

# B E Y O N D T H E B A S I C

## CHAPTER 7- THE PROCESS FOR RENEWAL

### **The Outcome Desired by God**

God's original plan, which continues to be His plan today, is to be a part of a family, a very large family (Romans 8:29), over which He is the head. His desire is for a family of beings like Himself. He is not interested in pets or servants, but children that are His. That is why He originally created us in His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26). The angels are ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:13&14), and were not made in His own image and likeness. His intention is that we live together with Him for all eternity as the perfect family (Matthew 5:48). Over the years there has been some almost perfect fictional families portrayed on television, but, including the first family in the Garden of Eden, there have been no perfect families among real life humans. That is why we desperately need to be restored. Some people see our restoration process as very complicated and difficult to accomplish. The process is actually straightforward: simply reverse what happened in the Garden of Eden. The not so simple task of accomplishing that belongs to the Holy Spirit (John 16:13&14, 2 Corinthians 3:3&6) but requires our permission and cooperation. Its technical-theological name is sanctification (2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2).

The first thing we need to be aware of is that when God tells us to do something, He will empower us to accomplish it. If we are ever going to achieve what our Heavenly Father expects us to, we really need to know everything we possibly can about what our Heavenly Father is actually like. We know that God is Spirit (John 4:24) and we cannot look upon Him with eyes of flesh (Exodus 33:20). That is one of the reasons He sent Jesus. Jesus is the same as the Father (Hebrews 1:2&3). The fullness of God was in the man Jesus (Colossians 1:15-19). He is the visible image of the invisible God, revealing to us the very nature and character of the Father. If we really want to see the Father, all we have to do is look at Jesus (John 14:8&9). If we are ever going to achieve what our Heavenly Father expects us to, we really need to know everything we possibly can about what Jesus is really like. Jesus came to be an example (John 13:15). His intent and desire was that His followers should act and be motivated as He acted and was motivated. His life was a living demonstration of how God originally intended His children to live. Since we did not seem to get it through the prophets, or get it through the law, He came to show us how. His work of redemption is complete, but His work of making disciples is still ongoing, and He is our example of how to do that. When He said that He was our example He had just finished washing His disciples feet. Jesus lived life as originally intended for us (Hebrews 5:8-10). The constant theme throughout the scripture is one of obedience to God. Adam and Eve failed, and so has every son of Adam and every daughter of Eve ever since. Jesus chose to live a human life of obedience and made the Father's will His own will. His obedience demonstrated His perfection to us, that we might imitate Him. If we believe that it is impossible for us to do that in our own power, we are correct. However, God is able (Matthew 19:26). If we are walking with Jesus, we can accomplish all things (Philippians 4:13). Our one desire should be to become like Jesus. If we truly examine our hearts to identify what is important, chances are that the desire to become like Jesus is either absent or so far down our list of priorities that we will never work our way down to it. We will concentrate most of our efforts on whatever is at the top of our list. We are the ones that prioritize our own lists of what is important in our lives. If we believe that we need to have the desire to be like Jesus as the number one priority in our hearts we need to ask the Lord to put it there. Some people believe that when God said He would give us the desires of our hearts (Psalms 37:4) He would give us whatever we thought we wanted. If what you want is your neighbors spouse, God will not give that to you. If you are upset with someone and want him or her to be publicly humiliated, that isn't going to happen. However, if you want God to put good desires in your heart; that is what He promised to do.

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The only way to become what we are expected to be is to have our foundations firmly planted in Jesus (Colossians 2:6&7). We must commit our entire lives to Him and submit our wills to Him. We must seek to learn from Him, from His life and His teachings. We must also recognize the Holy Spirit power in us, and use it for His glory. The world values things, position, power, creature comforts, and ego inflators. God's children are to seek things of value to God (Colossians 3:1-4). The things that we dwell on in our minds are the things we will eventually seek. God's plan is different from the world's plan. If we constantly seek worldly values we will always be struggling for more. If we seek God's kingdom we will discover that our Father has provided everything we really need in abundance (Matthew 6:33). If you are sincerely seeking God, He will bless you (Hebrews 11:6). We are called to influence the world, not be a part of it (1 Peter 2:11&12). We are here to serve our God and Father, not serve the world. We are not to cater to the flesh either (1 Peter 1: 13-16). We must walk in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). We are also called to make a sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1&2). Our Lord does not want earthly things; He wants us (Psalms 51:16&17). He seeks true worshipers who trust Him enough to trust all of who we are to His care (John 4:23).

Jesus was a Holy Spirit filled human (Matthew 3:16). Throughout most of His life Jesus lived an ordinary human life, mostly unnoticed. All we really know about His first thirty years is His birth and a visit by the Magi, the flight into Egypt, the return to Nazareth and His visit to the temple as a youth. It was only later, at the age of thirty, when John the Baptist baptized Him, that we start learning about His life and actions. The great works Jesus did were not done in the power of God the Son, but as a mere human filled with the Holy Spirit. Had He done His works as God the Son, we could not hope to attain to it, because none of us is or ever will be God the Son. However, we can all be Holy Spirit filled humans, and we can all do the things Jesus did. Throughout the ages many people have performed the things Jesus did, and all true Christians should live by that same Holy Spirit power. Jesus gave Himself totally to God and had the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34).

### **The Mind of Christ**

If we are going to be like Jesus we need to make some radical changes in our thoughts and in our standards. Our thinking and values need to be come similar to those of Jesus. That is why we were told to "Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5-8, 1 Peter 4:1). As triune human beings we consist of body, mind, and spirit. The mind is the center of our personality and includes our thoughts, (judgments , opinions and beliefs), our emotions, (feelings), and our will, (determination, motivation, and intentions). That is why the mind is Satan's battlefield of preference in spiritual warfare (Romans 7:23). In the carnal person the mind is tarnished and sinful beyond any similarity to the mind of Christ. If our thoughts, emotions, and will become transformed, so will our personality be transformed.

Scripture provides sufficient information about the life of Jesus for us to discern His thought patterns. The things He talked about and acted on were the things He thought and cared about. First and foremost, He was concerned with our salvation. He was here to rescue fallen humanity from eternal death and separation from God (John 10:10, John 17:2). His task was to enable us to become what we were originally created to be, part of God's family. We are presently a work in process, not yet what we shall be. Jesus also cared about other people's genuine needs. His concerns included the disadvantaged (Luke 4:18), the poor (Matthew 19:21, Luke 14:13, Galatians 2:10), the helpless (Isaiah

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1:17, James 1:27), and those in bondage to diseases or demons (Matthew 4:24, Matthew 8:16, James 5:14&15). His motivation was to free those in bondage (Isaiah 61:1, John 8:36, Galatians 5:1), to protect the helpless from abuse, and to provide for those in need. Jesus was not concerned about Himself, about worldly fame, worldly wealth, worldly power, or for that matter, worldly needs of any kind (Matthew 6:28-34). None of those things Jesus was concerned about existed in the Garden of Eden before the fall of man, and they will no longer exist after Jesus returns to rule on earth. We must avoid all carnal and immoral thoughts, concentrating on what is good and pure in God's sight (Philippians 4:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:21&22). We would not have been told to control our thoughts if it were not possible to do so (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Some folks have a tendency to confuse opinions (thoughts) with feelings (emotions). You have probably heard someone say "I feel that God wants you to do something!" That is not a feeling; it is an opinion. If something is a genuine feeling (emotion) you can replace the statement "I feel" with "I am" and it will retain the same meaning. For example, "I feel happy" is the same as "I am happy". However, "I feel God wants - - -" cannot be replaced by "I am God wants - - -." Jesus encountered the same emotions experienced by other humans. Just a few of the emotions Jesus felt included joy (John 17:13, 1 Thessalonians 1:6), sadness (Luke 19:41-44, John 11:34-36), and anger (John 2:13-17). Emotions are neither good nor bad; they simply are. How we react to them can be good or bad (Psalm 4:4, Ephesians 4:26&27). Righteous anger is acceptable. Holding on to anger and meditating on it is not acceptable because it will turn into bitterness (Romans 12:19). Bitterness is like a leaven and will spread throughout your whole being, eating away and destroying the fruit of the Spirit in your life, the same way worms destroy fruit hanging on a tree.

The will of Jesus is so clearly revealed in scripture that there can be no room for doubt or confusion. He delighted in doing the Father's will. He told His disciples that doing the will of the Father is what sustained Him (John 4:34). In fact, He never sought to do His own thing, only that which the Father desired (John 5:30). The reason He came to earth was to accomplish the Father's will (Hebrews 10:7, Galatians 1:4). Even at the end, in the Garden of Gethsemane, waiting to be crucified, Jesus prayed, "Let thy will be done, not mine" (Matthew 26:39). When His disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, He taught them to pray for the Father's will to be realized on earth (Luke 11:2). If our own will is going to be suppressed in preference of the will of Jesus, we must seek only the Father's will. His will is to realize the completion of His plan for His large family (John 6:39&40). We need to be in prayer and be thankful for God's grace (1 Thessalonians 5:17&18).

Jesus also had a servant's mind and heart. Though He was divine, He became human and took the form of a servant (Philippians 2:6-8). He came to our world to serve us (Matthew 20:28) as an example of how we should act with each other. Left to our own devices we would be attracted to the life of comfort and importance, but we are called, not to lord it over others, but to serve them (Mark 10:42-44). To be great in God's kingdom we should be the servant of all in this world (Mark 9:35), because Jesus, our example, came to serve.

The mind of Jesus was nourished by His passionate fellowship with the Father. Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness alone to pray (Luke 5:16). He also went up on the mountain to pray, sometimes all night (Luke 6:12). One time He took some of His disciples along, and what they witnessed was startling (Luke 9:28-31). Jesus said His Father's house is a house of prayer (Luke

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19:46). He also said that instead of worrying, we ought to always pray (Luke 18:1). If we are to maintain the mind of Christ, we need intense fellowship with Jesus and the Father (1 Corinthians 1:9, 1 John 1:3).

### The Character of Christ

Character, or personality, is what identifies a person and, more than anything else, distinguishes that person from all other persons. Personality originates in the mind and is reflected in the behavior resulting from thoughts, emotions, and the will. Character is defined by an individual's nature, temperament, disposition, moral fiber, and traits. Character traits tend to run in families, and associate individuals with the family. Jesus, as our example, had the character of the Father, the same character we must have if we are to become like our Creator and dwell with Him for all eternity. Personality is what identifies us as children of the Father or children of the world. Jesus said that a little different: "By their fruit you shall know them" (Matthew 7:15-20). He was speaking about the Fruit of the Spirit, which defined His own personality. The Fruit of the Spirit are the character of our Heavenly Father. We cannot grow them in ourselves any more than a common weed can produce apples and bananas. The Fruit of the Spirit can only be developed within us by the Holy Spirit, and only with our permission. The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22&23) consists of:

- **Love** - divine love. A strong, ardent, tender, compassionate devotion to the well-being of someone.
- **Joy** - the emotional excitement, gladness, and delight over blessings received or expected for self or for others.
- **Peace** - the state of quietness, rest, repose, harmony, order, and security in the midst of turmoil, strife, and temptations.
- **Longsuffering** - patient endurance, to bear long with the frailties, offences, injuries, and provocations of others, without murmuring, discontent, or resentment.
- **Gentleness** - the disposition to be gentle, soft-spoken, kind, even-tempered, cultured, and refined in character and in conduct.
- **Goodness** - the state of being good, kind virtuous, benevolent, generous, and God-like in life and in conduct.
- **Faith** - the living, divinely implanted, acquired, and created principle of inward and wholehearted confidence, assurance, trust, and reliance in God and in all that He says.
- **Meekness** - the disposition to be gentle, kind, indulgent, even balanced in tempers and passions, and patient in suffering injuries without feeling a spirit of revenge.
- **Temperance** - self-control. A moderation in the indulgence of the appetites and passions.

Developing the Fruit of the Spirit with us is a part of the process of sanctification that the Holy Spirit is working within us when we allow that to happen. The Fruit of the Spirit and the Mind of Christ are an inseparable combination. Without the presence of the mind of Christ, the fruit cannot develop (John 15:4&5). The character of God cannot be supported by a worldly mind (Luke 16:13, James 4:4, 1 John 2:15-17).

When Jesus was preaching to a crowd during what is commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount, He was identifying the godly characteristics required for all who would participate in the Father's fulfillment of His large family living together in fellowship. They are a people who cling to Him in simple trust and are single-minded in their love for Him. Even though they are oppressed by

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the world, they remain merciful to others. They are the bringers and founders of peace. As God's children we are all expected to put into practice what Jesus taught, understanding that He was not presenting a menu of options to choose from. What Jesus presented was inclusive qualifications for entry into His kingdom. The list is often referred to as the beatitudes because each one begins with the word "blessed." The Greek word translated as blessed literally means the highest possible level of happiness and well being. The beatitudes are:

- "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). The poor in spirit maintain their compassion for others and are always aware of their own dependence on God. They have no desire for the complex life of the world, nor the wealth of the world, but are contented with the simplicity that existed in the Garden of Eden. The world values self pride, independence from God, and looking out for number one.
- "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). They mourn for their own sins, the sins of their land, and the malice of the world; because it all offends the God they love. They are a people who offer kindness, even to those who cause them pain. They share their neighbor's pain. They agonize over mistreated prisoners, slums, and people deprived of the necessities of life. The world's values call for personal happiness at any cost to others.
- "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). We need to understand that meekness is not synonymous with weakness; it is a strength. Meekness is being humble minded, so overcome by the greatness and majesty of God that one sees oneself as nothing. The meek exhibit good will towards all men and reverent obedience towards God. Meekness is the opposite of aggressiveness. The meek live in quiet godliness, do not seek attention, but are content to walk in God's shadow. The world's values call for power, authority, and recognition.
- "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6). Righteousness is justice exercised in love. Those who hunger for it do not look to themselves, but depend on God for Righteousness. They experience an intense desire for righteousness, that they might become the Righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). The world values pursuing personal desires at the expense of others.
- "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Merciful people act with sympathy and loving kindness. They sympathize with and help, not only mankind, but all of God's creatures. The merciful have a definite distaste for cruel sports, cruel speech, and cruel punishments. They loathe injustice. The merciful are too aware of their own failings to condemn others. To be merciful requires prayer and sacrificial love. The world values personal strength without feeling or compassion; the letter of the law without understanding.
- "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). To be pure in heart is to be pure in mind; in our thoughts, our feelings, and our desires. The pure in heart cannot accept deception of any sort, and cannot tolerate dishonesty in their own lives. They are individuals who are right with God; they are passionate about doing His will. The purity extends to a person's entire personality and is about righteousness of mind and singleness of motive. The pure in heart are not double-minded, swaying between God's ways and the world's ways. They are consistent with men and with God, clear in their principles and inner desires. They see the hand of God moving in all things. The world values fraud as a tool to fulfill worldly appetites.
- "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). The persecuted remain true to God, even at the risk of their lives. Our supposed Christianity is condemned when it is so lukewarm that the wicked do not

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persecute it, but simply ignore it. The world values weak commitments to God and acceptance of anything the world agrees to.

The beatitudes are a set of standards presented by Jesus, a code of conduct for believers. They contrast the values of God's kingdom with the world's values. Everything Jesus spoke was in direct contradiction to the values practiced by the world at that time. The beatitudes are a description of the character of Jesus.

God is love (1 John 4:7&8). This scripture does not say that love is something God does, or that love is something God has, but love is what God is. He is the author and source of love. Love is His nature. If we want to learn how to be like our Heavenly Father we need to imitate Jesus in love. Paul described love so that we could better understand our God:

- Love is patient, unwearied, long suffering, and endures long. Look how long God waited for the time to be right for Jesus to make an appearance, and is now waiting to send Him back for us. He is giving everyone maximum time to make a commitment to Christ.
- Love is kind, caring, thoughtful, compassionate, and considerate. It takes into account the hurts and needs of others; and makes allowances for the human responses others make to their hurts and needs.
- Love is neither envious nor covetous nor boils over with jealousy. It has no desire for what others have, but wants only to bless others as it has been blessed (1 Corinthians 13:4).
- Love is neither boastful nor vainglorious nor does it display itself haughtily. It desires to build up others and encourage them.
- Love is neither arrogant nor conceited nor inflated with pride. It values others as God does, as being fellow sinners redeemed by Jesus.
- Love is not rude or unmannerly or act unbecomingly.
- Love is considerate of others and treats others as it would like to be treated.
- Love does not insist on its own way or own rights, but understands that it needs grace, and does not want what is really deserved.
- Love is not irritable or ill tempered or touchy. It refuses to allow others to control its spiritual state; it maintains the peace and joy of the Lord.
- Love is not resentful nor indignant nor offended nor pays attention to evil done to it. It recognizes attacks are against God and not self, allowing God to repay all things (1 Corinthians 13:5).
- Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing, injustice, or unrighteousness, because all such things are an affront to God.
- Love rejoices in the truth and right because they are pleasing to God (1 Corinthians 13:6).
- Love bears, stands, tolerates, accepts all things under any and all conditions. No matter how rebellious or rude others may become, love still desires for them what is best for them; eternal salvation.
- Love believes all things - the best for every person. Napoleonic justice claimed that a person was guilty until proven innocent. Love assumes a person is innocent until proven guilty, and assumes the best of motives until proven otherwise.
- Love hopes, expects all things in all circumstances, anticipating God's grace to be functioning and effective.

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- Love endures all things without fading. Love cannot be weakened by people, by circumstances, or by devils (1 Corinthians 13:7).
- Love never fails, never ends. If it is real love it will be eternal. It will not turn into apathy or hatred (1 Corinthians 13:8).

If you take 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, and every place you find the word "love" you replace it with the name "Jesus", these verses will all still be true. If you are not now revealing this kind of love in your life, you need to make a deliberate effort to develop it. If you are diligent in your efforts there should come a time when you no longer have to work at it because it has become natural for you. You will have become a partaker in God's nature (2 Peter 1:4) on your way to becoming what you need to be to fulfill God's plan. Love is the hallmark of God's Kingdom.

### Faith in Christ

Faith is the evidence of things unseen (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is an unquestioning belief that does not require proof. Once we are with God we will see and faith will not be necessary, just love. Until then faith is essential because no one can please God without first having complete trust in Him (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is all that counts (Galatians 5:6). Faith is a saving belief, trust, and confidence in Jesus, believing that He is who He said He was, and that He died to save us from sin and death. Our trust needs to be in the Lord, not in men, or in governments, or even in our five senses (Psalm 118:8&9). No matter what the conditions, with faith there is always hope because what is impossible for man is possible for God (Matthew 19:26, Mark 9:23). Faith can move mountains (Matthew 21:21&22). Can you accept Jesus' sacrifice on faith, or are you haunted by nagging doubts, thinking you must pay something yourself?

The faith that saves us is not of our own doing, but is the work of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:8). It is that same faith that makes us a part of the family of God (Galatians 3:26). That same faith is also the means by which we live (Romans 1:17) and by which we are justified before God (Romans 3:28, Galatians 2:16). Through faith we are credited with the righteousness of Jesus (Romans 3:21-26). Everything about the Christian way of life has to do with faith, and lack of faith is dangerous (Romans 14:23). No matter what the conditions, with faith there is always hope. Have you ever wondered if maybe God is tricking you; setting you up for a fall? Where do you think such ideas originate?

Faith comes from knowing who God is, and believing that He will do what He said He would. That is why He told us to be still and know He is God (Psalm 46:10). Jesus knew the Father intimately and was driven to do the Father's will (John 4:34), not wavering in faith, even when it led to Calvary. Jesus was diligent in complete obedience to God. We also are called to stand fast (Hebrews 10:23). We can be lost if we don't stand firm (Matthew 10:22) but we must realize that standing firm is evidence of commitment to Jesus, not a cause of salvation. Perseverance brings the crown of life (James 1:12). Do not allow the enemy to wear you down (Galatians 6:9) because he is only trying to get you weary enough to give up. Jesus said that if you endure you will eat of the tree of life (Revelation 2:7), you will not be hurt by the second death (Revelation 2:11), you will be given to eat of the hidden manna (Revelation 2:17), you will be saved, wear white raiment, and be in the lambs book of life (Revelation 3:5), you will sit with Jesus in heaven (Revelation 3:21), and you will be sons of God and inherit all things (Revelation 21:7). If you think you are seeing a pattern here, you are right. The message is **never, ever give up**. The battle can be won. Anchor yourself in the Lord Jesus Christ

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and refuse to budge. The faith God expects is not a casual thing, but a faith that is ablaze with an all-consuming fire. Do you see God as your loving father, as a strict judge waiting for you to fall, or a mysterious unknowable power?

When the enemy attempts to convince us we are too evil for God, and God can never forgive us, we need to remember that we are God's work in progress, and, though He may despise what we do, He still loves us. He is never disillusioned with us because, being God, He never had any illusions about us to start with. He loves in spite of how we are, but He is not content that we should remain as we are. Remember, God's intent is to have a large family of beings like Him. What we are in this life is a far cry from what we need to be. That is why when He chose Abraham to father His chosen people He instructed Abraham to walk before Him and be perfect (Genesis 17:1). That is why Jesus told us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48). That is why we are told to keep ourselves pure (1 Timothy 5:22) and to purify ourselves just as our Father is pure (1 John 3:3). That is why God wanted His chosen people to be holy (Leviticus 11:44&45) and why He wants us to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). Allow the Holy Spirit accomplish His work of sanctification in you.