

Journey Eleven

Omniallinfinitude™
begin - return - continue

M. A. Helland



Up Close & Personal

*"**OMNIALINFINITUDE™** builds a bridge on which my head and my heart can shake hands. It combines deep principles with ancient practices, and is a pathway to knowing God in order to love Him. I encourage you to walk the path; cross the bridge."*

*Dr. Jim Altizer
Azusa Pacific University*

Up Close & Personal

journey elements

- [What Comes to Your Mind?](#)
- [Remember:](#) John 1:14
- [Read:](#) Proverbs 1, 1 Peter 1, James 1, 1 John 1
- [Journal 11.1:](#) Best Friends Forever
- [Analyze:](#) Biographical Study
- [Journal 11.2:](#) That's Personal
- [Investigate:](#) Personal
- [10 things](#)
- [Journal 11.3:](#) Friend of Sinners
- [Practice:](#) Submission
- [Why?](#)
- [Journal 11.4:](#) Makers and Breakers
- [Inventory:](#) Your Gratitude Challenge
- [Journal 11.5:](#) Frenemies of God
- [Adventuring:](#) One Day at a Time
- [Journal 11.6:](#) The Company you Keep
- [Lyrics:](#) *All I Can Do, I'll Be There for You, Wind Beneath my Wings, Gratitude, Give Me Jesus*
- [More Cool Stuff:](#) On Being Friends with the Personal God
- [Journal 11.7:](#) Nitty Gritty
- [Closure](#)
- [Appendix](#)
- [Credits](#)

what comes to your mind?

Up Close & Personal

Me.
About Me.
My Story, My Life, My Secrets
My Stuff, My Ideas, Values and Beliefs, My Access
My Likes and Dislikes, Hopes and Dreams
My Fears and Failures, Strengths and Weaknesses.

Our current culture encourages us to define ourselves.
Using the services of personal trainers, chefs and assistants
We seek to achieve our personal best
All the while carving out our personal space where we spend our personal time.

We love our personal computers
Where we can set up our personal settings, profiles and passwords
Even start a personal blog chronicling our personal development and achievements
Our personal homepage shares our personal information for all the world to see.

We let our personal preferences be known, even our personal calling
What we are about, why we are here.
We have personal heroes, people who inspire us to be the person we were meant to be.

We might even take out a personal loan in order to have a personal car
We indulge our personal cravings
And want our own personal copy so we don't have to share.

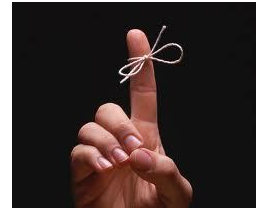
Up Close is often too personal to share
Only our closest personal relationships will know that kind of information
Our personal identity is very private
Yet so many demand to know it, even steal it for their own benefit, without a care for us.

They don't know us personally, about our very personal lives, our secrets, shame, and struggles
Often we hide and pretend we are someone else, someone with no cares in the world
We create personal gods to prop us up,
To assist our personal goals,
To protect our personal souls.

But deep down, very personally, we know they aren't real
They are only part of our cry to be truly personally known
By the only One who can.

The One and Only Personal God.
Who gets very Up Close and Personal.

remember



John 1: 14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. NIV

Use the space below to help you memorize the verse above.

For additional background on the *remember* element, see the [appendix](#).

Now write out the verses from:

Journey 1: **Psalm 145:3**

Journey 2: **Exodus 3: 14a**

Journey 3: **Revelation 1:8**

Journey 4: **Jeremiah 29:11**

Journey 5: **Joshua 1:9**

Journey 6: **Psalm 145:8-9**

Journey 7: **Hebrews 7:26**

Journey 8: **Psalm 94:2-3**

Journey 9: **Ephesians 1:7**

Journey 10: **1 John 4:8**

read

Proverbs 1, 1 Peter 1, James 1, 1 John 1

Please read all the above chapters through completely on three separate days, once from a **modern translation** such as the *NIV* or *NAS*, once in a **modern paraphrase** such as *The Message*, and then **once again with a pad and pencil** by your side as you record your thoughts and observations. It is also helpful to **read the selections aloud**. As you read, underline words that describe who God is or names He is called.



This element is about **reading what it says** – try to put aside any preconceived ideas about what you think it says, or what you may have concluded based on other studies or classes. We are not saying those ideas are wrong, but for this Element, we just want to read it as if for the first time. Please **read for the storyline** – and see if you can then faithfully retell it in your own words.

First Reading: Modern Translation – which one did you use?

Second Reading: Modern Paraphrase – which one did you use?

Third Reading: Reading Notes

Proverbs 1:

1 Peter 1:

James 1:

1 John 1:

Descriptions of God:

Names used for God:

journal

11.1 Best Friends Forever

Everybody needs a friend.
Someone to talk to
Hang out with
Belong to.

Someone

Who will help you, cry with you, celebrate with you.
Listen to you, do things with you,
Be there through thick and thin.

We choose our friends and our friends choose us.
We have a personal relationship
Two people relating.

It's never perfect

Sometimes friends move on.
They leave you,
Hurt you,
Exclude you and get new friends.

You grow apart.

You used to be friends, but.....neither of you remember what happened.
Many friends are just for a season.

Sometimes you find a friend and you wonder why they would ever want to be your friend.
They are so different, perhaps better looking and much smarter than you.
They have more money, are more talented, and run in much different circles.
And yet, they are there for you!
It's true. It's real.

It's personal, two people relating.

Can you imagine having such a perfect friend?
Can you imagine being the friend of the Perfect, Amazing, Almighty God?
The Creator of the Universe?
The One who is all Powerful, all Knowing, Everywhere at once, Holy and oh so Good, yet
Loving, Gracious, and Merciful?
The One who is truly Friendly and Personal?

Two people relating.

Can you imagine?

Your turn:

Describe what you look for or expect in a friend. What is your part in the friendship?



analyze

Biographical Study

We will now tackle a Biographical study which is a more in depth study of one Biblical person. To accomplish this we will need additional resources to discover everything possible about our chosen subject.

In addition to a couple different Bible translations, it will be helpful to also have access to the following. A version of each of these is available for free online.

- Study Bible
- Exhaustive Concordance
- Topical Bible
- Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia

1. Select your Subject: The hardest part will be selecting a person to study. Scholars spend years or a lifetime studying the major players in the Biblical narrative, like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David, John, Jesus, and Paul. Many characters have books of the Bible that tell their story, such as Joshua, Nehemiah, Job, Ruth, and Esther, to name a few. So start with a simple study, someone with a smaller number of references, but enough to get a sense of their life story.
2. Find Biblical References about this Person. The Topical/Subject Index in the back of any Study Bible will get you started. Many common names are used to refer to different people, so make sure you are using the correct ones.
3. Be prepared to spend multiple sessions working on this. Read through your references multiple times and take notes.
4. Create a chronological timeline about this person's life.
5. List character qualities you discover, both positive and negative.
6. Who else was involved with them? What happened to them? Where did it happen? Why did it happen? What were the results? Was anything accomplished?
7. How did God use, interact, show up, shine through this person? What ideas are expressed?
8. Describe this person's relationship with God. What changes happened in their lives?
9. Pick a key verse for this person.
10. What can you learn from this person? Can you relate to their experience?

journal

11.2 That's Personal

Some things are personal, very personal
They are not for public consumption.
We only let our closest friends in on this information about us.

And some things are too personal even for our friends.
Private things, those things not ready for prime time or any time.
Hidden. Dark.

What would they think if they knew our most personal secrets?

We are all unique individuals, yet we try so hard to fit in. To be like each other, to be acceptable so we can be accepted. If we could just blend in, be part of the group, maybe we wouldn't feel so alone.

Intimacy, reality, truth.

Being known. No holding back.

We want it.

But are not sure we are willing to pay the price by opening up our lives to get it.
Only God can truly know us like we need to be known.
And He gets Personal real fast.

There is Nowhere to hide from Him.
Not part of any group, or blending into the crowd. He still sees us.
Known. Seen. Understood. Never alone.
In fact, He knows us better than we know ourselves

Can you imagine what it would be like?

To receive the incredible power of approval and acceptance from the One whose approval and acceptance really matters?

Instead of looking to the crowd?

We don't need to imagine it, we can have it. That's one of the many benefits of knowing a Personal God.

When you were a child, did you ever have an invisible friend? You could tell them anything. They always let you choose and were always there when you needed them. They had no needs, so were always available to meet yours. You were joined at the hip and they were at your service. Until you grew up.

Now real people, sinners all, are often difficult to relate to. Personal relationships get messy, and it's easier to retreat to our own selfish modes of survival. Our needy selves cry out for attention, all the while fearing we will actually get it.

Getting Personal takes its toll. Two people relating, often looking for friendship in all the wrong places. So we hide in the crowd, go along to get along, blend in for acceptance.

What would you do for a friend? A real, personal friend?



A friend tells the truth in love
Is longsuffering
Overlooks the little things that drive them crazy
Understands
Helps
Listens
Supports
Protects
Is never far away.



It's very personal. It's very possible.

Can you imagine what kind of a personal friend the Almighty God is?
The Perfect Kind.

Your turn:

Do you have something too personal to share? Why do you feel that way?
Is there a difference in your mind between a friend and a personal friend?
What kind of friend are you?



investigate

Personal

Define: Please write a brief definition next to each of the above words using a regular dictionary, not a Bible dictionary. (Click on any word to link to dictionary.com)

- ∞ [Person](#)
- ∞ [Personality](#)
- ∞ [Relational](#)
- ∞ [Intimacy](#)
- ∞ [Interaction](#)
- ∞ [Intelligence](#)
- ∞ [Volition](#)
- ∞ [Sensibility](#)
- ∞ [Individuality](#)
- ∞ [Self-consciousness](#)
- ∞ [Responsibility](#)
- ∞ [Identity](#)
- ∞ [Friendly](#)
- ∞ [Individual](#)
- ∞ [Knowable](#)
- ∞ [Self Determination](#)

Now write your own definition for Up Close and Personal below:

Review:

Read the following verses and answer the questions.

God is the author of personhood. We have a personality because we were made in His Image. Describe how the verses below illustrate the different aspects of His personhood.

Intellect: (Reason)

Psalm 139:1-2,17-18; Psalm 94:10-11; Proverbs 3:19-20; Job 28:20-28; Acts 15: 8, 18; Isaiah 11:2; I Samuel 2:3;

Sensibility: (Emotion)

Genesis 6:6; John 3:16; Psalm 5:5; 103:8-14; Jeremiah 31:20; James 5:11

Self Determination: (Will)

Genesis 1:1,3,26,31; 3:15; Hebrews 1:1-3; Psalm 115:3; 139:13-14; John 6:38-40; Ephesians 1:11; Job 9:10

Self Consciousness: (Knowledge of One's own existence)

Exodus 3:14-15; 6:2-3; 34:5-7; 1 Corinthians 2:11; John 8:58; 14: 9-11; Isaiah 43:10-13

Alive:

Jeremiah 10:10; Acts 14:15; I Thess. 1:9; John 1:4-5; 5:26; Genesis 2:7; Revelation 1:18

Free:

Isaiah 46:10-11; Daniel 4:37; Job 23:13; Romans 9:15-23; Psalm 115:3

Purpose:

Psalm 75: 7; 104:27-30; Colossians 1:15-20; Ephesians 3:10-11; Genesis 20:19-20; Isaiah 14:26-27; Daniel 2:21; 4:17; Acts 17: 24-28

Because God is a personal God, He is knowable and desires a relationship with us. Describe what each verse below reveals about this fact.

Psalms 139

Psalms 27:7-10

Psalms 19: 1-6

Isaiah 41:10-11

Genesis 3:8-10

Jeremiah 29:11-13

Jeremiah 23:23-24

Jeremiah 9:24

John 1:17-18

John 15: 13-16

John 17:3, 22-24

John 10: 11-17

Acts 15:8

Romans 8:15-17

2 Corinthians 6:18

Galatians 4:8-9

2 Timothy 2:19

1 Corinthians 8:3

God can only be known by revealing Himself in ways of His choosing. Describe the limits that exist on our personal relationships with God from each verse below.

James 1:2-7

Isaiah 19:7-14

Isaiah 45:15

Isaiah 55:8

I Corinthians 2:10-16

I Corinthians 13: 12

John 4:24-26

John 16:12-16

Matthew 7:21-23

I John 3:1-2

Conclude:

Summarize what you learned in the two columns below.

God's Personality

Getting to Know God

10 things

Up Close and Personal

1. **Yahweh Shammah** was originally given as a name to a city in Ezekiel 48:35 meaning "The Lord is There". Because it is so closely associated with God's presence and power it has become a name for God. It is similar to the New Testament name given to Jesus, Immanuel, "God with us", the greatest promise of God to not only dwell with his people, but to indwell them through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹
2. **A. W. Tozer** – "God's love tells us that He is friendly and His Word assures us that He is our friend and wants us to be His friends. No man with a trace of humility would first think that he is a friend of God; but the idea did not originate with men."²
3. **J. I. Packer** – "When it comes to human beingsthe quality and extent of our knowledge of them depends more on them than us. Our knowing them is more directly the result of their allowing us to know them than of our attempting to get to know them.....Knowing God is a matter of grace. It is a relationship in which the initiative throughout is with God.....We do not make friends with God, He makes friends with us."³
4. **David L. Hocking** – "A real person exists because God exists. Personality exists because God is a Person.....We live because God lives."⁴
5. **Philip Yancey** – "Because of Jesus, we need never question God's desire for intimacy."⁵
6. **Jesus** – Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3 (NIV)
7. **C.S. Lewis (*Voyage of the Dawn Treader*)** - "But who is Aslan? Do you know him?" "Well-he knows me," said Edmund. "He is the great Lion, the son of the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea, who saved me and saved Narnia."...."It isn't Narnia, you know," sobbed Lucy. "It's you. We shan't meet you there. And how can we live, never meeting you?" "But you shall meet me, dear one," said Aslan. "Are-are you there too, Sir?" said Edmund. "I am," said Aslan. "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."⁶
8. **James Montgomery Boice** – "For when the Bible speaks of knowing God, it means being made alive to God in a new sense (being born again), conversing with God (so that he becomes more than just the great "Something" out there, so that he becomes a friend) and being profoundly changed in the process."⁷
9. **John Piper** – "In all of knowable reality, God is unique. He is knowable not like the multiplication table or the table of elements; he alone is knowable as the one totally in control of being known. He is not at the disposal of the human mind. He is known when he wills to be known. Yet he is known in and through created reality, which is known naturally. Therefore the glory of God is exalted most not when we know God apart from observation and reading and study, but when we know God as a result of his free and gracious self-revelation in and through our earnest observation of and meditation on his work and Word in history."⁸
10. **Philip Yancey** -...in his relationships with people God places a premium on faith, which can only be exercised in circumstances that allow for doubt – such as God's hiddenness."⁹

Your turn:

Pick one or two of the above quotes or statements and share any insights or challenges it presents to you.

journal

11.3 Friend of Sinners



What does it matter that God is Personal?

Would you rather that God relates to us as a person and not as an impersonal force?

Our Creator God created us In His Image for a purpose. Impersonal forces don't do that.

When He created us, he placed His Image deep within us, which includes our own personhood. **Personhood began with God and came down to us. We didn't project it back on Him.**

And a great part of our purpose is to relate personally to our personal God because He first desired to relate to us. We long for God to know us, and to be known by us, although we may not recognize it.

He knows this because He created us this way. We are only responding to the tugs of divinity within. **He hid Heaven within us and the better we know Him, the less satisfied we are with our lives on earth.** Only in relationship with Him will the longings of our hearts be satisfied.

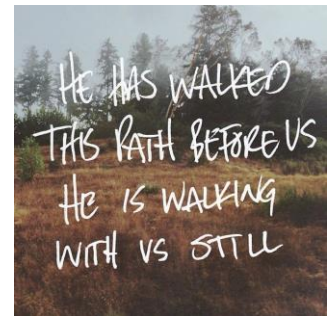
It is difficult for humans to imagine non human relationships, especially one with God.

We find it hard to understand how we are able to have a relationship with Him in a somewhat similar way that we might have with another human being. So, He speaks in the 1st person and appears as a Man. He shows emotion.

The language of interpersonal relationships is all over the Bible, the model for our relationship with God. The concepts of reconciliation, justification and redemption are all drawn from the sphere of human relationships.

Adam was perfectly related to God in the Garden until he sinned.

This longing for relationship, now corrupted by sin, becomes idolatry as man creates his own ways of relating to God, which actually keeps us from meeting Him in person.



Only through Jesus (Heb. 1:1-4, John 14:6), is personal contact with God now possible. Jesus came to reveal who God is and how we can have a personal relationship with Him.

We know God, just like we know other people, because the Father sent Jesus to us and He deals with us as individuals, very personally.

Jesus does not stand between us and God, He allows us to stand before God.

To meet with Him,
As His Child,
As His Servant,
And most amazingly, as His Friend.

As a Child (Rom 4:13, 8:17, John 1:12) we are co-heirs with His Son, Jesus, with full rights, full inheritance and full access to Him and from Him that comes with the privilege of Sonship.

We have been adopted into His Family and will live in His Kingdom. His Father is now our Father.

And there is only One Father.

While we are naturally born into our Human Family without our choice, we are born again, or adopted into our Heavenly Family because the Blood of Jesus covers the sin that severed any possibility of a personal relationship with God. **That was Jesus' merciful choice.** How can we turn His offer of adoption down?

But Friendship is a different thing all together.

It signifies a horizontal relationship with Jesus and through Jesus, as opposed to our vertical relationship of adoption by the Father. James 2:23 explains that Abraham believed God and as a result God called him His friend. Faith is required for Friendship.

**KNOWING THE BIBLE
IS ONE THING
KNOWING THE AUTHOR
IS ANOTHER**

In John 15:13-15, **Jesus calls His Disciples "friends" instead of "servants" or "slaves"**. This friendship is based on their obedience to his commands, but it also comes with the knowledge of the revealed will of God.

If we do everything He commands, we will know everything He knows. They were no longer slaves or servants, but intimate and loving friends.

Faith. Obedience. Friendship.

God walked with Adam and talked to Noah, Abraham, and Moses as friends. The love between them could not be commanded. What God wants most for his children is love, peace and friendship, none of which can be commanded or produced by power or fear.

Just as the LORD said in Zech 4:6, "Not by might, or by power, but by my Spirit.", **you can force people to be your servants or slaves, but you cannot force them to be your friends.** Only by His Spirit can people be persuaded of their own free will to give God what He wants, a personal relationship with them.

How can mere humans, be on genuinely friendly terms with someone who's so infinitely above us?

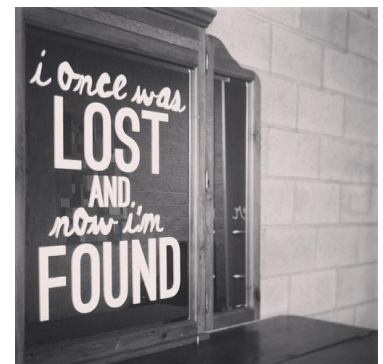
So awesome in power majesty that the mightiest angels bow down?

How can we be close and friendly with such a being and gain the enlightenment and understanding that comes with it?

Because we have a Friend in Jesus.
The Friend of Sinners.
A very Personal Friend

Your turn:

Do you know how to become a Friend of Jesus?



practice

Submission

Living free



Just hearing the word makes us cringe and tense up.

We've all had that bad experience, some to the extent of abuse, from those in authority.

Submission goes against our human nature and our culture. A culture that states we're #1, that we deserve it our way, we are owed our rights and that its OK to take up offense at just about anything and everything. My rights supersede your rights.

We become angry and rebellious, seeking power, control, prestige, accomplishment and more and more and better stuff to bolster our identity. Our obsession is to get exactly what we want. If others behavior doesn't live up to our expectations we feel dishonored, disrespected, disregarded, ignored, cheated, and taken advantage of.

We want our way.

Our self-centered sin natures are on full display.

And that's why we need to practice Submission. It's so hard to do – it's unnatural.

So we have to work at it.

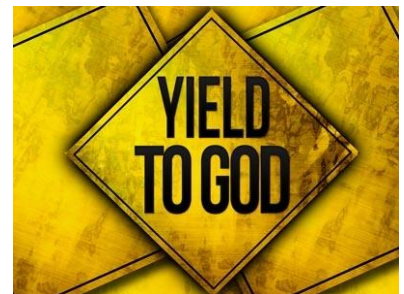
What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 4:1-3 NIV

Another Way

What if there was another way? The way described by these words:

- Lordship
- Obedience
- Self Denial
- Surrender
- Servanthood
- Humbling Yourself.



A way where Jesus says the First shall be Last, and He invites us to Turn the other Cheek and Take His Yoke so we can Take up Our Cross.

(Matt. 5:39, 10:38, 11:28-29, 16:24, 19:28-30, 20:1-16; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 6:27-31, 14:27)

Submission begins as an attitude:

the willingness to voluntarily submit to another
to set aside your own wants and needs
to stop living for myself and live for you.

It's not asserting myself, not demanding my way, so I can come under another
with a spirit of consideration and respect
surrendering the right to retaliate or win an argument.

It's freedom from having to have our own way. Freedom to give in and to give up so we can give way. It's a position we take, an attitude, that then leads to choices and a complete lifestyle.

We deny ourselves the power and privilege we want. We choose not to control people or situations. We seek not to make it all about us.

We practice submission.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.
Colossians 3:12-15 NIV

But there are Limits

Submission is not about hating ourselves or losing our identity or personality. We do not allow people to abuse or take advantage of us and are still required to use the discernment God has provided us through the Holy Spirit.

No one should ever be put into any kind of bondage, crushing their spirits and driving them to despair. Yet we are also not to respond with a spirit of martyrdom, self indulgence or control. When submission becomes destructive or goes against God's law or the dictates of Scripture, we are released from its requirements. (Matt. 18:6, Acts 4:18-20, 5:29-42, 16:16-40)

Submission does not denote weakness. You don't have to always agree.

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."
Acts 4:18-20 NIV

Not Submitting is not Pretty

If one continues in life without a spirit of submission, our self-will eventually becomes our God, setting aside the work of the One True God. We begin to disregard unity and disrespect authority which leads to discord, quarrels and shame.

We become imprisoned in our own agendas, issues, baggage and hurts. All we show others is anger, bitterness and strife, while focusing on our own self glorification which ends up keeping us from actually discovering the best God has for us.

It is not beneficial to be rebellious. Misery, boredom, loneliness, striving and fear will reign in our lives as a result. (2 Peter 2, James 4:12, Jude 2-16, 2 Tim 3:1-9)

*But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God-- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.
2 Timothy 3:1-5 NIV*

Even Jesus

Jesus is our model.

All real authority resides in Him. It was given to Him by the Father and we are commanded to follow Him, to be like Him. (Matt. 28:18, John 17:2)



And Jesus practiced submission.

He first submitted to the Father since submission precedes the right to exercise authority. (John 12:49-50)

He emptied Himself and submitted by coming down to earth to become like us. He listened and prayed to His Father in Heaven and submitted to the leading and power of the Holy Spirit. (Phil. 2:5-7)

As a child He placed Himself under the authority of his parents and teachers. (Luke 2:41-52) As an adult he obeyed worldly government and religious authorities even to His Death. (Luke 22:47 – 23:25, Mark 15, John 19:1-15)

His teachings were radical and countercultural, even to this day. He modeled servanthood by washing his disciples' feet. **He taught that submission was not based on your position in life but on mutually serving one another.** He broke new ground by defining leadership and greatness in terms of The First shall be Last and the Last shall be First. (Matthew 19:30, 20:16; Luke 22:24-27, John 13:1-17)

We are invited to take His Yoke, to chain ourselves as slaves to Him, submit to Him in order to realize the incredible life He offers us. (Matt. 6:10, 10:38-39)

Perfectly submitted to the Father, His authority was recognized by others in authority. The Roman Centurion, Nicodemus, Pontius Pilate.....to some it was so attractive and to others it was the ultimate threat. (Matt. 8:5-13, John 3:1-2, 5:30, 19:19-20)

Jesus, our example, calls us to submit, and not only to Him as Lord, but to each other.

*When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.
John 13:12-17 NIV*

Authority Figures

Because we live in the realm of worldly authority we have a difficult time understanding and living out the organic authority modeled by Jesus and through the Holy Spirit to the greater Church.

Worldly authority is hierarchical and is based on a chain of command instead of on character or wisdom. You see this everywhere in government, business, the military, education and often in the family. Because power has the great tendency to corrupt, worldly authority often becomes abusive, controlling, and arrogant. Worldly leaders use their authority to seek power, glory, and privilege at the expense of those who should be benefitting from their leadership. Instead of serving others they require that they be served instead.

And yet, the Bible teaches believers to respect government authority while at the same time trusting God's hand in history. Worldly authority was established by God to preserve society and maintain order in a sinful world under His sovereignty.

The Fall of Man created a new desire in mankind for a physical leader to bring them to God. So God, in His wisdom, works through physical leaders to bring people to Himself. God exercises His authority through positional leaders to control the rebelliousness of sinful man that leads to despising authority and lawlessness.

Even Jesus had to submit to governmental authority. He urged His followers to obey the laws of the land.....render unto Caesar....As did Moses, Joseph, David, Daniel, Esther, Paul and many others. (Matt.22:15-22, Mark 12:13-17, Luke 20:25)

But, but....

This world is not our home. We are promised persecution, trials and struggles....our perspective is not the same as His. We see through a glass darkly.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

Romans 13:1-2 NIV

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

1 Peter 2:1-7 NIV

Of All to All

In contrast, Jesus authority functions through mature followers exercising power, truth and mercy.

Submission is mutual, of all and to all. This submissive authority is a response to the many calls for help from those most able to provide it because of the depth of their experience and maturity.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:21 NIV



Yielded to the Spirit, these organic authority figures demonstrate that serving is more important than commanding. Jesus own words resonated so much with men and women because they were backed by the power of his extraordinary life. He cared deeply about people, seeking to serve them and not exploit them. People knew the difference.

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:1-3 NIV

Jesus also let people recognize truth when they heard it. We are all free to do what is right in our own eyes, reaping the benefit of responding to truth or the consequences when we miss it. Our senses are sharpened to discern truth from error. The Spirit is at work. Organic authority spreads from the inside out as leaders model the power to serve and support.

Real authority illuminates truth, while knowledge without transformation leads to arrogance. The organic authority modeled by Jesus was a perfect blend of truth and love. Truth carries its own power when people are ready. Real authority is not demanded, but must be earned and then recognized. If you have to demand it, you don't have it. **If people don't follow, we have no authority to make them do so.**

Official worldly authority simply sets up who gets to lead and who gets to follow. It is much easier to live under this worldly system if at the same time we can gain the wisdom and experience learned under Jesus model of mutual submission. The world system requires laws, rules, policies and police to maintain order. **With our hearts focused on Jesus, order results from mutual respect and affection.**

Obedience is never demanded. It is earned.

Mutual submission is costly. No one likes to be subject to anyone and yet we know we were designed for community not isolation. We thrive on meaningful relationships. Within this context, submission creates a culture that appreciates spiritual leadership without making it absolute. It is not about power over, but power for the empowerment of all.

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
Matthew 20:25-28 NIV

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.
John 15:13 NIV

I Respectfully Disobey

Jesus suffered the consequences of disobeying the very world system He put in place. His death on the Cross was capital punishment for breaking the blasphemy laws. Many others in scripture have stepped out from under worldly authorities to break laws and customs that stood against God's greater laws. Moses, Joseph, Rahab, Esther, Daniel's friends, Daniel, John the Baptist, the Disciples, Stephen, Paul..... Many continue throughout history even today to stand for God against the world. (Gen. 39, Ex. 1:7, Joshua 2, Esther, Dan.3:17-18, 6:8-10; Mark 6:14-29, John 14:1-12, Acts 4:18-20, 5:27-29, 6:8-15, 21-26.)

Submission does not mean that we are not allowed to disagree or to try to change the status quo. It is much more about our attitude and process. We also must recognize the

possible consequences of our actions and not rail against them. Many have suffered imprisonment, torture and death for simple professions of faith in Christ.

We need to choose our battles and not create a culture of hysteria and criticism but instead learn to communicate and influence clearly, fairly, listening responsibly, and showing consideration for all involved. It is about Jesus, not about us.

*Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.
1 Peter 2:16 NIV*

Personal Benefits of Practicing Submission

- Gain patience, humility, stronger faith and reliance on God (1 Peter 5:6-7)
- Learn to take criticism well (Prov. 28:13-14)
- Accountability to God and others (Heb. 13:17)
- Drives us to seek God and His Will
- Allows Jesus to be LORD, not just Savior (Rom. 10:9, 1 Cor. 12:3, Phil 2:11)
- Changes how we communicate and act towards others
- Helps us relinquish self-centeredness and pride
- Realize the reality of who we are, a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 2:20)
- Allows us better practice of the Spiritual Disciplines
- Provides freedom from the need to control and worry about everything (John 8:32-36, Gal. 5:13, Matt. 6:25-34, Prov. 3: 5-6, Phil 4:6-7, John 14:27)
- Gain a greater perspective on the important things in life

Ways to Begin to Practice Submission

Submission is a complete life encompassing Spiritual Practice and can be overwhelming unless you to begin by focusing on a couple of areas where you currently have submission issues. With that in mind, the list below gives many avenues to pursue, not all of which may apply to your situation. Also, make sure to be discerning and not violate your or another's conscience.

1. Take some time to pray about an area of your life where you could start practicing submission. Start closest to home. Think of family, work and church situations and relationships.
2. As you go through a day or two, pay attention to situations where you could practice submission. Write them down. Was there anything in common to these? How could you have been more submissive?
3. One way to get started is to work on not getting your own way. Intentionally give up the right to have your own way for a couple of days.
4. Release your agenda for one day. Do whatever anyone else wants you to do. (within limits, of course.)
5. Watch your tongue. Make an effort to only speak encouraging words. Don't try to have the last word, or answer point for point. Listen to other's perspectives so as to understand them, not to argue with them. (This also applies to emails, social media, etc.)
6. Let someone else make the decision and abide by it or try someone else's idea.
7. Submit to some requests you don't like, don't agree with, or don't care about for the sake of the other person.

8. Stop thinking about what you want and start asking God what He wants.
9. Identify your control issues. What makes you nervous if you can't have your way? What can you do to change this?
10. Make a list of people in your life you respect. What could you learn from them? How could you put yourself "under" their influence?
11. What puts you on the defensive? What causes you to take offence? How can you begin to let these go?
12. Identify some of your sacred cows. Intentionally give one up for awhile.
13. Submit to circumstances you can't control. Learn to abandon outcomes to God. (Rom. 12:2) Give some examples.
14. In the following areas, think of some ways you can submit or deny yourself and then do them: to God, in your thought life, habits, use of time, money, and control.
 - To God
 - In your Thought Life
 - Habits
 - Use of Time
 - Use of Money
 - Control

Personal Reflections on Submission:

1. List some common situations that demand submission in your life. List some situations where you are the one who is submitted to.
2. What are some situations or areas in your life where it is easy to put other's needs ahead of your own? In what areas is it harder for you to do that?
3. Do you have an easier time submitting to official worldly authority or to an organic spiritual authority? Why?
4. What causes you to voluntarily submit or place yourself under a leader? What would change this for you to no longer voluntarily submit?
5. Here are some common everyday arenas or situations that require submission. How you could exercise mutual submission in each of these areas, understanding of course, you should still submit if it is not returned.

Workplace:

School:

Home life:

Marriage:

Neighborhood, Dorm, Apt Building:

Traveling:

Entertainment venue: (Movie theater, concert, sporting event)

Eating in a Restaurant:

On the Road:

Waiting in a line:

Church:

6. Under the banner of mutual submission and servant leadership the following relationships are addressed in the New Testament. These relationships already existed in the culture of their day in an extreme dominant/submissive manner. Read the following verses and in each relationship describe what each party is responsible for, how each side can be abusive and what that means to you.

Prior to reading each set, please read the following verses to gain some context for the passages below: Ephesians 5:1-21, Colossians 3:1-17, I Peter 2:11-17, Titus 2:1-2, 3:1-7

Husbands and wives: Gen. 3:16-19, Ex. 20:14, Matt. 6:27-28, Eph. 5:22-24, Col. 3:18-19, 1 Peter 3:1-7

Parents and children: Ex. 20:12, Eph. 6:1-3, Col. 3:20-21

Masters and slaves (employer and employees): Eph. 6:5-8, Col. 3:22-29, Titus 2:9-10, 1 Peter 2:18

7. List the many elements of submission we are to incorporate into our lives found in the following verses. Pick one to work on for the next month.

Cheek: Matthew 5:38-42, Luke 6:27-31

Cross: Matthew 10:37-39, 16:24-26, Luke 14:27, Mark 8:34-36

Yoke: Matthew 11:28-30

Last: Matthew 19:28-30, 20:1-16

Less: John 3:27-30

Sober Judgment: Romans 12:3

Good: Romans 12:9-21

why?

Submission

C. S. Lewis – “True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.”¹⁰

Martin Luther – “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”¹¹

Nathan Foster – “Essentially, Jesus was saying, “Chain yourself to me, and I’ll teach you how to live as you were created to live.” He said, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Jesus knew that as humans, we are by nature slaves – slaves to power, slaves to approval, slaves to escapism. So instead of leaving us bound to our selfish desires, he calls us to chain ourselves to his rule of love. Freedom through submission.”¹²

A.W. Tozer – “The reason why many are still troubled, still seeking, still making little forward progress is because they haven't yet come to the end of themselves. We're still trying to give orders, and interfering with God's work within us.”¹³

Richard Foster – “I said that every Discipline has its corresponding freedom. What freedom corresponds to submission? It is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way. The obsession to demand that things go the way we want them to go is one of the greatest bondages in human society today.”¹⁴

Charles Spurgeon – “It is, perhaps, one of the hardest struggles of the Christian life to learn this sentence – ‘Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name be glory’.”¹⁵

Dallas Willard – “In submission we engage the experience of those in our fellowship who are qualified to direct our efforts in growth and who then add the weight of their wise authority on the side of our willing spirit to help us do the things we would like to do and refrain from the things we don’t want to do.”¹⁶

John - “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?” Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.” From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. John 19:10-12

Richard Foster – “Spiritual authority is God-ordained and God-sustained. Human institutions may acknowledge this authority or they may not; it makes no difference. The person with spiritual authority may have an outward position of authority or may not: again, it makes no difference. Spiritual authority is marked by both compassion and power. Those who walk in the Spirit can identify it immediately.”¹⁷

Your turn:

Pick one or two of the above quotes or statements and share any insights or challenges it presents to you.

journal

11.4 Makers and Breakers

Friendship – the most important relationship outside the family.

Good friendships are a gift from God.

What makes them work?

How do you find a friend?

And how do you keep a friend once you've found them?

Being friendly is not the same as being a friend.

Friendly leaves the room when you do. As long as you are around, you're nice, approachable, engaging, considerate, polite, even helpful. But that's as far as it goes.

Initially we find our friends where we are, in our neighborhoods, schools, workplace, churches, sports teams, children's activities, even online, you name it. We usually have something in common that leads to spending time with them and then some of them may move beyond the acquaintance stage. Will they survive beyond the activity we share with them?

Friends rub off on us. They have great power to change us and we also have the power to change them. Beliefs, convictions and behaviors are shaped, lives reordered, and new responsibilities and commitments are created. We begin to open up, reveal ourselves. We learn from each other, support each other, enjoy each other.

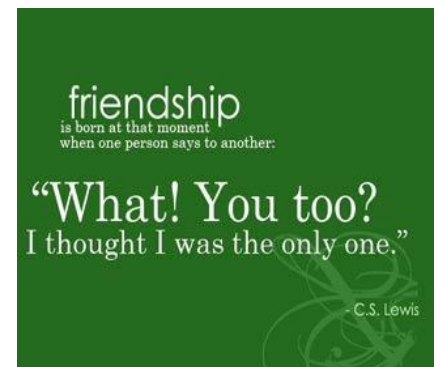
So what would be on your list of **relationship makers**? Those things that encourage and nurture the development of a priceless friendship?

Let's start with these:

- Kind words and encouragement
- Shoulder to lean on, support, show up
- Honesty
- Sacrificial Love
- Humility
- Concern
- Freedom
- Generosity
- Forgiveness
- Faithfulness
- Openness
- Promise Keeper
- Respectful
- Value your family and other friends
- Protect from harm
- Things in common, like minds
- Longsuffering

Who does that sound like? High standards for sure. The same things that make or break a human relationship will also impact or be true of our relationship with Jesus.

And now for the **friendship breakers**, a list that strangely resembles aspects of the Seven



Deadly Sins:

- Negativity
- No emotional connection
- Too busy
- An “I could care less” attitude
- Jealousy, envy
- Competition
- Dishonesty
- Lack of respect and restraint
- Laziness
- Unhealthy or unrealistic expectations
- Demanding perfection
- Smothering
- Controlling
- Selfishness
- Unforgiving
- Pretentious
- Hiding the truth about yourself
- Lack of proximity – moving away
- Competing friendships



These very same character flaws and attitudes can also hinder our relationship with Jesus or keep us from even getting started. Here are a few more that specifically challenge our spiritual growth and friendship with Jesus.

- **Lack of time spent** with Him– undisciplined, poor choices, wasted time
- **Lack of trust** – society innately trusts no one today
- **Lack of connection** – we can find nothing in common, see no need
- **Lack of recognition of truth** about ourselves and our sinful condition – inauthentic, phony
- **Non-supportive environment** – all by ourselves, no one to encourage and model
- **Spiritual Bondage and Abuse** in past – focus on works, performance, manipulation
- **Worldliness**, Materialism and Prosperity Focus
- **Selfishness** – Me, Me, Me

Friendship is a two way street – it is not just about getting to know someone, but also about being known by them. A good friend lets you in and you let a good friend in.

You either rub off on your friends or they rub off on you.

In Friendship with Jesus, however, the rubbing off only goes One Way.

Your turn:

Share some examples from your own life about how others have rubbed off on you in a good way and in negative ways.

If you know Jesus as a Friend, how has He rubbed off on you?

inventory

Your Gratitude Challenge

Every now and then it's good to check our attitude. Are we moving towards gratitude or away from it? It's human nature to dwell on the negative, our fears, problems, annoyances and injustices. **While we start out at ungrateful, we need to grow towards a life characterized by a grateful heart.**

Gratitude is a state of being, a conscious affirmation that there are good things in the world, gifts and benefits we receive from outside ourselves, from others, from God. We are content, appreciative and aware of the wonders of everyday life, today. Now. Not yesterday or tomorrow.

Gratitude has the power to change about every aspect of our lives. We will see and process the world differently. Being grateful is a choice and has positive effects on our health, and our psychological and emotional well being.

It allows us to see what we already have, the things we take for granted, forgetting for the moment all we think we lack. Gratitude turns what we have into enough, while ingratitude says this is not enough, this is not what I asked for.

In order to be grateful we must recognize, see, perceive, or experience the giver's favor, gifts, or promises kept. **First you have to know it, to feel gratitude, then you show it through giving thanks.**

We become grateful beings because we have experienced being ungrateful beings and the pain that brings to us and others. We finally discover there really is so much to be grateful for.

Answer the following questions to check the current status of your gratitude.

Describe some qualities or characteristics of an ungrateful person.

What kinds of things put you into an ungrateful mood? How do you get over it?

What has annoyed you in the last 24 hours? How might this be a reflection of an ungrateful attitude? How could focusing on what you are grateful for have changed your response?

How do unmet expectations foster ingratitude? What unmet expectations do you struggle with?

What keeps you from having a grateful heart now or in the past?

What do you see in the world to be grateful for?

How does nature overwhelm you?

What people are you grateful for?



Who has helped you get where you are today?

Do you have enough? In what areas do you struggle with contentment?

Is there someone you have taken for granted? How?

Is there someone you have been ungrateful towards? How?

How could gratitude foster forgiveness or altruism? Have you experienced this as either the giver or the receiver?

How do you take God for granted? What do you struggle with in learning to have gratitude for God, his favor, promises and gifts?

How does gratitude towards God bring peace in your life?

Describe some areas in your life where you have made progress moving towards a grateful heart?

List what you are grateful for today.

journal

11.5 Frenemies of God

Perhaps you've heard it said,

"With friends like these, who needs enemies"

(more popularly known as frenemies)

Frenemies pretend to be our friends,

But in reality they're our rivals,

Often seeking to compete with or humiliate their "friends".

Over time they create needless drama and havoc in what is already a toxic relationship.



Here are some ways to recognize them:

- They require and demand instant attention instead of slowly building a lasting relationship over time
- They overshare – too much, too soon, and too helpful. Friends keep some things private and are sensitive to their place.
- They disguise their criticism and are masters at the putdown, using humor and sarcasm as cover. Friends respect your feelings.
- They love giving left handed compliments, leading off with praise, which soon becomes a critique and ends up being an insult. Friends give unqualified praise and only critique in private.
- They feed on negativity and gossip, will interrogate you for details and then spiritualize it. Friends respect your privacy.
- There is always a persistent feeling they have an ulterior motive and can't be trusted. Friends prove themselves trustworthy.
- With sabotage always in play, their ultimate goal is to make you fail or at least feel miserable about your success. Friends care and help you succeed.

Frenemies are only about themselves and are often unaware of their true motives. Fueled by jealousy, inferiority and resentment, they will **seek to distract and compete**, especially with our personal relationships with Jesus and His purposes for our lives.

Most often though, we become our own worst frenemy.

Distracted by the World System, our own selfishness and the Evil One, we crave and spend to get what's new, worry about missing out and become overly concerned about rules and traditions.

Our own personal relationships with Jesus and the resulting spiritual growth and maturity become overshadowed by a narrow focus or arena of discovery. **While initially these can be positive learning and growth experiences, we now add them on to Jesus, requiring them for all our opportunities and relationships to be valid and true.** It is very subtle at first but then it becomes all about them and Jesus has faded away.

It is just Jesus: Paul talks about this in Colossians 2 when he warns us not to let anyone take us captive.

It's not Jesus PLUS philosophy or the wisdom of Man

Many think believing in Jesus is anti-intellectual, mindless, common and unsophisticated
But the simplicity of our faith counters this worldly elitism of high sounding words and well crafted arguments.

We have the Mind of Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God
And the Knowledge of God is infinitely higher than the rationalistic knowledge of man.
What can human knowledge and wisdom add? Knowledge is not a means of salvation.
Jesus is enough.

It's not Jesus PLUS human achievement or legalistic actions

There is nothing we can do to gain favor with God
We cannot earn our way to Heaven
It's not about doing things or not doing things, eating or drinking or festivals and special observances or rituals
It's not about keeping rules and rules about the rules.
It's not about outer actions and appearances.
It's about our relationship with Jesus, transforming us from the inside out.
Jesus is enough.

It's not Jesus PLUS mystical experiences or mysticism

We do not need some other religious experience
Signs and wonders while they do occur, are not required nor should they be sought
You don't need to see angels or have visions
There is no higher spiritual plain
No surpassing experience
Jesus is enough. Only He can bring us to God, we need no other intermediary.

It's not Jesus PLUS self denial or asceticism

We don't need to impose rigorous self denial or abstinence to prove our faith
No need to live as a hermit or give everything away
There is no need for False humility, or self imposed worship to prove our worth to God.
Transformation will not come this way.
Only through Jesus.

Jesus is enough.

The Colossians viewed salvation as a combination of faith in Christ PLUS secret knowledge and man made regulations and requirements all stemming from the evil spiritual powers of the world system. Paul reminded them that only in and through Jesus had they already been set free from all this.



Jesus is enough.

What could we possibly add on to Jesus today?

What kind of secret Knowledge, Rules, Experience, False Humility?

Even much that is worthy and good in its proper place and perspective, even glorifying to God, once it becomes an end in its self results in idolatry. Then fulfilling its demands and requirements becomes our focus instead of the relying on the only One who can satisfy us.

And so we elevate them to a higher plain, adding them on to Jesus.

Then we demand others follow our lead, becoming like us, instead of becoming like Jesus. Here is a short list. I'm sure you can think of many more

- Accomplishment, success, activity, work, career
- Youth, appearance, fitness, health, sleep
- Social causes, the earth, good deeds
- Hobbies, sports, the arts
- Family
- Routine, organization
- Friends and relationships, love and romance
- Church attendance, religious activity
- Education
- Time
- Goals and bucket lists
- Possessions
- Country
- Myself, reputation, morality, rule keepers

James 4 warns us of the consequences of friendship with the World. These frenemies of God will either distract from our relationship with Jesus, or cause us to complicate it with demands and requirements that did not come from Him.

Jesus is enough.

Your turn:

What do you catch yourself trying to add on to Jesus?

How do you become your own worst frenemy of God?

adventuring

One Day at a Time

We all have **To Do Lists** and **Schedules**. We're all busy. We have family, work and church commitments, friends, hobbies, sports, workouts, social events and ME time. And sleep.

It seems there is never enough time, and somewhere in our busy lives we try to find time for Jesus.

What if we gave our whole day to Jesus and let Him give it back to us? Let's put Jesus in charge of our schedules and lists because.....

He actually already is.

We are going to intentionally Practice the Presence of Jesus for a day, or even a whole week and see what happens.

Here's how to start:

1. Make a To Do List for today, and make another for other things that you need to do but not necessarily right now. Keep it handy.
2. First thing in the morning acknowledge that Jesus is your Lord and that His Presence is with you. Spend some quality time with Him and ask him to direct your day.
3. Share your List and your Schedule with Him and then begin your day. Listen intently for Him to change your schedule as you go.
4. How will you know?
 - Interruptions
 - Delays
 - Chance meetings and occurrences
 - Changing your mind and desires
 - Questions in your mind about need or practicality of something or whether it is a waste of time
 - Things that pop into your mind to do
5. Jesus is not always about doing. He is much more often about being. He knows what you really need and He loves to bless. His will is good. Thank Him as you go through your day. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you however He pleases.
6. Plan on keeping your regular daily commitments.
 - Get up and go to work
 - Take care of your family
 - Take care of yourself
 - Do what you said you would do
 - He still can work within each area in very creative and surprising ways.
7. Some days you will get much more done than you expected. Some days it will seem nothing goes according to plan.
8. At the end of the day, check your To Do List. You might have to add some things from your other list so you can check them off too. Then plan to do this all over again the next day.

Describe how Jesus directed your day.

- Interruptions
- Delays
- Detours
- Chance meetings
- Divine Appointments – Surprises
- Changed your mind about something you were planning on doing
- Changed your desires
- Satisfied desires you were unaware of
- Things that popped into your mind
- Bunny trails you followed
- Things you planned to do but didn't
- Things you did but did not plan to do
- Time you think you wasted...but was it really?
- Ways you saw Jesus work.
- Things you learned about God
- Ways He blessed you
- New things you became aware of

Describe your attitudes and general disposition throughout the day.

journal

11.6 The Company you Keep

What do we look for in our lives that we believe makes us right with God?
Things we think will make God accept us because we do them or are them?

It seems there is an **age old tendency towards human religious effort to make ourselves right with God.** We are always trying to earn God's approval.

The Book of Philippians addresses this struggle in Chapter 3. We are urged to put no confidence in the flesh, everything outside of Christ. If we have Jesus, we have all we need for right standing with God. **We are to trust in Jesus and not in our own effort.**

God doesn't accept us on the basis of anything other than Jesus.
If we know Jesus, that's enough.
If we have Jesus, we have all we need.

Jesus is not a pathway to the prize.....He is the prize.
He is the Pearl of Great Price. (Matthew 13:45-46)
We don't add Jesus to what we already have, we give up all things for the only ONE we need.

Resolve to KNOW CHRIST and that's enough. (1 Cor. 2:2)

We either impact our environment or culture, or it impacts us. We rub off on our friends and they rub off on us. Our friends can elevate us, challenge us for good, or bring us down and drag us into evil. That's why it is so important to choose your friends wisely. There is an old saying, "Show me your friends, and I'll tell you who you are." The company you keep will speak volumes about you.

What a friend then we have in Jesus.
Our Personal Friend who just happens to also be our Lord and King.
Son of God, Son of Man.
God.

He has an upside down and backward way of relating.
We die in order to live.
We go last in order to be first.
Love and forgiveness is to be our response to evil and hate.

His grace is sufficient. (2 Cor. 12:9)
Apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5)
We are complete in Him (Col. 2:10-15)

In Him we have all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. (1 Cor. 1:30)
We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Him (Eph.1:3)
We are perfected and sanctified forever. (Heb. 10:4)



To have HIM is to have everything needed in time and eternity. To not have HIM is to have nothing.

We have an All Sufficient relationship with an All Sufficient Christ.

We don't need something other than Jesus to know God. (Acts 4:12)

Or to defeat the power of sin.

Or to have true spirituality

Or to be a completely whole person.

What else could possibly be needed?

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:37-39 NIV

It is a deceptive ploy of the Evil One to convince us that Christ is not enough.

The better we know Him, the greater our understanding of the truth.

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.

Acts 17: 24-28 NIV

He is everything.

He is sufficient.

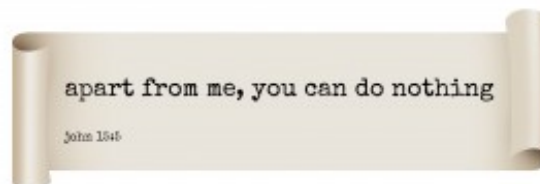
He is enough.

If you know Christ, you're in good company.

Your turn:

In what situations are you tempted to believe Jesus is not enough? What else do you rely on?

Is there some "company" you need to spend less time with? More time with?



lyrics

You might wonder why lyrics are included in a study like this.

I believe lyrics, or poetry put to music, as well as the accompanying music, have always been used by the Most High to impact our hearts and minds –

either by **our part in its creative process** –
 or through **our participation in its expression** –
 or through **our pleasure as a recipient** of its

sensory benefits.



Please try to access and listen to the musical versions on your own - **iTunes** and **youtube** are great online resources. If you are using the PDF version of this study and are connected to the internet, clicking on the song title will bring up a video of each song. The lyrics presented will not always be spiritual in their original context – but much can still be gained from applying them to how they describe and point to the Most High God.

[All I Can Do](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvVJJhp7NJM)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvVJJhp7NJM>

Lyrics and Music by Mike Grayson
 Performed by MIKESCHAIR

© 2014, Curb Congregation Songs, Strength to Shout Publishing
 Youtube video uploaded by *mikeschairtv*

I could write a love song
 Tell You what I think You wanna hear
 But it wouldn't be good enough, no
 Yea I could try so hard
 To give it everything I've got
 But I'm not ever gonna measure up

All I can do is thank You
 For this life I never deserved
 Wanna thank You for the grace
 I know I don't have to earn
 You love me, You love me
 Your mercy is proof
 All I can do is say thank You
 All I can do is say thank You

It would have been easy
 But I'm glad You never walked away
 Cause Your love runs deep for me
 And I see this beautiful world
 And it brings tears to my eyes
 And I think it's beautiful to be free

All I can do is thank You
 For this life I never deserved
 Wanna thank You for the grace
 I know I don't have to earn
 You love me, You love me
 Your mercy is proof
 All I can do is say thank You
 All I can do is say thank You
 For hope, for love, for all the ways You move
 (You)
 For everything You do
 (You)

What else can I say but thank You
Thank You

I could write a love song
Tell You what I think You wanna hear
But it wouldn't be good enough

All I can do is thank You
For this life I never deserved
Wanna thank You for the grace
I know I don't have to earn
You love me, You love me
Your mercy is proof
All I can do is say thank You
All I can do is say thank You

All I can do, all I can do, all I can do
Is say thank You
All I can do, all I can do, all I can do
Is say thank You

The band originated in Mike Grayson's dormitory room at Belmont University during the first two weeks of their freshman year and was named after Mike Grayson's chair in the frustration of deciding on a band name. They submitted a demo for Belmont's Christian Music Showcase and scored a coveted performance slot that was so well received it boosted their confidence and ultimately helped pave the way for a deal with Curb Records.

Grayson has recently gotten married and entered a new chapter of his young life. "There's a lot of songs on this record that reflect the season that I personally have been going through," he says. The lead single, "All I Can Do," is a buoyant number that serves as a great introduction to the band's third collection.

The lyric was inspired by a small group study that Grayson and his wife Molly have been doing on the book "Crazy Love." "The first chapter is all about prayer and the way we approach God and the way we think when we're praying," Grayson explains. "I got really convicted about the way that I pray because I realize that I'm literally like a kid most of the time when I pray because I'll just jump right into 'God this is what I want. This is what I need. This is what I feel you should be doing and you're not.'"

I don't want my life to look ungrateful. I want my life to scream thankfulness and gratefulness because there's so much that God has done. I have tendency to always look for the next thing coming up and I rarely rejoice in what God has done and what he has me in now. So this song reminds me I don't want to pass up the opportunity to stop and say thank you. I want to be able to rest in what God has done and be faithful. I want to find the Lord in the moment. We're not promised tomorrow so let's find what God has for us in the now."

MIKESCHAIR has been on an incredible journey from college buddies who started a band to young men with a successful music ministry that has impacted people from eight to 80 with their thought-provoking songs. Along the way, they've experienced some interesting moments. They recorded their first Christmas project, which included original holiday tunes. The band saw their logo emblazoned on a NASCAR race car. They also traveled to Peru, Guatemala and Honduras doing mission work for Buckner International and Food for the Hungry.¹⁸

More information about MIKESCHAIR can be found at <http://www.mikeschair.com/>.

Your turn:

Do you ever feel that just saying "Thank you" isn't enough? What are some other ways you show your thanks to others?

[I'll Be There For You](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-9kPks0IfE>

Lyrics and Music by

David L. Crane, Allee Willis, Marta Fran Kauffman, Philip Ronald Solem, Danny C. Wilde, Michael Jay Skloff

Performed by The Rembrandts

© 1995 Universal Music Publishing Group

Youtube video uploaded by *alliemaster93*

So no one told you life was gonna be this way
Your job's a joke, you're broke, your love life's D.O.A.
It's like you're always stuck in second gear
When it hasn't been your day, your week, your month, or even your year, but

I'll be there for you
(When the rain starts to pour)
I'll be there for you
(Like I've been there before)
I'll be there for you
('Cause you're there for me too)

You're still in bed at ten and work began at eight
You've burned your breakfast, so far things are going great
Your mother warned you there'd be days like these
But she didn't tell you when the world has brought you down to your knees that

I'll be there for you
(When the rain starts to pour)
I'll be there for you
(Like I've been there before)
I'll be there for you
('Cause you're there for me too)

No one could ever know me
No one could ever see me
Seems you're the only one who knows what it's like to be me
Someone to face the day with, make it through all the rest with
Someone I'll always laugh with
Even at my worst, I'm best with you, yeah!

It's like you're always stuck in second gear
When it hasn't been your day, your week, your month, or even your year

I'll be there for you
(When the rain starts to pour)
I'll be there for you
(Like I've been there before)
I'll be there for you
('Cause you're there for me too)

I'll be there for you
(When the rain starts to pour)
I'll be there for you
(Like I've been there before)
I'll be there for you
('Cause you're there for me too)

"I'll Be There for You" is a song recorded by the American pop rock duo The Rembrandts. It is best known as the theme song to the American sitcom *Friends*, which premiered during 1994 and ended in 2004.

It was co-written by *Friends* producers David Crane and Marta Kauffman, Kauffman's husband, composer Michael Skloff, and songwriter Allee Willis, along with Phil Sölem and Danny Wilde, both of the Rembrandts. It was initially offered to the rock bands, They Might Be Giants and R.E.M. Strongly influenced by The Beatles, especially reminiscent of the "I Feel Fine" guitar riff, it is also highly

reminiscent of The Monkees' "Pleasant Valley Sunday."

The original theme, which is under one minute long, was later re-recorded as a three-minute pop song. After Nashville program director Charlie Quinn, along with radio announcer and music director Tom Peace, looped the original short version into a full-length track and broadcast it on radio station WYHY, it became so popular that they had to re-record it. "Our record label said we had to finish the song and record it. There was no way to get out of it," lead singer Phil Sölem said.

"We thought we were all done, and then, we went in to hear the final mix and the clapping was in there," Solem said. "I was like, Who thought of that? That's like the best part!" Wilde said the show's executive producers wanted to make a contribution to the clapping portion of the song as well. "Kevin Bright, Marta Kauffman, and David Crane wanted to be part of the record so they wanted to try the clapping part," he said, before pausing and putting his face in his hands. "Oh my god. All they had to do was go (clap, clap, clap, clap). And it was like, 'Take 25!'" And, you'll note, Wilde clapped four, not five times when he recounted that story. He was happy to clarify that it is indeed four claps, not five in the song, which even confuses some of the cast members.

The music video of the song featured the six main stars of Friends, taking the singing and dancing roles of the band after, amusingly, attacking them all and bemusing everyone else on the set with their daft behavior.

In the United States, the song topped the Billboard Hot 100 Airplay chart for eight weeks. It also peaked at #1 on the U.S. Top 40 Mainstream and Hot Adult Contemporary Tracks charts. In April 2004, the song was ranked at #15 on Blender magazine's list of the "50 Worst Songs Ever". Most recently, in 2010, Matthew Wilkening of AOL Radio ranked the song at #25 on the list of the 100 Worst Songs Ever, calling it "The most dangerous song on this list. Like a panther, it can strike anywhere that reruns of Friends roam free." ¹⁹

Your turn:

Who are you there for? Who is there for you?
What does being there for someone look like to you?

[The Wind Beneath My Wings](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0iAzMRKFX3c)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0iAzMRKFX3c>

Lyrics and Music by Jeff Silbar and Larry Henley
Performed by Bette Middler

© 1982 Warner/Chappell Music Inc.
Youtube videos uploaded by RHINO

Ohhhh, oh, oh, oh, ohhh.
It must have been cold there in my shadow,
To never have sunlight on your face.
You were content to let me shine, that's your way.
You always walked a step behind.

So I was the one with all the glory,
While you were the one with all the strength.
A beautiful face without a name for so long.
A beautiful smile to hide the pain.

Did you ever know that you're my hero,
And everything I would like to be?
I can fly higher than an eagle,
For you are the wind beneath my wings.

It might have appeared to go unnoticed,
But I've got it all here in my heart.
I want you to know I know the truth, of course I know it.
I would be nothing without you.

Did you ever know that you're my hero?
You're everything I wish I could be.
I could fly higher than an eagle,
For you are the wind beneath my wings.

Did I ever tell you you're my hero?
You're everything, everything I wish I could be.
Oh, and I, I could fly higher than an eagle,
For you are the wind beneath my wings,
'cause you are the wind beneath my wings.

Oh, the wind beneath my wings.
You, you, you, you are the wind beneath my wings.
Fly, fly, fly away. You let me fly so high.
Oh, you, you, you, the wind beneath my wings.
Oh, you, you, you, the wind beneath my wings.

Fly, fly, fly high against the sky,
So high I almost touch the sky.
Thank you, thank you,
Thank God for you, the wind beneath my wings.

"The Wind Beneath My Wings" is a song written in 1982 by Jeff Silbar and Larry Henley. They recorded a demo of the song, which they gave to musician Bob Montgomery. Montgomery then recorded his own demo version of the song, changing it from the mid-tempo version he was given to a ballad. Silbar and Henley then shopped the song to many artists, eventually resulting in Roger Whittaker becoming the first to release the song commercially.

Following Whittaker's recording, many other artists recorded the song, including Sheena Easton. The first year "Wind Beneath My Wings" appeared on music industry trade publication charts in the United States was 1983. Singer Lou Rawls was the first to score a major hit with the song, as his version peaked at No. 10 on the Billboard Adult Contemporary chart. Gladys Knight & The Pips also released a recording of the song in 1983 under the title "Hero". Singer Gary Morris released a country version of the song in 1983 that charted highest on any of the Billboard music charts that year. Morris's version of the song peaked at No. 4 on Billboard's Hot Country Singles chart, and also later won both the Academy of Country Music and the Country Music Association awards for Song of the Year.

Then in 1988, Silbar learned that Bette Midler would be recording "Wind Beneath My Wings" for her movie, *Beaches*. Midler's musical director Marc Shaiman had played the song live for Midler, director Garry Marshall and co-producer Bonnie Bruckheimer, and they had all loved the song.

A few months later, Silbar attended an early screening of *Beaches* in Los Angeles. "I heard a demo, midi version of "Wind Beneath My Wings" with Bette singing it, temped into the picture," recalled Silbar. "It was in a dramatic scene near the end of the movie where Barbara Hershey's character had died. I was blown away by Bette's version and its impact in the movie. The song was positioned perfectly in the film to have a great impact. I felt Bette had recorded the definitive version of the song."

The *Beaches* movie and soundtrack album were released in December 1988. "Wind Beneath My Wings" was actually the second single release, following the first single, "Under The Boardwalk." But "Wind Beneath My Wings" was clearly the favorite from the soundtrack, and it steadily moved up the Billboard Hot 100 and Adult Contemporary singles charts. More than three months after its release, in June 1989, the song reached #1 on both of the Billboard charts and won Grammy Awards for both Record of the Year and Song of the Year in February 1990. On October 24, 1991, Midler's single was also certified Platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America for shipment of one million copies in the United States. In 2004 Midler's version finished at No. 44 in AFI's 100 Years...100 Songs survey of top tunes in American cinema.

Midler's version helped establish "Wind Beneath My Wings" as a legitimate standard. Over the years, many other artists have recorded this song, including Willie Nelson, Kenny Rogers, Patti LaBelle, Eddie & Gerald Levert, John Tesh, Judy Collins, Shirley Bassey and Perry Como. Also, it has continually been honored for being one of the most performed songs. In fact, "Wind Beneath My Wings" has now won six ASCAP Pop Awards, and in 1999, was honored by ASCAP for being one of the most performed country songs of the century.

Silbar realizes that beyond its record sales and performances, this song has brought inspiration and joy to many people. "I started to become aware of the impact 'Wind Beneath My Wings' was having on people's lives, and how a song can truly have a deep effect," explained Silbar. "The most rewarding thing for me is to hear people, when they find out I wrote the song, tell me what the song has meant to them. They would tell me how they performed the song at an important event in their lives, such as their wedding, their father's funeral, or a graduation ceremony. It is a tremendous feeling to know that I had a part in creating such a special song."²⁰

Your turn:

Do you have a hero?
How do heroes inspire us to go higher?

Gratitude

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRKhqdb8EoE&list=RDIRKhqdb8EoE#t=47>

Lyrics and Music by Paul McCartney
Performed by Paul McCartney
2007© Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC
Youtube video uploaded by *Fullfilms*

Gratitude, gratitude, gratitude
 I'm so grateful for everything you've ever given me
 How can I explain, oh, what it means
 To be loved by you, by you
 Loved by you, loved by you?
 Show my gratitude, gratitude
 Show my gratitude
 I wanna show my gratitude
 Gratitude, yeah
 Well, I was lonely
 I was living with a memory
 But my cold and lonely nights ended
 When you sheltered me
 Loved by you, I was loved by you
 Yeah, I was loved by you
 I wanna show my gratitude
 Wanna show my gratitude
 Yeah, show my gratitude, ooh, to you
 Gratitude, show my gratitude, oh yeah
 I should stop loving you
 Think what you put me through
 But I don't want to lock my heart away, no, no
 I will look forward to days when I'd be loving you
 Until then, gonna wish and hope and pray
 Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah
 Oh, I wanna show my gratitude, gratitude
 Yeah, I wanna show my gratitude
 Show my gratitude, yeah, my gratitude
 Oh, to be loved by you, be loved by you
 To be loved by you, loved by you
 Gratitude, I wanna show my gratitude, gratitude

McCartney (from the Mail on Sunday May 12, 2008): "I've always had a couple of voices. Originally you're just a kid at home, like everyone else, and then you start to dream of being a singer. My heroes then were rock 'n' rollers, so my ballad voice was based on Elvis and the screamie voice was me trying to be Little Richard. I loved him so much. When I joined the Beatles, John used to like that and it's stayed with me as something I enjoy doing - that gritty, souly voice. So on this track I was just thinking of how much there is to be grateful for in life, and I wanted to put that into song and use the gritty voice to do it with."

Gratitude" is reportedly about the divorce between Heather Mills and McCartney. The New York Times surmised that "Gratitude" was a tribute to Paul's first love, his wife Linda, to which McCartney replied, "'Gratitude' is just me being grateful for the good stuff in my life, past and present. That's the thing about me - when I talk about love, it's often general, it's not always specific. If people think these songs are specific to Linda, that wouldn't be true. But they're pertaining to Linda, or my children, or other things in life for which I feel grateful. So she's certainly in there."²¹

Your turn:

Is it easier to be grateful in good times or hard times?

Can you choose to be grateful even when you don't feel it?

What are some things you are now grateful for that you weren't grateful for at the time?

[Give Me Jesus](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XASEss7ySgw)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XASEss7ySgw>

Lyrics and Music by Moses Hogan

Performed by Moriah Peters

Words © Public Domain

Arr. © 2014, Brave album, Reunion label

Youtube video uploaded by *moriahpetersVEVO*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vu2E2FUCiIE>

Performed by Fernando Ortega
Ruth Graham Tribute
Youtube video uploaded by jschroter
Words © Public Domain
Arr. © 2000 Dejamesolo Music/Word Music, LLC

In the morning, when I rise
In the morning, when I rise
In the morning, when I rise
Give me Jesus
Give me Jesus, give me Jesus
You can have all this world
But give me Jesus
And when I am alone
Oh and when I am alone
And when I am alone
Give me Jesus
Give me Jesus, give me Jesus
You can have all this world
But give me Jesus
And when I come to die
Oh and when I come to die
And when I come to die
Give me Jesus
Give me Jesus, give me Jesus
You can have all this world
You can have all this world
You can have all this world
But give me Jesus

Moses George Hogan (March 13, 1957 – February 11, 2003) was an American composer and arranger of choral music. He was best known for his settings of African-American spirituals. Hogan was a pianist, conductor and arranger of international renown. His works are celebrated and performed by high school, college, church, community, and professional choirs today. His most famous work today is The Oxford Book of Spirituals created in 2002. He died at the age of 45 of a brain tumor.

Born in New Orleans, Hogan lived with five siblings and his parents, who gave their children a passion for music. An accomplished pianist by the age of nine, he was eventually awarded a full scholarship to the Oberlin Conservatory of Music where he studied piano and graduated in 1979 with a Bachelor of Music degree. Immediately after graduation, he began graduate studies at Juilliard School of Music, and later went to study classical music in Vienna, Austria. During his piano performance years, Hogan won several competitions including first place at the 28th Annual Kosciuszko Foundation Chopin Competition in New York.

He single-handedly has been credited with introducing the professional choral spiritual and revitalizing the Negro spiritual tradition.

"Give Me Jesus" is a traditional Negro Spiritual. It has been printed and added to many hymn books over the years, but was most recently updated by Fernando Ortega (1999) and Jeremy Camp (2007)

Moriah Peters started writing songs at the age of 13 and played the guitar since she was young. Moriah first turned her life over to God at the young age of 14, and growing up in Chino, California, she always considered singing and songwriting her passion, but never imagined that making music would be her career. "After high school, my 'genius plan' was to go to college, major in psychology, minor in music and eventually become a lawyer." she said "Thankfully, I prayed one of the most important and dangerous prayers I've ever prayed, 'God, I just want to be used by you.'"

After auditioning for American Idol and being told by producers that her Christian lifestyle was not "ideal," Moriah knew that was God closing the door. Shortly after Idol, the now 19-year-old signed a record deal with one of Christian music's most respectable labels, Reunion Records. Her first single, "I Choose Jesus" speaks about taking a stand for your faith, and choosing to believe in God. ²¹

More information about Moriah Peters can be found at <http://www.moriahpeters.com/>.

Your turn:

When do you need Jesus the most?

Is there anything you would take instead of Jesus?

more cool stuff

On Being Friends with a Personal God



*Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.
John 15:13-15 NIV*

Living in Relationship

Throughout our time together we have referred to each of our lives as a journey to God and then a journey with God. Once we become Christ Followers our work is not finished as we learn to live in this wonderful new relationship with Jesus, a relationship where He desires we turn from our self life and become more like HIM, participating fully in His Life, what He desires for us, from us, and changes He wants to make in us.

This new part of our Life Journey has been characterized in many ways.

Sometimes it is referred to as a battle, a fight, or a race.

It happens within us and then spreads out from us through our words, attitudes and deeds. We are told we are sanctified, made holy, transformed, that our old selves have died, that we have been given New Life and are a New Creation.

Jesus sent us His Holy Spirit to accomplish His Work in our lives. However, we must allow the Spirit to do His work. We must cooperate, submit, obey, struggle, die daily to our selfish desires, and give up trying to do it on our own.

Like John the Baptist we discover that Jesus must increase and we must decrease.

It's moving from My Will be Done, to Thy Will Be Done.

Growing Up

Jesus and the Apostles spoke much about this process of growing up, of becoming Spiritually Mature, of dying to self and living for God. Here are some of the ways they described the process of being Friends with God.

- **Walking in the Spirit:** Galatians 5:16, 25
- **Being Spirit Filled:** Ephesians 5:18
- **Displaying the Fruit of the Spirit:** Galatians 5:22-23
- **New Life in Christ:** Colossians 3:1-4
- **Being in Christ:** 2 Corinthians 5:17
- **Christ in Me:** Galatians 2:20
- **New Creation:** 2 Corinthians 5:17
- **Spiritual Growth:** Colossians 1:10, 1 Peter 2:2, 2 Peter 2:5, 3:18, Hebrews 6:1
- **Christlikeness:** John 13:15, 1 John 2:6, Philipians 4:6, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Matthew 9:9
- **Taking up your Cross:** Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23
- **Putting on Christ:** Romans 13:14, Galatians 3:27
- **Having the Mind of Christ:** 1 Corinthians 2:16, Philipians 2:5, Romans 12:2, Isaiah 40:13
- **Abiding in Christ:** John 15:4-5
- **Producing Spiritual Fruit:** Galatians 5:22-23, Matthew 12:33, John 15:1-8
- **Living the Abundant Life:** John 10:10, Ephesians 5:8-11, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 12:11
- **Living with Jesus as Lord:** Colossians 2:6, 1 John 2:5-6

Walking with Jesus not only as our friend, but also as our Lord.

Surrendered, submitted, growing up, living in relationship with the Almighty God.

What does it look like?

How does it happen?

How does one do it?

Called to Transformation

When Jesus called his original twelve disciples He invited them to "Follow Me!". This hasn't changed in over 2000 years. His desire is for all who place their faith in Him to become his disciples, His committed followers. And if we do, we will soon discover this process of spiritual growth will continue throughout our lifetimes and involves our cooperation in His transformation of our lives.

Often in church settings this process is called **Discipleship** or **Spiritual Formation**. We have already covered much of the needed knowledge and tools for this to occur in our OmniInfinity Journeys so far. However, this is not something that can be glossed over once and put on a shelf.

Reading a book, or taking a series of classes does not fulfill the requirements. One needs to practice, practice, practice and continually learn, study, apply and be in communication with Him. While it is a wonderful walk with Jesus, since we are so prone to wander away, it is also a Battle and Fight with and within Ourselves, the World, and the Evil One.



Salvation and Sanctification

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

Romans 5:1-2 NIV

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I Thessalonians 5:23 NIV

It all begins at the moment we say Yes! to God, to Jesus and our relationship as a Child of God is restored in all its glory. Two things happen, one in eternity and one in our current worldly reality. We are **justified**, made right with God, righteous in His sight because Jesus paid off our account, our debt of sin. This happened when He shed His Blood for us and died on the cross. The key to our salvation is the Blood of Jesus. Once and for all, eternally, our position as a Child of God is secured and secure. Forever and ever. It is a free gift. We can not earn it or pay for it. We can only accept it by faith. Done. We have a home in Heaven for eternity.

On the other hand, we are still living in time and space. The other thing that happens is about reflecting Jesus NOW as we live our lives on earth. **Sanctification**, or being set apart or made holy, is the **ongoing process of transformation** into the **likeness of Christ**. It is why He saved us. The purpose of sanctification is to get to know God and His Son and live a transformed and spiritually renewed life while still on earth.

We are **transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit** who enters our spirit at the moment of salvation. Only He has the power to change us to look and act like Jesus and live a Christlike life. This is a work of grace and while we are to cooperate with obedience and submission allowing the Spirit to work, we cannot earn it through legalistic rules and standards.

Filled with the Spirit

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit
Ephesians 5:18 NIV

The **key to the abundant Christian life** of discipleship is the power and filling of His Spirit who now lives in us. As we grow up in Christ, the Spirit touches more and more areas of our lives, so there is more of us with which to work or fill up, giving greater capacity for spiritual growth.

The concept or process of being Filled with the Spirit is essential to understand and practice if we are going to grow spiritually. It is a daily, if not a moment by moment, occurrence. Yesterday's filling is not enough for today. He begins by **slowly changing the desires of our hearts** and then working from the inside out.

Most often He shows us areas in our lives we must first empty, since the Spirit cannot fill space in our hearts and minds occupied by sinful or worldly attitudes and desires. This is the hard work of sanctification. **We need to empty the trash**. Fortunately He also brings us the power to do just that. Ultimately it comes down to another choice, an act of our will to choose to cooperate with God. Our obedience and agreement to change, or repentance, switches on the power to obey.

Abiding in Christ – Practicing the Presence

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.
John 15:5 NIV*

To the extent that a believer is Filled with the Spirit, the believer is Abiding in Christ. In John 15, Jesus speaks to His Disciples about the concept of abiding and uses the illustration of a vine and its branches. He is the vine and we are the branches. He calls us to Abide with Him eight times in this passage.

To abide with someone means to **remain in fellowship or relationship over time** with them, and in Jesus case, **to cultivate an intimate, living relationship** with our Creator and Lord, the God of the Universe. No other religion offers this. His Presence is the greatest Presence in the Universe and we get to settle down with Him.



Abiding in Christ is the Key activity in fostering spiritual growth. We are to seek the Lord, not principles for living. It's about **seeking after a Person, every minute of every day**. To realize He is with us, in us and we are in Him. This doesn't come naturally for us, thus the term "Practicing the Presence of Jesus". When we forget about Him, our lives reflect it.

Faith precedes abiding. We cannot abide with someone we do not have a relationship with, so salvation must come first. Once we have the Holy Spirit within, we are now connected to Jesus, like the branches are connected to the vine. **The Holy Spirit is the sap** that flows from the vine to the branches, delivering everything needed for life. All Christians are abiding in Christ because they all have the Holy Spirit. What changes is the degree, consistency, depth, and richness of that intimacy.

Jesus invites us to "Walk with Me, Follow Me and Worship Me". We do all these by being Filled with the Spirit, Abiding in Him, and Practicing His Presence wherever we go and whatever we do.

This incredible privilege of being in Christ should be taken very seriously. We trust Christ, do what we know to do by faith, and receive His Grace in return. He does not require perfect knowledge or perfect behavior and accommodates Himself to our finite limitations. We are human after all.

Abiding works it self out in our lives in the following three ways:

1. A New Creation

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!
2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV*

Using His life and words as a model, we are now able to see the goal, what we are aiming for. We model our life after his. He sets the perfect standard, and we aim as high as we can to move towards Christlikeness. He points out ways in which we can improve attitudes, thoughts and actions, taking the initiative to move us to places we never thought possible. He is steady and stable and reflects our new normal.

2. Out with the Old

*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.
Ephesians 4:22-24 NIV*

On the negative side, He will also point out areas that He cannot tolerate or allow to exist in His Presence. This is the junk that needs to be taken out to the trash so the Holy Spirit can fill the place where it was. These are sinful and worldly habits, thoughts, actions, that distract from our relationship with Him. He is moving us from the remnants of our prior life controlled by the flesh to our new life now controlled by the Spirit.

3. Power to Live

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death
Romans 8:1-2 NIV*

And finally, we receive the power to change, to grow, to enjoy His Presence, to be refreshed and let His Spirit work through us. He is enough for us, all we need for life.

The depth and quality of our Spiritual Growth in Christ is directly related to the following things.

- The length of time you have been a Believer, including your consistency in the time you spend with the Lord as well as how many deviations there have been and how long they were.
- Your knowledge of the Word of God, the Bible, and your ability to apply it to your life
- The depth and quality of your experience Abiding in Christ.

If we are Abiding in Christ, over the years, we should move closer to Christlikeness with quality that fills our time with Jesus and the consistency of that time growing greater and deeper. Our lives are Spirit controlled, no longer controlled by our old fleshly desires. As the Spirit opens up new areas of our lives for closer evaluation, we take out the trash and allow the Spirit to fill up to its new capacity.

Abiding in Christ – Preparing the Vines

In referring to the Vine and the Branches, Jesus mentions two activities that the Holy Spirit will bring to the Believers life that are common gardening practices; cleansing and pruning the vines. These support the purpose of the branches to bear fruit. **Branches that are abiding will bear fruit. This is proof they are abiding.** However, some branches take longer than others to do it, but fruit will eventually come if they are abiding in the vine.

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.
John 15:1-4 NIV*

Cleansing: Vines need their branches to be rid of pests, disease, etc. He uses the Word to convict causing **confession and repentance and cleansing of the Spirit** of sinful attitudes and actions.

Pruning: Branches are cut back to focus the growth in the right areas. This results in greater, fuller, stronger, richer growth. Weak suckers, distractions, branches going in wrong direction, not getting enough sunlight, or laying on the ground are all cut off. This allows the remaining branches to thrive.



Trials in life are part of the pruning process, revealing our inadequacy to cope on our own. They are absolutely necessary to help us to rely more on Jesus who is adequate for any loss, redirection, pain, or suffering He allows to come into our lives. The greatest growth comes through trials.

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
James 1:2-4 NIV*

The Fight and the Battle:

Out with the Old, In with the New

Christian Growth is often characterized in the New Testament as a Fight or a Battle between the Children of Darkness and the Children of Light. (Ephesians 3-4) We are to put on the New Man and flee the Old Man. We are to stand against our new enemies; the Devil (Col. 1:15-23), the World System and our Old Self.

We are to move on from Childhood to Adulthood in Christ – seeking to eat meat rather than milk. We are to be careful not to Grieve the Holy Spirit. We are to, above all, live the Christ Life and deny the Self Life.

*In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.
Hebrews 5:12-14 NIV*

The Battle is costly, denying our old self does not come without a price, sacrifice, and loss. It requires our devotion and discipline since it is so easy to allow God to get crowded out of our schedules. But changed lives start with the realization that we need to change, and sometimes that is the biggest battle of all.

There is no joy in living for the devil and we must remember which side of the battle we are on. Most Christian Growth stops between 5-10 years after salvation, but God expects the dynamic work of sanctification to continue throughout our lives. God brings the change through His Spirit and His Word. His Glory humbles us, and yet He does not degrade us, because He loves us. (2 Cor.3:17-4:2)

Who exactly are we fighting? How do we recognize them? How do they lead us astray?

We are fighting in a spiritual conflict against the worldly trinity of the Flesh, the World System and the Devil.

The Flesh

*For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.
Galatians 5:17 NIV*

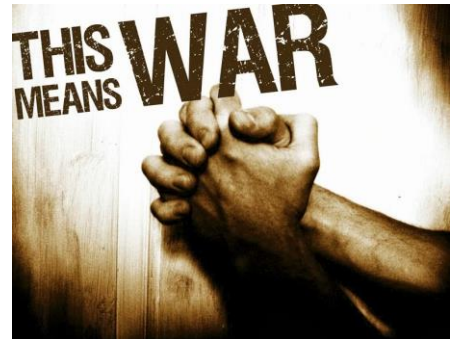
The Flesh is characterized as our Old Man, the Old Self controlled by our sin nature. Even though the Holy Spirit is now in us we must constantly allow the Spirit to do His transforming work in us by getting ourselves off the Throne of our lives and letting the Spirit Lead us and then give us the power to follow and act in obedience.

Giving up control and trusting that Jesus will fulfill his promises to us is a moment by moment step of faith. This is where practicing the Spiritual Disciplines prepares us to walk and be filled with the Spirit as well as to abide with Christ.

This conforming and transforming sanctification goes on for our entire lives, as new areas of growth are revealed to us, and we go further up and further in. Sometimes it appears that we are learning the same lesson over and over, while we are actually going to new heights and depths, discovering how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is. (Ephesians 3:16-19)

The Self Life is all about me. It is characterized by the following traits, many of which we are very familiar with. (Ephesians 4 and 5)

- Self Sufficiency, Independence
- Self Centeredness and Self Idolatry
- Self Pity and Preoccupation
- Despair, Worry, Giving Up
- Critical Spirit, Complaining, Ingratitude, Immaturity
- Fearful
- Controlling and Abusive
- Pleasure, Prestige and Power
- Seven Deadly Sins of Pride, Envy, Gluttony, Lust, Anger, Greed and Laziness
- Sexual Immorality and Impurity, Sensual, Shameless
- Foul Language
- Confused, Resentful, Bitter
- Idolater
- Hardened Hearts and Closed Minds
- Insensitive and Unkind



We are born in sin, in the flesh. We are reborn into new Life in Christ, in the Spirit.

The Flesh seeks to satisfy its own lusts, while the Spirit seeks to give life to our souls, and produces Spiritual Fruit in our lives. This battle between life and death, love and hate, bondage and freedom, light and darkness starts new every morning. We choose to either walk according to the Spirit with life everlasting or walk according to the flesh and continue to reap corruption.

*So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.
Romans 8:12-14 NIV*

We have been freed from sin, now we need to walk in that way.

Here are some traits of the New Man, living a life controlled by the Spirit of God.

- Humble
- Mature
- Discerning
- Wise
- Forgiving
- Renewed
- Loving
- Thankful
- Alive
- Free
- Holy
- Strong
- Fruit of the Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self Control
- Gracious

The World

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.
John 16:33 NIV

The World refers to the Kingdom of Darkness, the World System or the Kingdom of this World, which stands against the Kingdom of Heaven where Jesus now reigns. It is currently ruling the Earth we live on (while still under God's sovereignty), so as redeemed believers we are occupiers in enemy territory. We are not referring to the beauty and magnificence of creation, the heavens and the earth, animal and plant life, or the even our own amazing bodies. These all point us to an almighty loving God. (Psalm 8, 19, 24, 139)

This World System seeks to blind its members to the reality of their sin so they will not respond to the salvation offered to all by Jesus. It is represented by the all the peoples, religions, governments, cultures, and tribes that are opposed to and reject the truth and rule of Christ.

The World glosses over and distracts from its true reality, from its suffering, death, destruction, poverty and depravity with no accountability to God. It seeks to unify mankind under a pantheistic or atheistic banner, while emphasizing no absolute truth, that anything goes. Sin is celebrated, depravity is accepted as normal, God is a myth, and progress is only achieved through education and social welfare.

The World is very deceptive. It seeks to distract the believer from fellowship with God and other Believers and thus becomes a very dangerous obstacle to Spiritual Maturity.

Here are some additional characterizations of the World System.

- Concern for external appearances vs. inner content and quality
- Outwardly religious, scientific, cultured, and elegant
- Inwardly seethes national and commercial rivalries and hatred
- Produces conformity to cultural norms and traditions of men... Stifles individuality
- Makes use of force, greed, ambition, and warfare to accomplish objectives
- Cares little for the worth of the individual
- Diverts attention from spiritual values by appeals to pursue pleasure, pride and power
- Permissive sexual, moral and ethical values encourage self indulgence
- Superficiality of life and appeal to immediate pleasure over long term goals
- Root problem is pride
- Exalts man, his abilities and progress

Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world. And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever.
 1 John 2:15-17 NIV



Three components make up the World: The Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life. The Ruler of the World System, the Devil, has used these three elements from the Garden of Eden where he deceived Eve, to the temptation of Christ, to each believer at some point in their journey. We need to be prepared and on guard against them.

1. The Lust of the Flesh: Once again this **focuses on the excesses of the natural God given desires given to mankind** and takes them to the limit and beyond. Instead of satisfying God given desires God's way, the lusts of the Flesh seek out strong desires of any kind and pervert them, pollute them, excuse them. Self control is not even a consideration.

These are not necessarily lusts for the flesh, but lusts based in our flesh, our natural man, our sin nature. They stem from a desire to do something contrary to God's Will, something corrupt. Based in our natural senses, pleasure is fleeting and eventually becomes extreme in order to be enjoyed. But it is never enough, it never satisfies, it only leads to death.

Think uncontrolled human appetites and passions seeking pleasure at all costs. Souls are destroyed, bodies dishonored and character reproached and no one really cares at all.

2. Lust of the Eyes: This **focuses on the desire for things you see, or covetousness.** It is an excessive appetite for wealth and possessions that is never satisfied, a desire to possess something contrary to God's will. Seeing things we shouldn't see, knowing things we shouldn't know, watching entertainment we shouldn't watch. Idleness, collecting treasures, needing more and more money, profit, laying up treasures on earth instead of in Heaven.

This also refers to things that please the mind or inner life, mental excess, demand for proof and information in areas we are not to venture into such as the future and the occult. We demand to know everything, we won't accept anything without proof, yet superstitions and dark powers fascinate. We want to know all the dirty laundry, the gossip, the whispers, and be the first to do so. We are overwhelmed by information and entertainment and it distracts from our walks with God.

Disasters, personal failings, wars, death and destruction, who can look away? We are so obsessed with watching and coveting others lives, accomplishments, and wealth that we never live our own.

3. Pride of Life: Being first, the best, the most powerful at all costs represents much of the Pride of Life. We want to bolster our reputation, our esteem, and seek titles, power, grandeur and glory to do so. We want others to envy us, to adore us, to worship us. We get great pleasure from outshining someone else. Arrogance that enjoys creating rivalries and jealousies, boastful showoffs, pretentious, pompous seekers of the chief places and high titles all fall under the spell of the Pride of Life.

The World System simply desires what is not of the Kingdom of God. It teaches us to desire to do something, possess something and be something that is contrary to God's will. It encourages, at all costs, the love of pleasure, the love of knowledge and the love of power, unchecked, worldly and with no caution or restraint. This is where we live. This is why we need the Holy Spirit's power to survive. We are not to love the World.

I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They are not part of this world any more than I am.

John 17: 14-16 NIV

The Devil

For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:12 NIV

The final part of this unholy worldly trinity is the Devil, also known as Satan, or the Prince of Darkness. Since we have presented information on him in a prior journey, we will only share what is appropriate for this section.

He is the spiritual ruler of this World System. He influences our reasoning processes toward satisfaction of the self instead of walking with God. He provides disinformation and stirs up our spirits. He is involved in every nation and culture on the earth and is called a Friend of the World (James 4:4) adopting and influencing its standards, wants, and values.

He rules the invisible spiritual ordered system that controls the world, an evil order with elements and components that work against the things of God. His world, this world, hates Jesus and His Followers. It is a world of wickedness, wretchedness, corruption and evil.

His greatest weapon is to counterfeit the Truth in order to deceive us, and his truth will appear as close to God's Truth as possible. He creates counterfeit religions, with satanic evangelists, ministers and apostles. He has counterfeit doctrines and pseudo righteousness that is often difficult to perceive.

Satan and his Demons cannot indwell a believer, but they can influence them through the world system. Here are some of the ways this happens.

- Accuses believers in Heaven (Job 1:6-12, Rev. 12:10, Zech. 3:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Romans 8:34)
- Uses demons to indwell non believers who then deceive believers (Matt. 7:15)
- Deceives believers himself (Rev. 12:9, 20:10)
- Uses the pleasures of this world to distract and sideline (2 Cor. 11:3)
- Uses demons to abuse, oppress and attack (Ephesians 6:11-18)
- Hinders us by using outside forces. (1 Thess. 2:18)
- Creates doubt and confusion (Gen. 3:1, 2 Cor. 2:11)
- Uses guilt and temptation (I Thess. 3:5)
- Entices believers to act on own energy and strength rather than Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3)
- His principles are to steal, kill, destroy and corrupt (1 Peter 5:8)

It's important to remember that the Devil can only operate to the extent that our all powerful, sovereign, wise, loving God allows. The victory is already ours.

He has and will use the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes and the Pride of Life to distract us from God's plan for our lives. As we will see below, it worked on Eve, but it did not work on Jesus.

Eve and the Devil: In Genesis 3, the Devil, disguised as the serpent, approached Eve and offered reasons she should eat from the Tree of Life which was exactly what God had forbidden her to do. He presented her with one reason from each of the above components of the World System (Gen.3:6):

- The tree was Good for food: The Lust of the Flesh
- Pleasing to the eye: The Lust of the Eyes
- And Desirable for gaining Wisdom: The Pride of Life

Eve ate from the tree and you know the rest of the story.

Jesus and the Devil: The Devil tried this same approach on Jesus during his 40 Day Fast in the Desert. (Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13) Jesus was tempted to respond to challenges from all three parts of the World System.

- Command this stone to become bread: The Lust of the Flesh
- All these worldly kingdoms I'm showing you now can be yours: The Lust of the Eyes
- Cast yourself down from this high point and let your angels catch you: The Pride of Life

Jesus answered him with Scriptural rebuttals and the Devil left Him.

Jesus and the Parable of the Sower: Some scholars have pointed out that the three fruitless soils in this parable (Matt. 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-34, Luke 8:4-18,) match up to the three parts of the unholy worldly trinity that we are in conflict with as Believers.

Hardened Ground – snatched away by birds of the air (Devil): The Devil

Rocky Ground – no roots, no lasting power, death: The Flesh

Thorny Ground – choked out by thorns, cares of the world distract: The World System

Obstacles along the Way

Spiritual Maturity is the Devil's worst enemy and so he will do everything to block our path or distract us to take a lesser road. He will use all our emotional baggage, our past successes and failures, broken relationships as well as external influences, things within and out of our control to sideline us, take us out of the game so we are no longer a threat.

Here are some areas to watch out for and nip in the bud if the Holy Spirit brings them to your attention or they cross your path.

- **Resentment and an angry heart** – anger is a killer and oftentimes simmers just below the surface, ungrateful, demanding
- **Worldliness** – over emphasis on the good life, excess, lack of generosity
- **Busyness** – too busy for Jesus, stressed out
- **Indifference** – I don't know and I don't care. This reveals a divided heart and reveals itself in unfinished projects, poor execution, sloppiness, slow learning, being unprepared, not caring.
- **Ignorance** – failure to investigate the truth and count the cost.
- **Poor role models** and bad company



- **Lack of discipline**
- **Evil People**
- **Spiritual Bondage** and Abuse – Cults, controlled, manipulated and dominated.

Counting the Cost

In Luke 14, **Jesus lays out the terms of discipleship** to those who have been eagerly following him for the free food and miracles. Following Jesus is not just about the show and it's not a welfare program. **If one chooses to follow Jesus you are releasing control of your life to the God of the Universe.** He will want to make some changes.

He cautions us to Count the Cost of following Him. In Matt.7: 24-27, at the close of the Sermon on the Mount, He warns us to Build our lives on the Rock of his Words by putting them into practice and not on shifting sands that will be washed away. In Matt 6:24, He reminds us that we can only serve one master, so those who try to keep one foot in the world while following Him will not succeed. It's either God or Money, not both. The Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:18-25) tried his hardest but could not do it.

And finally, in Luke 9:23-26, Jesus again explains the terms of discipleship:

- Deny Your Self
- Take up your Cross
- Daily
- Follow Me
- Lose your Life to save it
- Forfeit the World

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old is gone, the new has come!
2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV*

We now understand the need for Spiritual Growth and Discipleship. Living this New Life in Christ may be costly and require transformation and sacrifice, but the benefits are eternal, and we are provided with spiritual tools and resources right now to live it out.

Running the Race:

Tools and Activities of Transformation

Spiritual Renewal does not occur naturally, it comes from God. (Phil. 2:13, Romans 7:18, Jer.31:3). He draws us by the Holy Spirit and leaves us the choice of how to respond. It is the work of God in our lives from the inside out.



God gives us the desire through the Holy Spirit within us and then accomplishes it in our lives. We are to live by the Spirit.

(Galatians 5:16, Romans 8:14-16) We move from following to discovery to desire and passion and then to going further up and further in with Jesus. We learn to do all things Jesus taught, to be obedient and repentant, with our wills transformed into His, gaining his Mind, becoming like Him.

*So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
Galatians 5:16 NIV*

Often the change is subtle and we don't even notice. Our attitudes and actions and activities have changed. Our focus on training, endurance, wisdom, faith, submission, humility and obedience has allowed the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us. And people notice. We

shine brighter in the darkness and take Jesus with us wherever we go. We are running the race to Spiritual Maturity.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

*For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2 Peter 1:3-8 NIV*

Tools of Transformation

I find it helpful to organize the Tools and Activities of Spiritual Growth into 5 different Relationships or Arenas. Many of these have already been covered in this lesson and many have already been covered within the different Elements of prior OmniInfinity journeys. Some we will cover in more detail and some I have left for your own personal investigation.

Relationship 1: With the Living Personal God

- **Spiritual Breathing (Being Filled with the Spirit, Walking in the Spirit):** This is the ongoing process of confession, repentance and continually giving the Throne of your Life back to Jesus and accessing the power and direction of the Holy Spirit.
- **The Spiritual Practices:** Silence and Solitude, Prayer and Fasting, Bible Study and Meditation, Confession, Simplicity and Slowing, Service, Guidance, Secrecy, Community, Worship and Celebration, and Submission (Lordship).
- Abiding in Christ (Practicing the Presence of Christ, Keeping Christ as Lord)
- Praise and Thanksgiving
- Faith and Trust, Stepping out in Faith
- Assurance of Salvation
- **Right Doctrine/Core Beliefs:** We are not talking about denominational differences but Core Christian Beliefs and Doctrine as set forth in the Early Church Creeds.
 - Who are God and Man? What is the problem that separated them?
 - What is sin and its effects?
 - Who is Jesus? (virgin birth, God/Man, Death and Resurrection, Return)
 - What did Jesus accomplish? How?
 - What is the Bible? (God inspired, Truth, Authority)
 - What are the Creeds? (Revealed doctrines, statements of faith, Truth and Revelation)
 - What is conversion by faith? (implications and evidence, justification and sanctification)
 - What are Heaven and Hell?

Relationship 2: With Yourself

- Remember Whose you are
- Putting on the New Man
- Dying to Self/Taking up your Cross Daily
- Taking every Thought Captive/Thinking on these Things/Controlling your Thought Life
- Controlling your Tongue
- Becoming a Living Sacrifice
- Practicing Humility, Not thinking too Highly of yourself

- Developing a Spiritual Perspective/Setting mind on things above
- Guarding your heart and mind
- Forgiving others
- Walking away from what is opposed to Christ
- Cooperating with Pruning of the Branches: Trials, Pain, Sufferings and the Consequences of Sin (James 1:2-4)
- Fixing eyes on Jesus
- Dealing with fear, anger, doubt, bitterness
- Choosing healthy relationships and companions
- Focus on your own issues, do not judge others

Relationship 3: With the Body of Christ, the Church

- **Spiritual Gifts:** These are supernatural abilities given to believers at salvation for the purpose of carrying out the purpose of the Church. These are given and empowered by the Holy Spirit and may appear to be natural or supernatural. They are not for inward personal sanctification, but to be used for the benefit of others within the Body of Christ.

As you grow up in Christ under proper discipleship mentoring, your gift will be obvious to others around you as they benefit from it. You may not even realize you are doing anything special, just following the lead of the Holy Spirit.

This is a great subject for further study and can be controversial. The main discussions of the Spiritual Gifts in the Bible are found in Romans 12:4-8, I Corinthians 12:1-11, 22-31, Ephesians 4:7-16, and 1 Peter 4:7-16. Another good resource can be found at <http://mintools.com/gifts-list.htm>

- Community
- Communion
- Baptism
- Serving and Giving
- Mentoring Relationships
- Teaching, Knowledge and Application
- Practicing the "One Another" commands
- Worship

Relationship 4: With the World

- Outreach/Testimony/Telling your Story
- Sharing with those in Need
- In the World but not of the World
- Let Jesus judge the World
- Rejecting/Walking Away
- Dealing with Persecution and Injustice (Matthew 5:10-12)
- Becoming a Light in the Darkness/Sweet Smelling Fragrance

Relationship 5: To the Evil One

- **Armor of God:** In Ephesians 6:10-20, there is a description of the Armor of God, which every believer needs to put on to help them stand firm against the Evil One. Most of the armor is for defensive purposes. Paul used the imagery of a Roman soldier to portray the different resources God through the Holy Spirit has already provided each one. Below is a very brief description of each piece. This is definitely a great subject for further study and application. (Romans 13:12)
 - **Belt of Truth:** Holds it all together, knowledge and assurance of the absolute truth of God
 - **Breastplate of Righteousness:** Protects your heart...godly spirit filled character
 - **Shoes of the Gospel of Peace:** Peace of Christ allows us to step out without fear.
 - **Shield of Faith:** Strong faith puts out the fiery darts of doubt and fear from the devil
 - **Helmet of Salvation:** Assurance of salvation protects our minds from the lies of the devil.
 - **Sword of the Spirit:** The Word of God confronts the devil and reminds ourselves Jesus already has defeated him.
- Demolish strongholds – 2 Corinthians 10:4-5
- Don't give a foothold – Ephesians 4:26-27
- Resist – 1 Peter 5:8-9, James 4:7
- Discernment, Test the Spirits - 1 John 4:1-6
- Submit to God – 1 John 4:4, 18-19
- Expose and overcome evil with good – Ephesians 5:11, Romans 12:21
- Christ is already victorious – Matthew 13:36-43, Romans 16:20, Hebrews 2:14, Colossians 2:15
- **Dealing with Evil People:** As hard as it is sometimes to admit, there are evil people who come in and out of our lives. We need to develop discernment and learn to deal appropriately with these situations. Here are some things to watch out for.
 - They are experts at creating confusion and contention. - 2 Peter 3:16, Psalm 5:9, Proverbs 6:12-19
 - They will fool people with smooth talk and flattery. - Romans 16:17-18, Psalm 52
 - They crave and demand control and look to only themselves as an authority. Psalm 10, Jude 1:8-16
 - They play on the sympathies of good and kind people, often playing the grace card. Jude 1:4, Proverbs 21:10
 - They have no remorse and no conscience and do not think there should be any consequences to their actions. - Isaiah 16:10, Romans 1:30
 - They will talk like a Christ follower, masquerading as an angel of light. - 2 Corinthians 11:13-15
 - Confront head on, do not reason with them or show mercy, do not waste time talking, inflict painful consequences, walk away.

Running the Race requires training, endurance, wisdom, faith, submission and obedience. As we Walk with the Spirit and Abide in Christ the desires of the flesh soon give way to the desires of the Spirit. The Works of the Flesh begin to disappear as the Works of the Spirit begin to shine out from our lives. (Galatians 5:19-26)

John 15:5 - I am the vine.....

Hebrews 13:20-21 - ...equip you with everything good for doing His will.....

Psalm 51:10 – Create in me a clean heart...

Phil 2:12-13 -for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.

James 1: 2-4 -.....Consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds.....

We begin to look a little bit more like Jesus and a lot less like our old sinful selves.

Dry Spells and Dark Nights

*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?
Matthew 27:46 NIV*

*Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary
and lose heart.
Hebrews 12:2 NIV*

Spiritual Growth occurs in stages similar to the physical growth process we all pass through from infants to children through adolescence and finally to adulthood. There is no jumping ahead. We can't skip any or rush through them.

It's all very exciting at first as we enter into the most incredible relationship available with the Almighty yet very Personal God of the Universe and His Son, Jesus Christ. A period of Discipleship follows as we learn about God and Jesus and how to follow Him by practicing the disciplines of the faith which transform our lives.

This usually involves joining a community of fellow Christ Followers, engaging our Spiritual Gifts in service to His Church, as well as ministering to our fellow humankind around the world.

As we mature in faith we become aware of a seasonal cycle, not unlike the Seasons of the Year. (although these spiritual seasons do not occur during the annual seasons or last the same amount of time.)

Spiritual Seasons

Spiritual Winter will be a time of introspection, preparation and planning. We check our heart motives, strengthening and grounding our souls. While God is at work within, we may feel unfruitful, waiting and waiting.

Spiritual Spring is finally time to get to work, cleansing, pruning and watching for new growth. This is a vibrant time of renewal, rebirth, new starts, new relationships, new discoveries about God.

Spiritual Summer is when ministry or growth heats up and we work hard. It is easy to burn out at this point, so plenty of spiritual replenishment and food is required. And then once again we wait for the harvest. Pausing to reflect, we relax and play.

Spiritual Autumn announces that vacation is over and the harvest is here. It's time for fruit bearing, the wait is over. All in due season, the passage of time and God's provision throughout is easy to see and thanksgiving and celebration are appropriate. Routines are resumed and its time to clean up and prepare for winter once again.

Wandering

Periodically as we pass through the stages and seasons of spiritual growth we run up against a Wall, or wander in the Wilderness, or pass through the Fire.

A crisis of faith, a dark night, a dry spell.....

We have come to the end of ourselves and all we can do is wait on Jesus to work in our inner world, transforming us even more. He's forcing us to go deeper in to gain new awareness and understanding of Him. God wants us to know Him apart from our feelings, but instead based on faith.

This is often **a time of confusion, despair and suffering, a crisis that turns our lives upside down.** Our faith doesn't appear to work, we have more questions than answers, and we don't know where God is or what He is doing.

He's doing some gardening, digging up the weeds that spring up in our inner lives, core issues we would never deal with in good times. **Our pride, selfishness and self-will are all under his scalpel.** It's painful because He wants to pull them out by the roots, and the roots run deep.

We struggle and battle with God, but ultimately it is only God who brings us through the fire, or over the wall, or out of the desert. And only when He is ready. God tries our patience with His slowness. He never comes to those who do not wait.

We can only choose to wait on Him, to trust Him, obey Him, and stick with Him. Not quit and run. Patiently waiting and waiting and more waiting.

Some people run away, refuse to follow Him through only to run up against the same situation, only worse later on. You cannot grow to maturity without going through the fire. And it will happen periodically, once is never enough. It's not always the same, and each person has their own private fire. Sometimes it is over quickly and other times it takes much longer.

He is with you through it all.

Refined by the Fire

One of the perspectives that is transformed through the fire is that we no longer ask, "How do I fix this?" but instead ask, "What can I learn from this?". Some of the areas of spiritual maturity that blossom after going through trials and tribulations are listed below.

1. The desires of our hearts change and we are more contented. Our passions, affections, emotions, attachments and idolatries are refined or purged. (Eph. 4:11-13)
2. We are freed up to have greater appreciation of His love and peace as well as new perspectives, patience and graciousness.
3. We are protected from worshipping our feelings of God instead of God.
4. We are broken and poor in spirit, less judgmental, with fewer expectations. Until we are broken, we are full of ourselves, our plans, our ambitions, our value judgments, with no room for God. The fire empties us of this, and Spiritual Maturity can commence. (2 Cor. 4:7-12)
5. We are better able to leave things in God's hands, let God be God.
6. We have a greater understanding of the mystery of God, that God is more than we will ever understand, and that He is not here to serve us. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)
7. We are better able to wait for God – this is a big part of growing spiritually.
8. We are freed from our unhealthy attachments to the power of behaviors, habits, things, people. All the "shoulds", "ought tos" and traps are gone. We can appreciate all God has created without being trapped by it.
9. We are no longer looking to find God on our own terms, removing all resentment and rebelliousness toward God, and gaining yieldedness, submission, and surrender.
10. Agape love can only be learned through tribulation, pain and stress.

Do not fear the fire. Suffering is the pathway to glory.

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporal, but what is unseen is eternal.
2 Corinthians 4:17-18 NIV

Passing through the Fire

Here are some things you can think and do as you experience trials or tribulations.

- Acknowledge it for what it is.
- Mix it up. Try new ways to practice your spiritual disciplines or practices. Just keep doing them.
- Go back to the beginning.....recite God's provision for you over time, your history with Him, how He has shown up, what you love about Him....etc.
- Find a verse just for you for this situation and memorize and repeat it often to yourself.
- Get outside. Go someplace beautiful. Ponder His creation.
- Care for yourself. Sleep, eat, breathe, exercise.
- Enlist a close confidante, friend, mentor, counselor, or pastor to pray for you.
- Focus on the attributes of God. Remind yourself how amazing He truly is.
- Simplify your expectations. Lighten your load.
- Live in the present. Take one day at a time.
- Focus on someone else. Be a friend, provide for a need.
- Talk to Jesus. Look for Him.
- Rejoice! (Romans 5:3-5)

And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.
Romans 5:3-5 NIV

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking in anything.
James 1:2-4 NIV

More verses about trials and suffering

Psalm 34:19; 119:71

Isaiah 43:2

Romans 8:35-39

2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 4:8-10

Philippians 1:29; 3:8-11

I Peter 1:6-7; 2:19-21; 4:12-19; 5:10

The Victory: Christlikeness

Below you will find many different ways to visualize and express the various elements of the spiritually mature Christian's inner and public life. Only our very amazing yet very personal God, through His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit could ever accomplish this in one life, yet the millions that have become believers and followers throughout the ages.

Becoming like Jesus, gaining His mind and His heart; this is the goal. We get closer, yet this side of heaven we are never finished. Only Jesus is finished. However, being in Christ and Christ in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit allows us to shine very brightly into this dark world. God is glorified! Only Jesus wears the Victors Crown.



Use the information below for further study and transformation.

Characteristics of a Spiritually Mature Christ Follower

Transformed to glorify God - Col 1:8, Jer. 1:5, 1 John 3:2, 2 Cor. 3:18, 2 Peter 1:3
 Godly Lifestyle – James 2:14-19
 Desire to grow in godliness – 2 Peter 1:3
 Mind of Christ – Phil 2, 1 Cor. 2, Col 2:8-9, Romans 8
 Fruit Bearers – John 15:5-8
 Spiritual Eyes/Discernment/Eyes fixed on Jesus – Hebrews 12:1-3
 Christ in you – Col.1: 25-27
 Living the Abundant Life – John 10:10, Ephesians 3:20
 Living Sacrifice – Romans 12:1-2
 Lordship – life guided by the Holy Spirit – 1 Peter 3:15
 Servanthood – Matthew 20:25-28
 More than conquerors – Romans 8:28-39

Transformed Attitudes of a Spiritually Mature Christ Follower

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obedient • Humble • Forgiving • Died to Self/Unselfish • Repentant • Intentional • Fruitful • Surrendered • Grateful/Thankful | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistant to Evil • Charitable • Hospitable • Kind/Loving • Trusting/Faithful • Hopeful • Living for God • Honest and Transparent |
|---|--|

Living Sacrifices: Romans 12:1-2

- No sin unconfessed
- No life you cannot share
- Take all your burdens to Him
- Draw all wisdom, strength and life from Him
- Nothing is allowed in your life that separates from Him
- Continued exercise of faith in Him
- Total dependence on Him
- Distrust of yourself and cleaving and counting on Him

All Things Made New: 2 Corinthians 5:17

- New life - In Christ
- New Kingdom – Kingdom of God
- New King - Jesus
- New food - God’s Word
- New exercise - obedience and faith
- New family – Church, Family of God
- New Enemy – The Evil One
- New Guide – The Holy Spirit
- New Goal – Holiness
- New Desires – of the Spirit
- New Perspective – Mind of Christ, set on Things Above
- New Future - Heaven

If anyone is in
Christ,
 he is a new creation;
 the old has gone,
 the new *has come!*
 2 Corinthians 5:17

Fruit Bearers: John 15:5-8

What does this fruit of the Vine look like?

- **Christian Character:** Gal. 5:22-23, John 15, Eph. 5:8-13, James 3:17-18, 2 Peter 1:3-11
- **Praise:** Confession of Christ’s Name, Fruit of the Lips, Heb.13-15 – Sacrifice of Praise
- Contributions to those in Need: Phil 4:15-17, Romans 15:28
- **General conduct:** Col. 1:10
- **Conversions to Christ:** John 4, 1 Cor. 16:15, Romans 1:13

In contrast to the worldly fruit listed below: Luke 16:15

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success • Sensationalism/Impact • Sectarianism/Protocol • Zealousness • False sacredness • Anxiety for results/urgency • Absolute perfection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a strict schedule • Assuming all knowledge • Binding oneself to a formula or program • Expecting God to always do it the same • Trying to be someone else. |
|--|--|

Time to Get Personal

Listed below are some of the areas of our lives where the Spirit will begin to transform us.

Remember as Samuel Shoemaker has said, “We begin by surrendering as much of ourselves as we can to as much of Christ as we understand.”

Over time we will see less acts of the flesh and more fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We never finish, there is always something to work on. See if the Holy Spirits points any areas out to you today.

Heart Issues:

Anger	Lack of conscience
Fear	Guilt
Trust	Stress
Pride	Anxiety
Lack of forgiveness	Control Issues
Lack of compassion	

Mind/Thought Issues:

Belief System/Worldview
Thought Life
Rehearsing past offences
Doubt
Worry
Reading/Online Material
Entertainment

Hopelessness
Disorder/Confusion
Ignorance
Self focus
Evil thoughts/focus/input
Purpose/goals
Honesty

Behavior/Action Issues:

Language/Speech
Relationships
Free Time
Money
Priorities
Family
Helpful
Others first

Lifestyle
Habits
Organization
Disorder
Appearance
Healthy Habits
Honesty

Spiritual Growth Recap

1. God is ultimately responsible – Phil 1:6, 1 Cor. 3:7-9,15:10
2. Effort and discipline are necessary – 2 Peter 1:1-11; 1 Cor. 9:24,27; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; Romans 8:13; Phil. 2:12-14
3. Growth may not be easy to see at first. 1 Cor. 1:26-29; Matt. 13:31-32
4. Growth depends on intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. John 15
5. Growth is primarily an inside out process and mostly about your heart. Deut. 6:4-6; Mark 4
6. Growth relates to every aspect of our lives. Luke 2:52; Matt. 3:2-8; Romans 12:1-2
7. Growth happens most naturally in a social or community context, like a family or a church community. Acts 2:42-47
8. Significant Growth occurs within context of trials, sufferings, pain and persecution. 2 Thess. 1:3, James 1:2-4.
9. The great business of Spiritual Life and Growth is to learn to Love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself. (Mark 12:33)

Discipleship Chapters

Psalms: 1, 15, 18, 25, 27, 32, 37, 51, 62, 92, 105, 119, 127, 131, 139, 141, 145
Proverbs – The entire book
Ecclesiastes – The entire book
Parables of Jesus in the Gospels
Matthew 5-7
John 14-17
Romans 6, 7, 8, 12, 13
1 Corinthians 10, 12, 13
Galatians 5
Ephesians 4, 5, 6
Philippians 2, 3
Colossians 2, 3
1 Thessalonians 4
1 Timothy 6
2 Timothy 2
Titus 2
Hebrews 12, 13
James, 1 Peter, 1 John – The entire books

Things to Remember

1. Let God set the pace....don't run too far ahead or fall too far behind.
2. Step out on faith, but be careful not to test God. It's OK to flee awkward or unhealthy situations in the beginning. You may not be ready.
3. Learn to listen and recognize the Spirit's voice.
4. Concentrate on developing positive Godly traits and attitudes with the Spirit's help, rather than outwardly obeying a list of do's and don'ts.
5. Obey what you know. Stop sinning in areas you are aware of.
6. Focus on today, don't worry about tomorrow, let go of yesterday.
7. Keep short accounts with God. Confess and repent often, then move on.
8. Stay in the Word. Memorize verses so the Word stays in you.
9. Living in the present is the only way to live in His Presence.
10. We are not imperfect creatures in need of a makeover, but rebels who need to give up their weapons.
11. Pain shatters the illusion that all is well, and that what we have is ours, and is enough for us. C. S. Lewis.
12. We will not seek Him if He leaves us any other option. As long as our life is agreeable we will not surrender it to Him. Spiritual blessings come wrapped in trials.
13. We have a tendency to wander. Psalm 62:56
14. Empty is good....otherwise there is no way to be filled.

15. God does not love us because we are good.....He makes us good because He loves us.
16. Trust keeps you from worrying and obsessing.
17. Thanksgiving keeps you from criticizing and complaining.
18. You can fill your emptiness with Jesus' Presence or your Problems.
19. Self Pity is a demonic trap of great depth usually springing from weariness or illness.
20. Self Idolatry was the original sin – turning from God to self.
21. Transformation comes through yielding to His ways, wisdom and will....through hard times and ongoing struggles.
22. Fix your eyes on Jesus.....people will fail you, even the strongest believers sin. The devil is out to topple them and destroy their impact and leadership.
23. "Don't think more highly of yourself" does not give you permission to get down on yourself.
24. Jesus is not a one size fits all. He deals with each of us accordingly. "Don't worry about the speck in your brother's eye. What's that to you?" He's dealing with it. John 21:22
25. Persecution always has a persecutor and is because we believe in Jesus. Trials and Tests come from God or the Evil One to get us to change our hearts and minds and move one way or the other.
26. Joy comes in the morning.
27. The best way to resist the Evil One is to draw near to Jesus.
28. Waiting before working or reacting weakens the principalities and powers of darkness. Eph. 6:12
29. Only the Light of the World reveals the beauty that makes our hope bright. Look for Him.
30. Law of Dry Spells: Mature believers understand they are not permanent and are not tempted to despair.
31. Our personal God relates to every human being as if they were the only human ever born.
32. You are filled with the Spirit only to the capacity that the Spirit has transformed you.
33. The Christian Life seems rather complex in the beginning. There appears to be so much to remember, like learning to drive a car. Over time, with the Spirit's power, it becomes natural, coordinated and almost automatic.

And Finally:

Focus on your relationship with Him – get His Mind and His Heart.
Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind areas to change, things to walk away from and reject.
Receive His Power and grace to obey and allow the transformation to begin.
Believe He is enough to help you navigate the issues of life.
Don't take back control.
Let trials take you further up and further in.
Repent, Obey, Abide
Truly Live.

Without Him you can do nothing. John 15:6

Your turn:

1. Explain the following concepts and what part they play in Spiritual Growth.

Walking in the Spirit: Galatians 5:16, 25

Being Spirit Filled: Ephesians 5:18

Displaying the Fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22-23

New Life in Christ: Colossians 3:1-4

Being in Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:17

Christlikeness: John 13:15, 1 John 2:6, Philippians 4:6, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Matthew 9:9

Taking up your Cross: Matthew 16:24

Having the Mind of Christ: 1 Corinthians 2:16, Philippians 2:5, Romans 12:2, Isaiah 40: 13

Abiding in Christ: John 15:4-5

Living the Abundant Life: John 10:10, Ephesians 5:8-11, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 12:11, Ephesians 3:20-21

Living with Jesus as Lord: Colossians 2:6, 1 John 2:5-6

2. The great business of Spiritual Life is learning to love like Jesus did and as He commanded us to do in the Great Commandment (Mark 11:33). With His Spirit's help, we will learn to love God, love our neighbors and ourselves and He will take our entire lives to teach us this agape love.

In each of the following parts of this Commandment, list some changes you've seen in your own spiritual lives as well as ways you could continue to grow in each one.

Love the Lord your God

- **With All your Heart:** Seat of our emotions, affections, desires, what we treasure, the desires of our heart. The Heart is the leader, it steers our lives. (Matthew 6:21, 13:44; Philippians 3:8; 2 Corinthians 4:6-7)

- **With All your Soul:** Defines who we are, eternal, our personality, identity, inner self, the core you. This is the seat of joy, hope, faith and peace. The Will lives here, the decision maker, chooses how we live, behave, obedience to Word of God, attitudes, speech, values. We do what we value. (Psalm 23:3, 63:8; Matthew 12:34-37, 16:26, I Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 1:6-9)

- **With All your Mind:** The intellect, learner, reason, knowledge, memory, imagination, images, thoughts, ideas, truth. Faith goes before reason. The Mind is the learner, eventually catches up with the heart, which receives Revelation. (Psalm 8:3-4; Isaiah 1:18, 55:8, 63:7; Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 4:8-9, Hebrews 10:16)

- **With All your Strength:** Actions, perseverance, stamina. What we do (hands), what we see (eyes – gateway to the heart), what we hear (ears – listen for more revelation to be transformed), feet (journey of your life, walk away from evil), mouth, (speech) (Psalm 27:4; Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 6:19; Hebrews 12:1-2; James 1:22, 2:14-17, 3:3-12; 1 John 3:18)

Love your Neighbor: (Luke 6:27-42, 10:25-37; 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 2:3-4; James 2:1-8)

Love Yourself: (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 139:14; Proverbs 19:9; Luke 12:4-7; Ephesians 5:29; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Hebrews 12:15)

3. List some components of the areas below that you know are obstacles in your Spiritual Growth. Then also list some areas from each where you are seeing transformation in your life.

The Flesh:

The World System:

The Lust of the Flesh

The Lust of the Eyes

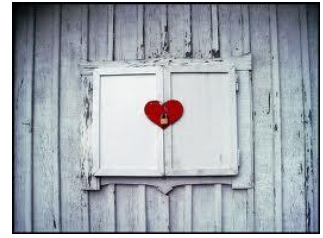
The Pride of Life

The Evil One:

4. Read Ephesians 4, 5, and 6. List all the commands in these three chapters. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal a couple of these commands you could better obey and start the transformation process.

journal

11.7 Nitty Gritty



1. **There is nowhere to hide from Jesus.** He knows us better than we know ourselves.
2. **One of the benefits of knowing a Personal God** is receiving the power of approval and acceptance from the One whose approval and acceptance really matters.
3. **Almighty God is the Perfect kind of Personal Friend.**
4. **Personhood begins with God and was placed within us** when we He created us in His Image.
5. **When sinful man, longing for a personal relationship with His Creator,** creates his own ways of relating to God it becomes idolatry, and actually keeps him from the very relationship he seeks.
6. **Only through Jesus is personal contact with God possible.**
7. **Faith is required for friendship with Jesus.** If we do everything He commands we will know everything He knows.
8. **Friends rub off on each other.** Belief and convictions are shaped, lives reordered and new responsibilities and commitments created.
9. **There is a human tendency towards religious effort** to make ourselves right with God.
10. **Jesus is enough.**
11. **Resolve to Know Him.** We don't need something other than or in addition to Jesus to know God.
12. **Extra Credit reading recommendations:** Here is a list of great books on Spiritual Growth and related topics:

Don't Waste Your Sorrows by Paul E. Billheimer
Soul Keeping by John Ortberg
True Spirituality by Francis A. Schaeffer
Not A Fan by Kyle Idleman
Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter Scazzero
The Problem of Pain by C.S. Lewis
Wild Goose Chase by Mark Batterson

closure

Because it matters what we think about God

We have come to the end of **Up Close and Personal**, the eleventh of the 12 OmniInfinity™ Journeys. This journey has caused us to **Remember** *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"* and **Read** Proverbs 1, 1 Peter 1, James 1 and 1 John 1.

We **Analyzed** by completing a Biographical Study of a Biblical person; **Investigated** the Personal attribute of God; and **Practiced** Submission. We took **Inventory** of our Gratitude Index and went **Adventuring** by learning to take One Day at a Time. We were challenged in **More Cool Stuff** to learn to live in Relationship with our Personal God. And finally, **Lyrics** spoke to our hearts and souls as we pondered through music the impact of God's Love on our lives.

The **Journal** revealed that we were **created to live in relationship**, not just with each other as family and friends, but also with God. **God is the perfect friend**. Healthy relationships get messy and personal, requiring intimacy, reality and truth and most of us are afraid to open up our lives enough to gain this intimacy. We are afraid of rejection, of not being accepted so we hide our true selves in order to blend in with the crowd.

But no one can ever know us like God does. He sees us as we truly are no matter how hard we try to blend in. What we need is the power of approval and acceptance from the only one who's approval and acceptance really matters. He knows us better than we do ourselves. **He is the Perfect Friend.**

When He created us, he placed His Image deep within us, which includes our own personhood. And a great part of our **purpose is to relate personally to our personal God** because He first desired to relate to us. We are only responding to the tugs of divinity within. Only in relationship with Him will the longings of our hearts be satisfied.

Adam was perfectly related to God in the Garden until he sinned. Because of this, now only through Jesus is personal contact with God now possible. **Jesus came to reveal who God is and how we can have a personal relationship with Him.** We know God, just like we know other people, because the Father sent Jesus to us and He deals with us as individuals, very personally.

Good friendships are a gift from God. You either rub off on your friends or they rub off on you. They have great power to change us and we also have the power to change them. Beliefs, convictions and behaviors are shaped, lives reordered, and new responsibilities and commitments are created. In Friendship with Jesus, however, the rubbing off only goes One Way.

Just as in our earthly personal relationships, "frenemies" or enemies who appear to be friends, fueled by jealousy, inferiority and resentment, will **seek to distract and compete**, especially with our personal relationships with Jesus and His purposes for our lives, **complicating it with demands and requirements** that did not come from Him.

Fulfilling these additional demands and requirements becomes our focus instead of the relying on the only One who can satisfy us. We elevate them to a higher plain, **adding them on to Jesus**, forgetting that Jesus, and only Jesus is enough. He is everything, He is sufficient, **He is enough.**

Now it's time to **think back** over this part of your journey and **reflect** on what you have discovered and learned. The sections below may help jog your memory. **Describe** the details of any areas that **apply** to you.

New Things I Learned

Old Things I was reminded of



Questions I have

Areas I was challenged in



First steps I took

Areas I would like to study more

“AHA!” moments



Dreams and visions

appendix

- [About the Journeys](#)
- [About Remembering](#)
- [About the Practices](#)

about the journeys...

Welcome to **OmniInfinity™**.. a series of guided journeys leading to greater knowledge and understanding of the attributes of God and the Spiritual Practices necessary to gain this knowledge.

The only requirement is a willingness to learn and discover through a variety of activities. Some elements you may naturally be drawn to, some will challenge you, and some may be way out of the box for you. It is important to do them all, in order, completing one journey before moving on to the next.

There are twelve journeys or units, **each designed to be completed in two months** - either by yourself, with a friend or in a small group setting. It is important to remember we all start from different places, we start with what we know and move on from there, but we are all traveling together.

journey elements

The following elements make up each journey and should be completed in order. Some of the elements require some advance planning, so you might want to review the entire contents of each journey before you begin. Use the Table of Contents to check off your progress.

Remember: One or more Bible verses to memorize for each journey unit.

Read: Throughout the twelve journey units you will read some of the most profound and well loved chapters in the Bible.

Analyze: A variety of Bible Study methods will be offered to help you analyze in greater depth a section of the Reading above. The goal of this section is to familiarize you with various ways to greater understand God's Word.

Investigate and 10 things: Each journey unit focuses on a group of God's attributes, defining terms, and completing a directed investigation page.

Practice and Why?: Part of growing in our relationship with God is the intentional practice of skills that have helped Christians from the beginning. Each journey unit will focus on one or more of these with instructions for developing each discipline skill. Some Practices involve doing a specific activity, while others require we stop doing certain things.

Inventory: A personal inventory will be completed regarding areas related to the attributes and skills studied in each unit, reviewing your personal history and evaluating your current practices and beliefs.

Adventuring: This section guides you to venture out into the world with a specific assignment to observe, interact with or impact your surroundings and neighborhoods. The intent is to allow God to reveal Himself through nature, media and other people.

Lyrics: You are encouraged to read the included song lyrics as poetry for your inspiration, go online and listen to the actual recordings and then reflect on the questions that follow.

Journal and More Cool Stuff: The author has included some musings and further information pertaining to the subject of each journey unit for your consideration, personal response and reflection.

Closure: At the conclusion of each journey there is a place to recap where you've been, what you learned, new thoughts, challenges, growing pains.....

enjoy the adventure ...

about remembering...

Think of this exercise as a necessary foundation for future excellence – like practicing scales on the piano or doing wind sprints or swimming laps, taking your vitamins, or eating your vegetables.

We actually recall or remember all kinds of things we've memorized without really even trying. Can you think of any?

How about your phone number, email address, street address, zip code, social security number, birthday, names of your family, how to get to work, how to drive a car, that secret recipe...or how to spell or multiply, song lyrics, movie scenes, jokes, what someone was wearing, what car they drove, sports statistics, what chocolate tastes like, what the ocean smells like, and on and on.



Why do we remember what we remember?

Recollection is just the tip of the memory iceberg. Within our marvelous and mysterious brain the memory works in collaboration with us and the world – it uses all our senses and emotions. We associate smells, colors, places, rituals, symbols, landmarks, even people, with memories and when we sense the trigger, we remember.

There are tremendous spiritual benefits from Remembering Bible verses:

- Strengthens our faith
- Shapes how we view the world
- Makes God's Word immediately accessible
- Guards our minds.....and that's just for starters.

Experts say that we will forget more in the first hour after our memory event than in one day, and more in the first day than the first month...What we remember for one month, will probably stay with us....so the idea is to remember regularly for one month and we've got it.

Here are some suggestions to help you get started. We all learn differently – so don't be afraid to try some of the more unusual methods. Not only do we need to remember the verse, **we need to remember to work on remembering the verse.**

- Write the verse on several post it notes or index cards and put them where you will see them such as the car, the bathroom mirror, the kitchen sink, a bulletin board, your computer screen saver, your cell phone, by your bed....
- Make plans to spend five minutes, twice a day (usually as you get up and before bed) to review.
- Say it slowly, 15 times in a row, emphasizing each word.
- If you have already learned it in another translation, review that one. Once you know it in one, look it up in a couple of other translations to see what is different.
- Review it when you are waiting in line, or on hold on the phone.
- Sing it – make up a tune to go with it
- For extra credit, add the verse before and the verse after.

about the practices...

The Spiritual Practices put us in a place where we are better able to interact with our environment and God. God can then reach inside our spirits and transform them.

Just as our body needs to eat, breathe, exercise, drink, sleep, etc., so our spiritual self needs to make sure it is being sustained, cared for, and trained.

The results include spiritual growth, a life controlled by the Holy Spirit, evidence of the fruit of the spirit, and the ultimate goal, living life like Jesus did.

The Spiritual Practices are not:

- Meritorious laws that earn favor with God
- A way to show how spiritually mature we are
- Unpleasant or difficult

Instead, they are:

- Intentional
- Activities we do that when practiced allow us to do activities we cannot now do.
- Adaptable to work with our temperaments and gifts
- Adjustable according to the rhythm and seasons of our lives

There are two kinds

Practices of Abstinence - when we stop doing something that is perfectly normal to allow ourselves to focus more on God, His Word, and growing in godliness. These also help us resist our tendency toward sins of commission (when we do something we shouldn't do). We withdraw to breathe in all that God can provide to us, breaking the hold that the world has on our lives. Practices of Abstinence help ready us and create room for the Practices of Engagement.

Practices of Engagement – when we do certain activities that help us grow in Christ and obey his commandments. The Practices of Abstinence have opened up the time and broken up the preoccupations so we are now free to learn of, focus on, and practice those things that God commands us to do. These assist in keeping us from our tendency toward sins of omission (not doing the things we should do). We engage to breathe out all that God commands us. ¹¹

As their name implies, the Spiritual Practices are not one-time events, but skills to be learned and developed over time. So don't be discouraged in the beginning if you struggle with them or find them difficult. Make them a regular part of your life. In our Journeys we would rather **emphasize the actual practicing of the Practices** and not so much the reading about them.....and let you discover the benefits as they appear in your life.

credits

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