

For the Love of the Family Ministries

Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family

Why Can't I Change My Life?-Part One

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Ephesians 4:22-24, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Many Christians feel they are trapped and cannot change their life. Romans 15:4 "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the **scriptures might have hope.**" Have you ever been convicted about a certain area of your life and you confess that area (sin) to God and promise never to do it again? Sounds like many of us, doesn't it? Many Christians have areas (sins) of our lives that we would really like to change. I find this to be the most dramatic need of the Christian life. Many people for years deal with a certain area (sin or sins) of their life and they are defeated, discouraged, and many quit because they have lost hope. Did you notice in Romans 15:4 that the Bible tells us we have **hope in the scriptures**? That means the solution to the area (sin) you have lost hope about changing is in the Bible. The scenario goes something like this. We hear a message and we are convicted about this area (sin) of our life. We ask God to forgive us as I John 1:9 says. We even promise not to do it again. Then 24, 36, 72 hours later we do it again. Then we ask why? Why doesn't God help me? I do not understand? I seem so powerless in my life. This is the all too common Christian experience.

Ephesians 4 is what I call the change chapter in the Bible. So, what is God's will in the matter? God wants each of us to be changing to be more like His Son, Ephesians 4:1, 15, 32, 5:1, Colossians 1:28, II Peter 3:18. The model for our life is the Lord Jesus Christ. The expectation is that we will be more and more like Christ in our thoughts, motives, and actions. God tells us exactly how to do it in His Word.

Ephesians 4:22, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts." God wants us to be changing to be more like His Son by putting off the old self. Who is responsible for this? Notice it says "that **ye** put off". Let me see if I can define this. Who is the old man? The old self, old man, would be the habits of thinking and the actions our corrupt nature has adapted.

Ephesians 2:3, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh,

fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

Did you notice the word “lusts”? Folks, there are lusts in our life that we can ask God to forgive us for and we can move away from them. There are other lusts that I call “demand lusts”. These are things that are **controlling in our life**. We have to have them. They are the lusts I described before, where we ask God to forgive us and 24, 36, 72 hours later we do it again. We do not have victory over them in our life and we wonder why we cannot have the victory and we lose hope. The demand lust is something you have programmed in your life that you have to have.

Do you remember back in Ephesians 4:22, “that ye put off”? “Put off” here means to lay aside, put off, to strip off as in the case of old dirty clothes. It emphasizes personal responsibility for change. Did you notice the word “corrupt”? It means spoiled, contaminated, rotten, perverted, and evil. Did you notice the word “lust” here? It is the same as Ephesians 2:3, meaning strong desires (demand lusts) of any kind that demand and motivate behavior. How are they described? As **“deceitful”**. Why? They are deceitful because they promise what they cannot deliver. For instance, they cannot deliver, peace and joy, they only deliver defeat and discouragement. Hebrews 3:12-13, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the **deceitfulness** of sin.” You see folks many people think that the lust they are allowing to consume their life is the best thing for them and they like it. They are deceived, Galatians 6:7. Many times a person will think well, “I cannot change it so, oh well; I do not understand why God does not change this in me, so I will just go along. Besides it is not that bad any way.” Sounds deceptive doesn’t it? Of course, the devil now has the person where he would like them in their life, seeking the lusts of the flesh, deceived, and not knowing or understanding how to change. When Kim and I counsel with people about their marriage or their children, it is always someone else’s fault. They do not understand their marriage is in trouble or their children are in trouble because they have failed to understand the need for Biblical change in their life. Obviously, the person or persons who are the object of their finger pointing generally do not understand the need to Biblically change in their life as well. In fact, most Christians do not understand the need or how to Biblically change their life. Rest assured the devil surely does not want you to change to be more like Christ.

Now let’s turn our attention to Ephesians 4:24, “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”. God wants us to be changing to be more like His Son by putting off the old self and putting on the new self. Notice who is responsible in Ephesians 4:24 to do this, “Ye”. The new man, the new self, would be the habits of thinking, motivations, and behavior that emulate Christ. Notice the phrase “put on”, like putting on new clothes or clean clothes; to adapt new ways of thinking and acting. It emphasizes **personal responsibility for change**. Romans 6:16-19, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” Did you notice the word “yield”? What are you yielding yourself to today? Who are you yielding yourself to today? I Timothy 4:7, “But refuse profane and old wives fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.” Righteousness, holiness, and truth describe Jesus Christ and the scriptures. The new self will be oriented toward pleasing God by obeying His Word, John 14:15.

We have seen that the old man has to be put off; the new man has to be put on. It is a literal process. The how of that is in Ephesians 4:23, “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” God wants you and me to be changing to be more like His Son by putting off the old self and putting on the new self as the result of a **changed mind**. In the New Testament the mind is synonymous with the heart, soul, or spirit. And is viewed as the center of thought, understanding, belief, motives, and actions. All of these refer to the inner man. The inner person is the real you that God sees and interacts with. I Samuel 16:7, Hebrews 4:13. In essence we cannot fool God, He knows who and what we really are. Ephesians 4:23, did you notice the word “renewed”? This is the key to change. The word renewed means to be rejuvenated, made youthful, to be renovated. So, why have I not changed this behavior or action? **Because you have not really ever repented of it.** You have asked God to forgive you, but you have never repented of the sin (area) God wants to change. The word here renew means a total renovation. The old stuff has to be cleaned out and replaced with new stuff. Notice the phrase, “spirit of your mind”. It means that which gives the mind both its bent and its material thought; it does not refer to some superficial change of opinion on points of doctrine or practice. A habit allows you to do something automatically, unconsciously, skillfully, and comfortably. Renewed thinking will lead to putting off the old self (dehabitation) and putting on the new man (rehabitation). Folks, this is so important and is essential. **A person simply cannot break a habit; he must replace it.**

Paul gives us examples of this in Ephesians 4:25-28, verse 25, “wherefore putting away lying”, replacing it with truth. Verse 26; don’t let anger stay in your life replace it with being controlled by the Holy Spirit. Verse 27, “Neither give place to the devil”; replace that with giving place to Christ in your life. Verse 28, “Let him that stole steal no more”, rather let him replace it with work. Verse 29, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”, but replace it with “that which is good to the use of edifying”.

You put off the old man by putting on the new man. Your goal is to have your thinking patterns changed so drastically, that you are automatically, unconsciously, skillfully and carefully acting like Jesus if He were in your shoes. Failure comes in when we emphasize stopping rather than putting on new behavior. Why can’t I quit this? You have not turned from it and replaced it.

How am I going to renew my mind? Through God’s Word. You see it is going to require more than just a confession of the sin. My mind is going to have to be changed through God’s Word, Romans 12:1-2. **Let me say that there will be no change in your life unless you get specific about what needs to be changed or renewed.**

Most of us as Christians are very general. We are general about a lot of things we do in our life. “Lord forgive me for all my sins”. Well, what are they? In fact what we have seen so far is yes, God will forgive you, but if you want to change it must go further. I have included a list of things the Bible talks about and many of God’s people struggle with in our lives to change. As I go down through the list and take inventory of my life, this will help me to get specific about the things I need to change in my life. These are things that God wants me to change. As you go down the list, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you the things God really wants changed in your life. Remember, I did not say your wife, husband, or your children. Once I have determined what they are by going through the process, I need to see what God really says about this sin or sins (probably will be more than one) in His Word. Let me give you an example. Maybe you are involved in lying. You know this sin is wrong. No one has to tell you that. When you get in a pressure situation you lie. Or when around others you exaggerate. You have been convicted about it. You think no one really knows you are not telling the truth. You have tried to stop, and in those moments after you do it you say “God forgive me”. Then you do it again very soon. Same process again and again. You feel bad about it, but you have just

accepted this behavior in your life. This is the typical Christian experience. Then you wonder why other things are going bad in your life. You are really defeated and discouraged. Church is a chore. You lash out at others. You think, man this Christian life is tough. Sure it is, if you are disobedient to God and not Biblically changing in your life. So, where do I go? Remember Romans 15:4, “the scriptures”.

Look up lying in your Bible and see what God really says about it. Then meditate on the passages. Ask the Holy Spirit to cement in your mind the horribleness of lying from God Word. Find a friend who you feel you can share this desire to change this habit (sin) with. This will help you with accountability in the matter. Remember you have to replace lying with the truth. Be mindful of speaking the truth. Be mindful of what you say and how you say it. Also, ask God to take away from you the sin of lying. Go out of your way to speak correct things. Make it a specific priority. Did you know that God will not only show you from His Word about lying, how bad it is, but also how to change it? Your mind will start the process of Biblical change. It will become renewed by God’s Word. Then your behavior will change by the power of God. Then you will speak the truth in love, Ephesians 4:15.

Failure comes in this when we emphasize stopping rather than putting on new behavior. Ephesians 4:22, put off old self which is feeling oriented, motivated by lust, strong passionate desires (demand lusts). The way it is done is by renewed thinking, in Ephesians 4:23. Then in Ephesians 4:24, put on the new self. You are then scripture oriented rather than emotion oriented. Then you are motivated by love of Christ rather than motivated by strong passionate lusts.

May God help each of us to seek Biblical change in our lives. Remember God loves you, He desires for you and I to change. He will empower our life if we follow the instructions He has given for Biblical change in our lives. Remember, there will be no Biblical change if you are general about it, you must get specific about it from God’s Word.

Getting Specific: My Needs for Change

Here is a list of attitudes, feelings (areas-sins) that every follower of Christ needs to put off, Ephesians 4:22, in his life. Place a number, from 0 to 10 before each item to indicate the extent of its presence in **your life**. Do not give this to your wife or husband to do about you. This is for you to do about you. Mark 0 if it’s “not an issue at all” and 10 if it’s present on a regular basis. If it’s extremely rare put a 1, occasional 2 or 3. If it is sometimes a problem, score it a 5. If it is often a struggle, then you are a 7. If you know it is one of your significant weaknesses, you are in the 8, 9, 10 category. True change will never happen in your life until you become specific about what God really wants to change in your life. Do not get concerned if there is more than one area to deal with, there will probably be more than one area and maybe several areas.

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| ___ Anger | ___ Hostility | ___ Resentment |
| ___ Anxiety | ___ Homosexual lust | ___ Restlessness |
| ___ Argumentative | ___ Idolatry | ___ Sadness |
| ___ Addiction | ___ Impatience | ___ Self-centeredness |
| ___ Bigotry | ___ Impulsiveness | ___ Self-confidence |
| ___ Bitterness | ___ Impure thoughts | ___ Self-deprecation |
| ___ Boastful | ___ Indifference to | (self hatred) |
| ___ Bossiness | others problems | ___ Self-gratification |

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Causing dissension | <input type="checkbox"/> Inhibited | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-indulgence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conceit | <input type="checkbox"/> Insecurity | <input type="checkbox"/> Self--justification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Controlled by emotions | <input type="checkbox"/> Intemperance | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-pity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Controlled by peer pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-reliance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Covetousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Laziness | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-righteousness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical tongue | <input type="checkbox"/> Loner | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-sufficiency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> Low self esteem | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression | <input type="checkbox"/> Lust for pleasure | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual lust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dominance | <input type="checkbox"/> Materialistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Slow to forgive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drug Dependence | <input type="checkbox"/> Must strive to | <input type="checkbox"/> Stubbornness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drunkenness | <input type="checkbox"/> re pay any kindness | <input type="checkbox"/> Temper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Envy (depressed by | <input type="checkbox"/> shown you | <input type="checkbox"/> Unloving (of the |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the good fortune of others) | <input type="checkbox"/> Negativism | <input type="checkbox"/> unlovely) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> False modesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Occult involvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Vanity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear | <input type="checkbox"/> Opinionated | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of rejection | <input type="checkbox"/> Overly quiet | <input type="checkbox"/> Workaholic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of stupidity | | <input type="checkbox"/> Worry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of weakness | <input type="checkbox"/> Overly sensitive to criticism | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> of helplessness | <input type="checkbox"/> Passivity | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of worthlessness | <input type="checkbox"/> Prejudice | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gluttony | <input type="checkbox"/> Profanity | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greediness | <input type="checkbox"/> Projecting blame | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt (false) | <input type="checkbox"/> Prone to gossip | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hatred | <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellion to authority | |

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