive yourself!

- God forgave Samson (Judges 17)!
 - Samson accepted and owned his sin
 - Samson then beseeched God for an opportunity at personal restoration to restore God's honor, even though it might cost him his life.

When a Christian damages his own personal integrity he dishonors God's name. Always seek personal restoration for the sake of his honor.

- Return to the right path (Romans 12:1-2)!

Spiritual Mind

Question: How do I think?

1. Explain the carnal and spiritual minds.

Matthew 7:13-14 → 2 roads to journey

Matthew 7:15-20 → 2 trees to grow

Matthew 7:21-28 → 2 houses to build

- *Carnal* → our capacity for the material and physical nature: the part of us that wants to satisfy our material thirsts and physical appetites without the restriction or thought of consequences; the mind that rules the world of man and so it wants to suppress and ignore or deny the spiritual
- *The Worldly Mind:*
 - Moses and Pharaoh (Exodus 5-14) → man thinks he is god
 - Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4) → thought he was in control
 - Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 19-21) → driven to try and stop the truth
- *Spiritual* → our capacity for God and the holy things: the part of us that enables us to have an intimate relationship with God, that wants to please Him, to worship and serve and obey Him, to love Him and love His kingdom; That part of us that is willing to struggle with the carnal because it wants to think and live above the world
- *The Spiritual Mind:*
 - Meshach, Shadrach, Abed-nego (Daniel 3) → choices and actions based on what God wants and who God is and what God will do
 - Elijah (1 Kings 18) → challenge the world
 - The Philistines (1 Samuel 4-7) → The world will not stand before God

2. How does the world manifest the carnal mind? What does it look like?

1 John 2:15-17 → the very essence of the carnal mind, void of spiritual thought,
God and the love of God

John 3:18-21

John 15:18-25

Romans 3:1-21

So:

- Driven by human pride, human lust, and human greed
- Humanize God → make God seem human, even in religion
- Humanize the Truth → make man the measure of truth, even in religion
- Vain conceit and self ambition
- Self justification that twists and perverts truth and right and goodness
- Seeks the perceived value of self pleasure
- I want it!

3. How does the Christian manifest the spiritual mind? What does it look like?

- Galatians 5:16-26 → fights the spiritual warfare that the world has already lost
- Matthew 22:34-40 → life is built on the foundation of an intimate love for God and a love for others that always considers the consequences or the effect he will have on others.
- Mark 8:34-38 → Lives and breathes under conviction so he draws a line in the sand and stands
- James 3:13-18 → Seeks divine revealed truth while the world is being torn apart by seeking its own vain conceit and self ambition

4. Describe the spiritual mind.

- John 15:18-26 → world hates the truth and the divine spiritual because it can't control it or deceive it: the spiritual mind is not influenced by the carnal or worldly mind/thinking because it follows Christ, it is his disciple. (Why and how follows)
- 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 → cuts loose from the world to keep pure of its poison
- 2 Corinthians 10:1-6 → think and live above the world
- Matthew 6:19-34 → not want the same things to pursue the things of God
- Colossians 3:12-17 → under conviction of Faith: self-restraint and will not cross the boundaries of these convictions
- Ephesians 3:14-21 → God's love lives in the believer

5. How does the Christian nourish and nurture the spiritual mind?

- Philippians 4:8-9 (1:6-11) → feeds the mind on that which is holy and above the world
- Philippians 2:1-4 → humble and merciful and compassionate love for and interaction with his spiritual family of God
- → by living the faith itself!
- Ephesians 4:11-6 → growth
- Hebrews 10:19-32 → worship
- Matthew 7:7-12 → prayer
- Philippians 3:1-14 → seek an intimate relationship with God and you will not be distracted or pulled away by the attractions and lust of the world; to hunger and thirst after God so deeply that the greed, power, pride, and desires of the world cannot take hold; to become so devoted to you and God that you will keep the flesh and its appetites in their place and under control (c.f. Galatians 5:11-26)
- Romans 8:31-39 → never forget whose you are and where you stand, with the greatest authority, power, and force in the universe for which there is no match!

Independent Will

Question: What am I committed to?

The Lord Is In His Holy Temple

Nearer, Still Nearer

1. **What is an independent will?**

- I choose to live my life on God's terms; I choose to become Christ's disciple to live in obedience to God.
- What are God's terms?
Mark 8:34-36
Colossians 3:16-17
2 Corinthians 10:1-6
- I will not be pushed, pressured, persuaded, deceived, or easily tempted to:
 - do what someone else wants me to do
 - do what I believed (I am convicted) is wrong to do
 - do what is popular to do
 - follow the majority or accept the norm
 - be made to fit in your mold
- I will live by my convictions, I am under conviction, from God →
Daniel 3, Numbers 14
I do what I do because that is what God wants me to do (Because I am following Christ), whether it is acceptable or is popular, or is the norm, etc., or not

2. **What is the spirit of a disciple's independent will?**

Everything means I must reject sin, darkness, wickedness, and the world where they rule and devote myself to God (James 4:7-10).

- Submit to God
- Resist the devil but he will not flee until I submit to God for then I will resist the devil
- Draw near to God
- Get clean
- Repent
- Humble yourself before God → not the world!

3. **How does a Christian develop the disciple's independent will?**

He has focused himself on godliness and its source (Philippians).

- 1:6-9 → seek God's wisdom and the world's philosophies
- 1:19-23 → "man on a mission"; not intimidated by anything, not ashamed of Christ
- 2:1-8 → humble mind and spirit towards God and his saints

- 2:12-16 → note the saving relationship of redemption between God and his saints (between Christ and his disciples), that salvation is your life's work
- 3:7-14 → deep hunger and thirst to know Christ intimately and experience his life in you for as long as you live; the world's allurements, pleasures and prides, do not distract you or get in your way
- 4:6-7 → protect yourself with the peace of God, not the world's promises
- 4:8-9 → meditate on the godly things, not the world's measures and standards
- 4:10-14 → learn the strength of contentment in Christ and the weakness of the world's dependency

4. Why do we lack the independent will?

We loose this independent will to serve God by following Christ when we give up our trust in God. The only thing left is self and that is when the world (Satan) will take over our lives. So we trust God's sea of promises and we take life where we want it to go with a passion as we follow Christ! (Matthew 7:7-11)

- Fear (Luke 22, 2 Timothy 1:7)
- Shame (Romans 1:14-17)
- Self (Luke 9:57-62)
- Doubt (James 1:2-8)
- Pride (Romans 12:9)

Quiet Spirit

Question: Am I at peace?

1. What is a quiet spirit?

- "Nearer My God To Thee" → a prayer for God to keep you close to him all the time
- "Blessed Assurance" → trust and confidence in God's faithfulness because you have tasted it in redemption
- "On Bended Knee I Come" → a prayer of humble trust in praise of who God is for his work to renew your devotion and service to Him
- "A Balm in Gilead" → You know you can go to God for healing and bring peace to your soul
- "It Is Well With My Soul" → you will not allow anything to turn you from God because you have already tasted the peace of his redemption and it is good; you will not turn away for you know there is nothing to match it
- "The Lord Bless You And Keep You" → a prayer of peace from the presence of God for others; "his "face" -- is deeply personal and intimate!
- "Jesus Lover Of My Soul" → a prayer for God to keep you close to his bosom when the seas get rough and a storm is coming.

Common thread -- The closer you are to God the better you will be; the greater your trust in God, the closer you will be!

2. What does a quiet spirit look like?

A quiet spirit lives life steady and resolved!

- 1 Samuel 17 → David was steady and resolved while those who were expected to be strong and courageous drew back in fear.

Question: What were the stones of David's faith?

- Acts 27:21-28:10 → Paul was steady and resolved in the face of dangers and threats because he trusted God would do what he said he would do if Paul would follow the way God said He would do it.

Question: Do we behave this way?

- Daniel 6:1-28 → Daniel could see the evil plot that was unfolding; he knew that the choice between God or man (world) could cost him his life; he did not plead and beg of the king for his exception but simply went about as was his custom in his relationship with God; he was steady and resolved to stay the course "continually" because "he believed in his God."
- John 18:1-19:30 → Jesus was steady and resolved in the midst of the mistreatment and attacks; He knew the truth and he knew what he had to do and he knew that God was with him.
- Numbers → What a quiet spirit is not! They are murmuring, whining, grumbling, etc. even though they had the cloud, the manna, the Sinai experience, the protection from the other peoples, etc. at the hand of God.

Question: Why do we behave this way?

3. Where does the believer's quiet spirit come from?

Trust in God's power and truth.

- Mark 4:35-42 → Life's situations may trouble from time to time, may even become a struggle, but whether I am faced trouble in serving/obeying/ living for God or I am troubled by the frailty of my physical self, God is greater than it all!
- Matthew 14:22-33 → And even when I am overwhelmed and falter, God will not allow me to be lost: he will reach out his Almighty hand, lift me up, and put me back into the safety of the boat! God never loses sight of me!
- Philippians 4:6-7 → God's protection will bring me peace of mind, prayer is the way to a peaceful soul; it will allow me to see through the mist and fog and shroud off life's troubles and needs to see God's hand holding me and knowing without doubt that God is protecting me relieves the stress and fear.
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 → Just as God took care of the Israelites in the wilderness do he will take care us when we face temptation to fall back or to sin; so, let us not fail to take that trust and fall back and sin as they did.
Question: Why do we fail to trust?
- Romans 11:33-36 → God created life and this universe, he designed it and gave it its life; God is above it all and there is nothing can second guess him or that he does not see and understand; so, nothing is beyond his power and wisdom, there is nothing that he can not handle.

4. What are the characteristics of the quiet spirit?

- Philippians 4:10-13 → Contentment because I know that Christ will give me the strength to do it.
- Hebrews 4:14-16 → Bold assurance to approach God for help with our lives because we know God understands what we feel and what we are thinking; Jesus lived though it for us; so remember that another human may understand and have lived through it but is weak and frail and limited and sin troubled you are -- Jesus is not and he can not fail!
- Matthew 6:25-34 → No anxiety to keep a clear mind to be focused on the godly life and to keep a clear eye to see the way because is taking care of me and so I do not need to be distracted by the cares of this life and I attend to them.
- James 1:19-27 → Meekness to listen to God and accept his will to do it and his teachings/commands to obey them no matter what it may be; the meekness to submit to whatever God wants me to be , to submit to the potter's hands (Jeremiah 18).
- James 5:7-12 → Perseverance (Patience)

Pure Heart

Question: Am I clean?

1. What does a pure heart look like?

- "Though Your Sins Be As Scarlet" -- Purity begins here
- "Are You Washed" -- Cleansing takes place here
- "Take Time To Be Holy" -- Purity is in our relationship with God
- "Purer In Heart O, God" --
- "Holy, Holy, Holy" -- Only God is holy -- pure and clean -- in a filthy world

2. Why is the world filthy?

- John 15:18-22 → The world hates God
Question: Why does the world hate God?!
- John 3:18-21 → God exposes their dark hearts! How?
Question: Why then does the world hate the Christian? (c.f. John 8:12)
- Will not obey God and follow his truth!
- World is making every effort to remove any awareness or acceptance of God!
- Why? World is ruled by Satan who is God's enemy.

3. How does one get clean?

- Isaiah 1:16-20 → by going back to God for our disobedience to God is what has made man dirty and filthy with sin; turn to God and learn his ways of good, justice, mercy, and compassion; willingly get rid of the evil you are doing and do not want it anymore; devote yourself to God's way and obey him.
- Acts 2:22-38 →
- Romans 6:1-14 → Accept and follow the new life that is born in you and given to you when you are washed and made clean in baptism; do not allow yourself to get dirty again!
- Luke 15:11-35 → But we may get dirty again and God will forgive!

4. How does the Christian develop a pure heart?

- 1 Peter 1:13-16 → gird up the loins of your mind;
- Matthew 5:17-20 → exceed the righteousness of man; Christ is the measure and not another man (c.f. John 1:1-4,
- Titus 2:11-14 → humble yourself and listen to God, study His Word and he will teach you

5. What are the characteristics of a pure heart?

- Ephesians 2:1-10 → no longer following the world' way, no longer walking in its path, but rejecting its values, measures, and lifestyles.

Question: Why do we do this, according to this text?

- I John 2:15-17 → one who does not love the world nor the world's things because he loves God!

Question: How do we behave and live when we indulge each one of these of the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life?

- Ephesians 5:1-7 → a sweet smelling aroma of godly love in a world that reeks with the stench of filthiness in a life that is hopeless; so their arguments are empty -- then do not be deceived by them.
- Ephesians 5:8-14 → children of light in world shrouded and lost in the darkness of their hearts; so do not take part in their affairs and find no pleasure or allurements in their immoral ways.
- Ephesians 5:15-21 → walking in spiritual wisdom of God; seeking God's will and not the world's pleasures.
- *Question: What does this kind of person look like? What kind of life is this? How does a Christian behave as a sweet aroma, children of light, walking in God's spiritual wisdom when contracted with this immoral world?*
- **Hebrews 12:12-17** →→ Renew your spiritual vitality:
 - What happens to our spiritual vitality? (vs.12-13)
 - How do we renew our spirit? (vs.14-15)
 - What will happen if we do not keep our vitality renewed? (vs.16-17)

Hope Vision

Question: What is my destiny?

For your meditation:

- "I am Going Home"
- "Here We Are But Straying Pilgrims"
- "There Stands a Rock"
- "This World Is Not My Home"
- "My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less"

1. **For what is the world living?**

- The attainment of pleasure, power, status, wealth, possessions
- Yet, a life of such pursuits is Ecclesiastes (1:1-11):
 - sows trouble and worry
 - gives pain and sorrow
 - empty and wasted
- The end of the road is eternal waste, pain, and worry → it is a journey toward self-destruction.

2. **What kind of life is this?**

- The here and now
- Sensual life
- If it feels good, do it!
- Live by sight
- There is nothing more so take everything you can get!
- Eat, drink, and be merry!

3. **What does the Christian live for? What is our destiny?**

- The final day of redemption (2 Corinthians 4:16-5:7) → Context is 4:1-5:21.
- We are going home to live with God forever (John 14:1-6) → God wants me!
- When we get home, God is going to give us an incorruptible reward for our life of service and labor to which we committed ourselves, (Matthew 6:19-24) → It cannot be taken away or destroyed. We have as purpose that cannot be taken from us, will not be kept from us, and it cannot be defeated.

4. **Why? What is the basis of this hope?**

- The Gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:18-21, Acts 2) → Who Jesus is, what he has done, and what he is doing; Immanuel is here! God's Son came to us; God came to us and became our Redeemer, Lord, and Christ.

- Jesus suffered complete separation from God with our sin (just as our sin does to us) so that I will not!!! (Matthew 27:46, Luke 23:33-49) → That is the grace of God's love!
- That day when God will forever deliver us from the way it is with this life and from this life itself (1 Corinthians 15:1-49, Romans 8:31-39) → It is our final victory!
- The power and authority of Christ to forgive by the blood he shed (Mark 2:1-10)

5. How does *that hope* effect us?

- A life long journey beyond death; upon life's canvas we paint our destiny. What picture does the believer's destiny paint for your life?
- Hope lives in the light and not in the darkness; it abstains from uncleanness (sin and disobedience to God), from living as one who does not know God as the world does; but hope seeks God and holiness (1 Thessalonians 4-5)
- Hope takes a hold and will not let go (1 Corinthians 15:50-58)
- Hope moves forward and will not turn back (2 Timothy 4:6-8)
- Hope takes a stand and stands it ground (1 Peter 1:3-12)

Peaceful Feet

Question: What do I intend to do?

Feet carry us where our wills want us to go. They represent our intent or purpose of what we want to do.

1. **Where do the world's feet run to?**

- Proverbs 6:16-19 → they run to evil and do not run to good; they run to violence and war, strife and conflict, hate and cruelty, abuse and crime.
- They also run to obsession and addiction.

2. **What is the spirit of the feet of God's people?**

- Matthew 22:34-40 → God's people are lovers; they are attached to God and not the things of this world and they are seeking to be a blessing to others first and not the pleasures of this world first. You cannot seek or want to hurt another when you love them.
- Matthew 7:12 → They want to do the good for others
- Matthew 5:44-48 → They seek the redemption of their enemies
- Philippians 2:1-4 → They esteem the brethren

3. **Where do the believer's feet run to?**

- Acts 4, Galatians 6 → God's people are encouragers, they desire to comfort and lift one another
- Numbers 6:22-28, Philippians 2:1-4 → God's people have a humble and meek spirit; they seek the well-being of and goodness for one another
- Ephesians 4:1-3 → God's people have a patient spirit; they will nurture not hurt another
- Romans 10:13-17 → God's people have peaceful feet; they work for others to hear the gospel

4. **Therefore, God's people are peace makers, not haters or strife makers:**

- Romans 12:17-21 → do good even when wronged
- Galatians 5:13-15 → do not run over or hurt another to accomplish your agenda
- Matthew 18:1-20 → moves to forgive or repent to make things right

Ministering Hands

Question: Why do I help others?

Ministering hands in the good that one does for another. Remember that any good done by a worldly minded person is poisoned by impure self-serving motives that will only rot and decay the good they do -- and it will turn on you. All good deeds will bless for a time. Remember that all good deeds done of a pure heart will flourish forever. Consider Acts 4 and 5.

1. What motivates a worldly- minded person to do good things?

- What can I get out of it?
- What do I need or crave for?

2. Why does a Christian, a spiritually-minded person, do good things for another?

- Nehemiah 4-6 → devotion to something greater than yourself.
- Matthew 22 → Love for God and neighbor
- Philippians 2:19-30 → Will to risk yourself for another
- Acts 4, 13 → Desire to be a blessing

3. What is the spirit of ministering hands?

- Galatians 6:1-10 → the joy and work to be a blessing to another
- Gently, humbly, and wisely recover another from sin (v.1)
- Humbly help another with his burden (v.2-5)
- Do not loose the desire cease the opportunity to do good deeds for others because you want to do it knowing that you will be taken care of (v.6-10)

4. Example:

- Romans 12:1-8
- Pure motive (v.1-2)
- Pure attitude (v.3)
- Pure ministries (v.4-8)

Embracing Arms

Question: How well do I love?

Humans need to be touched and the spirit needs to be healed. We need to know, to feel, that someone cares about us. We need to give love and be loved. The Christian seeks this on a higher road.

1. Why is the world an uncaring place?

- Use, abuse, and control for own gain
- Intolerance that fuels hate

2. Why do so need touching and healing?

- Lonely
- Painfully unhappy
- Depressed
- Hopeless

2. What drives the way a Christian, a spiritual minded person, treats others?

- John 11:35, Matthew 9:35-38 → Compassion
- Luke 17:11-19 → Mercy
- Ephesians 4:31-32 → Tender kindness
- John 13:1-11 → Forbearance
- John 21: 15-18 → Encourage
- Matthew 23:37-39 → Exhort

3. How do embracing arms express themselves?

- Luke 10:25-34 → embrace the troubled
- Luke 15:11-35 → embrace the penitent sinner
- Luke 14:15-24 → embrace all kinds around God's table
- Luke 7:25-50 → embrace even the outcast and untouchable

Listening Ears

Question: How do I hear?

There is always time enough to listen, there is always enough time to learn. So, be still and hear God's voice. The believer listens to the power, mind and person that is beyond all human. The world has only itself to listen to.

1. What (Who) does the world listen to?

- Itchy ears
- What it wants to hear, not what it needs to hear
- So it listens only to what agrees with it
- In essence, the world only listens to itself
- Therefore, it will not be still and what will challenge it or rebuke it

2. What is the spirit of the listening ear?

- 1 Samuel 1-2 → devoted unhesitating willingness to hear and do what God says to do
- Isaiah 6 → Humble to accept what he wills/wants of you to do
- Hebrews 4:14-16 → boldness to seek his ear and accept his answers
- James 1:19-22 → patient and quiet to hear his voice

3. Who does the Christian have to turn to?

- Matthew 7:7-11 → God talks to us, listens to us, and is faithful to take of us like a father.
- John 10:14-30 → God looks after us, blesses us, and protects us like a shepherd; we know his voice, we know one another, intimately; we know which way to go because we do not follow the strange voice
- Those who proclaim to protect and lead the world are leading it into trouble and bleeding the world

Single Eyes

Question: How do I see?

The worldly man sees life and himself through a sensual and materialistic perspective. He can't see beyond his senses. The spiritual man sees life and himself through the eyes of God. He sees beyond his senses. He wants to see the soul of man. He wants to see Heaven.

Example: Numbers 14

- 1. What does the worldly man see?**
- 2. Explain how that perspective dictates they think, live, and what they live for?**
- 3. What does the spiritual man see?**
 - Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1, Hebrews 11 → God and his work
 - 2 Corinthians 4:13-18 → Man's soul and his destiny
 - Colossians 1:9-18 → Jesus and His rule
- 4. How does that direct his life and thinking?**
 - Matthew 6:19-24 → Purpose -- reason to live
 - Matthew 7:13-28 → Life -- standard to live by

Christian Living

For your meditation: "In spite of the distance, our thoughts always find their way home."

We worship amidst a world that worships itself (1 Chronicles 29:10-15).

Therefore → We must be different to live different and we must think different to be different. We must be different to make a difference (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1),

The essence of Christianity is God and the essence of Christian living our intimate relationship with God (1 John 1).

- Numbers 6 → it becomes our identity: it is a life of separation to God from "everything else" and God will bless that dedication and sacrifice and take care of his servants.
- 2 Timothy 4:1-8 →
- 1 Timothy 6:11-18 →
- 1 Timothy 4:10-16 →

In the end, the essence of what makes the Christian unique/distinct from the world is his intimate relationship with

