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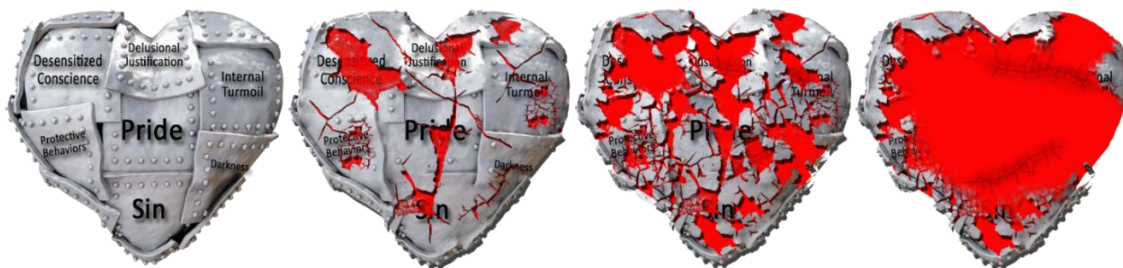
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As we learn more about Jesus Christ, we learn more about ourselves. Jesus is not only our savior and Lord—He is also our example; He is our directional compass; He is the light that reveals the darkness within our heart and soul; and He is the light that exposes the darkness that surrounds us.

Jesus spoke... “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”
John 8:12

It is important to understand the objective of this message is to enhance understanding of Jesus and ourselves. However, when we open our heart to guidance and correction by the Holy Spirit...it can sometimes be “painful” when the depths of our sin are revealed. Remember...we are forgiven because of the sacrificial blood that Jesus shed for us; because we believe Jesus Christ died for our sins; and because we have accepted Him as our Savior. Jesus filled the gap between who we are and who we should be—and we are justified—or “just-as-if-I’d” never sinned. Proof of God’s grace—and our adoption as His children—is evidenced by His promise He would give us a new heart and a new spirit.

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.” Ezekiel 36:26-27



Consider for a moment who you were before you accepted Jesus...and who you are now. Consider the changes that have occurred in your heart, changes in your behavior, changes in your thoughts, changes in how you view others, and changes in how you view the world. All of these changes have occurred—and will continue to occur—because God keeps all of His promises!

“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Titus 3:3-7

Each one of us can attest to the transformational power of the Holy Spirit because we have individually witnessed an increasing dislike of our sinful nature; a repulsion towards the darkness that is in the world; and a desire to spiritually grow, increase knowledge of our Lord, and to become more like Him.

What’s more, we are not motivated by fear. But rather, we are pulled towards Him by His grace and love.

- Love and fear are mutually exclusive. As one increases, the other decreases.
- When someone is motivated by fear...you can gain obedience...but you will not win the heart.
- When someone is motivated by love...you can gain obedience...and win the heart.

Christians Are Transformed Into His Image

When we step back and look at the big picture...Christians experience a life-long process as God's grace and the Holy Spirit transforms each of us into an image of His Son...in the same way Jesus was an image of the Father.

"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 by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18

Jesus Christ was a perfect reflection of God. If you want to know the nature and character of God...look at Jesus. In addition, the ministry and life of Jesus pointed towards His Father...as He directed recognition and glory towards God...and never sought personal acknowledgement or praise for His words and miracles.

Jesus said *"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."* John 5:19

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." Colossians 1:15

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

Philip asked Jesus to show us the Father. Jesus responded *"Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves."* John 14:9-11

In the same way Jesus was a reflection of God, we become a reflection of Jesus as the Holy Spirit works in our lives.

However, due to our sinful nature, we often "get in the way." To reinforce this concept, here's a humorous that video that portrays our focus upon self.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7liOSZbUOG0>

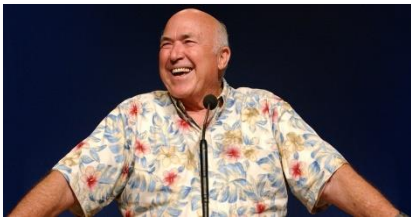
The single word of the song (sung by the Muppet character Beaker) reveals a basic truth about human nature in that we are self-centered. Unfortunately, the words me, me, me, me, me, me, me, me...often defines an undesirable source of human motivation; and is a subliminal influencer of what we think, what we do and what we say. Note how the various personas of Beaker harmoniously sang the song; how he beat his own drum; how he used a violin to accentuate the song, how the intensity increased; how he became distraught as things got out of control; and how destruction occurred in the end (all of which correlates to the lifecycle of sin).



A predominance of "me" will influence two different perceptions: external and internal. Both perceptions will often have little to no regard for others.



From an external perspective, self-centeredness will influence how we perceive, judge and communicate with other persons. Our focus on “me” will also initiate emotional responses. Plus, it influences our willingness to engage others based upon similarities (social status, education, and so forth).



Chuck Smith—founder of Calvary Chapel—looked beyond himself, yielded to the Holy Spirit, and reached out to those who were considered social outcasts and rejects. Here’s a wonderful video that reveals some of the reasons why Calvary Chapel has continued to grow since the 1960s. The video is of Chuck introducing Love Song in 2009...as he shares the story of when they first met.

<https://youtu.be/2sFgOT1z6z4>

From an internal perspective, self-centered thoughts usually begin with an “I” or end with “me.”

- I want it.
- I am angry.
- I was disrespected.
- What’s in it for me?
- What will others think of me?
- Are there personal costs to me?

Unfortunately, this is our “normal” thinking—which we all experience. Simply stated, “me” permeates and influences our thoughts. What’s more, it is extremely rare when a “me-driven” person will consider such thoughts as:

- Will this please God?
- Will this glorify God?
- Will this benefit someone?
- Is there eternal value?

When you think about it...this is very odd thinking. And if someone acts upon these types of thoughts it will often be perceived as abnormal behavior, and to some shocking—and will ask themselves “why would you do that?” The reason...this type of behavior conflicts with the desires of human nature, is in direct contrast against today’s marketing messages, is contrary to movie portrayals, opposes just about all social norms, and pretty much “messes” with everyone’s minds and expectations.

This type of behavior is known as altruistic. Altruism may be defined an unselfish act to enhance the welfare of another person—without anticipation or expectation of personal recognition, or personal reward, or personal return. In addition, this type of behavior is not easy because it usually involves some form of cost. And yes, there are times when altruistic behavior is “me” driven: to make one feel better about themselves. However, it is quite different when altruism occurs for the glory of God. This type of behavior requires heart-transforming revelation by the Holy Spirit—followed by a personal decision—and continual reminders and reinforcement (via prayer and

reading God's word)—in that this whole thing of living...and the reason I exist—is not about me! This is when one discovers a mystery...in that living life to the fullest is about loving God and serving others.

Jesus said “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40

Take some time to contemplate the following statement:

Everything Jesus Christ said and did during His life and death exemplified “It’s not about me.”

- His life was about seeking the will of the Father.
- His death was for us.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point* of death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:5-8



“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Philippians 2:3-4

Here is a wonderful song and video that speaks to the core of this message.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BuS9_v07GCs

As we go about our daily lives...as we encounter other persons, and as we make choices...it is beneficial to ask ourselves the following questions.

- Will this please God?
- Will this glorify God?
- Will this benefit someone else?
- Is there eternal value?



These questions encapsulate the ministry of Jesus Christ. What's more, they will illuminate your heart; they will reveal degrees of self-centeredness; and they will reduce the influence of me as we become more like Him.

All for His Glory!
Harold D Thomas

This message is also available in video: <https://youtu.be/n4SfqooJt3o>