

Regent University

**A Church-Based Curriculum Designed to Teach Entire Sanctification to New
Believers in Metro Praise International's Discipleship Program**

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the School of Divinity
in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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School of Divinity

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**A Church-Based Curriculum Designed to Teach Entire Sanctification to New
Believers in Metro Praise International's Discipleship Program**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation will demonstrate that the increase in understanding of entire sanctification as taught by Metro Praise International church in its discipleship program with new believers has positive benefits in a Christian's life. The author conducted a six-week course on the subject and applied a mixed method approach to receiving and analyzing the results. Likert scale surveys, along with interviews, were used to confirm the thesis.

The author used Moodle as an online learning platform, along with Zoom for a video classroom. The materials used by the author was a book he had wrote specifically for the research project. The main problem that the researcher wanted to solve was in regard to the identity of the believer- specifically how new Christians view the subject of sanctification. The end results from both the Likert tests and survey questions showed that it is possible within a short period of time to change for the positive the way new Christians view their nature in Christ. Likewise, the research showed that those who know who they are in Christ will exude more of a confidence in living for Christ (i.e., "keeping God's commands").

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

Overview

In this chapter the author will first lay out the problems in new believer's lives at Metro Praise International (MPI) church that are associated with an unbiblical understanding of entire sanctification. Second, the rationale for undertaking this project will be explained. Third, the limitations and assumptions of the author will be stated. Fourth, interaction with the literature on the subject will be explored. Fifth, the author will explain how the biblical, theological, and historical foundations on entire sanctification contributed to the curriculum designed to increase the understanding of entire sanctification; also known as, "The Finished Work" theology. Sixth, the results and contributions of the curriculum taught at MPI will be described. Seventh, the evaluation of the project will be given. Eighth, and lastly, the author will summarize the project.

Statement of the Problem

Neglecting to teach new believers entire sanctification at Metro Praise International church has resulted in Christians lacking understanding in their new identity in Christ. MPI church was founded by Joe and Nancy Wyrostek in 2012 with a group of mostly Latino young adults in an urban area of Chicago. MPI is an independent Pentecostal church that has both a local vision and global calling. The church was established to fulfill the Great Command of Jesus to "Love God and Love People." Their purpose is to obey Jesus' Great Commission by connecting the lost to Jesus, mentoring believers with the message of Jesus, and sending out trained disciples with Jesus' words to change the world. MPI's goal is to make 100,000 disciples and eventually plant a total of 50 churches within Chicagoland and to start 500 churches around the world.

Over the years, the author has observed that when new Christians are not taught from the Scriptures how they were made holy to live holy, they tend to struggle more with sin and live less obedient lives compared to those who were properly taught to view themselves as God's masterpiece, created to do good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). Therefore, what effect does an effective curriculum being taught on entire sanctification have on the lives of the congregation at Metro Praise International church in Chicago, Illinois?

Rationale for Doing the Ministry Project

First, the rationale for undertaking this ministry project was due to the wonderful experiences the author has had over the last twenty years from believing in entire sanctification. By God's grace the author has lived free from the lifestyle of sin since November 5, 1995 (the day the author was saved) and he wanted to share this teaching with the church he pastors (MPI). Second, it was observed in MPI church that new Christians who did not understand the doctrine of entire sanctification did not share his same experiences of living free from the lifestyle of sin.

Third, the author wanted to design a curriculum that would teach new Christians at MPI the doctrine in hopes that their understanding on the subject would increase.

Fourth, the author wanted to show the participant in the project that when a person believes something that is not biblical, they tend to live unbiblical lives in those areas of false beliefs. Specifically, when new Christians at MPI believed they were not able to live free from the lifestyle of sin they did not enjoy the freedom from besetting sin. The following unbiblical phrases were noticed to be the mindsets of those living in continual sin at MPI; "nobody is perfect," "God is still working on me," "it's okay to not be okay,"

“Christians are beautifully broken people,” and “Christians are a mess and masterpiece at the same time.”

Fifth, by drawing from current neuroscience science in regard to neuroplasticity the author practically implemented the same of kind of techniques used by professionals in the field of counseling to rewire the brain for optimal well-being to help the new Christian renew their mind to test and approve God’s perfect will for their lives (Romans 12:1-2). Sixth, and lastly, the rationale for this project was to encourage other churches to teach the New Christians under their care the doctrine of entire sanctification in hopes that when their understanding of the doctrine increased, so would their holy behavior.

Limitations and Assumptions

The first limitation of the project was to only include new believers at MPI church. A new believer was defined as someone who was saved less than two years. Since MPI church believes in the doctrine of backsliding (falling away from the faith), the project included people who had lapsed in their Christian faith. The second limitation was to have the curriculum be only six lessons taught in six weeks. In the condensed format there was not the appropriate time needed to follow-up with the participants in the years following to examine their lifestyle and document if the positive results of the class had lasting impact.

The third limitation is MPI’s relationship with other Christian groups. Since they are non-denominational, they have limited exposure to outside influences that would come naturally to other churches in larger groups via conferences, camps, and the like. The fourth limitation is MPI’s geographical location being urban, thus it is hard to understand if these findings would be the same in suburban or rural areas. The fifth

limitation is the relatively young age of the church and those who attend. MPI is less than 20 years old and the majority of the attendees are under the age of 40 years old. The sixth limitation is the size of MPI, since they average around 200 attendees (including children) each week there may be a different set of challenges or outcomes in a larger or smaller church.

The first assumptions of the author in this project is that the Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of God. Second, the classical trinitarian Pentecostal worldview is the most accurate description of biblical Christianity. Third, the author assumed based on past experience, that MPI's teachings of entire sanctification contribute to the overall increase in the new believer's understanding of their identity (in the way of Sunday services, home Bible studies, and one-on-one mentorship). Fourth, the author assumed that what God does in one place based on His Word being taught in regard to doctrinal teachings; He will do in other places (and this includes different time periods of church history- "Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever"). For example, the author believes that no matter where a person lives in the world, when they are taught the commands of Jesus, faith comes by the Holy Spirit to empower them to obey those commands- including, "being born again," "being baptized in the Holy Spirit," "renouncing and turning for sin," etc.

Summary of the Literature

The three main categories of research literature the author used for this project are as follows: literature for effective methods to teach doctrine in the local church, literature from non-Pentecostals, and lastly literature from Pentecostals in the past that affirmed entire sanctification.

In regard to literature for effective methods to teach doctrine in the local church the author mainly used the book, *A Well-Furnished Heart*. The key components drawn from the book that were then implemented were the “Five Core Values of Renewal-Oriented Theological Training”; and an adaption of the authors’, “Five Dimensions of Theological Education” to focus the range and scope of the research.¹ As it pertained to literature from non-Pentecostals in the area of total sanctification the researcher relied upon the work of John Wesley from his sermon/tract, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* and Dr. Vinson Synan’s book, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*. Wesley was used as a starting point in the researcher’s journey to studying total sanctification and Synan’s work helped frame the historical narrative of the doctrine of entire sanctification and how it relates to the subject of Christian holiness in the Pentecostal tradition.

Lastly, the main sources used from Pentecostal authors of the past were from William Durham. He was a Pentecostal pastor/theologian around the time of the Azusa Street revival. Durham’s two main works cited are, *Sanctification* and *The Finished Work of Calvary- It Makes Plain the Great Work of Redemption*. These two pieces from Durham deeply informed the author’s own view on the subject and are the most similar to that which was presented in the research project lessons.

Biblical, Theological, and Historical Foundations

First, MPI’s foundation for a biblical and theological understanding of total sanctification is based on the Old Testament’s pattern of temple and priestly qualifications that find their fulfillment in the New Testament. For example, in the Old

¹ J. T. Flynn, W. L. Tjiong, and R. W. West, *A Well-Furnished Heart: Restoring the Spirit’s Place in the Leadership Classroom* (Fairfax, VA: Xulon Press, 2002), 152 & 210.

Testament God said in 1 Chronicles 29:3 that His temple was a “holy temple” and in the New Testament in Ephesians 2:21 Paul said the believers are called the holy temple of the Lord. As a result, MPI believes that if the temple was not lacking in its sanctification (set apartness and purity), why should Christians consider themselves any less sanctified? Likewise, God said in Exodus 28:41 that the priests were to be sanctified and the Peter said in 1 Peter 2:9 that all Christians are a “royal priesthood.” Once again, MPI teaches that as the priests were without blemish, forgiven of all sin (via animal sacrifice), and anointed by the Holy Spirit to serve God perfectly in the temple, so to, the New Testament Christian is without blemish, forgiven of all sin (via Jesus’ sacrifice), and anointed by the Holy Spirit to serve God perfectly in the temple of their body.

Second, the biblical and theological aspect of MPI’s teachings on entire sanctification are seen in the very fulfillment of the New Covenant promises (made in the Old Covenant) being brought about by Christ’s salvific work. One of the most important New Covenant promises that MPI relies upon to make their case for entire sanctification from both a biblical and theological aspect is found in Ezekiel 36:25-27:

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.²

MPI teaches that Paul used the language of Ezekiel in multiple places to emphasize the reality of Christ’s sacrifice bringing about these promises. The five greatest places where they believe Paul taught that God’s promise to “cleanse” and give a

² The 2011 NIV translation is used for all Scripture quotation unless otherwise noted.

“new heart/spirit” to His people so they can be moved to follow all of God’s laws are listed below:

1. 1 Corinthians 6:11, “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”
2. 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1, “16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” 17 Therefore, “Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” 18 And, “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” “1 Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”
3. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, “3 It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.”

4. Titus 3:1-7, “1 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, 2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. 3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”
5. 2 Timothy 2:22, “Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

In summary, for MPI, if God truly brought a new covenant that results in a new heart that is led by the Spirit to follow the things of God then the disciple of Christ lacks nothing in regard to spiritual purity or empowerment to live without sin. Thus, Christian perfection and entire sanctification are not a secondary experience or only an endeavor for the “spiritually elite” but rather the promise and default position of every born again Christian.

Third, the theological and historical foundation of MPI’s theology of total sanctification is most closely related to William Durham’s historical understanding of

sanctification as he taught in his “Finished Work” doctrine. Which, unlike Wesley, basically asserts that just as salvation is fully received at the moment of receiving Christ, so is sanctification. This doctrine does not remove the need for spiritual growth, because it differentiates between spiritual identity and spiritual maturity. For example, Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 6:11 we were sanctified and washed at the same time we were justified (i.e., “saved”). Likewise, Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 that it is God’s will for all people to sanctified.

MPI counters any attempts to nullify the reality of all Christians being in a state of entire sanctification for an ongoing process by stating that any belief in an ongoing process that removes the reality of being total sanctified removes the force of the proclamations made in Scripture that infers Christians are in fact entirely sanctified. In other words, if one were to say that they since Christians can and do receive further forgiveness of sins after salvation that this somehow shows they are not fully sanctified, MPI would respond by stating that if a Christian sinning and receiving forgiveness doesn’t prove they are not fully saved in the present, than neither does it prove they are not fully sanctified in the present.

This combining together of both salvation and sanctification is done in their theology because they point to verses like the ones cited above to show that the authors of the Bible included sanctification in the same context of justification and salvation. As a result, if a Christian is not fully sanctified than they are neither fully justified. However, if one believes a Christian is fully justified in the present, then they ought to also believe they are fully sanctified.

Methods for Solving and Analyzing the Problem

The method of delivery to solve the problem stated above consisted of the author teaching his book on the subject, *In Him: I am Who God Said I am and I Can Do What God Said I Can Do*, for six weeks. The class was made up of MPI attendees who had been saved less than two years and were in the 101 phase of the church's discipleship program. Students were given an identical ten-question Likert scale-based survey and a three-question short answer questionnaire at the beginning and end of the six weeks. The total number of students who completed the class was 13.

During the week the students were asked to read the upcoming week's lesson, answer the review questions at the end of the lesson, and keep a prayer journal with a minimum of one entry per seven days. The researcher used Moodle (an online learning platform) for posting the lessons and administering the surveys and questionnaires. The six classes were held online via Zoom with the students having their webcam and microphones on. Each class had a pre-lecture 10-minute hang out time, which consisted of small talk and basic review of the lesson. Each weekly lesson was around one hour in length and allowed for class participation with those who volunteered beforehand. The researcher also made a Facebook private group for means of communicating with the students. Facebook was chosen over Moodle (which has similar capabilities) because everyone in the class was more familiar and comfortable with Facebook.

Results and Applications

The results of the research were positive in both the survey and questionnaire. There was an overall increase of 8% in the Likert scale and significant indications of increased understanding of entire sanctification derived from the data in the post

questionnaires. Both of these results helped confirm the thesis for the project, that teaching new believers entire sanctification does have positive results in the Christian experience.

Evaluation of the Project

The project contained both qualitative and quantitative aspects, known as a “mixed method approach.” This approach was used because the researcher believed it best suited the project’s desired outcome- to record the positive changes in new disciples’ lives who are taught entire sanctification in a discipleship course. For the quantitative research the author used the same Likert style questions at both the beginning and end of the course to compare the increase in knowledge the new disciples have gained. In regard to the qualitative aspect the author used a three-question questionnaire where the students were given 2-4 sentences to share their perspective on important topics related to the subject. They were given the same three-question questionnaire before and after the class. The data that was collected from these evaluations was the basis for the claims made in the last chapter as it pertains to potential applications in the church.

Summary

Teaching new believer’s entire sanctification in discipleship at MPI church resulted in noticeable positive outcomes in their understanding on the subject. This is great news because from the Bible, to the first Church Fathers, to the Methodist and Salvation Army movements, to the early Pentecostals- entire sanctification has been the teaching God has used to bring His people into total freedom from sin. Jesus said in John 8:31-32,34-36;

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set

you free.” “34 Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Therefore, historical data, along with sound biblical exegesis, support the thesis of this project, which according to Jesus is a life of freedom based on knowing and holding to the truth.

CHAPTER 2 – SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

The following is an overview of all the applicable literature in areas of study relevant to the research subject, “A church-based curriculum designed to teach entire sanctification to new believers in Metro Praise International’s discipleship program.” The three main categories of research literature can be summarized as follows: effective methods for teaching doctrine in the local church; understanding the doctrine of entire sanctification as it has been taught by both non-Pentecostals and Pentecostals; and, how modern neuroscience supports the positive findings of identity-based learning and cognitive re-training.

Effective Methods for Teaching Doctrine in the Local Church

In the book, *A Well-Furnished Heart*, the authors give two important frameworks that will be adapted for the implementation of this study’s intervention. The first is the “Five Core Values of Renewal-Oriented Theological Training”; and the second is the adaption of Tim Dearborn’s “Five Dimensions of Theological Education.”³

Five Core Values of Renewal-Oriented Theological Training

The five core values of renewal-oriented theological training are: *theologia*, *paideia*, *ekklesia*, *koinonia*, and *pneumatics*.⁴ For simplification and clarity, this study will use the English words; biblical revelation, spiritual growth, church interaction, communal fellowship, and Spirit-empowerment. These core values are key to

³ J. T. Flynn, W. L. Tjong, and R. W. West, *A Well-Furnished Heart: Restoring the Spirit’s Place in the Leadership Classroom* (Fairfax, VA: Xulon Press, 2002), 152 & 210.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 152-3.

understanding how the lessons will be taught, implemented, and evaluated in the intervention and following case study. For example, the lessons will be based on biblical revelation, aimed at spiritual growth, in cooperation with the student's church involvement, accountability sessions, and personal reliance on the Holy Spirit.

Five Dimensions of Theological Education

The five dimensions of theological education are institution, process, faculty, student, and curriculum.⁵ To fit better within the framework of the local church this study will use the terms local church, discipleship program, pastoral teachers, disciples, and discipleship materials. For example, the intervention and following case study will take place in the local church called Metro Praise is International (MPI), within their discipleship program, taught by their pastors, to their newly converted disciples, and with their created discipleship materials.

Understanding Entire Sanctification by Non-Pentecostals and Pentecostals

For this study the author relied upon two main sources of information for each of the two categories as it relates to the doctrine of entire sanctification; mainly, "Non-Pentecostal Sources" and "Pentecostal Sources."

Non-Pentecostal Sources

Starting with non-Pentecostals sources is fitting because the Pentecostal movement did not officially become its own movement until after the Azusa Street Revival in the early 1900's.⁶ First and foremost, in regard to entire sanctification the most

⁵ Ibid., 210.

⁶ This does not mean that the doctrines found in the Pentecostal movement cannot trace their way through church history even to the book of Acts and the apostolic age, but rather that the movement as it is

important historic foundation for MPI's stance of entire sanctification comes from John Wesley's work in 1776, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. The second most important book is Vinson Synan's, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition* because it outlines how the first Pentecostals came from the Methodist-based holiness groups and thus formed their new movement. Synan writes, "John Wesley, the indomitable founder of Methodism, was also the spiritual and intellectual father of the modern holiness and Pentecostal movements."⁷

What is surprising to most Pentecostals is that Wesley was inspired by both Roman Catholic and Anglican mystics such as; Thomas Kempis (*Imitation of Christ*), Jeremy Taylor (*Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*) and former Church of England priest and author William Law (*Treatise on Christian Perfection and Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*). Each of these works were mentioned by Wesley in his *Plain Account on Christian Perfection* as guiding him to his understanding on the subject.

Wesley's basic understanding for the need for Christian perfection to be received and taught can be summed up in his own phrase, "an entire inward and outward conformity to our Master."⁸ Wesley believed that this inward and outward perfection was the only way one could truly fulfill Jesus' great command to love God with all of one's

known today within its various denominations was not started until the early 1900's. See Dr. Eddie L. Hyatt's book, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, for further study.

⁷ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2002), 1.

⁸ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection: As Believed and Taught by the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, From the Year 1725, to the Year 1777*, (Anonymously re-published for the Kindle Edition), 5.

heart, soul, mind, and strength.⁹ Synan summarized Wesley's breakdown of salvation and sanctification in two phases or "blessings." The "first blessing" was to be saved (i.e., "born again by the Spirit") as taught in John 3:3. The "second blessing" was for the Holy Spirit to remove all sin from the nature of the believer and this was considered to be baptized by the Holy Spirit as taught in Acts 1:8.¹⁰ Thus, because Wesley believed that after salvation sin was still in the nature of a believer a second blessing was needed-entire sanctification.¹¹ Though Wesley and holiness history is important to how MPI established its own doctrine of entire sanctification, it is not the doctrine that resembles theirs the most because they do not believe entire sanctification is a separate blessing/experience from salvation. MPI believes, like early Pentecostals such as William Durham, that entire sanctification occurs at the same time of salvation as seen in 1 Corinthians 6:11, "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Pentecostal Sources

The overall most important source and Pentecostal work in this project comes from an early obscure Pentecostal preacher and author from Chicago named, William Durham. He was deeply impacted by the Azusa Revival but was not in agreement with how Pentecostals were adopting the Wesleyan formula of two blessings and then adding a third blessing for the enduement of power with the evidence of speaking in other

⁹ Synan, 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., 8.

¹¹ Ibid., 6.

tongues. Durham didn't question the doctrine of entire sanctification; he just questioned when it came.¹² In 1909 he began to teach that both salvation and sanctification were completed at the moment a person was born again and that the second blessing was for the Spirit to empower the believer.¹³ The founders of Pentecostalism, such as William Seymour, were teaching a person needed three experiences/blessings: first to be saved, second to be sanctified, and third to be filled with the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ Durham taught two experiences- first to be saved/sanctified and second to be filled with the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

Durham's greatest works on the subject are found in two articles he wrote; *Sanctification* and *The Finished Work of Calvary- It Makes Plain the Great Work of Redemption*. Both of these articles were written for the *Pentecostal Testimony*, an early newsletter/journal Durham published and wrote in for the early Pentecostals to share and teach their unique doctrine and theology. The author of this project has recovered these articles and biographical information about Durham from the books, *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices from the First Generation* and *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement*. Though many early Pentecostal teachers like William Seymour rejected Durham's reinvented two-step process known as, "The Finished Work Doctrine," a good number of the founders of the Assembly of God

¹² Douglas Gordon Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 82.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

denomination adopted his thinking and helped begin a new era of Pentecostal theology distinct from the Wesleyan formula of separating entire sanctification from salvation.¹⁶

For the purpose of this research the author has adopted the doctrine of entire sanctification as expressed by Durham. Mainly, that a person is wholly sanctified at the moment of salvation. A key text from Durham that helps summarize this position is from his article on *Sanctification*, “Sanctification is a state... in conversion we come into Christ, our Sanctifier, and are made holy, as well as righteous. When one really comes into Christ, he is as much in Christ as he will ever be.”¹⁷ Likewise, MPI church believes that though sin might remain in the flesh, the flesh is not the nature of the believer. The nature of the believer is a perfected spiritual soul that lives in a body made of flesh but is not the body of flesh nor joined with it in nature, the spiritual soul is a separate nature (also known as “dualism”).

Though the Christian who has been made perfect in Christ from the moment of salvation might sin and need to receive forgiveness, the process of receiving forgiveness and being cleansed again would not be considered an ongoing work of sanctification in the ontological sense. Forgiveness and cleansing of sin in the believer are a returning to a perfect state, not progressing the believer to a perfect state. The new creation and workmanship of the believer is completed instantly in Christ while the spiritual growth will continue. The formation is done but the transformation of thinking will continue until heaven.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 84

A key verse to this understanding comes from Paul in Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” MPI believes that currently, in the present, believers are God’s handiwork and have been created in Christ (from the moment of salvation) to do good works. These good works are not the means in which God perfects the believer; they are the fruit of the believer being God’s perfect handiwork.

The Self and the Soul

Shockingly in his book, *The Atheist Guide to Reality*, Dr. Alex Rosenberg writes, “The self, the person, the “I” inside the body is an illusion.”¹⁸ He doesn’t seem to notice his blatant contradiction by all the times prior in his book he used the word, “I.” However, he is not alone in his conclusion about the self because many other prominent atheists agree with him (e.g., Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris). By denying the soul or anything spiritual inside of humanity, Rosenberg (and those like him) simply attribute everything to the brain and physical states.¹⁹ In other words, humans are just mostly moist physical robots operating on brain chemicals. However, these views rooted in materialism are exactly the opposite of where much of modern science is pointing.

For example, Dr. Andrew Newberg in his groundbreaking work showed how belief in God actually changes the brain. So instead of a person being strapped to the brain they were born with as a brute reality, he has shown that a belief in God can change the brain. He writes in his book, *How God Changes Your Brain*, “The moment we

¹⁸ Alex Rosenberg, *The Atheist's Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life without Illusions*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 315.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 235.

encounter God, or the idea of God, our brain begins to change.”²⁰ This kind of change that can occur in the brain is also confirmed by Dr. Amen in his book, *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*. He writes, “After a quarter century and more than one hundred thousand SPECT scans, the single most important lesson my colleagues and I have learned is this: you can literally change people’s brains, and when you do you change their lives. You are not stuck with the brain you have; you can make it better, and we can prove it.”²¹

Therefore, if all this change is possible in the brain for the individual, what is the mechanism acting upon the brain? In his book, *More Than Matter*, Dr. Keith Ward makes compelling arguments that point towards “pluralistic idealism” or “dual-aspect idealism.” Pluralistic idealism differs with Cartesian dualism in that instead of suggesting like Descartes that humanity has a ghost in the machine (an immaterial spirit in a physical body), rather all physical realities are different manifestations of an immaterial mind (mainly, God). And from God’s mind all realities are formed and shaped, including the self which functions inside a body (also sustained by God’s mind). He writes:

Rigorous philosophical thought about the nature of human persons, and about the place of mind in the cosmos, does, in my view, point toward idealism. The argument for idealism stands on its own, and it offers a view of human life that stands in stark opposition to the materialism that characterizes many popularizations of modern scientific thought. It gives human life a value, significance, and purpose of enduring worth. Not only that. It might actually be true.²²

²⁰ Andrew Newberg, *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist* (New York, Random House Publishing Group, 2009), 41.

²¹ Daniel G. Amen, *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life (Revised and Expanded): The Breakthrough Program for Conquering Anxiety, Depression, Obsessiveness, Lack of Focus, Anger, and Memory Problems* (New York: Harmony, 2015), p. 16.

²² Keith Ward, *More than Matter?* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2010), 212.

With this in mind, the author believes along with Ward that a more complex definition of dualism is needed to meet the challenges of modern materialism to coincide with the Bible's description of the spiritual soul. Nonetheless, dualism by any name is far more accurate of a scientific description of the world than mere materialism and that is where the Bible generally affirms.

The Soul and Biblical Identity

Dr. J.P. Moreland in his book, *The Soul*, gives the following five pieces of evidence for a non-physical soul from which mental states arise (i.e., “the mind”):

(1) there is a raw qualitative feel or a “what it is like” to having a mental state such as a pain (e.g., we can easily tell a pain from a feeling of joy, since the two experiences are qualitatively different); (2) many mental states have *intentionality—of-ness or about-ness directed towards an object (e.g., I can have a thought about a cat or of a lake); (3) mental states are inner, private, and immediate to the subject having them; (4) mental states require a subjective ontology—that is, mental states are necessarily owned by the first-person subjects who have them (only I can possess my thoughts; no one else can); (5) mental states fail to have crucial features (e.g., spatial extension, location, being composed of parts) that characterize physical states and, in general, cannot be described using physical language (my thoughts have no physical dimensions, no physical²³

For this project, mental states and the soul would be seen as one because it seems like Jesus considered the soul and mind similar in their substance when He said to love God with one's heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37). The author believes that a simple way to understand the soul would be to view it as the breath of God in the physical body, as seen in Genesis 2:7. To avoid overwhelming the reader about what constitutes the self

²³ J.P. Moreland, *The Soul*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 78-79.

from the Bible, the author choose to simplify the debate between dichotomy and trichotomy by referring to the self as the “spiritual soul.” By doing this the author hopes to capture the biblical data on the aspect of humanity having a spiritual nature, as well as, possessing a unique identity that comes from mental states. As a result, it is the viewpoint of the author that the spiritual soul is in a state of darkness, sin, and separation before Christ and being born again and it is in a state of light, holiness, and in union after Christ and being born again. This kind of transformation, which is commonly known as the “salvation experience”, has multifaceted results on the identity of the Christian. Since the soul is primarily mental in experience, though spiritual in substance, the change in the Christian’s identity would not only be in terms of their spiritual nature being impacted, but also their mental states. These changes in mental states would be what the author believes Paul had in mind when he wrote Romans 12:1-2. Specifically, that the pattern of one’s mind is what makes a person’s identity and to the extent they change their pattern of thinking would be to the extent that they change their identity.

It is also good to note that since the author believes in total sanctification, this would mean that though a Christian can be made perfect in their spiritual soul at salvation, they may still have a sinful or wrong view of their identity because their pattern of thinking has not changed. This would be similar to a person being granted a valuable inheritance but not knowing about it. Their financial status would have changed without their mental state in regard to their personal wealth changing. They would be rich in one sense (nature) but poor in another sense (mental state). Furthermore, it is from this view that the materials were written to help Christians understand who they actually are in Christ and to encourage them to have a different mental state in regard to their identity.

Neuroscience and Identity-Based Learning

As a way of connecting the intervention to the outside world of research the author thought it would be beneficial to show how modern brain science supports identity-based learning as it relates to biblical teaching and lifestyle transformation. For example, Dr. Caroline Leaf (neuroscientist) in her work, *Perfect You: A Blueprint For Identity*, Drs. Jeffrey Schwartz and Rebecca Gladding (both brain researchers and psychiatrists) in their book, *You Are Not Your Brain*, and Dr. Daniel Amen (psychiatrist and leading expert in SPECT imaging for the brain) in his book *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life* all support the cutting edge theory of neuroplasticity.

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to regrow in response to mind stimulation.²⁴ This kind of re-growth comes from the mind being stimulated in a variety of ways. Dr. Schwartz uses a four-step process to encourage neuroplasticity in the brain called, "The Four Step Method to Brain Change." The four steps are relabel, reframe, refocus, and revalue.²⁵ For this research project to be easily seen in the Bible, the following terms will be used; repent, re-think, re-position, and renew. For example, as the disciple is taught entire sanctification they will also be taught how to repent when they do not think, speak, or act right. Next, they will be encouraged to re-think through the situation and ask God to deliver them the next time they are faced a similar temptation. Afterward, they will be instructed to reposition themselves by thinking on their true, perfect identity in Christ.

²⁴ Caroline Leaf, *Perfect You: A Blueprint For Identity*, (S.L.: Baker Book House, 2019), 389.

²⁵ Jeffrey Schwartz and Rebecca Gladding, *You Are Not Your Brain*, (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2012), xvi.

Lastly, they will be trained to renew their mind to believe they are who God said they are and that they can do what God said they can do.

Summary

The cited literature was helpful in making the curriculum in that it gave the author the structure and foundation for the best results. The structure was based on combining the structural elements of biblical revelation, spiritual growth, church interaction, communal fellowship, and Spirit-empowerment from the book, *A Well Furnished Heart*. The author's book, *In Him*, used biblical revelation as the starting point for each lesson and was referred to throughout the teaching time. Spiritual growth was encouraged in the review questions at the end of each lesson, along with additional questions that might have been derived from the lesson while it was being taught. The communal fellowship came at the beginning of each class in the hangout time and at the end with open discussion. And the Holy Spirit's power was welcomed into every class with an opening prayer, relied upon by the researcher while teaching, and was called upon to seal the lesson at the closing class prayer.

The doctrinal foundation (outside of the Bible) for the class materials was based upon the Wesley and Durham's work in Christian perfection. The author drew mainly upon Durham for the formation of when entire sanctification occurred and followed Wesley's passion for holiness by giving practical steps to living without besetting sin (which was a hallmark of Wesley's teachings- i.e., using practical methods to further the disciple's spiritual growth). Likewise, the foundation for the use of prayer journals by the students was given support by Dr. Schwartz's four steps of cognitive change; which are relabel, reframe, refocus, and revalue. Thus, the students were encouraged in their times

of prayer to discover any areas in their life that were outside of God's will and repent and renew their mind to change their outlook and behavior.

CHAPTER 3 – BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Overview

The phrase entire sanctification used in this project means, “an instantaneous cleansing from Adamic sin, and an empowerment, which Christian believers may receive, by faith...”²⁶ The author of Hebrews wrote in Hebrews 10:14 (KJV), “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Likewise, Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (KJV), “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.” To understand why humanity needs to be entirely sanctified one must first look to the fall of mankind, when all in Adam became entirely unholy. In the beginning the book of Genesis described mankind (Adam & Eve) being made perfect in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). This does not mean that they could not grow in their knowledge of God or go to higher states of glory, but it meant that they were completely good both physically and spiritually. Their physical makeup was perfectly good because it was without any flaws or defects and their spiritual soul was perfectly good because inwardly, they were without any sin, evil, or uncleanness. King Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 7:29, “This only have I found: God created mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes.”

Their perfection did not exclude them from being tempted by their own evil desires or from an outside source, for even Lucifer (being perfect in his ontology was able to be tempted by his own evil desires while dwelling in heaven with the other angels, Isaiah 14:14). According to Genesis 3:7-11 after Adam and Eve sinned, they lost their

²⁶ Kenneth J. Grider. *Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism*. (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1980. Kindle Edition), loc. 73.

perfection. Some of the first consequences of their fall from glory was that they were ashamed of their nakedness, became afraid of God, and desired to run from Him and hide instead of enjoying fellowship as they had before.

After God pronounced His curses upon them and the earth they were removed from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23). From that point on their bodies began to die and suffer from not being clothed in the glory of God and the new state of their soul was bent towards sin (Genesis 4:6-7). David, like Solomon in Ecclesiastes 7:29, noted that the state of mankind after the fall was dreadful, Psalms 51:5, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Tragically their fall was not just for them alone, but also for all humanity that would come through their loins. Paul summarized the impact of their fall on all of humanity in Romans 5:12-21. The key verse in this passage is Romans 5:18, “Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.” The condemnation Paul is addressing in verse 18 is both physical and spiritual; physical condemnation because Adam’s sin brought the reign of death to all humanity according to Romans 5:12, and spiritual condemnation because humanity was separate from God personally according to Romans 5:21.²⁷

Though humanity lost their perfection in the fall, they did not lose the image of God that was bestowed on them in creation. Moses wrote in Genesis 1:27, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Post fall mankind is still mentally superior to all creation by being able

²⁷ Paul used only Adam in his treatise of the fall of mankind in the book of Romans impacting all humanity, not Eve, because Adam was considered the federal head of humanity. For more on *Federal Headship* consider Dr. Millard Erickson’s summary in his book, *Christian Theology – Third Ed.*, p. 578.

to reason and have a self-reflecting conscience, able to subdue all the animals, and have spiritual interaction with God personally (though it must be initiated by God and lived out by faith, Psalm 115:16). The fall was a great tragedy, but God's plan of redemption was greater. God made a promise to all humanity in Genesis 3:15 that from the seed of Eve a child would be born that would crush the head of Satan, the evil serpent.

Moving from the Garden of Eden and the fall one can begin to see that entire sanctification in the Old Testament is foreshadowed in many different ways because it is the practical means in which God promised to restore mankind back to their rightful place—first spiritually at re-birth, then second, physically at the resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:1-5). Starting with God clothing Adam and Eve with animal skin one can see God restoring humanity's lost covering of glory. Thus, God desired by the one sacrifice of Jesus to both save fallen humanity from their sins and to separate them from their sins (sanctify them).

An Old Testament Understanding of Salvation and Sanctification

This section will give a brief summary of how both concepts of salvation and sanctification are seen within in the context of God's deliverance plan for the Jewish people. In other words, the Jewish people believed that the same God who saved them from their troubles was the same God who sanctified them (made them holy and separated them from the other nations, Leviticus 20:7-8). This work of deliverance was to first come to them as God's chosen nation, and then go through them to the nations. God had promised Abraham that His seed would be a source of great blessing for all people. God said to Abram in Genesis 12:3, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Hence, Paul wrote in Galatians, with Christ in view, that "Scripture foresaw that God would

justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you’” (Galatians 3:8).

Likewise, Moses, Israel’s greatest prophet, had much to write about salvation and sanctification while leading Israel to the Promised Land. Consider his song of deliverance to God in Exodus 15 after God drowned Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea. Moses sang the following: “The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation” (15:2); and, “In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling” (15:13). Moses understood that God was not only saving the Israelite people, but He was also making them a holy nation able to dwell in the holy presence of God. Likewise, this concept of saving and sanctifying is made even clearer when God spoke to Moses in Exodus 19:4-6:

4 ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, 6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.

For this reason, New Testament writers like Peter relate this kind of saving and sanctifying language of God with the Jewish people in Exodus to all people in the New Covenant. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:9-10, “9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Another example of salvation and sanctification being seen as a unified theme in the Old Testament comes from the prophets; especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah, a

pre-Babylonian captivity prophet was given insight, along with Ezekiel a captive in Babylon, for not only the near future but for the distant future in which God would fully enact His plan from Genesis and deliver not only the Jewish people from the powers of their natural enemies, but to save and sanctify all people from the consequences of the fall. Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 31:33-34;

33 “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Ezekiel foretold a similar promise in Ezekiel 36:25-27;

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

We know that these promises relate to Jesus’ plan of redemption for all people because the author of Hebrews quotes in Hebrews 8:8-13 the passage from Jeremiah 31 and declared that the New Covenant is the one Jesus came to initiate. Furthermore, he wrote in Hebrews 9:14-15, “14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! 15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.” As a result, just as salvation and sanctification were seen as the one work of God in the Old Testament and brought to its fulfillment for

all people in Jesus in the New Covenant, so the New Testament explains in more detail what this salvation and sanctification looks like.

A New Testament Understanding of Salvation and Sanctification

One could consider Jesus' prayer in John 17 as one of the most powerful declarations of what God intended to do for all people through the sacrificial work of Christ. Consider the following:

17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

The meaning of “truly sanctified” would not entail an ongoing process or progressive act because the word “sanctified” in the Greek is *ἡγιασμένοι* and is in the perfect tense, which means, “completed in the past but exists in the present.”²⁸ One can see this already happening in part before Jesus' work on the cross because when Peter wanted his whole body washed Jesus said in John 15:3, “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.” However, it would not be completed until Jesus said, “It is finished” from the cross. Therefore, the saving and cleansing work of God were going to take place both at the cross and be implemented to the believer at the moment of their salvation.

Consider such important words from Jesus in Matthew 5:48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” This command to be perfect came in the same place as all the already clear commands of Jesus known as the “Beatitudes,” thus to

²⁸ Heiser, *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology*, Logos Edition. “Perfect Tense” — The verb tense used by the writer to describe a completed verbal action that occurred in the past but which produced a state of being or a result that exists in the present (in relation to the writer). The emphasis of the perfect is not the past action so much as it is as such but the present “state of affairs” resulting from the past action. This database will be used for all Greek grammar unless otherwise noted.

limit this command to just a goal is to forget the clear present tense nature of the word, “be.” Jesus did not say, “strive to become perfect,” but rather He said in the present tense to, “be perfect, just as God the Father is presently in a state of perfection.” Likewise, to try and limit Jesus’ command of perfection to just the realm of loving forgiveness would miss Jesus’ point entirely because the Father is not just perfect in performing the act of forgiveness; He is perfect in love as a grounding for forgiving, for He is love (1 John 4:8). In other words, God’s ontological nature of perfect love and holiness grounds all His other attributes and actions- including the ability to forgive perfectly (Ezekiel 36:22-38). Jesus was giving an ontological command in the word, “be,” not just a directive command, “do.”²⁹ How else could a disciple even do one thing perfect, like forgiving one’s enemies, if they first are not made perfect? From the disciple first “being” made spiritual perfect, they will be able to “do” perfect actions like forgiving their enemies. However, one cannot “do” perfect actions like forgiveness unless they are first perfect as God is perfect, hence Jesus’ command in Matthew 5:48.

Another great New Testament passage that teaches entire sanctification comes from Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:11: “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” Here we read the Paul includes sanctification, along with justification in the past when a person was born again. To say one is not fully sanctified at salvation would be like saying one is not fully justified at salvation.³⁰ Also, note that

²⁹ *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, entry Matthew 5:45,48.

³⁰ *Sanctification: The Bible Does Not Teach That It Is a Second Definite Work of Grace*, Pentecostal Testimony 1, no. 8 (1911).

Paul includes the term “washed” as well to make sure that the reader understands that washing away of one’s sins is not just economic, like a debt being cleared, but it is also ontological.³¹

Other great passages to reference are those in which one can see a transition from the term disciple being the most widely used name for Christians in the gospels and Acts to the term, “saints/holy ones.” Likewise, Paul at the beginning of His letters signified who he believed the people of God were at the present time by using the term “saint” frequently. Notice in his first letter to the Corinthians how Paul combined the term “saints” with the word “sanctified” in the past tense: “To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people [saints], together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours (1 Corinthians 1:2). This greeting signifies that the apostles believed that God’s people on earth were already fully sanctified and made holy- hence giving them the endearing name of “saints/holy ones.”³²

Furthermore, Paul’s prayer in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 exemplifies the apostles’ heart for all God’s people to be holy in all they do because God first made them holy at salvation: “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.” Though the term, “sanctify” is in the present active sense this does not mean that the cleansing is ongoing in the way of making someone more holy or sanctified, however,

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

it means that it was to be received in the present as an active reality and “kept.”³³ Paul had already in the previous chapter written: “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified [past tense]” (4:3). Therefore, this prayer is an actual desire that Paul believed was God’s will and could be received in the present and kept moving forward in the future. Paul’s prayer is not just for partial or on-going sanctification, but rather it is for entire sanctification because the Greek word for “through and through” in the NIV is “*όλοτελεις*,” from the root, “*τελεις*,” which means, “perfect, wholly, and completely.”³⁴ This is reiterated in the second part of the verse when Paul writes, “may your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless.” The Greek word for “whole” is “*όλόκληρον*,” and means, “complete, entire.”³⁵ Therefore, the verse could be read as the following, “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you perfectly [in the present because it is the will of God for you to be sanctified]. May your entire spirit, entire soul and entire body be kept blameless [without sin] at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Lastly, a powerful verse that teaches entire sanctification at salvation is Hebrews 10:14: “For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” Note in translations like the NIV that the last phrase is translated, “being made holy,” however, Dr. Wallace in the NET version translated the verse as the KJV does- in the past tense. Consider the following comparison in all three versions:

³³ Charles A. Wanamaker in his book, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, entry for 1 Thes. 5:23 in regard to Paul’s phrase, “be kept whole,” he writes, “Paul clearly wants his converts to be found complete and without fault in every aspect of their existence at the time of the public manifestation of their Lord.”

³⁴ Word study taken from *Louw-Nida Lexicon* and *The Lexham Theological Wordbook* for, *όλοτελεις*.

³⁵ *Ibid*, *όλόκληρον*.

1. KJV- For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified;
2. NET- For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy;
3. NIV- For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

The reason for this difference in translation comes from the difficulty of translating verbs in the present passive form. Sometimes based on context and the translator's preference they are made past tense, even though they are generally thought about being in the present because of ongoing action. They can be translated to show either ongoing action or a completed/received action in the present.³⁶ To avoid further regress into this subject, the author has chosen the past-tense rendering of this phrase because, in just four verses prior the author of Hebrews noted that the saints he was writing to were already perfectly holy. He wrote in Hebrews 10:10, "And by that will, we have been made holy [perfect passive/past tense] through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Therefore, since we can assume that the author wouldn't contradict himself in the space of just a few verses, it is good to accept the NET and KJV's translation because they not only preserve the meaning of Hebrews 10:14, but support the accumulative argument being made in the entire chapter, which is, "God makes sinners perfect and holy by the blood of Jesus."

³⁶ *ESV Study Bible notes*, Hebrews 10:14, "...those who are being sanctified (i.e., those who are made holy; 2:11; 10:10; 13:12). The Greek present participle allows for the idea of progressive sanctification in this life and/or present positional sanctification of the believer as one who from the start is deemed perfectly holy (see 10:10; and "saints" in 6:10; 13:24)."

Theological Foundations

The five main theological positions of sanctification have been categorized as the Wesleyan, Reformed, Pentecostal, Keswick, and Augustinian-Dispensational views. In Gundry's book, *Five Views on Sanctification*, he does a great job of presenting scholars in modern times from each position to outline their view and respond to the critiques of the other positions. Below is a brief outline of each main view from the book:

1. The Wesleyan Perspective: Sanctification is the definite and complete work of the Holy Spirit that comes after salvation and results in a perfected heart to love God and people perfectly. Also, it brings the ability to overcome all sin by being completely cleansed from all inward corruption of the fall and empowered to keep God's law perfectly.³⁷
2. The Reformed Perspective: Sanctification is when the Holy Spirit, with the believer's responsible participation, is delivered from the pollution of sin. Likewise, they are renewed in their entire nature according to the image of God and enabled to live lives that are pleasing to God.³⁸
3. The Pentecostal Perspective: Sanctification is an act of separation from that which is evil, and of dedication unto God. Sanctification is realized in the believer by recognizing his identification with Christ in His death and

³⁷ Dieter, Melvin E. *Five Views on Sanctification* (Counterpoints: Bible and Theology) (p. 12). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

resurrection, and by faith reckoning daily upon the fact of that union, and by offering every faculty continually to the dominion of the Holy Ghost.³⁹

4. The Keswick Perspective: Sanctification means to be made holy to live holy by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰
5. The Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective: Sanctification is the removal of sin and change of position before God, however, the believer remains in a sinful nature even after salvation, thus they are both a sinner and a saint.⁴¹

MPI falls between the Pentecostal view (because they believe sanctification is not a secondary experience, unlike the Wesleyan view) and the Wesleyan view (because they believe it to be definite and complete, unlike the mainline Pentecostal view). It is good to note that the Pentecostal view draws much from the Wesleyan view and can be seen and as the child of Wesley. However, this does not mean that either the Wesley view or the Pentecostal view (or their variations) are not found in church history. Just as those today who are from the Reformed traditions would claim that the Reformers were restoring the teachings of Augustine, who came much earlier than Calvin and Luther (against the teachings of Rome), the same is true with those who hold to the Wesleyan and Pentecostal views- they too believe their doctrines are rooted in church history with such fathers as Polycarp, Ignatius, and Clement of Rome.

³⁹ Ibid., 112.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 157.

⁴¹ Melvin, *Five Views on Sanctification*, 200.

That is why it is wrong to believe that since Wesley is more recent in church history compared to the other views such as those found in the Reformed or Augustine tradition, that the Wesleyan view (and as a result the Pentecostal view) are new doctrines to the church. Though it is true that in more recent times, John Wesley was a strong and popular teacher of the theological doctrine of Christian Perfection, he certainly was not the first nor the inventor of such ideas. Consider that John Wesley was a devoted student of the Bible; thus, whatever would be attributed to him, could simply be said to be the meaning of the writers of Scripture since so much of what he taught we based solely on the Word of God. Also, Wesley was an avid student of the church fathers, and therefore whatever he taught could be said to be inspired by their writings. Noble writes about Wesley's influences, "The Bible was Wesley's source of authority for his doctrine, interpreted in the light of the early Fathers and of his own tradition in the Church of England."⁴²

Complete vs. Progressive and Instantaneous vs. Secondary

MPI believes in complete (entire) nature of sanctification in contrast to the Pentecostal, Reformed, Keswick, and Augustinian-Dispensational views. Though each of the three views share a belief that one's position with God has changed by being sanctified, they all agree that progressive sanctification is needed. Surprisingly, Horton, who represented the Pentecostal view, sides with the Reformed and Augustinian-Dispensational views on this matter, despite recognizing the debt that the Pentecostals owe the Wesleyan Holiness movement in their early days. While Horton does agree that

⁴² Noble, T.A. *Holy Trinity: Holy People: The Theology of Christian Perfecting*. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013. Kindle Edition), p. 3.

Christian perfection should be the goal of every Christian, he is not confident that it can be attained in this life.⁴³ Likewise, the Keswick view doesn't believe in Christian perfection in this life, but does affirm that Christians should strive to live at "perfect peace" with God and His law.⁴⁴

The Augustinian-Dispensational and Reformed views are similar in that they openly admit that it is by God's sovereign choice to allow humanity to remain in a "Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde" state even though the Scriptures command believers to live holy. Sadly, they are convinced that such passages like Galatians 5:16-24 and Romans 7:14-25 point towards their view of the constant struggle between being a sinner and a saint. The author has taken the time to add an exegesis in the appendix in the lesson book used for the research of the often mentioned passage of Romans 7:14-25 to demonstrate that Paul was not considering himself a sinner at the time of his writing the book of Romans but was rather most likely using present tense language to retell his past experience as an unregenerate Jew. Also, in his curriculum, the author addresses many of the passages used by the Augustinian-Dispensational and Reformed views to show they do not detract from the teachings of MPI on entire sanctification when properly understood (nor do the passages used by Pentecostals or Keswick for ongoing sanctification).

As will be discussed further in the next section, the one major difference between the MPI view and the Wesleyan view is not in regard to the extent of sanctification (as with the above four views), but rather the timing. John Fletcher, a confidant of Wesley, taught that sanctification was the second work of the Holy Spirit, also known as the

⁴³ Melvin, *Five Views on Sanctification*, 110.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

“baptism of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁵ In contrast, MPI teaches that because of such passages like 1 Corinthians 6:11, entire sanctification occurs at salvation and that the baptism of the Holy Spirit (as mentioned in Acts 1-2) is not for purity but for power. MPI teaches that the second definite work of the Holy Spirit, also known as the “Father’s Promise” and the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is for the endowment of power to be Christ’s witness and is evidenced in speaking in unknown languages (i.e., tongues).

MPI believes this is the clear understanding of Acts 1-2 because nothing in that portion of Scripture is in reference to sanctification or holiness in character (or nature), but rather power to preach and testify of Jesus’ salvific work. Consider Jesus said in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Thus, the promise of the Father mentioned in Acts 1:4 was in reference to power, not holiness. Likewise, Luke recorded in Acts 2:1-4 that when the disciples in the upper room received the baptism of the Holy Spirit they began to speak in tongues and preach to the crowd. There is no mention of holiness or sanctification. As a result, it is clear to MPI that the baptism of the Holy is in reference to receiving power to be God’s end-time witnesses, not become sanctified.

Historical Foundations

This section will briefly lay out the previous understandings of entire sanctification from some of the most popular mainline Pentecostal denominations and the main voices that either preceded Pentecostalism and were foundational to its

⁴⁵ Melvin, *Five Views on Sanctification*, 44.

understanding of entire sanctification or were voices in early Pentecostalism but were not in the popular denominations.⁴⁶

Entire Sanctification in the Methodist Movement with John Wesley

Entire sanctification for Pentecostals finds its origin mainly in the teachings of John Wesley and the Methodist movement.⁴⁷ John Wesley believed that the second work of the Holy Spirit after regeneration was the baptism of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of being made completely holy and perfect. Wesley believed that Christian perfection was commanded and fulfilled in love.⁴⁸ In other words, the only way a person could truly love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength and their neighbor as themselves was if they were first perfected in love by the work of God.⁴⁹ Therefore, he believed that every believer needed to be baptized in the Holy Spirit so they could be freed from their fallen nature and be able to live perfectly in love.⁵⁰ John Wesley went so far as to teach that sin was no longer even in the flesh and believed that the born again experience not only made a person's spiritual soul new, but their very physical body.⁵¹ Some wrongly state that Wesley tied the concept of Christian perfection to sinlessness, however, this is not

⁴⁶ The author will not be delving into the beliefs of Christians regarding entire sanctification before the 1700's because it would overload the research in hundreds of historical accounts.

⁴⁷ For further study consider Vinson Synan's book, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*.

⁴⁸ Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 6.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁵¹ Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 4,16.

true.⁵² Wesley, simply believed that once sin was removed by the second blessing in both the body and spiritual soul, a person would no longer live in continual, willful sin.⁵³

The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition

It is no wonder that when God began to move in the early days of Pentecostalism in the U.S. that the majority of those open and ready for the experience of the God's spiritual gifts were those connected to the Methodist movement- either in a direct way or an indirect way within the many different holiness groups that came from Methodist revivals and circuit riding preachers.⁵⁴ These holiness groups might of had differences between themselves, but they were unified in their belief that the baptism of the Spirit was for all people and it gave them power to live holy and be witnesses for Jesus.⁵⁵ As Charles Purham and William Seymour began to expand the influence of Pentecostal doctrine within the holiness circles there was both rejection and acceptance.⁵⁶ Those who accepted the new experience, called the third blessing, began to spread like wild fire.⁵⁷

The vast majority of early Pentecostals simply moved back the act of being sanctified by the Holy Spirit to happening before one could receive the gift of tongues and hence the gift of tongues was then seen as the true result of being baptized in the Holy Spirit.⁵⁸ This made better work of the actual texts the holiness preachers had been

⁵² Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 89-99.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

using for the baptism of the Holy Spirit because in places like Acts 1-2 there is no mention of sanctification or holy living, but rather receiving power to be a witness for Jesus. Then this promised experience was validated and evidenced on the Day of Pentecost by the new disciples speaking in unlearned languages (i.e., “tongues”). It didn’t take long for the new three-step formula to be preached among the holiness churches. It was a simple message, “God wants all people to be, ‘saved, sanctified, and fill with the Holy Ghost!’”

The Finished Work Doctrine with William Durham

Provisionally, as time went by, people like William Durham (a Chicago pastor) who was touched by the fires of Azusa Street, began to further examine that second step of sanctification. The reason for the examination was because it didn’t seem to fit like it used to since losing its connection to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He rightly began to ask where does the Bible teach that sanctification occurs after salvation?⁵⁹ He saw the many clear references in the Bible that taught sanctification was directly connected to experience of salvation.⁶⁰ With that in mind he came up with a new and better way of explaining entire sanctification in his theological system called, “The Finished Work Doctrine.”⁶¹

The Finished Work Doctrine kept all the wonderful truths of Wesley and the holiness preachers concerning being made perfect in love by the power of the Spirit, but it didn’t need to teach that sanctification was the result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit

⁵⁹ Jacobsen, *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology*, 82.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

(it was obvious now to many Pentecostals that it was indeed for empowerment evidenced with spiritual gifts- mainly speaking in tongues).⁶² Durham began to skillfully teach his new two-step understanding and many agreed it was more biblical. All people needed to do was get saved and filled with the Holy Spirit because entire sanctification was a direct result of salvation.

How Most Pentecostals Failed to Understand and Apply the Finished Work Doctrine

Tragically, the Finished Work doctrine was never truly embraced by the Pentecostal movement at large. First, three-step holiness preachers like Seymour didn't like it because they thought it was changing the tried and true doctrine they had all once believed. Shockingly, Seymour even went so far as expelling Durham for Azusa Street and wouldn't let him preach there anymore after hearing about his finished work doctrine.⁶³ Second, those like Aimee Semple McPherson with the Four Square movement and some in the Assembly of God tried to embrace Durham's teachings into their movements but they didn't have the same kind of theological mind to keep it pure and free from more non-Pentecostal views like progressive or gradual sanctification.⁶⁴

After Durham died in 1912 at the young age of thirty-nine, the mainline denominations went in basically two directions. They either stayed in their three-step process like the Church of God based in Cleveland, TN or they went away from the

⁶² Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 153.

⁶³ Goff, James R. Jr. "Sanctification Scuffles" in *Christian History*, Issue 58, Vol. XVII, No. 2., 18-19. Source: <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/sanctification-scuffles>, accessed Sept. 25, 2019.

⁶⁴ Dieter, Melvin E. *Five Views on Sanctification* (Counterpoints: Bible and Theology) (p. 110). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

Finished Work Doctrine to embrace the Protestant mainline view of progressive/gradual sanctification.⁶⁵ That is why the author believes; only within a few decades after Durham's death, the Assembly of God changed their statement on sanctification from that of one that leaned more toward the Finished Work perspective to one that now points more toward the views of non-Pentecostal Protestants like Baptists, Presbyterians, etc.

Today, many Pentecostals (including those in denominational leadership) do not even know there was a beautiful way given to them by Durham to settle the dispute in Pentecostalism between the two-step and three-step process without losing any of their core doctrines.⁶⁶ Now as a result of rejecting God's gift from within the Pentecostal movement, the author believes Pentecostals have lost the same passion for holiness because whatever side one took in the previous holiness debates, there was no debate that God wanted all men holy in the present. However, the mainline view of gradualism preached by the most popular Pentecostals preachers from the Hillsong movement (Brian Houston, Carl Lentz, etc.) and in the Assembly of God (Rich Wilkerson, Samuel Rodriguez, Jim Raley, Reggie Dabbs, etc.) has seemingly led to many unholy believers that claim, "no one is perfect." Plus, even some of the biggest Pentecostal churches in the nation like the Potter's House in Dallas with T.D. Jakes and Jentezen Franklin of Free Chapel do not even have a belief statement on sanctification on their website.⁶⁷ It seems

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ The author is not able at this time to site any official study on the matter, but rather give antidotal evidence from talking to dozens of pastors/preachers over the last twenty years from various Pentecostal backgrounds.

⁶⁷ Potter's House, <https://thepottershouse.org/explore/belief-statement/> & Free Chapel, <https://www.freechapel.org/about/#eightVisions>. Accessed Sept. 22, 2018.

that what once used to be so vitally important to a movement that holiness was in their very names, now is not even worth a mention.

It is the opinion of the author that since Pentecostals failed to unify around the two-step process that included entire sanctification, they gave up entire sanctification altogether with the three-step process and settled for something less than what both views held in regard to holy living.⁶⁸ Currently, it is a trend in the church world, even among some Pentecostals and Methodists, to put signs in their churches or on their advertisements that say such things as, “No perfect people allowed.”⁶⁹ This would have been on the same level of blasphemy in the early Pentecostal churches (both with the two-step and three-step leaders) because they hung banners over their buildings and tent meetings that read, “Holiness Unto the Lord.”⁷⁰

MPI’s Position on Entire Sanctification

With all this in mind, the author hopes to demonstrate by the illustrations below how the concepts of entire sanctification and salvation can be related to the theological training of new Christians at MPI church. The first illustration would be in the context of

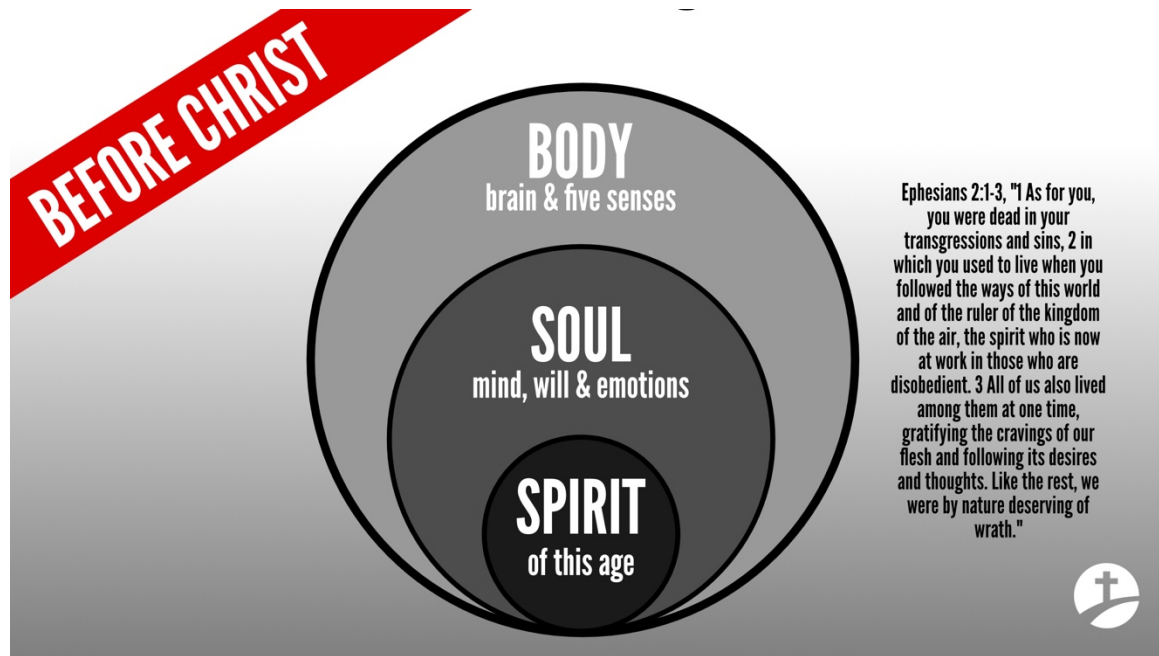
⁶⁸ Douglas Jacobsen in his book, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement*, quotes Durham as saying, “Men are weighed in the balance and found wanting. Men are proving their loyalty to their theories and their disloyalty to God, by clinging to their old theories after they are exposed by the Scriptures.” Jacobsen rightly adds, “It was time, especially for Pentecostals who held a second-work view of sanctification, either to give up their erroneous ways of thinking or to be cast out of the Pentecostal movement and ultimately to be cast out of God’s grace as well. While Durham could sympathize with the pain involved, he allowed for no compromise on the basic point. Facts were facts and truth was truth. It was that simple. He said that when Christ returned, he hoped he would be among that ‘little company standing against almost unheard of odds, but standing as unmovable as a rock, defending the glorious truths of the Gospel.’” (loc. 2407-2408).

⁶⁹ Written on the church’s outside board, <https://twitter.com/raymondafoss/status/1091816476061904897> (accessed 25 September 2019).

⁷⁰ Example seen in the Asbury University’s Chapel, <https://tfwm.com/asbury-universitys-hughes-auditorium-upgrades-sound-with-worxaudio-line-array-technology/>. Another example at an African American Pentecostal church, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1178687/holiness-unto-the-lord-shiloh-photograph-morris-dennis/>. Accessed Sept. 22, 2018.

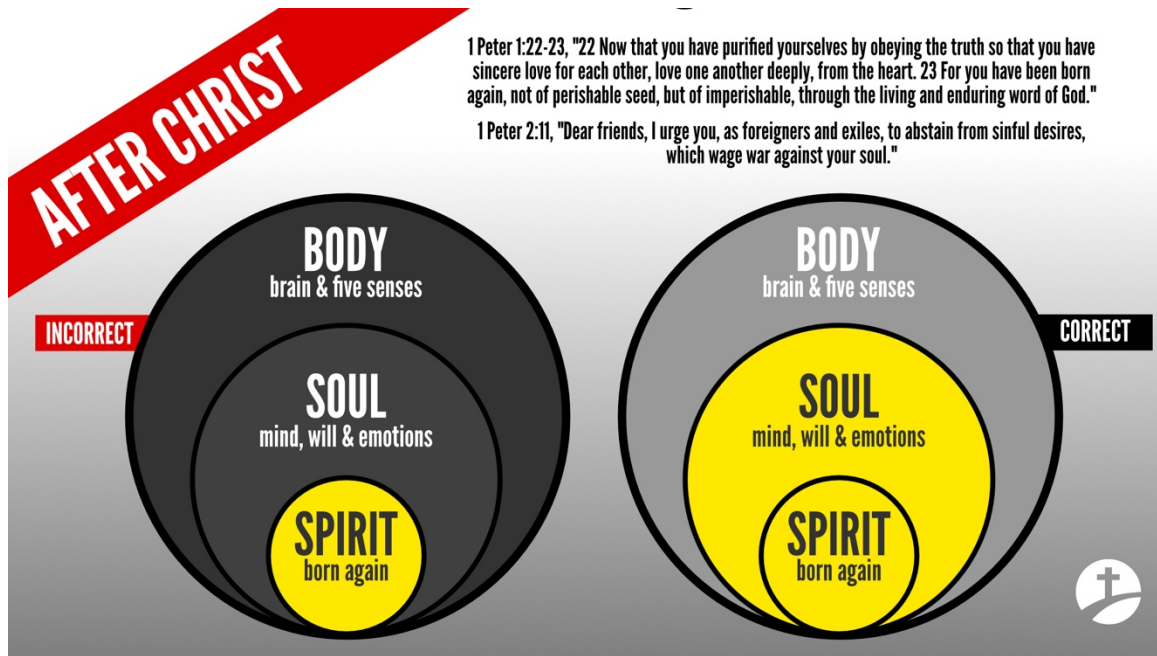
showing a person who they were before Christ with the passage from Ephesians 2:1-3 relating to a humanity's nature before the fall.

Illustration 1. The Ontology of a Christian Before Being Born Again



The second illustration is useful for showing the difference between what they might think has happened because of bad teaching in prior churches, false religions, etc.

Illustration 2. The Ontology of a Christian After Being Born Again



The third and fourth illustrations explain the proper way to view the conflict they will still face as Christians who are saved and sanctified.

Illustration 3: The Flesh vs. The Spirit

THE FLESH vs THE SPIRIT



Illustration 4. The Crucified Life



The above illustrations give a sound biblical framework and foundation for defense of the following theological statement that summarizes MPI's position on entire sanctification, which is;

Because of the fall all mankind is born sinful, but because of Jesus all believing people can be born again in the divine nature of Jesus and be restored to the inner image of God in its fullness. Though this spiritual rebirth impacts man's spirit and soul by making it perfect and whole by the process of entire sanctification, the sinful body remains until death (or rapture). The body of mankind does not contain the nature of man because when mankind's spiritual soul is disembodied at death (awaiting the resurrection) we are still human, made in God's image. Nor did Jesus stop being fully human while in His post death activities. Therefore, humanity's ontology is not primarily material- they are more than their body. Humans are not their material bodies in an individual sense, or in a collective sense. For example, a person is not their individual stomach, leg, or arm; nor are they a combination of all their body parts. Therefore, the body (with all its parts, including the brain with its five senses) is to be counted crucified with Christ until it is transformed into the likeness of Jesus' resurrected body. This final act of restoring mankind's body to perfection is the last salvific act of God giving at the resurrection. Henceforth, Christians are to keep their sinful body, along with their perfected spiritual soul, free from all sin.

From this biblical and theological position, the book which was used to teach the classes was written.

Summary

In a modest, yet, honest attempt the author tried to honor the above biblical, theological, and historical foundations in the writing of the curriculum. Though the book, *In Him*, did not contain direct quotes or references to Wesley and Durham, it should be evident to anyone familiar with their works that that general ideas of their view of holiness are present (along with those from the various Holiness-Pentecostal traditions). More specific to Wesley and Durham, in Chapter One: I am a Newly Created Child of God, the author makes it plain that sanctification occurs at the same time of salvation. This would be due to the heavy influence of Durham. As well as, in Chapter Three: I am Entirely Sanctified, the author goes to great lengths to show the correlation between the timing of both salvation and sanctification. Pertaining to Wesley, in Chapter Four: I Can Love God with all My Heart, the author gives insight into Jesus' command to love God and people as the basis for the Christian keeping all of God's commands. Therefore, it was the intention of the author to gather together all the best from the past holiness traditions and make them palatable for the modern Christian, as seen in Scripture, with the hope that new believers in this generation would embrace the doctrine of holiness.

CHAPTER 4 – METHODS FOR SOLVING AND ANALYZING THE PROBLEM

Overview

The specific methods for analyzing the problem were chosen to help the researcher gain insight into the new believer's belief system as it pertains to Christian identity. The researcher used a mix-method approach, which included a Likert Scale survey (quantitative) and a questionnaire (qualitative)- both sets were taken with the students remaining anonymous. The same Likert Scale survey and questionnaire were given before and after the six-week class. The Likert Scale survey had 10 statements that the students were asked to describe their feelings in agreement with based on a 10-point scale, 1 being the lowest sense of agreement and 10 being the strongest. The questionnaire had three questions and allowed the students to write their thoughts and feelings out in their own words.

The survey and questionnaire, along with the class materials, were hosted on Moodle, a free online learning platform. The class materials included a weekly lesson from the book written by the author delivered each week, along with a short checklist questionnaire to help the student stay on track. The questionnaire checklist was used as an accountability tool to see if the student was reading the lesson, answering the questions at the end of the lesson, and keeping a prayer journal. The students would answer "yes" or "no" to the following three questions:

1. I read the lesson for this week.
2. I answered the review questions for this week's lesson.
3. I journaled a minimum of one time this week.

Below is how the home page on Moodle was organized for the student:

Illustration 5. The Moodle Home Page

In Him Identity Class

The screenshot displays the Moodle interface for the 'In Him Identity Class'. At the top, there is a breadcrumb trail: Home > Courses > In Him Class. Below this, the page is divided into several sections:

- NAVIGATION:** A sidebar menu on the left containing links for Home, Dashboard, Site pages, Current course, In Him Class (with sub-links for Participants, Badges, General, Lesson 1-6), and Courses.
- ADMINISTRATION:** A sidebar menu on the left containing links for Course administration (Turn editing on, Edit settings, Users, Filters, Reports, Grades, Badges, Backup, Restore, Import, Publish, Reset, Question bank), Switch role to..., and Site administration (with a search box).
- News forum:** A central area with links to News forum, Consent and Release Form, Pre-Class Survey, Pre-Class Questionnaire, Post-Class Survey, and Post-Class Questionnaire.
- Lesson 1 through Lesson 6:** A vertical list of lesson sections. Each lesson section contains links for Lesson X Reading and Lesson X Checklist Survey.
- SEARCH FORUMS:** A search box with a 'Go' button and a link to 'Advanced search'.
- LATEST NEWS:** A section with a link to 'Add a new topic...' and a recent news item: 'Welcome to the In Him Identity Class!' dated 13 Mar, 13:08 by Joe Wyrostek, with a link to 'Older topics...'.
- UPCOMING EVENTS:** A section stating 'There are no upcoming events' with links to 'Go to calendar...' and 'New event...'.
- RECENT ACTIVITY:** A section showing 'Activity since Sunday, 14 June 2020, 9:06 AM' with a link to 'Full report of recent activity...' and a note 'No recent activity'.

One lesson from the researcher's book was presented on the Zoom video conferencing each week in non-stop consecutive order. The researcher would open the Zoom room approximately 10-15 minutes before class to let the students to come and discuss their questions regarding the lesson or share briefly about their life. The class would then start with prayer and last about an hour as the research taught the lesson. Afterward, the researcher would keep the Zoom room open for 10-15 minutes for the

students to share any feedback from the class. Students were asked beforehand if they would like to participate in the class by answering the review questions or bring up any comments they had from the reading. The lessons were then recorded and uploaded to the Facebook group that was formed for the students to ask questions during the week, post absences, and stay in contact with the researcher. The researcher chose to have a Facebook group, along with the Moodle page, because he felt Facebook would be easier for the students to communicate with him and each other since they already were on Facebook and weren't familiar with Moodle. The recorded videos on Facebook also allowed for those who were absent to watch the lesson and ask their questions (if they had any).

In summary, the following online platforms were used for analyzing the problem:

1. Moodle: The place where the lessons, questionnaires, and surveys were posted.
2. Facebook: Used for communication with the students and posting recorded video lessons.
3. Zoom: Hosted the online video class.

After the six weeks the researcher asked everyone to make sure they had done all the reading and post class questionnaire and survey. The class started with 16 students who did the pre-class questionnaire and 13 who completed the pre-class survey. At the end it was 13 who did the post-class questionnaire and 13 who completed the post-class survey. Since the researcher did not want to be perceived as forcing the new believers to stay in the class he let them leave the class without any follow-up from himself. He simply asked his church administrator to write them on Facebook or email to see if they

were still in the class. As it turned out three dropped out very earlier and thus a total of 13 students started and completed the class.

The Students

The students that completed the class were asked to be in the class by MPI's administrator. They were chosen based on the criteria of being a new believer. Which meant they had only been saved and apart of MPI church for two years or less. They then were asked if they would like to be in a class when their pastor would teach a book that he had wrote on Christian identity. They were told how the class would be structured, the online platforms used, the reason for the class (as it pertained to the doctoral project of their pastor), and what was expected of them. After they were chosen and asked to join the class there was no formal questionnaire given to them to gain information about their age, ethnic origin, marriage status, or past church affiliation. The students were only chosen based on their status of being a new believer and a recent attendee to MPI. For an observational standpoint, the researcher reported that most of the 13 students were under 40 years old, Latino, and single (which fits into the main demographics of MPI church).

The Materials Used

The researcher wrote the six lessons in book format. The title of book written for the research project is called, *In Him: I Am Who God Said I Am and I Can Do What God Said I Can Do!* The book (see Appendix A), is 72 pages in total length and is divided into two main sections. The first section is labeled, *I am Who God Said I am*, and has the following three chapters:

1. I Am a Newly Created Child of God
2. I Am Saved from Sin

3. I am Entirely Sanctified

The second section is labeled, *I Can Do What God Said I Can Do*, and contains the following three chapters:

1. I Can Love God with All My Heart
2. I Can Love Others as Myself
3. I Can Obey All of God's Commands

The book also contains an introduction and conclusion section. Each chapter is roughly 10-15 pages long and is written in an informal, non-academic format. This kind of writing format was familiar to the students because the researcher had written other books for the church in a similar way- including the discipleship books used in MPI.

After the class the book was released by the church's publishing arm (MPI Publishing) on Kindle and in paperback.

The Pre-Class Survey

The following table, taken directly from Moodle, indicates the questions asked in the Likert Scale format (with a 1-10 scale), the answers from the 16 students that took it, and the overall percentage of their answers:

Illustration 6. Pre-Class Survey

1

I am born again

Average rank ↓



1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief ■ 9.8

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	13	16
								(6%)	(13%)	(81%)	

2

My spiritual nature is 100% new

Average rank ↓



1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief ■ 8.4

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	4	6	16
					(13%)		(25%)		(25%)	(38%)	

3

I am God's finished handiwork

Average rank ↓



1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief 7.8

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	1 (6%)	0	0	0	3 (19%)	0	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	1 (6%)	7 (44%)	16

4

I am entirely sanctified

Average rank ↓



1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief 9.1

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	1 (6%)	0	1 (6%)	2 (13%)	3 (19%)	9 (56%)	16

5

I am perfect like my Heavenly Father is perfect

Average rank ↓



1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief 8.1

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	1 (6%)	0	0	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	0	1 (6%)	2 (13%)	3 (19%)	7 (44%)	16

6

I can live without sinning

Average rank ↓

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief

 8.8

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	1 (6%)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (6%)	2 (13%)	3 (19%)	9 (56%)	16


7

I can love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength

Average rank ↓

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief

 10.0

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16 (100%)	16

8

I can love others as myself

Average rank ↓

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief

 9.8

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (13%)	0	14 (88%)	16

9

I can obey all of God's commands

Average rank ↓

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief 9.5

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (6%)	2 (13%)	1 (6%)	12 (75%)	16

10

I can live like Jesus because I am righteous like Jesus

Average rank ↓

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief 9.2

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	1 (6%)	0	2 (13%)	5 (31%)	8 (50%)	16

Things to Consider from the Pre-Class Survey

What was interesting to the researcher is that none of the overall averages in the survey were below 5 on the Likert scale. The researcher suspects that this is most likely because the students in the class had already been impacted by the church’s preaching on the subjects in the survey. The church’s discipleship program, which many of the students were already in, probably helped frame their worldview to include such strong feelings. At the same time, there were three very low individual scores on the survey. There was a 1-point score for each of the following survey statements, “I can live without sinning,” “I am God’s finished handiwork,” and “I am perfect like my heavenly Father is

perfect.” The researcher is not sure if this person was a recent attendee to the church or just had differing feelings. Also, since the survey was anonymous the researcher is not sure as to whether or not the person(s) completed the class and had improvement or were in fact all answered by the same person.

The three survey statements that scored the overall highest average were, “I am born again” (9.8), “I can love others as myself” (9.8), and “I can love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength” (10). What is striking to the researcher is that loving God scored higher than being born again. The students on average were surer of their love for God than their affirmation of experiencing a new birth. The researcher thinks this might be due to the term “born again” being not as clear to the students as the phrase “love God.” In other words, the students on average might not have been sure of what it meant to be born again as to the same confidence they had in affirming their love for God.

Pre-Class Questionnaire

The following are the answers given by 18 students at the beginning of the class. Note: there seems to be one person whose answers are repeated twice. This is most likely due to a technical error on Moodle’s side or they submitted it two times not thinking that their first ones went through. As a result, this makes the actual total student participation 17 (one more than the pre-class survey).

Illustration 7. Pre-Class Questionnaire

1

In 2-4 sentences, share what you think Jesus meant by the phrase, "Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

Response

I believe that what Jesus meant by saying "be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect" – is that we can live a life without sin, due to the simple fact that he lives within us. When we receive our "New Spirit" we are sanctified by the Blood Of Christ, so we can walk in confidence that we are made perfect through him and can live a life of obedience.

I think the meaning was for us to live our lives as godly as we can like Jesus did, even though it can never be 100% we should strive to walk in his footsteps.

What I think Jesus meant by the phrase stated above is that I am to live according to God's will. I can not act or do what the world does. I am to live a life that reflects God's moral character. Setting aside my will, and my own understanding so I represent God in me.

He is perfect. To be like him because we are made in his image.

When Jesus died on the cross, he took all of my sins, my sickness and sorrows! My job is to live holy and pure and with the help of the Holy Spirit living in me, I am able to do so.

To strive to be perfect by living according to how the bible tells us to. Also since the Father is perfect and we are to follow what He teaches we should be an example of Him.

God made you in his image, which is perfect. However, the creation of man was both in flesh AND in spirit. You must be one with the spirit, IN spirit, by following the Father's commands and giving your life to Him. This is how you become perfect as Him.

I think Jesus was saying to follow the word of the Bible and live as holy as he did.

I think Jesus was saying to follow the word of the Bible and live as holy as he did.

what I think Jesus means by " be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect", is that us as Christians are supposed to live our day to day lives as Jesus did. living holy and blameless, renewing our minds on a daily and running to the father for everything.

Jesus expects us to be living as he taught his disciples to live.

Jesus either A) truly believed His followers are capable of being perfect or B) He may have had a bit of a sarcastic sense of humor as He understood his rules may seem daunting to us mere mortals and in closing He was sarcastically summarizing “in other words ‘just be perfect.’”

I think A is more likely.

By not messing up your life. Live for Jesus and allow him to dictate your life for the better.

To be perfect is to live sin less. God is sin less therefore I am to live sin less because I am made in the image of God.

Sanctification, spiritual maturity & perfection. To have pure love of God & other people.

I think this means we should be 100% perfect just like God. because he's the perfect example and the Holy Spirit is living in us therefore we should live holy because he said it was written.

Well I believe the meaning behind the phrase is to put that as your mindset to be perfect like Jesus. A lot of people make the excuse I am not perfect I am human the only person perfect was Jesus but if we accept Jesus in our hearts we are washed clean so therefore in a sense perfect. Also I believe or maybe wrong but maintain the perfect we need stay away from sin and repent if we do fail and sin no more.

Well, Jesus lived a blameless life. If the Son can live a perfect life, I should equally be able to do so by staying according to His word.

2

In 2-4 sentences, share in your own words how much you think you're like Jesus as a person and how often you believe you act like Jesus.

Response

I believe that I am like Jesus as a person when see my family (or anyone) and wish for them to be saved, or when I do things to please God; such as serve my family or anyone in particular, rather than to please man. I also think I am like Jesus as a person when I preach the Gospel with truth instead is sugar coating it, and when I give without expecting anything back. I think that about 90 of the time I act like Jesus.

Its hard to be like someone who was perfect but i think i as a person show/give a lot of love out as Jesus did, In that aspect of my life i give that love out 24/7 but as in a time from id say a few days a week.

I believe everyday I act as a reflection of Jesus. Some days more than others. I may have to repent and keep myself accountable for things not done in excellence. Overall my goal is always to live my life worthy of being called a child of God.

Honestly speaking I don't I could act like Jesus. Only if he gives me wisdom or guidance I can act like him but I could never be him.

Now that I have been sanctified, I am more Jesus like because I find myself being able to forgive people whereas before sanctification, I was holding grudges. Through the discipleship program, I am learning how to be more and more like Jesus every day. Slow to anger. Forgiving. Loving. Kind.

I believe I am growing to be more like Jesus but not exactly like him yet, or close to it. I believe I act like Jesus when it comes to those who seek out prayer and they ask me or when they ask what the Word says about certain topics and when I am one on one with people. When it comes to big groups or sharing the Gospel I tend to be timid and always second guess myself since I don't always know how to back up certain points and I don't want to be misleading or sharing what I "think" is the truth rather than what actually is the truth. I also sometimes don't want to "rattle" up arguments with people since I don't always have the proper text to back it up.

Jesus' lessons came in both action and in parables to his followers. In my life, through Jesus' lessons, I have become a forgiving and faithful man. There are times I feel that I draw coworkers, family and friends to me by my Godly actions (giving praise to Lord for my blessings, praying for those around me, having patience and forgiveness for those who utter hateful words against me, etc.). Some of these examples of Godly actions become manifested in me through the Holy Spirit.

As a person, I am starting to act more and more like Jesus but I am not exactly there yet. I believe I act like Jesus about 60% of the time if even that. In all honesty, I still have a lot of growing to do.

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on a day to day bases, I'm showing love, compassion, and grace to those around me. not only doing that but helping others in need before my needs. for example, sharing the word with them and encouraging them during rough times and good times.

on a day to day bases, I'm showing love, compassion, and grace to those around me. not only doing that but helping others in need before my needs. for example, sharing the word with them and encouraging them during rough times and good times.

The desires of my heart are to be more like Jesus. But knowing my history and humanity I have yet to feel fully "like Jesus."

If I were to quantify how much I feel I am LIKE JESUS: about 75%

and HOW OFTEN do I act like Jesus? about 80% of my time

By not doing sexual activities and ungodly like things that God doesn't like and or appreciate. I am like Jesus because I no longer sin or drink to get drunk anymore.

I'm far from being like Jesus but I try my best to be like Him daily. I fall short because i'm not one hundred percent sinless. As a person I try to treat people with kindness and respect all the time.

I love Jesus as a person, he is the perfect person. I strive to act like Jesus in all my affairs and I fall short frequently due to my spiritual immaturity.

I think im like Jesus when I make myself teachable and humble myself and love everyone no matter who it is, also when I pray like he did and preach the gospel like he did. I act often like Jesus but I do catch myself sometimes doubting my salvation because I start to compare myself with other people who are. saved and see how fire they are for Jesus and I feel less saved. sometimes I find it hard to act like Jesus at work due to being busy and not being mindful.

Well I believe one thing is Love I learned to love like Jesus. I think that no matter who you are, how old you are or how mean you are, I cant find a way to not love that person. Somehow I can see a person and if I see them sad I weep for them and when I see a person laugh because there happy I feel a joy. I think that maybe many people can see my love I have. I would love to act more like Jesus in other things as well.

I think that I could do so much better. Jesus was always able to stand his ground, because the word of God is a firm foundation, but I have been struggling to defend the faith.

3

In 2-4 sentences, write how good or bad you think you did in keeping God's commands in the last 30 days.

Response

I think I did pretty good in keeping God's commands in the last 30 days, aside from about 3 times that I didn't do so good. I always remind myself that although I stumbled I am still made perfect through him, and that I am forgiven.

In the last 30 days by the grace of god i have been good at following gods commands.Even thought in the times of life we are living in now it can be rough but with Jesus on our side nothing is impossible.

I believe I have often kept God's commands in the last 30 days. Is there room to improve on always keeping God's commands yes.

I think pretty good. Even if we weren't stuck in our house I would still say pretty good because you have to lay down you life for Jesus. Not just when you feel like it.

In the last 30 days, I have shown a lot of improvement and have been able to keep Gods commands perfectly. The shelter in place order has given me more one on one time with God and I have never been happier.

I think I am doing much better now in the last 10 days compared to before, I am becoming more consistent in praying and applying what I have been reading in my 101 chapters to my everyday life. I do repent when I feel I have fallen short of God's glory but am still learning how to live victorious everyday! Before, I was not doing so well. I was not being as consistent as I knew I needed to be in maintaining God's commands and felt very discouraged often.

I would say that I am very good at keeping God's commands.The Holy Spirit fills me with a constant reminder of God's commands, now that I am saved. There are times when I am tempted with sin that I feel an instant conviction and correct myself before I fall into that sin.

In the last 30 days, I feel like I have failed to keep some of Gods commands but I have prayed and asked for forgiveness and guidance every time I felt that I failed.

In the last 30 days, I feel like I have failed to keep some of Gods commands but I have prayed and asked for forgiveness and guidance every time I felt that I failed.

in the last 30 days, I think I did well in keeping his commandments. I been staying away from things that can cause me to stumble. just guarding my mind and not chasing things of this world. There are some days where it is tough but most of my days are amazing. the reason it gets tough on some days is that my flesh is week but the spirit is constantly willing to get closer to God.

in the last 30 days, I think I did well in keeping his commandments. I been staying away from things that can cause me to stumble. just guarding my mind and not chasing things of this world. There are some days where it is tough but most of my days are amazing. the reason it gets tough on some days is that my flesh is weak but the spirit is constantly willing to get closer to God.

I think I did pretty good! But I can do better and I plan to be better.

I did okay in my opinion. Had a couple downfalls to be honest but I have a friend who helps me get through it when I need help.

I don't know if there's a good option because you're either keeping them or you're not. In that sense, I did bad because I've fallen short with anger.

In the last thirty days I have kept Gods commands. Quarantine has been helpful.

I have done okay I wouldn't say the best like I wish I can. for example not giving the 10% tithe. im not fully trusting God with my finances its clear that's what im showing by not giving the way I should. also my intimate time with him daily has not been how I would want. I don't give him a hour day. as far as devotional and prayer time. i can reflect in the last year for sure I have grown in these areas but still not where I want them to be.

Well for the most part I think good although there were times when I would get angry and I did let the sun go down in my anger and said things that are not very bad but can be hurtful. I lied about coming late to work and lying is breaking commandment. I also was not so forgiving toward something hurtful to me and really held on to that anger before I even prayed to ask God help me release that I can be forgiven.

I think I did good in keeping God's commands in the last 30 days. There was at least once or twice where I didn't read go into prayer as the Lord wanted me to, so I know I could do better.

Things to Consider from the Pre-Class Questionnaire

As with the pre-class survey, the researcher was pleasantly surprised to see how well the students grasped the goal of the class, even before it began. Once again, he believes this is due to the preaching of the church on these subjects, as well as the discipleship program's success in spreading the teachings of the church to new believers. Pertaining to first question—describing what one thinks Jesus meant by saying “be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect;” most answers seemed to grasp what the researcher was looking for at the end of the class in regard to the students grasping the concept of perfection. No one rebutted the concept in their answers nor came up with

another interpretation to the phrase- “be perfect,” aside from the one being presented by the researcher. Most, if not all, believed that Jesus was referring to some kind of “moral perfection” that was supposed to be exemplified in their personal lives. Such phrases in the answers make this a valid indication that they understood they in fact could live morally perfect like their Father:

1. “Live with sin”
2. “Live our lives as godly”
3. “Be like Him”
4. “Live as holy”
5. “We should be 100% perfect like God”

One would be hard pressed to find an opposite point of view from the first set of answers to the first question.

The second question, which asked the students to describe how much they saw themselves being like Jesus in their identity and in their actions brought a variety of answers. The answers ranged from one student writing, “I believe I am like Jesus” to “I don’t [think] I could act like Jesus.” The researcher was not surprised to see this kind of range in the answers because in his pastoral experience, many people may believe that God wants them to be perfect, as was seen in the first question, but when it comes to their personal lifestyle, they often doubt God’s Word and live beneath their ideals and God’s best for them.

One person wrote, “If I were to quantify how much I feel I am LIKE JESUS: about 75% and HOW OFTEN do I act like Jesus? about 80% of my time.” This kind of thinking, though not expressed in the same way by the others, seemed to be a good way

to possibly summarize how many of the others felt. It would seem that they understood they were to be like Jesus and live like Jesus- yet they were having trouble believing it all the time and acting on their beliefs consistently. Note some of the phrases that reinforce this pattern of belief:

1. "I am starting to act more and more like Jesus but I am not exactly there yet."
2. "I'm far from being like Jesus but I try my best to be like Him daily."
3. "I think that I could do so much better."

Pertaining to the third question- how good or bad they had felt they were living like Jesus in past 30 days, the answers reveal why the research project is so important. Here most of the students see that they are doing "okay" to "pretty good," however, one person wrote, "I feel like I have failed to keep some of Gods commands."

Summary

Overall the pre-class data points toward a strong indication that MPI's discipleship program had a lasting positive impact on the new believers in the research project. It is highly unlikely that churches with a different understanding of sanctification or a less emphasized approach to the subject would score as high in the initial phase of testing. At the same time, there is some key data that indicates a possibility of improvement and increased understanding on the subject matter. It was the desire of the author in that situation to still set the goal for increased confidence in Christ-based identity and compliance to total obedience to God's commands.

CHAPTER 5 – RESULTS AND APPLICATIONS

Overview

The results of the research were positive in both the survey and the questionnaire. There was an overall increase of 8% in the Likert scale and significant indications of increased understanding of entire sanctification derived from the data in the post questionnaires. The three main applications the author would like to present to the Body of Christ based on this research would be: (1) The benefit of teaching entire sanctification to new believers, (2) The value of discipleship-based learning for new Christians, and (3) The possible correlation between entire sanctification and mental health.

The Post-Class Survey

The following table, taken directly from Moodle, indicates the questions asked in the Likert Scale format (with a 1-10 scale), the answers from the 13 students that took it, and the overall percentage of their answers:

Illustration 8. Post-Class Survey

1	
I am born again	
Average rank ↓	
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	10.0
Responses	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	13 (100%)

2

My spiritual nature is 100% new

Average rank ↓

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief ■ 9.8

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (15%)	11 (85%)	13

3

I am God's finished handiwork

Average rank ↓

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief ■ 9.8

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (8%)	0	12 (92%)	13

4

I am entirely sanctified

Average rank ↓

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief ■ 9.8

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (15%)	11 (85%)	13

5

I am perfect like my Heavenly Father is perfect

Average rank ↓

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief 9.7

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	10 (77%)	13

6

I can live without sinning

Average rank ↓

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief 9.6

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	0	11 (85%)	13

7

I can love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength

Average rank ↓

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief 9.9

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (8%)	12 (92%)	13

8

I can love others as myself

Average rank ↓



1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief 9.9

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12	13
									(8%)	(92%)	

9

I can obey all of God's commands

Average rank ↓



1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief 9.7

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	10	13
								(8%)	(15%)	(77%)	

10

I can live like Jesus because I am righteous like Jesus

Average rank ↓



1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief 9.8

Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1 being the weakest sense of belief and 10 being the strongest sense of belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	11	13
								(8%)	(8%)	(85%)	

Things to Consider from the Post-Class Survey

All the survey questions had a post-class increase between the range of 1% to 25% (with an average increase of 8%), except for one question, #7 that had a decrease of 4%. The difference in this question is because one person who had previously given the answer of 10 on the scale in the pre-class and changed their answer to 9 in the post-class

(this can be seen because all the answers in the pre-class for question #7 were 10). The question was, “I can love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength” and thus indicates the person’s strength of belief in their love towards God in that moment. As a result, considering that both the answers of 9 and 10 on the scale are similar in strength the difference can only be assumed to be a slight difference in feeling at that moment and shouldn’t be considered an overall negative aspect of the project. Likewise, this kind of slight difference can point to a larger question for future research that looks into how Christians change day-to-day in their overall belief about God and their affection towards Him.

The survey question that saw the greatest increase was #3, which saw a 25% increase in strong feelings from the students. The question was, “I am God’s finished handiwork.” The researcher believes this high increase was due to the course materials drawing from the text of Ephesians 2:10 and that it points out that Paul used the present tense when referring to the believers being God’s handiwork, “we are God’s handiwork.” The other two questions with the highest positive differences were #5 (+20%) and #2 (+16%). Once again as with question #3 the researcher believes that these dramatic increases were because the materials presented in the class spent time explaining these concepts from texts that taught the believer’s present identity in a positive light.

Overall, the average increase of only 8% in the Likert scale surveys was a surprise to the researcher because he thought the increase would have been more pronounced- somewhere in the 30-50% range. This would have meant a lower set of scores in the pre-class survey. However, though he was surprised in the lower rate of increase, he was glad that it came by having higher scores in the pre-class survey. This along with the data

found in the pre-class questionnaire points towards the effectiveness the church’s regular discipleship program and the Sunday preaching had on the students in regard to the subject of entire sanctification. Therefore, when other churches implement the materials from this project in their church, the outcomes may be more dramatic. Below are all the results and the differences noted.

Illustration 9. Likert Scale Survey with All Results

	QUESTION	PRE-CLASS	POST-CLASS	+/- % DIFFERENCE
1.	I am born again	9.8	10	+2%
2.	My spiritual nature is 100% new	8.4	9.8	+16%
3.	I am God's finished handiwork	7.8	9.8	+25%
4.	I am entirely sanctified	9.1	9.8	+7%
5.	I am perfect like my Heavenly Father is perfect	8.1	9.8	+20%
6.	I can live without sinning	8.8	9.7	+10%
7.	I can love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength	10	9.6	-4%
8.	I can love others as myself	9.8	9.9	+1%
9.	I can obey all of God's commands	9.5	9.9	+4%
10.	I can live like Jesus because I am righteous like Jesus	9.2	9.7	+5%
		AVG. 9.05	AVG. 9.8	AVG. +8%

The Post-Class Questionnaire

The following illustration, taken directly from Moodle, indicates the answers to the three questions given by the 12 students that took it (one less than the post-class Likert survey)⁷¹:

Illustration 10. Post-Class Questionnaire

1

In 2-4 sentences, share what you think Jesus meant by the phrase, "Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

Response

Being perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect means to be like Jesus, live a life just like Jesus did, without sin. Love each other the way Jesus loves us and obey his commands the same way Jesus obeyed his father.

This verse is found in Matthew 5:48, It means to imitate and mirror our father in heaven in his moral perfection.

To be perfect like Jesus was! To be perfect in Jesus Christ when faithfully serving him!

I am made new. The old me is dead and by keeping Gods commands and I can be perfect. I am a child of God and a child of God can't sin. I can be perfect just as Jesus is perfect.

To be perfect like our Heavenly Father means, we must first be made perfect through God's love, for that we may be able to act perfectly in love and live perfectly.

If we Love God with our hearts, souls and minds, while loving our Neighbors as we love ourselves, we live a perfect life in Him. However, we must follow all of God's commands because we love Him. This is how we are perfected in Him.

We were born again in Christ. Therefore, we as his children should be perfect as he was.

when i first heard be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. i thought it meant that we had to be exactly like him in some way. but as i went through this 6 week class. it gave me a better insight that this means we are suppose to have characteristic like our father.

when i first heard be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. i thought it meant that we had to be exactly like him in some way. but as i went through this 6 week class. it gave me a better insight that this means we are suppose to have characteristic like our father.

⁷¹ Note: As with the pre-class questionnaire it appears that one student encountered a problem of some sort and ended up answering twice with the same answer to each question, instead of only giving one answer per question.

To be perfect is to be like Jesus, because I'm a born again Christian I am perfect because I'm in him and he's in me.

I think this means to be perfect just like our Heavenly Father. not just good enough or good most of the time but perfect all time because we have the perfect example.

I now believe that to be Perfect like Jesus means to be complete and to grow up and mature in his Word. When we are tempted in our flesh to be reminded that Jesus was tempted and prevail so therefore we can prevail from the temptations of this world by knowing His Word. I learned with wisdom comes maturity and knowledge of his Word will keep your Spirit from running back to Sin desires.

There is nothing that I should look at myself in an insecure manner. The transformation has already happened at being born again, so I am already perfect.

2

In 2-4 sentences, share in your own words how much you think you're like Jesus as a person and how often you believe you act like Jesus.

Response

I think I act like Jesus 95% of the time.

I believe I act like him in most of the areas in my life, I think I'm kind, compassionate, I love people and I have a desire for people to know the the Love of God.

I believe i am a good 100% of Jesus even though i may not be perfect i show the people around me that love Jesus showed. I've been more open on sharing the good news to others and not sugar coding. Our brothers and sisters need to be told that we serve an awesome God.

I think we all act like Jesus while evangelizing and preaching to people. Jesus made disciples and that what were doing when we preach to the public by telling them the good news.

I have been set free from sin and am made new. I no longer give in to my fleshy desires and I am acting like Jesus every single day. I ask my Father to deliver me from sin and I live by the Spirit.

I always thought I had to evolve in perfection, holiness, and love. I never really understood that I already am holy, perfect, and can love like God is/does. I now know that I was made all these things as soon as I received salvation! I am like Jesus, our Lord and Savior! After going through this class I now have the tools and know how to use them to remain in acting in accordance with Jesus! Before I didn't act as Jesus did, as often as I thought. Now, I am aware of the areas I need to work in and will act like Jesus did!

Jesus sought guidance from the Father in all that he did while both spreading the Word to all Jews and Gentiles. Jesus led by example by showing his love and patience for even enemies. Since being born again, I have found myself seeking guidance from God through the Holy Spirit in everything I do in my life. Even in my profession where I frequently encounter the hostilities of man, I find that I am patient with them because I have faith and trust in the Lord.

I feel like I act like Jesus most of the time because I have the Holy Spirit in me. But when I realize I'm not acting like Jesus, I repent.

I think I act like Jesus on a day to day basis because I grow to have such passion for the broken heart. I also am more patient and selfless with a lot of things.

I think I act like Jesus on a day to day basis because I grow to have such passion for the broken heart. I also am more patient and selfless with a lot of things.

I'm like Jesus because I live by his commands. I try to live by his commands daily but I fall short by falling into sin.

I think I'm like Jesus when I love my enemies and when I preach the gospel. I think I'm like Jesus when I pray and read because that's what he did. I think I act like Jesus all day.

Well I was questioning myself very hard on this especially on Lesson 5 then became depressed for a minute and then came back to reality. I know I love like Jesus because I was wronged very badly and hurt verbally many times yet I love very much to the point I forgive and continue to show love regardless of the hurt. I had a few people in my life that really hated me and became my enemies but when I see them hurt or look like they're hurting I feel bad for them and pray for them even if they try to put me down or even get me fired. So this was one of the things I believe I am like Jesus because although even family talk about me because I have grown in my faith and left sinful things I get criticized. When I mentioned don't get stepped on like a doormat I meant it's time to mature and know when to stop pleasing the world and please God before man.

I feel like I can do better to be more like Jesus. I know we are not saved by good works, but I guess I could say I struggled to find the different ways to go out and do good works as a believer.

3

In 2-4 sentences, write how good or bad you think you did in keeping God's commands in the last 30 days.

Response

I think in the last 30 days I've been pretty good at keeping God's commands, aside a time or two that I had to really pray and ask God to help me in love my neighbor as myself, I would rank a 9/10 in keeping God's commands over the last 30 days.

I've been doing great on keeping gods commands and by the grace of god i'll continue doing so in Jesus name.The in him class and 101 classes have been a great help in fulfilling this task.

For the most part very well. There are moments when your given wisdom to do certain things differently then you would of did before you were saved. Which is important because now you living for Jesus and you use that new wisdom!

In the last 30 days, I have diligently followed Gods commands. I am a slave to righteousness and sin is no longer a part of my life. I am who God says I am and God created me to LOVE HIM FIRST and then to LOVE OTHERS as I love myself.

In the last 30 days, I have been just okay at keep God's commands, now that I not only know His commands, but I have an understanding that I without a doubt can keep God's commands, because if I love God I'll keep His commands! I lacked the confidence in the power that God gives me in order to live them out everyday!

God's commands are written in my heart. Even at moments of temptation, the Holy Spirit keeps me on my narrow path of righteousness. The question is not HOW good or bad I have been keeping God's commands. It should be "HAVE you kept God's commands?" My answer is YES, because I love HIM.

In complete honesty, I'd give myself a 9.5 out of 10. When I feel like I've broken a command, I quickly repent so that the feeling of sin doesn't overtake me.

in the last 30 days i have kept the lords commands like the apple of my eye. i think i have been really good at it because when your consistent in the word and filled up with prayer there honestly no room for anything.

in the last 30 days i have kept the lords commands like the apple of my eye. i think i have been really good at it because when your consistent in the word and filled up with prayer there honestly no room for anything.

I was okay because I kept them most days except that I did sin a couple times. Ex: quick to anger.

I think I did follow is commands maybe 80% of the time because there's time where I don't guard my heart from certain situations and I feel as I fell short but overall I feel I have not sinned rather I just been fearful or discouraged.

I believe during the beginning I was going the right track and then May hit and Lesson 5 and that hit me hard like a ton of bricks to be honest. I have never Mourned my Sons passing my marriage failing, my aunt passing, and then was told I am the worst person who has been going to a church for the last 2 years in a half doing 201 and is still not worthy to pass and they wonder why. I was all in my feelings for a few days but then I realized I was wrong. At first could not admit to it and felt sorry for myself for a moment. I cried my heart out and prayed like Pastor told me to and learned that my heart was heavy and needed clarity. I then realize what was told to me was to build me up although it hurt for that moment it was so I can grow in maturity. I have grown by taking this class and although for a moment I fell into a wrong state of mind I believe it was all in Gods plan to help me in my flaws and getting to know my identity on Him. Thank you for allowing me to participate.

I think I have done very well, but I could have done better in reading scripture. Even so, I felt super joyful to be able to see myself fighting the battle in my mind every day, fighting off thoughts that the devil tries to place.

Things to Consider from the Post-Class Questionnaire

Starting with question one, “Share what you think Jesus meant by the phrase, ‘Be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect?’” The researcher found that between the pre-class and post-class answers there wasn’t much of a difference in the responses. These kinds of minimal results were assumed to be the result of MPI having such a strong emphasis on the concept of Christian perfection and entire sanctification. However, there was one answer in the post-class answers that mentioned a change in perspective. They noted that when they first started the class they thought the phrase by Jesus referred only to perfection in actions (like obeying God’s commands), however, after the class they understood that that phrase had more to do with the characteristics of God being imputed to them at salvation and as a result of being made perfect, they could have the potential to live perfect. This kind of change of thinking most likely is related to the teachings given in Lesson Three, “I am Entirely Sanctified,” and more specifically the section in that chapter titled, “I am Perfect Like My Heavenly Father.”

Next with question two, “Share in your own words how much you think you’re like Jesus as a person and how often you believe you act like Jesus” the researcher discovered a strong sense of progress from many of the students from before the class to after the class finished. In the pre-class answers one student rated their likeness to Jesus to be about 60% and someone in the post-class mentioned it to then be around 90%. Since the questionnaire was anonymous the researcher is not certain that this is the same student but either way, there was an indication of progress when percentages were used to answer this question. There was one student that mentioned a continued struggle in being Christ-like, yet they wrote that they still believed they could do better and that living like Jesus was possible. Overall, many of the post-class answers indicated that the students were growing in their confidence to live like Christ.

The last question, “Write how good or bad you think you did in keeping God’s commands in the last 30 days” was another question, like question one, that was hard for the researcher to note change in any direction. In the pre-class many of the answers were strong towards doing well in keeping God’s commands. For example, the following phrases were written- “pretty good,” “been good,” “I have often kept God’s commands,” and “have been able to keep God’s commands perfectly.” Likewise, in the post-class the students wrote, “pretty good,” “doing great,” “for the most part very well,” and “I have diligently followed God’s commands.” Therefore, for a question like this to be truly evaluated based on the materials and the class alone, it would be good for future pastors to engage new believers at churches where the subject of entire sanctification is not addressed early on in one-on-one discipleship or consistently from the pulpit. One student in the post-class did answer this question expressing their overall journey in discipleship

and shared how the class helped them better receive the correction of the leaders in the church and their inner hurt from past experiences.

Overall, the three main takeaways from the post-class questionnaire would be first that MPI's new believers are very well versed in key doctrinal and lifestyle expectations for those who hold to entire sanctification. Second, training people to understand such controversial subjects like Christian perfection are not beneath comprehension of new believers. Third, though MPI church could count the materials and class as a success from the post-class questionnaire, its success is not able to be assessed on its own merits because the church has a unique culture built upon the doctrine of entire sanctification.

Applications

The researcher believes that the following two applications can be made from the results: (1) Churches would do well to teach their congregation entire sanctification and (2) Christians would benefit to believe the doctrine of entire sanctification. First, in regard to churches teaching their congregation entire sanctification, the high Likert scores in both the pre- and post-class tests indicate that it is possible for a church to develop a culture that embraces the doctrine and that it produces strong positive feelings about holiness. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, "23 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. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it." It should be the prayer of every church leadership to see God sanctify the disciples under their care "through and through."

Church leaders could consider the following things to do to help cultivate the same kind of environment in MPI church that fosters a culture that embraces entire sanctification:

1. Preach messages from the pulpit that explain the importance of holiness.
2. Organize discipleship programs that meet both one-on-one and in classroom settings where holy living is encouraged and expected.
3. Encourage discussions between church leaders with new believers and members from other churches that may not agree or totally understand entire sanctification.
4. In the preaching, teaching, and discipling process base the doctrine of entire sanctification on the proper exegesis of Scripture so that the Word of God is seen as the source.
5. Answer questions and problems that arise around the doctrine of entire sanctification with grace and truth.

The second application the researcher suggests is that all Christians should embrace the doctrine of entire sanctification for means of spiritual growth. John wrote in 1 John 4:17, “This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.” As was seen in the post-class questionnaire, the more a person understands their identity in Christ, the more confidence they have to live like Christ. All believers ought to accept their calling to be like Jesus in this world so that the church may advance against the gates of hell and the nations disciplined. The following suggestions are encouraged to be followed by all those who love and profess Christ:

1. Accept the doctrine of entire sanctification by faith as it has been presented from the Bible in the research materials.
2. Do not judge the truthfulness of the doctrine of entire sanctification based on one's behavior, but on what the Word of God teaches.
3. Be in accountability with others who believe that entire sanctification is not only possible but given at the time of salvation as a free gift.
4. Avoid the trap of thinking that the more good works a Christian does, the more holy they become in their nature.
5. Embrace the biblical concept that all Christians are in Christ from the moment of salvation, and from this reality all things are new and obeying all of God's commands is possible.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research project demonstrated that teaching new believers at MPI church the doctrine of entire sanctification resulted in increased understanding of one's identity in Christ. This increased understanding help build confidence in the overall Christian experience, especially as it pertained to living holy (i.e., "keeping God's commands"). Things that can be explored for future research would be the impact the researcher's materials would have on different congregations in different settings. As well as, how the doctrine correlates to MPI's discipleship program and other similar ministries in different churches. Some of the more complex research that could be done would be to discover if there are any links between modern neuroscience and Christian identity doctrines such as entire sanctification. If these links are found and shown to be positive this would offer more evidence in favor of the Christian worldview and be

helpful for those who struggle with mental anguish attributed to low self-esteem. For those in the field of biblical studies, projects that uncover the similar patterns between the Old Testament and New Testament holiness codes might be very helpful to seeing God's bigger picture of sanctification. Along with studying the realities of inner transformation in the lives of the believers between covenants would be interesting.

The researcher has been encouraged by the project and hopes that those reading and studying the materials provided would be encouraged as well to forward the doctrine of entire sanctification to the greater Body of Christ. Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will." It is God's desire that Christians should live out His good, pleasing, and perfect will and MPI believes that believing and teaching the doctrine of entire sanctification by the power and leading of the Holy Spirit assists in making this command possible.

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APPENDIX A

The following book, *In Him*, was written specifically for the research project by the researcher and was used as the main curriculum.

 **MPI PUBLISHING**



IN HIM

I AM WHO GOD SAID I AM AND I CAN DO WHAT GOD SAID I CAN DO!

JOE WYROSTEK



IN HIM: I am Who God Said I am and I Can Do What God Said I Can Do!

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I dedicate this book to every disciple that I've had the honor of sharing the message of Christ-centered identity with and seeing them live the abundant life. Here's to Christ in you, the hope of glory!

INTRODUCTION

Colossians 1:27 (NKJV), “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

There is no greater promise than that of Christ actually dwelling within the born again believer. This is the purpose for which you and I were made: to be unified with God, glorified in His presence, and united with Christ forever (Romans 8:28-30). The fulfillment of this promise is not relegated until the afterlife when you go to heaven but happens at the moment of your spiritual re-birth- here and now (John 3:3). The Apostle Peter taught that, as a child of God, you presently partake of the divine nature (1 Peter 1:4). Therefore, you should never look at yourself the same again.

This book was written to help you gain a God-centered sense of identity. This is contrary to the world’s message that identity is basically self-derived- a self-centered identity. In other words, the self-centered movement teaches that our value and purpose come from within us and can only be decided by us. This, however, proves to be a vain attempt at true fulfillment, because the more we look within the more problems we find, and the more we believe in ourselves, the more we let ourselves down. At the same time, some people allow others to assign them their identity. This world-centered identity is often shaped by our family, friends, or false religion; as well as the culture at large. This, too, leads to frustration as we quickly find that broken people can’t fix other broken people. Corrie ten Boom once said, as it relates to these flimsy foundations for identity, “If you look at the world, you’ll be distressed. If you look within, you’ll be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you’ll be at rest.”

The only firm foundation for identity is found in Jesus, to see His reflection in you, and begin to live the God-kind of life, a life that is not based on what you think about yourself, or what other mere creatures say about you. Paul said that if you are in Christ, you are God’s masterpiece, created for good works- an entirely new creation! (Ephesians 2:10 & 2 Corinthians 5:17) Consequently, there is nothing lacking in you; you are as much like God as Jesus is (1 John 4:17). Do not be shocked by such statements; these are

foundational biblical truths that pertain to your identity as a Christian. Sadly, many in the Christian faith have been taught the opposite, with clichés like, “It’s okay to not be okay,” and “God makes you beautifully broken.” To put it bluntly, these are lies and nonsense!

Jesus’ atoning work on the cross renders you an alien to this world, belonging to a different Adam (the “Second Adam”) and thus you come from a different spiritual lineage and race, “The God-Race.” (1 Peter 2:9-10) As a child of God, you are as different from the children of this world as light is to darkness. You should never settle for less. Why play in a puddle of worldly filth, when God is inviting you to swim in the ocean of His divine grace?

The Apostle John goes so far as to imply that all the wonderful truths stated above are merely preliminary to a far greater reality that awaits us when he says, “we shall be like [Christ], for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2) Some have wrongly taken this to mean that we will become gods to rule over our own worlds. But such claims are blasphemous. For God spoke through the Prophet Isaiah, “Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior.” (Isaiah 43:10a-11) That being said, short of us actually becoming “gods,” I believe everything else is a possibility for us in our eternal state. We will indeed be kings and priests in the Kingdom of Christ (Revelation 1:6).

Once again, this is only made possible because of the redeeming work of Christ. For without His meritorious nature being imputed and given to us we would be the most pitiful and wretched of all creatures. As a human race, we had been given much- even more than the angels- and lost much due to our wicked pride and arrogance. Let us not become boastful in anything other than marvelous grace of God. Let us all say like Paul, “but by the grace of God I am what I am” and without Him, “I am the chief of all sinners.” (1 Corinthians 15:10 & 1 Timothy 1:15)

I pray that this book encourages you to boast in Christ and walk worthy of all that He has given you. Consider the great price that was paid for us to be like Jesus and bring glory to the Father. We do not work to gain our new identity in Christ, nor do we work to keep it, but we work to bring God glory because He has already given us the privilege to be made like Christ. Paul said that Jesus was the first of many brothers and sisters- “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” (Romans 8:29)

Now, being in the sinless One, you were made sinless to live sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21). You can “do perfect” because in Christ you “be perfect.” You don’t have to “do, do, do” in order to “be, be, be.” For unless Christ first

makes you to “be like Him,” all your “do, do, do” amounts to a bunch of “doo-doo.”

My prayer is that you and I will all be presented as perfect in Christ on Judgment Day because we were already made perfect in Christ here on earth. Paul expressed this same heart when wrote in Colossians 1:28-29 (NKJV), “28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.”

**PART I:
I AM WHO GOD
SAID I AM**

LESSON ONE

I Am a Newly Created Child of God

I am Brand New

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” Let us examine this verse further and see if it rightly applies to you. First, “Are you an anyone?” Second, “Have you come into Christ by faith?” If you answered positively to these questions, then the promises declared in this verse apply to you. First, you are God’s new creation; second, you are no longer the old person you were before Christ; third, Jesus’ new life is yours right now!

Please stop reading and take some time to repeat 2 Corinthians 5:17 out loud until you can say it from memory. Then determine to believe it and live like you believe it every day of your life. Imagine how radically different Christians’ lives would be if they believed their past was in the past and everything about them was brand new at the time of salvation. It would be like heaven on earth!

Conversely, to this point, you may have believed that this “new creation” was a “work in progress.” You may have been taught that God was working on you over the course of your lifetime, and that day by day you were becoming newer as the old things passed away slowly. It would then follow that you were helping God change you by learning to do more good work, as if He was taking the next 80 years to remodel your house and needed your help. But that is not what the Bible teaches. The Scriptures are clear that you were made brand new the moment you came into Christ. Just as a person becomes wet the moment they are immersed into water; you became new the moment you came into Christ.

In keeping with the example about water, some might ask, “What if all of me is not in Christ and I am just dipping my toes in Him?” They are basically asking if a person can be partially in Christ and partially out of Christ at the same time. The simple answer is, “No!” You are either all in or all out. There is no such thing as being partially saved or partially born again. You are either in Christ or you are not, there is no in-between. No one can serve two Masters (Matthew 6:24). Jesus was precise when He said to Nicodemus

that when anyone believes in Him, they are instantaneously born again, just like in natural birth (which happens in a moment).

John 3:5-8, “5 Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

Is a child born over the course of days, weeks or months? Certainly not. Though a mother may be in labor for long periods of time, the actual birth of a child happens very fast. Jesus didn’t say you would be formed in the womb of the Spirit for your lifetime and then be born again at death, but rather that spiritual re-birth happens at the moment you believe. Furthermore, does the same Holy Spirit who formed the universe in an instant need years to make your spirit new? Does He not possess both the power and desire to make us new instantly? Our spiritual re-birth took place at the same speed the Holy Spirit created light.

For this reason, both Peter and John wrote to their disciples assuming that the new birth had already taken place for them. They did not teach them to wait for this new life to develop over time or that it would be received upon death. For the apostles, the new birth was a present reality that they based their entire message of Christian living on.

1 Peter 1:14-16, 23, “14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” “23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

1 John 3:9-10, “9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. 10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.”

Notice that neither Peter or John's exhortations would be valid unless their readers had already been born again. For example, from Peter's epistle: how could his disciples live as obedient children of God, unless they were in fact already born again children of God? Likewise, where would John's disciples get the ability to discontinue sin if they were not yet born again by God's seed and had the work of Satan destroyed in their lives? The truth of the matter is clear: being born again into a new creation is the starting point of Christianity. All of our spiritual maturity and good works as Christians derive from this foundation and, thus, make Christ-like living, not only possible for us, but the expected standard.

I was Saved All at Once, Not Little by Little

Oftentimes, well-meaning Christians talk about how God is working on them day by day. This may be true experientially as we learn God's Word and mature in character, however, it is not true ontologically, with regard to our salvation and spiritual nature. Our maturity might be a process, but our identity is instantaneous. Being saved and becoming God's masterpiece is not a lifelong journey- a destination that lies far ahead- but according to Paul, it was accomplished the moment we believed.

Ephesians 2:8-10, "8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Is there anything in this passage that would suggest that our being saved, created anew is a slow, gradual process? Absolutely not! Paul taught that we were (past tense) saved by the free gift of God obtained through faith and that we are presently His handiwork. Now, only on this basis, can we do the good works God has prepared for us to do.

With that in mind, ask yourself this question; "Have I been saved by grace through faith?" If you have, then you are God's handiwork created to do good works. You are not becoming God's handiwork over the course of a lifetime- you were created as God's handiwork the moment you were saved. Think about it. Does a child have to learn to walk and talk to be born? Or, is a child first born, then they learn to walk and talk? Likewise, does a person

become a Christian by doing good works? Or, are they first made a Christian by God's grace?

Consider the following illustration as you set your heart on believing that your salvation is complete:



“Progressive salvation,” as seen in the chart above, is a man-centered mindset that looks at salvation as something dependent on our good works. “Complete salvation” is a God-centered mindset that sees salvation as dependent on God's free grace. Having understood the stark difference in these two views, you must determine to know what you believe about salvation and why. Because what you believe about your salvation will impact how you live out your salvation.

Both John and Paul wrote that God wants us to know we are His children the moment we receive Jesus. We are not waiting at the orphanage for the Father to pick us up and bring us home to heaven. Rather, it was at the moment we accepted Jesus that heaven came to live in us.

John 1:10-13, “10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”

Romans 8:15-17, “15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs —heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

Therefore, if you have received Jesus, you have the right to be God’s child. It is fully God’s choice to adopt those who willingly choose Christ. And He not only forgives them, but He completely changes them. God could have chosen to make us pickles when we repented of our sins, but instead He chose to make us His children. To conclude this lesson, take some time to read and study the chart below. Look at each of the Scriptures and consider all the wonderful truths connected with being made a child of God.

1. I am God's child, born again	1 Pet. 1:23	41. I am not afraid	Heb. 13:6	81. I am free from condemnation	Rom. 8:1
2. I have Jesus' atoning sacrifice	1 Jn. 2:1-2	42. I am redeemed from the curse	Gal. 3:13	82. I am the righteousness of God	2 Cor. 5:21
3. I am purified, cleansed from all sin	1 Jn. 1:7-9	43. I am strong in the Lord	Eph. 6:10	83. I am firmly rooted	Col. 2:7
4. I am born again into a new life	Jn. 3:3	44. I am holy and without blame before Him	Eph. 1:4	84. I have joy	Gal. 5:22
5. I am born of God	1 Jn. 5:1	45. I am blessed	Deut. 28:1-14	85. I have peace beyond understanding	Phil. 4:6-7
6. I have eternal life	Jn. 6:44	46. I am a saint	Rom. 1:7	86. I think in new ways	Phil. 4:8-9
7. I am accepted in Christ	Eph. 1:6	47. I am qualified to share His inheritance	Col. 1:12	87. I am a disciple of Christ	Jn. 13:34-35
8. I am set free	Jn. 8:31	48. I am the head not the tail	Deut. 28:13	88. I am built on the foundation	Eph. 2:20
9. I received God's character	1 Jn. 4:17	49. I am above only and not beneath	Deut. 28:13	89. I am a partaker of His divine nature	2 Pet. 1:4
10. I live in God's love	1 Jn. 4:16	50. I am victorious	Rev. 21:7	90. I am God's workmanship	Eph. 2:10
11. I have no fear of punishment	1 Jn. 4:18	51. I am dead to sin	Rom. 6:2,11	91. I am being changed into His image	Phil. 1:6
12. I have no darkness	1 Jn. 1:5	52. I am elect	Col. 3:12	92. I am one with Christ	Jn. 17:21-23
13. I have a sound mind	2 Tim. 1:7	53. I am loved with an everlasting love	Jer. 31:3	93. I have all my needs met in Christ	Phil. 4:19
14. I love like Jesus	1 Cor. 13:4-8	54. I am established to the end	1 Cor. 1:8	94. I have the mind of Christ	1 Cor. 2:16
15. I have the fruit of the Spirit	Gal. 5:22-23	55. I am circumcised by Christ	Col. 2:11	95. I have the gifts of the Spirit	1 Cor. 12-13
16. I am called of God	2 Tim. 1:9	56. I am crucified with Christ	Gal. 2:20	96. I have guaranteed inheritance	Eph. 1:14
17. I am called of God by my name	Is. 43:1, 49:1	57. I am alive with Christ	Eph. 2:5	97. I have abundant life	Jn. 10:10
18. I am engraved in the palms of God	Is. 49:16	58. I am raised up in Christ	Eph. 2:8	98. I have overcome the world	1 Jn. 5:4-8
19. I am precious to God, Honored by Him	Is. 43:4	59. I am his faithful follower	Eph. 5:1	99. I have power to control my thoughts	2 Cor. 10:5
20. I am created by God in the womb	Ps. 139:13-16	60. I am the light of the world	Matt. 5:14	100. I have access to the Father	Eph. 2:18
21. I am formed and set apart by God	Jer. 1:6	61. I am the salt of the earth	Matt. 8:13	101. I have received the power of the Spirit	Mk. 16:17
22. I am called in God by righteousness	Is. 42:6	62. I am called of God	2 Tim. 1:9	102. I can do all things through Christ	Phil. 4:13
23. I am created for His glory	Is. 43:7	63. I am brought near by the blood of Christ	Eph. 2:13	103. I shall do greater works than Jesus	Jn. 14:12
24. I am forgiven	Eph. 1:7	64. I am more than a conqueror	Rom. 8:37	104. I walk in Christ Jesus	Col. 2:6
25. I am delivered from darkness	Col. 1:13	65. I am in Christ Jesus by God's doing	1 Cor. 1:30	105. I possess the Greater One	1 Jn. 4:4
26. I am a new creature	2 Cor. 5:17	66. I am an ambassador for Christ	2 Cor. 5:20	106. I press towards the goal	Phil. 3:14
27. I have God's unfailing love	Ps. 32:10	67. I am beloved and chosen by God	1 Thes. 1:4	107. I forget the past, and go forward	Phil. 3:12-13
28. I am loved	1 Jn. 4:10	68. I am the first fruits among his creation	Jas. 1:18	108. I have received the power	Phil. 3:10
29. I have a purpose for living	Jer. 29:11	69. I am born of God, Satan can't touch me	1 Jn. 5:18	109. I live by the law of the Holy Spirit	Rom. 8:2
30. I am never forsaken	Ps. 27:10	70. I am a king and a priest unto God	Rev. 1:6	110. I know God's voice	Jn. 10:14
31. I am comforted	Is. 66:13	71. I am chosen	1 Pet. 2:9	111. I show forth His praise	1 Pet. 2:9
32. I have a father	Ps. 68:5	72. I am perfect	Heb. 10:14	112. I always triumph in Christ	2 Cor. 2:14
33. I am not an orphan	Jn. 14:18	73. I am a joint heir with Christ	Rom. 8:17	113. I have the fullness of God in Christ	Col. 2:9-10
34. I am adopted by God	Eph. 1:5	74. I am reconciled to God	2 Cor. 5:18	114. I have Christ in me, the hope of glory	Col. 1:27
35. I am filled with the Holy Spirit in unity	Jn. 17:21	75. I am forgiven and healed	Ps. 103:3	115. I am a witness for Christ	Acts 1:8
36. I have the Holy Spirit to teach me	Jn. 2:27	76. I am healed by the wounds of Jesus	1 Pet. 2:24	116. I am unconditionally loved	Rom. 5:5
37. I am the temple of the Holy Spirit	1 Cor. 6:19	77. I am in the world as He is in heaven	1 Jn. 4:17	117. I am the apple of my father's eye	Ps. 17:8
38. I am washed, sanctified and justified	1 Cor. 6:11	78. I am a fellow citizen with saints	Eph. 2:19	118. I am being made holy	Heb. 10:4
39. I am an overcomer	Rom. 8:9-11	79. I am sealed with the Spirit	Eph. 1:13	119. I am an image bearer	Gen. 1:27
40. I am transformed	Rom. 12:2	80. I am complete in Christ	Col. 2:10	120. I am to rule in heaven with Christ	Rev. 22:5

Lesson One Review

1. Recite 2 Corinthians 5:17 from memory.
2. Describe what it means to be a new creation in Christ.

3. Can someone be partially in Christ and partially outside of Christ at the same time? Describe why or why not, using Jesus' teaching in John 3 about spiritual birth.
4. What core belief did Peter and John use as their foundation to encourage their disciples to live godly lives?
5. How does Paul's teaching in Ephesians 2:8-10 contradict the idea that our salvation is a slow, gradual process?
6. What are some differences between the mindsets of progressive salvation and complete salvation? Which one is correct?
7. What is your choice in regard to becoming a child of God? What is God's choice?
8. List three benefits of being God's child. Use Scripture from the 120-point chart.

Faith Confession from Lesson One

I am God's child. I was born again by the Holy Spirit when I believed in Christ. I am a new creation, my past is gone, and I am completely saved. I was created in Christ Jesus to be God's handiwork to do good works.

Journal Ideas

Consider the following starter sentences:

- "Today's lesson changed the way I think about..."
- "I want to learn more about..."
- "God showed me that as His child I am..."
- "I pray that I will..."

- “I pray others would know...”

LESSON TWO

I Am Saved from Sin

Sin is No Longer My Master

Jesus made it clear that no person can serve two masters. He taught that they would love the one and hate the other or serve the one and despise the other (Matthew 6:24). With this axiom in mind, how can any Christian claim Jesus as their only Master, yet still live in sin? To live in sin is to live in defiance to Jesus' lordship. Paul explains this incompatibility in Romans 6:11-14:

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. 14 For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

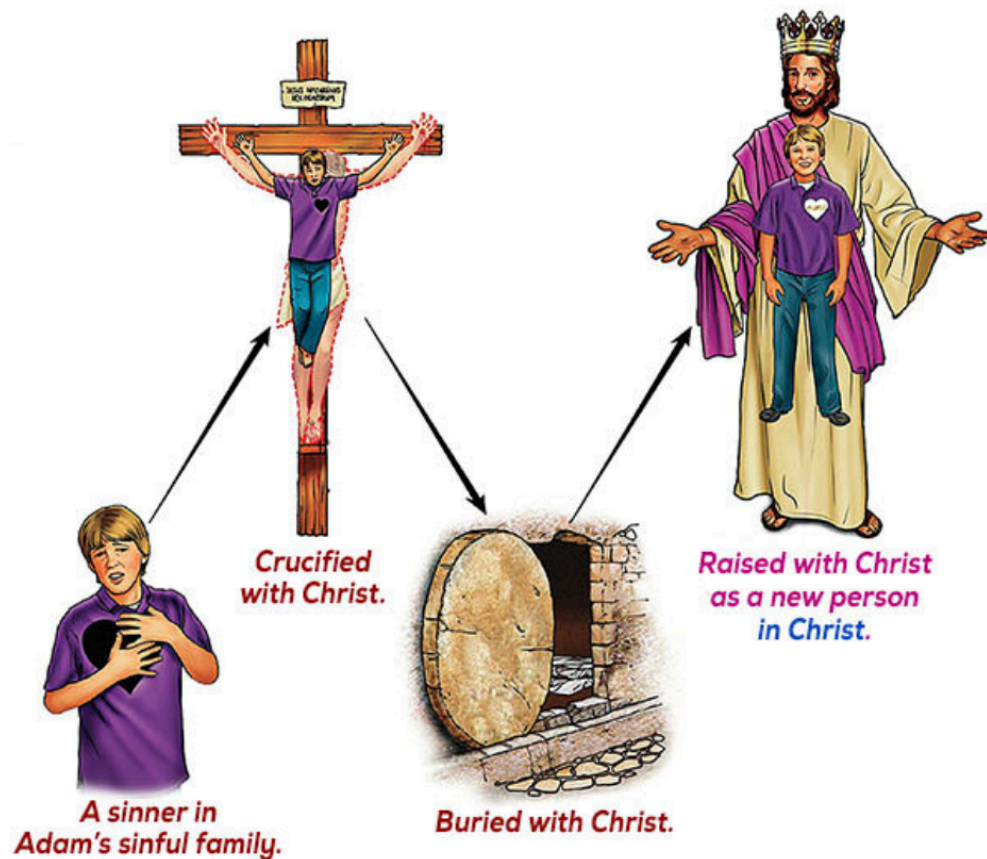
Notice that Paul ends the passage by using the term "master" in regard to sin. Our personal sin is the real slave master we must be on guard against. Some think that Satan is the most dangerous foe to the Christian, but sin was even his undoing. It was the sin of pride that turned Lucifer from a beautiful angel to an evil, fallen creature (Ezekiel 28:13-19).

Thankfully, as Paul teaches, once we come into Christ, we are set free from the mastery of sin. Chronologically speaking, the moment we are born again, we change masters even as our spiritual position changes. Before salvation, we were alienated from Christ, but upon salvation, we come into Christ. As a result, we are no longer slaves to sin, but now are slaves to Christ. Paul goes on to describe this transition in Romans 6:15-18:

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! 16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you

obey —whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Praise God! Because of who Jesus is, and what He has done on the cross, we are dead to sin and alive to righteousness! Below is a great illustration to help make this point clear.



It is true that we were all born sinners- spiritually dead, separate from God, helplessly mastered by our sin, and held under Satan's sway (Ephesians 2:1-3). However, when we were born again, our nature changed from sinful to righteous, and so did our master. When we submitted ourselves to Jesus as our Master, our old sinful nature was crucified with Him. Now our new life comes from the resurrection power of Christ. From that point on, as His disciples, we have been given a new life under a new Master. Therefore, we

are not to live in habitual sin as we did before. Our new habit and default mode of living is to be righteous just like Him. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Think of it like this: to the degree you were once unrighteous apart from Christ, is to the degree you are now righteous in Christ. In other words, we were sinners without Jesus, but now we are saints with Jesus!

In 1 John 3:9-10, we learn that the life ruled by sin is the observable difference between the children of the devil and the children of God.

9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. 10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

Notice that John did not say a Christian cannot sin, or that if they did sin, they are no longer a Christian. Rather, John was showing that children of God do not *continue in sin* as a habit, whereas, the children of the devil do. That is why John wrote previously in the same epistle:

1 John 1:8-2:6, “8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

2:1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 4 Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”

When we take into account Jesus’ teaching about lordship, Paul’s insight into spiritual slavery, and John’s exhortation to cease from continual sin, the

harmonious message of Scripture is clear: we are free *from* the control of sin, and free *to* obey God and live righteously!

I am Not My Fleshly Temptation

Whenever this kind of teaching is brought up, it is often asked, “If I am free from sin, why do I still face temptation?” This is a sensible question for followers of Jesus to ask. We want to deal honestly with the fact that some of our inner desires run contrary to the desires of our new Master and who He made us to be. It can feel as if there are two different persons, like “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” grappling within us. The answer to this troubling question has to do with our physical nature- that is, our flesh.

When God created Adam in the Garden, he was made both of the earth (body) and of spirit (soul). Moses wrote in Genesis 2:7, “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being [or “living soul”].” As Adam’s descendents, it follows that we, too, have physical bodies as well as spiritual souls, given to us by God’s breath. Though you have a fleshly body, you are not your body, you are a spiritual soul that lives in your body. That is why even when your body dies, you will still exist. Think about your body as your “earth suit.” It was designed to give your spiritual soul a place to dwell while on earth.

So, as a Christian, does our temptation come from our body or spiritual soul? The answer is found in 1 Peter 2:11, “Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.” According to Peter, sinful desires do not come *from* the soul; but rather, they come from the flesh and war *against* the soul. Therefore, the born again soul is not fighting against itself; it is the sinful flesh fighting against the spiritual soul. Specifically, the carnal brain with its sense driven passion has an animal like instinct for sinful things. Paul said in Philippians 3:19 about those who live by the flesh, “Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.”

Paul described the source of temptation, as well as how to conquer it, when he wrote to the Galatians, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:24) Notice it is the flesh that has “passions and desires” contrary to God’s will, and that those passions and desires are declared to have been “crucified” along with our flesh. Similarly, James tells us where temptation comes from and what it can lead to when acted upon, “14 Each person is tempted when they are dragged

away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” (James 1:14-15) Our temptation comes from our “own evil desires” that abide in our flesh. These desires, according to James, have a powerful, magnetizing force that can “drag us away” toward sin and death.

Remember, being born again has to do with our spiritual soul being renewed by the Holy Spirit. This spiritual new birth does not immediately transform our earthly bodies. The earthly body, what the Bible calls “flesh,” continues to be with us until we die, or Jesus comes back and transforms it. Either way, the flesh we now have will not inherit the Kingdom of God. It must either die or be transformed at Jesus’ second coming. And as for those who have already died and are in heaven, they will get their new body at the second coming as well.

While we live in the flesh, we are commanded to fight temptation, and count the flesh as crucified. For this reason, Jesus taught us to pray to the Father, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matthew 6:13, ESV) Similarly, that is why Paul wrote the following passage, which describes the conflicting natures of the flesh and the Spirit, and commands Christians to always choose to follow the Spirit (which guides our spirits):

Galatians 5:16-24, “16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 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. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

As we conclude this lesson, consider the following illustration to help you understand that though your flesh may tempt you, you are not your flesh. You are a born again child of God that lives in a body to glorify Jesus!

**THOSE LED BY THE SPIRIT
HAVE CRUCIFIED THE FLESH!**

THE SPIRIT
The spiritual soul (mind, will, & emotions) reborn and created in righteousness and holiness by the Holy Spirit.

THE FLESH
The physical body influenced by the brain and the five senses (touch, taste, see, hear, & smell).

**HOLY SPIRIT
NEW YOU**

Galatians 5:24-25, "24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

Lesson Two Review

1. According to Jesus, how many masters can a person have?
2. According to Romans 6:18, what master has the Christian been set free from and what master do they now serve?
3. What happened to the Christian's sinful nature ("flesh") when Jesus was crucified?
4. Why do Christians still experience temptation?
5. What kind of things did Paul say the flesh desired, according to Galatians 5:19-21?
6. How are you to pray when you face temptation?
7. What did John command a Christian to do in 1 John 1:9 if they should sin?
8. Describe what is meant by the phrase, "the flesh fights the spirit."

Faith Confession from Lesson Two

As a born again child of God, I am free from the mastery of sin because my soul is new and my old flesh is crucified with Christ. If I do sin, I will be quick to confess it and turn from it so that I will not continue in it. Jesus is my new Master, and I will keep in step with the Holy Spirit, empowered to live holy and righteously, bearing good fruit for God.

Journal Ideas

Consider the following starter sentences:

- “Now that sin is no longer my master, I will...”
- “Since I am crucified with Christ, I am dead to...”
- “My temptations do not define me, because...”
- “I pray that I will...”
- “I pray others would know...”

LESSON THREE

I Am Entirely Sanctified

I am Washed, Sanctified, and Justified

Sanctification, which means to be “made holy” and “set apart” for God’s purposes, has sometimes been thought of as a process- and a slow, gradual one at that. This is a popular sentiment, even among many preachers and theologians, but it is not what the Bible teaches. Read how Paul saw our sanctification, as well as our cleansing and justification, as something that occurred in the past in tandem when we were first saved.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11, “9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

Biblically speaking, can a Christian say that some of their past sins remain unwashed? Certainly not! And suppose someone else claimed that they were not entirely justified when they were saved. Would they be right according to Scripture? God forbid! Yet, why is it that so many Christians believe that they have not yet been made entirely holy, and, thus, need more “sanctification”? I often hear Christians say such foolish things as, “Nobody is perfect,” “Some days I’m a sinner, some days I’m a saint,” and “Nobody is like Jesus.” These statements came from the devil to keep Christians from experiencing the abundant life of God! (John 10:10)

Surprisingly, in an attempt to justify this foolish mindset, they will claim that Paul spoke this way when he called himself “the worst of sinners.” However, they fail to take into account the context where that phrase is found. Take a moment to read Paul’s statement within the body of his thought.

1 Timothy 1:15-16, “15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners —of whom

I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.”

Was Paul claiming that, presently, he was in fact the worst of all sinners? Was he worse than Nero, a witch, a rapist, a slave owner, a pedophile, or an apostate? If so, how could he be considered trustworthy as a leader in the church? A thief would be more credible than him! Later in the same letter Paul commanded that Timothy appoint elders in the church who were “above reproach” and in Titus, he said the elders must be “blameless.” (1 Timothy 3:1 & Titus 1:7) How could Paul require that church leaders be flawless in their character if he was the most flawed person alive? It’s ridiculous to think Paul would have done such a thing.

Obviously, Paul wasn’t referring to himself in the present time, but rather to his past life. He was simply speaking in the present tense to demonstrate how God made him an example of His grace. It would be as if I were to say in my sermon, “If God could save a wretch like me, he can save anyone!” I certainly don’t consider myself a wretch now, but I would speak as such to demonstrate for my listeners how lost I was before Christ. And I certainly believe that I would presently be just as bad off had Jesus not changed me.

Remember, Jesus taught that when a sinner is born again by the Holy Spirit, they become a new person. A new birth always leads to a new life and nature (John 3:3-8). That is why Paul wrote those powerful words in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” Paul wouldn’t go on to contradict himself a few years later in 2 Timothy. He understood that, at the moment of salvation, we are ontologically changed- that is, in our very nature. Therefore, we ought not to use Paul’s words out of context to justify our lack of belief that we have been changed. Rather, we should believe what Paul said in context- that God saves the worst of sinners- in harmony with what he taught elsewhere- that God makes sinners holy.

It is no wonder that Paul so often addressed his fellow Christians as “saints!” He frequently used this glowing language when he would write to the churches. For example, in his greeting to the Corinthians he wrote, “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...” (1 Corinthians 1:2, KJV) The word “saint” is translated from the Greek word, *hagios*, which means “holy ones.” In calling them saints, Paul declared the Corinthians to be holy and set apart to God.

Conversely, he never once called them sinners or wretches. Interestingly, the Bible used the term, “saint,” to describe believers even more than the term “Christian.” In point to fact, if you are a Christ-follower (i.e., “a Christian”), you are a saint- a holy and sanctified person. I like to say it like this: “We were born sinners in Adam, but we were born again saints in Christ.”

Not only does Paul call Christians saints, he goes much further to describe our lofty position with God. Think about it. Can you be more righteous than the “righteousness of God?” And can you be any closer to God than if you are “in Christ?” Paul uses this exalted language to describe our status as saints when he wrote, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) According to Paul, those who are now in Christ are as righteous as Jesus is and are as close to God the Father as the Son of God is.

To the extent we were sinful in our old, Adamic nature, we are now righteous in our new, Christ-like nature. Though it is true we still live in a sinful body (i.e., “the flesh”), it is also true that our spiritual soul lives with Christ in heavenly realms by the Holy Spirit who indwells us. We have established before that there is no way to be only partially born again. Similarly, there is no way for us to be only partially sanctified. We were entirely sanctified in our spiritual souls the moment we were born again. You don’t need more sanctification; you just need to live out the sanctification you’ve already been given in Christ!

I am Perfect like My Heavenly Father

Without a doubt, Jesus was a masterful teacher and communicator. But even so, many people manage to misinterpret even some of His simplest sayings. A great example would be when He said in Matthew 5:48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Some teach that Jesus was really trying to say, “Love like your heavenly Father loves.” They conclude this because Jesus commanded His disciples to love their enemies in the prior verses (Matthew 5:43-47). And in a complimentary passage in Luke 6:36 Jesus said, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” However, if that is what Jesus meant, why didn’t He just say that, and Matthew record it? Words have meaning and every Word of the Scripture is God-inspired and is important.

Furthermore, when we see similar concepts in the gospels (ex., “be perfect” and “be merciful” like our Father), we shouldn’t try to smash them

altogether like clay to say the exact same thing. We should do the opposite and allow each passage to add depth to the other and bring forth a multi-dimensional point. Just like surround sound uses multiple speakers to produce a full sound of an environment, so it is with the gospels. Thus, we as the reader should ask ourselves, “Why did Jesus say in Matthew 5:48 to ‘be perfect’ instead ‘be loving’ or ‘be merciful’?” The answer is simple; Jesus was teaching that before one can love perfectly or be perfectly merciful, they must first be made perfect. Otherwise, how can a person *do* perfect, unless they first, *be* perfect. Perfection cannot come for imperfection.

Others use the Greek to say that Jesus taught we are to be “complete and lacking nothing,” just as our heavenly Father is complete and lacks nothing. Though it is true that the Greek word, *teleios*, can at times be translated “complete,” how does “complete” fit into this context? Also, how is God completed when He acts upon the earth- isn’t He already complete? And how do we become complete by our good works, aren’t they just filthy rags before God? I thought Jesus made us complete at salvation. As a result, something is missing from this interpretation- mainly, the context.

The simplest explanation is often the best, and I believe that is true for understanding Matthew 5:48. What is the simplest explanation of Jesus’ words? In its context, Jesus was teaching His disciples to love and pray for their enemies, and in doing so, they would show themselves to be “children of [their] Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:45) Children are to imitate and mirror the character of their fathers (Ephesians 5:1). So when He goes on to say in verse 48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your Father in heaven is perfect,” He means, “imitate and mirror your Father in heaven in His moral perfection.” We know this is *moral* perfection, once again, because it is in the context of how we love and treat others, which are moral actions- we are to be perfect in this, just as God is perfect.

Jesus taught here and elsewhere that moral perfection is accomplished by love (Matthew 22:37-40). Though there may be some truth in the other interpretations we discussed, they cannot truly provide the same impact and clarity that Jesus intended, and cannot be seen in the plain reading of the text. Yet, now that we understand that this was Jesus’ point- to be morally perfect in love- how can we begin to be perfect like our heavenly Father? Is perfection something we strive and inch our way towards by our good works, or is it obtained by grace, the same way we receive salvation?

Thankfully, there is much light shed on this throughout the entire Bible. It conveys that we must first be *made* perfect *by* love in order that we may *act* perfect *in* love. Consider how in 1 John 2:5, the King James Version rightly translates *teleios* as “perfect” in regard to God’s love for us: “But whoso

keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God *perfected [teleios]*: hereby know we that we are in him.” John taught us that we are perfected by love to live in perfect love. We are first changed perfectly by God’s love and, therefore, we can both love perfectly and live perfectly.

Second, John notes that once God perfects His love in us, we then can have our love perfected by living in His perfect love. He wrote, “Herein is our love made *perfect [teleioō]*, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.” (1 John 4:17, KJV) Correspondingly, Jesus’ command in Matthew 5:48 is only possible inasmuch as the Father perfects His love in us in order that we may perfect our love in Him. I call this the “Cycle of God’s Perfect Love.” The same way God has perfected us in love, we are to live in perfect love toward Him and share it with others. Our highest duty in life is to love God and others perfectly. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-40:

37 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

But do we love God first or does He first love us? God loves us first according to 1 John 4:19, “We love because he first loved us.” God spoke about this perfection of love through the prophet Ezekiel, when He promised that His people would be able to perfectly follow all His laws because He would give them new hearts (the place where love abides).

Ezekiel 36:25-27, “25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

God promised to cleanse us from all our impurities, give us a new heart, and place His Spirit within us to guide us to keep His laws. We know that this was realized under the New Covenant, made possible by Jesus’ work on the cross. We can see this taught by the author of Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:19-22, “19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a

new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”

As a result, if Ezekiel’s prophecy has been fulfilled in Christ, as the author of Hebrews claimed, and all our impurities are cleansed, how much sin remains in the believer’s life? None. And if we are given a new heart at the moment of salvation, how much of the old heart is left? None. With this we can say the command to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect has been completed for us at the cross. All we have to do now is believe it, receive it, and live it. We were made perfect to live perfect in love!

I am Sanctified and Perfected in Jesus

Consider what was written in Hebrews 10:14 (KJV), “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Notice that the word “perfected” is in the past tense. Perfection is not something Christians strive toward or are waiting until heaven to receive. Rather, our spiritual souls have already been perfected upon our new birth. Let’s be clear that we were born again- not born again, and again, and again. It was one and done. In the same way, we were completely sanctified in our nature when we first believed and don’t need to seek further completeness.

Let’s look again at Hebrews in regard to how and when spiritual perfection came to God’s people, both on earth and in heaven. First, look again at Hebrews 10:14 (KJV), “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” This means that all saints, whether in heaven or on earth, have been perfected by the one offering of Jesus on the cross. This correlates to what we read in the next passage concerning the saints who lived before Christ, that they, too, have been perfected in the same way and at the same time by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Later, in Hebrews 10:39-40, the author wrote concerning the Old Testament saints, “39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.” Prior to the cross, the souls of the saints who passed rested in Sheol, namely in Abraham’s bosom (Luke 16:22-24). Hebrews teaches us that they had to wait to be perfected because an adequate sacrifice had not yet been provided for

them. Once Jesus offered His blood, however, those in Abraham's Bosom, along with the first believers living at that time, were made perfect together. Henceforth, those who get saved after the event of the cross receive the same spiritual birth and perfection as the first saints did. In other words, no one has to wait until after they die to be perfected. Perfection and sanctification came with Jesus' perfect sacrifice. Everyone in the New Covenant who believes in Jesus is spiritually perfected and sanctified.

Lastly, the author wrote in Hebrews 12:22-23, "22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect." This passage teaches that the saints who comprise the universal church, both in heaven and on earth, are "spirits of the righteous made perfect." No one can belong to the church (whether they are in heaven or on earth) unless they are a righteous spirit made perfect and are sanctified in Christ.

Think of it this way- in order to belong to the church of Jesus Christ, you must be a righteous spirit made perfect. The only way to be made perfect is by believing in the gospel. The process of going from imperfect to perfect is called sanctification. Therefore, it is necessary for God to perfect His people's spirits on earth before they come to heaven. Only when they are perfected can they belong to His church and be with Him forever. When a saint dies there is no extra step of purification called "purgatory," nor does the act of leaving your body make your spirit perfect. Spiritual perfection comes at the moment of spiritual birth, through sanctification, and remains for eternity. Death is not your savior, Jesus is!

When you remove the false belief of progressive salvation and progressive sanctification, the supposed need for more good works disappears with it. Now you can rest in the finished work of Christ, which empowers us to do the good works He prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). Consider the following verses about resting in Christ's finished work and be encouraged by Paul's prayer to let God sanctify you "through and through!"

Matthew 11:28-30, "28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Hebrews 4:9-10, “9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his.”

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, “23 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. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”

Lesson Three Review

1. What does sanctification mean and when does it occur?
2. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, what other two things happened simultaneously when we were sanctified?
3. Is it possible to be perfect like our Father in heaven is perfect?
4. What does the following phrase mean, “God perfects us in love so that we can live in perfect love?”
5. How does God go about perfecting imperfect people, according to Ezekiel 36:25-27?
6. What did the author of Hebrews say perfected Christians for all time?
7. Does a Christian need more sanctification either in this life or after death in order to be perfect? See Hebrews 11:40.
8. What did Paul pray in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 that all Christians should experience while alive?

Faith Confession from Lesson Three

As a born again child of God I am fully sanctified. There is no leftover sin in my spiritual soul. I was made perfect like my heavenly Father is perfect, to love both Him and others perfectly.

Journal Ideas

Consider the following starter sentences:

- “I believe I was washed and sanctified from...”
- “Since believing that I am perfected in love, I want to...”
- “Jesus’ finished work allows me to rest from...”
- “I pray that I will...”
- “I pray others would know...”

PART II:
I CAN DO WHAT
GOD SAID I CAN
DO

LESSON FOUR

I Can Love God with All My Heart

I Love God with Everything I Am

As we now contemplate the prospect of having a wholehearted love for God, take a moment to read Jesus' answer to the all-important question: Which is the greatest commandment? Then, consider His answer and its implications. Finally, ask yourself, "Is it truly possible to love God with all our hearts, or will we always somehow come short of it?"

Matthew 22:34-38, "34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' 37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment."

So, do you think it is possible to keep God's greatest command? Some think it impossible to love God with all of one's heart because we are just too sinful. They quote verses that seem to support this notion, such as Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" And Genesis 6:5, "The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time." To be sure, such texts accurately diagnose the heart of fallen, sinful man, but that is not true of the new man who is in Christ. They seem to forget the beautiful promise of a new heart available to all under the New Covenant. Read again what Ezekiel wrote on this subject many years before Christ.

Ezekiel 36:25-27, "25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

Notice that Ezekiel called the old heart, a “heart of stone,” but the new heart, a “heart of flesh.” The heart of stone is cold, dead, hard, and unresponsive to God’s love, and, thus, incapable of truly ever loving God. The heart of flesh, however, has been made alive, and is softened to where it can receive and reciprocate God’s love. We receive this new heart when we receive new birth (John 3:3-8). If that had not been the case, Jesus’ “greatest command” would be an impossible feat.

Think about it- if God cannot entirely remove the old heart of stone and give us a brand new, perfectly clean heart, then our sin is more powerful than the Holy Spirit. God forbid! Praise God that Paul gave us the truth on this matter, mainly, that Ezekiel’s promise of inward renewal and cleansing has been fully realized for us “through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

Titus 3:3-8, “3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a trustworthy saying.”

All Christians were washed at rebirth and renewed (made new) by the Holy Spirit. We were cleansed and given a new heart even as we were justified by Jesus’ grace. And God was not stingy in bestowing these blessings either, but He “poured [them] out” “generously” on us. Indeed, Paul confirmed the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s promise.

Likewise, in Galatians 5:19-26, Paul described how the Spirit guides us to follow God’s laws, and not give way to the sinful flesh. Further, the Spirit causes us to bear abundant fruit for God, chiefly love. Therefore, those who don’t believe we can love God perfectly are in denial of the power of the Holy Spirit and of the clear testimony of Scripture.

We have nothing holding us back from keeping the greatest commandment. Though, once having a stone cold heart, we could rightly say it was impossible. But now, having a living, beating heart of flesh, we are empowered and impelled to love God with everything we have. All our heart, soul, mind, and strength should be fully saturated with the love of God! And

what follows after is that when we love God perfectly, we will obey God perfectly.

For clarification- the heart, soul, and mind are all just different descriptions of the inner spiritual person. The inner person is who you truly are on the inside- mainly, your mind, will, and emotions. Throughout the book, I have been calling this the “spiritual soul.” As a result, the words “heart,” “soul” and “mind” are used interchangeably in the Bible to refer to the “inner person.” And lastly, your “strength” is the physical aspect of your nature that allows you to do all of your day-to-day tasks- such as, eating, working, playing, etc. The bottom line is, *God wants us to love Him with everything we are and with everything we do!*

I Love God Because He First Loved Me

John, who is known as the “Apostle of Love,” wrote in his first epistle that God is love and when we live in love, we live in God. He then went so far as to say that when we truly understand God’s love for us, all fear of punishment is removed, and we can see how perfect God has made us as His children. Enjoy reading this passage and allow it to impress God’s love in your heart.

1 John 4:13-19, “13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love.

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

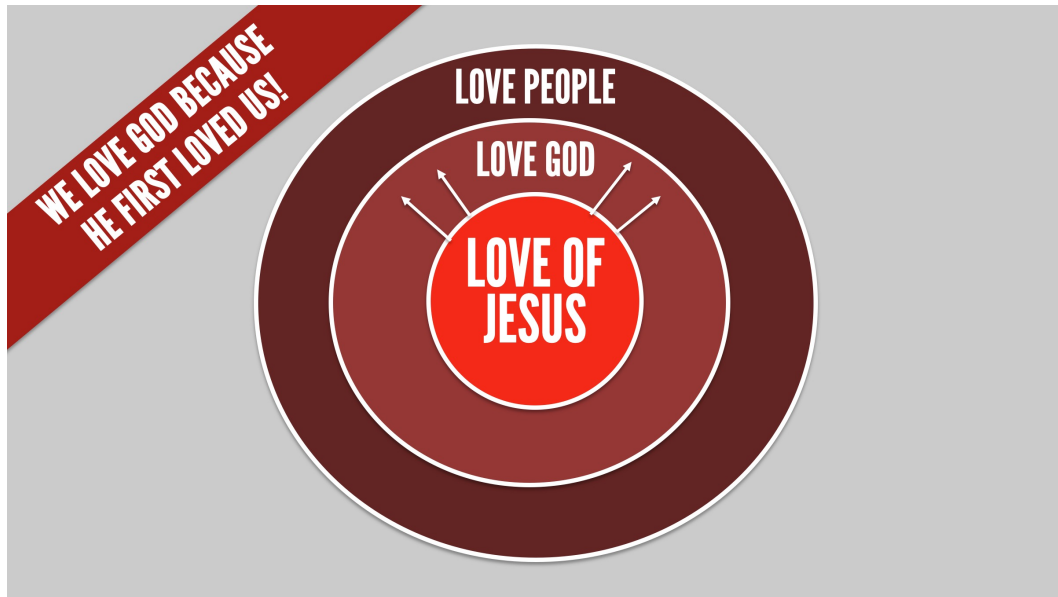
19 We love because he first loved us.”

With this text in mind, consider how beautifully John reminds us of the Trinity. First, he speaks of the Spirit, the Father, and the Son all working together in the life of the disciple, filling us with perfect love. Second, reflect

on how John's teaching about the Spirit corresponds to the Spirit's work as seen in Ezekiel 36:25-27. The Spirit's indwelling us makes the love of the Father and the Son real in our lives. Third, at the end of this passage, John reminds us that it was God who first loved us, and we now love Him. It is like when I give my children money to buy me a birthday gift. The money was mine to begin with and will be given back to me in the form of a present. However, the true joy in giving them my money is seeing them give it back from their heart, with their own unique expression of love.

When it comes to us loving God with everything, it is not our capacity to love that counts, it is the very love that God has already given us- an immeasurably deep well to draw from! Therefore, whenever someone says they cannot love God with their whole heart because of sin, they imply that God doesn't have enough love to fill their heart and has left them dry. This would be like my children saying they don't have enough money to buy me a gift, after I have given them the money to do so. Truly, the problem would not be with their resources, but with their willingness to participate in the cycle of giving.

All of God's children are privileged to participate in the circle of love. As the illustration below shows, when we have God's love in the center of our hearts, He enables us to love Him and others with perfect love. First, God pours His love into our hearts as we experience His unparalleled affection and faithfulness (Romans 5:5). Then, love works its way out as we begin to express it toward God and others, loving in action and in truth (1 John 3:16-17). With that said, there is certainly nothing in our nature that can prevent us from loving perfectly, because the very God of love lives in us.



I Have an Undying First Love for God

One of the profoundest conclusions to a book of the Bible is found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, when he wrote these parting words to the precious flock of God in Ephesus, "23 Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love." (Ephesians 6:23-24) Once again, as with John, Paul indicates that God is the source of love and that He initiates the circle of love. Further, he notes that God's love comes to us with peace and faith; "peace... and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." What more could we ever ask for? Yet, Paul goes one step further and mentions "grace" in regard to those who love Jesus with an "undying love." It is God's unending grace that allows us to love Him with an undying love.

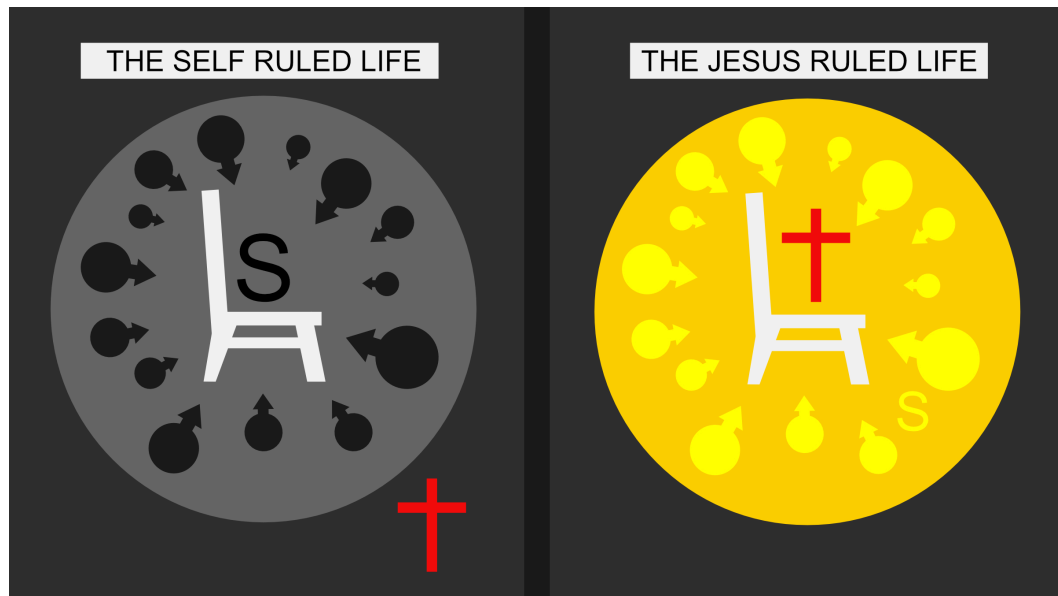
Sadly, only within a few years of this writing, the people of Ephesus had lost their first love and allowed their hearts to grow cold. Read what Jesus said about the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2:4-5, "4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. 5 Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place."

The Bible does not say specifically how the Ephesians came to forsake their first love and earn such a stern rebuke. However, 1 John does clue us in to another love that competes with our love for the Father. According to John,

every person living is in one of two circles; they are either in God’s circle of love or that of the world. (By “the world,” he means the fleshly, sinful world, under the power of the evil one.)

1 John 2:15-17, “15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”

Though God’s love will never run out, we can move out of it. Take for example, the Mississippi River- it never stops moving, but you can move in and out of it. God gives each of us free will and the power of self-determination. We are the final arbiters of our hearts. Consider the popular illustration concerning who sits on the throne of your heart, Jesus or Self.



“The Self Ruled Life” is one of idolatry, lust, emptiness, lovelessness, and darkness. “The Jesus Ruled Life” is full of glory, life, power, light, and love. Take a moment to consider all the things that God has given you to serve Him with. These blessings are like planets revolving around the Son (sun). However, if we do not keep Jesus at the center of our lives and allow His love to empower and motivate all we do, we will wither up and die because we put our “self” (“S”) on the throne of heart, instead of putting our self (along with everything else in our lives) at the feet of Jesus.

As God's children, we are to daily choose to stay in His circle of love and allow Him to bear good fruit in our lives. We are to resist the temptation to let even the good things in life, things like family, ministry and work, corrupt our love for God. Decide today and every day to let God's love flow from within you, and back to Him and everyone around you!

Lesson Four Review

1. What did Jesus say was the greatest commandment?
2. Is it possible to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?
3. How does God make it possible for people to love Him with everything according to Ezekiel 36:25-27?
4. What is meant by the phrase, "God's circle of love," and how does it apply to obeying the greatest commandment?
5. What did Paul encourage the Ephesians to do that Jesus said they stopped doing?
6. Can Christians choose to reject God's love? If so, what other choice in regard to love do they have, according to 1 John 2:15-17?
7. Describe what it means to live a "Jesus Ruled Life" and how it applies to obeying the greatest commandment.

Faith Confession from Lesson Four

As a born again child of God, I choose to participate in God's perfect circle of love. I love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. I am perfected in love and abide in the perfect love of the Father.

Journal Ideas

Consider the following starter sentences:

- “Now believing that I am in God’s perfect circle of love, I want to love God in the following ways...”
- “I will never let my love for Jesus grow cold because I will always...”
- “Jesus rules my life because...”
- “I pray that I will...”
- “I pray others would know...”

LESSON FIVE

I Can Love Others as Myself

I Love My Neighbor as Myself

Now that you are in God's circle of love, you have what it takes to love your neighbor as yourself. In fact, God's love in you empowers you to even love your enemies. When Jesus issued the greatest commandment, it came attached to the second greatest commandment. These two commandments should be viewed as a package and can only be kept by those to whom God has given a new heart.

Matthew 22:37-40, "37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

In Luke's parallel account, we read that an expert in the Jewish law tried to justify himself by asking, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29) To which Jesus answered by giving the famous Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). The premise of the story is simple: when a man (presumably a Jewish man) was robbed and beaten along the road, no one came to help him except a Samaritan (a person from the region of Samaria). The lesson of the story is best understood in light of the 1st century Jewish cultural context, which helps us understand the significance of those who passed by and the one who stopped to help. For the expert in the law wanted to narrow down his criteria of a "neighbor" so that he could justify not loving people outside of his preferred group.

Jesus said two kinds of religious Jews passed by, a priest and a Levite, both of whom did nothing to help the wounded man. However, a Samaritan, considered culturally inferior by the Jews, was the one to stop and help. The Samaritan not only offered help, but also went out of his way to meet the man's long-term needs. Many Jews in the time of Jesus despised Samaritans because their ancestors had intermarried with the pagan Assyrians long before, rendering them "half breeds."

To drive home the countercultural message in this parable, let's draw a comparison to a more familiar cultural backdrop. Picture living during the Jim Crow era in the U.S., addressing a group of white southerners. Telling a similar story, you make the white preacher and deacon respectively appear selfish and aloof, while presenting the African American as the compassionate hero. As you might imagine, this would be utterly scandalous to such an audience. And, as we think back to Jesus, if the person who was robbed in His story was in fact a Jew, it makes the point that much stronger. A Samaritan was willing to help his racist enemy, whereas the Jewish religious leaders were unwilling to help their own. The Parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us that our neighbor is anyone that we can help- regardless of cultural background, gender, religious affiliation and the like.

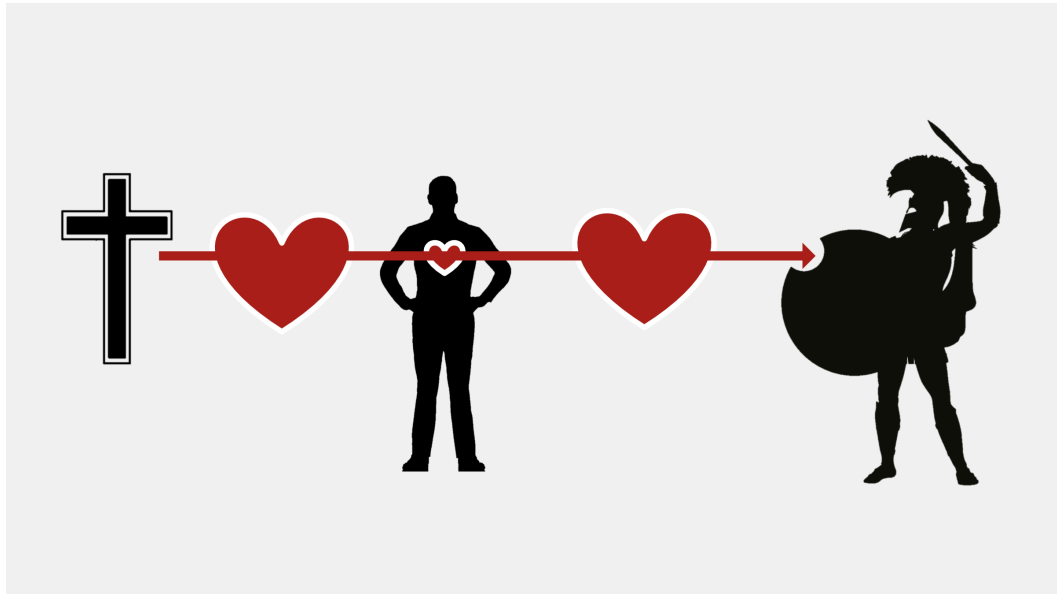
Though it is true that we may not be able to help everyone, it is true that we can help someone. Our willingness to help others should not be conditional upon culture, skin color or social status. Likewise, our love should be given equally to those who are good and bad alike. Recall our study of Matthew 5:43-48, where Jesus taught us to be perfect like our heavenly Father. This instruction comes in this exact context of loving even our enemies.

43 You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

When we consider how much Jesus has loved us, even while we were His enemies (Romans 5:10), how can we not be inspired to love others in the same way? Even those who dislike us or harm us are far more loveable in light of God's infinite mercy to us. It is helpful to note that loving our enemies does not justify their evil or remove its consequences (or that we may need to be separated from them for safety's sake). Loving our enemies means that despite their evil, we still want God's best for them. Furthermore, Jesus was clear that if we do not show our love in forgiving others of their sins against us, our own sins will not be forgiven.

Matthew 6:14-15, “14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

Remember what we learned about loving God with all your heart; it is the same with loving your neighbor. You can only love other people perfectly on the basis of receiving a new heart from God that has been filled with His love (Ezekiel 36:26-27 & Romans 5:5-8). The love you are giving others is God’s love. Hate, abuse, and rejection from others are not strong enough to stop God’s love! We simply must let God’s love flow through us like a river and it will fill every part of our heart with genuine compassion and mercy for other human beings. It is because of Jesus that we can love our enemies and help others in need, even when it requires great sacrifice and patience. Decide to be a conduit of God’s love to everyone around you as the picture below illustrates. Since God loved you when you were His enemy, you should never hinder your enemies from knowing God’s love through you.



I Love Others Like Jesus Loves Me

Loving people as yourself doesn’t mean you become a doormat or that you affirm everyone’s bad choices in life. We are called to love people as we love ourselves. Well, how is that supposed to look? Jesus taught His love for us would be the new standard for how we are to love others (John 13:34). Think about some of the ways that Jesus loves you:

1. Jesus loves you just the way you are, but too much to let you stay that way (John 4:16-17).
2. Jesus loves you by telling you when you are wrong (Luke 13:5).
3. Jesus loves you by correcting your bad behavior (Matthew 16:23).
4. Jesus loves you by hating certain actions and attitudes you may have that are sinful (Proverbs 8:13).

Likewise, you are to love yourself in the following ways:

1. Love yourself even when you're in a bad place, but do not allow yourself to remain there (2 Corinthians 13:5).
2. Love yourself by recognizing when you are wrong (Romans 13:13).
3. Love yourself by correcting your bad behavior (Ephesians 4:29).
4. Love yourself by hating certain actions and attitudes you may have that go against God's Word (Romans 12:9).

Lastly, you are to love your neighbor as yourself in the following ways:

1. Love others wherever they're at in life, but too much to let them stay in bad places (Ezekiel 3:16-21).
2. Love others by telling them when they are wrong (Proverbs 27:5).
3. Love others by correcting their bad behavior (2 Timothy 4:1-5).
4. Love others by hating certain actions and attitudes they may have that are sinful and destructive (Jude 1:22-23).

Love is not just an emotion; love is a person- God. And from God's nature comes the true definition of love for others. Often times, what non-Christians call "love" is actually hate, and what they call "hate" is really love. For example, it would be hateful not to warn someone that his or her house was on fire. Likewise, it would be hateful not to warn people about the fiery

judgment of hell. If someone was in such grave danger, but you only offered false security and affirmation, you'd be rightly judged as a terrible person.

Sadly, we are living in times when people have God's love backwards. Most sinners want us to "lovingly" affirm their sin and accept all behaviors as righteous. However, God said in Isaiah 5:20, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." We would be just as evil as the world is if we went along with its backwards morality. God has called us to truly love people as we love ourselves. Knowing the truth of God's Word, we wish to escape the judgment of hell that it warns about. And if we have so much as an ounce of goodwill toward others, we would want to help them avoid that horrible fate also (2 Corinthians 5:10-11).

Consequently, we should preach the gospel just like Jesus did. Call to mind that Jesus spoke more about hell than any other biblical figure. He did this, not out of vanity or fear mongering, but because He knew more than anyone how dreadful hell truly is. The judgment of hell, by an infinitely wide margin, is the worst thing that could ever happen to anyone.

On one hand, God has given all people a choice, so we cannot coerce others to change and believe as we do. We need to be patient with them as God was patient with us. On the other hand, we must not let their apathy for God diminish our passion for presenting them with the truth of the gospel. Jude said it best in Jude 1:22-23, "22 Be merciful to those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh."

I pray that, as you help others in their times of need, you will also love them enough to preach God's Word to them. May your heart be unified with the heart of God who wants all people to repent and know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. As we end this lesson be encouraged by 1 Timothy 2:1-6 to know how to pray for all people to be saved and blessed by God.

1 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

Lesson Five Review

1. What did Jesus say was the second greatest commandment?
2. Is it possible to love others as yourself?
3. How does God make it possible for us to love others as ourselves according to Ezekiel 36:25-27?
4. What did the Good Samaritan do that the other people in the parable didn't do?
5. Why was the ethnic background of the Samaritan so important to the man's question about who was his neighbor?
6. List some ways that Jesus loves you and explain how they apply to you loving your neighbor as yourself.
7. If people call our love "hate," should we stop loving them like how Jesus loves us? Explain your answer from the example of Jesus.

Faith Confession from Lesson Five

As a born again child of God, I love my neighbor as myself. I choose to be a Good Samaritan to everyone wherever I go- even to my enemies. I will love people just like how Jesus loves me and how I love myself.

Journal Ideas

Consider the following starter sentences:

- "Since believing that I can love people as myself, I want to..."
- "I pray that my enemies will..."
- "I will love others as I love myself by..."

- “I pray that I will...”
- “I pray others would know...”

LESSON SIX

I Can Obey All of God's Commands

I Love God's Commands

Behind each of God's commandments is a glimpse into His heart and character. God commands us not to lie because He is not a liar. God commands us not to steal because He is not a thief. God commands us not to commit adultery because He is not a cheater. All of God's commandments reveal to us His holy and loving nature.

Though the Bible calls God a "Jealous God" in Exodus 34:14, it does not mean "jealous" in the way we are not to be. The Hebrew word, *qanâ'*, is only ever used in reference to God, and does not mean covetous or jealous in the sinful sense. The best way to understand God's jealousy would be to imagine the longing of a husband for his wife's affection if she neglected him or gave her attention to another lover. Similarly, the Bible gives examples of God ending human life (as with the Flood), but this does not make God a murderer. When God judges His creation, it stems from His justice. Just as with human courts, it is considered just to administer capital punishment to the worst offenders. And all humanity deserves death because of sin. The sins we have personally committed, and the sins imputed to us in Adam all warrant death and damnation (Genesis 2:15-17 & Romans 6:23). Finally, God, being the Creator and Giver of life, alone has the right to take life.

With this in mind, God has a specific reason for each and every one of His commandments- this includes those found in the Mosaic Law in the Old Testament. In today's society, we tend to dismiss the Law of Moses as "politically incorrect" or just plain silly. King David, on the other hand, loved the Law so much that he wrote a poem about it. Psalm 119 is an acrostic poem that begins every stanza with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, each new stanza expressing David's great fondness of God's commands, decrees and statutes. Below are some of the verses that express his passion for God's Law:

v. 14, "I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches."

v. 40, “How I long for your precepts! In your righteousness preserve my life.”

vs. 44-48, “44 I will always obey your law, for ever and ever. 45 I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts. 46 I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame, 47 for I delight in your commands because I love them. 48 I reach out for your commands, which I love, that I may meditate on your decrees.”

v. 52, “I remember, Lord, your ancient laws, and I find comfort in them.”

v. 54, “Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge.”

v. 62, “At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws.”

v. 72, “The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.”

vs. 92-93, “92 If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. 93 I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life.”

vs. 97-100, “97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. 98 Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies. 99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.”

vs. 111-113, “111 Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. 112 My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end. 113 I hate double-minded people, but I love your law.”

v. 120, “My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws.”

v. 129, “Your statutes are wonderful; therefore I obey them.”

vs. 135-136, “135 Make your face shine on your servant and teach me your decrees. 136 Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed.”

v. 148, “My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.”

v. 164, “Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws.”

vs. 171-172, “171 May my lips overflow with praise, for you teach me your decrees. 172 May my tongue sing of your word, for all your commands are righteous.”

If that is how much David loved the laws of the Old Covenant, how much more should we love the laws of the New Covenant, which is a greater covenant built on greater promises? (Hebrews 7:22)

Obedying Jesus’ teachings was never meant to be a burden, but rather an expression of our love for Him. Below are a few key verses in John’s Gospel that reveal Jesus’ heart for us, that obedience would spring out of love and result in our joy.

John 14:15, “If you love me, keep my commands.”

John 14:21, “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

John 14:23-24, “23 Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.’”

John 15:9-14, “9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command.”

As we can see, from the Old to the New Testament, those who love God are to love His commands. Choose today to love all of God's commands and obey them with a joyful heart. If you do not know where to start, check out this summary list of Jesus' commands as found in the book of Matthew:

1. Repent of your sin (Matthew 4:17)
2. Follow Jesus (Matthew 4:18)
3. Be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20)
4. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matthew 22:38)
5. Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:38)
6. Be poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3)
7. Be mournful over sin (Matthew 5:4)
8. Be meek (Matthew 5:5)
9. Be hungry for righteousness (Matthew 5:6)
10. Be merciful (Matthew 5:7)
11. Be a peacemaker (Matthew 5:8)
12. Be joyful in persecution (Matthew 5:9)
13. Be the salt of the earth and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-14)
14. Don't murder or sin in anger (Matthew 5:21-26)
15. Don't commit adultery or lust (Matthew 5:27-30)
16. Don't get an unbiblical divorce (Matthew 5:31-32)
17. Don't make oaths (Matthew 5:33-37)
18. Don't seek revenge (Matthew 5:38)
19. Be kind to everyone, including your enemies (Matthew 5:39-42)
20. Be generous (Matthew 6:3-4)
21. Be a person of prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)
22. Be forgiving (Matthew 6:14-15)
23. Don't fast to gain attention (Matthew 6:16-18)
24. Store up treasures in heaven by using your wealth to benefit others (Matthew 6:19-24)
25. Don't worry about the things of life, but seek God's Kingdom first (Matthew 6:33)
26. Don't judge others by a different standard than the Bible (Matthew 7:1)
27. Remove the plank out of your eye so you can help get the speck out of your friend's eye (Matthew 7:3-6)
28. Be persistent in your seeking after God (Matthew 7:7-8)
29. Do unto others as you would want done unto you (Matthew 7:12)

30. Enter through God's narrow gate and stay on His narrow path (Matthew 7:13-14)
31. Avoid false prophets and teachers (Matthew 7:15-20)
32. Don't be a hypocrite (Matthew 7:21-23)
33. Build your life on Jesus' teachings (Matthew 7:24-27)
34. Be ready for Christ's return (Matthew 24)
35. Be a good steward of God's gifts in your life (Matthew 25)
36. Take communion in remembrance of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Matthew 26:26-29)
37. Be a disciple of Jesus that makes new disciples (Matthew 28:18-20)

Obviously, more commands and teachings from Jesus can be found in Mark, Luke, and John as well. Further, Paul and the other Apostles expound on Jesus' commands throughout the epistles. Romans 12-14, 1 Corinthians 5-8, Galatians 5:13-26, Ephesians 4:17-6:20, 1 Peter 2-5, and 2 Peter 1-2 are some great sections to read. Just know that wherever you find God's New Covenant commands, you will find God's strength to obey them!

I Love the Spirit's Guidance

Even though you, as the reader, are not specifically addressed in the Bible, the teachings of the Bible nevertheless apply to you specifically. The same is true for every situation and predicament you face in life. Even though the Bible doesn't specifically mention what kind of career path you should take, it does contain moral judgments and principles to help you discern between what is right and wrong in that situation.

Consider the following questions of Christian conduct that Scripture does not provide a clear, comprehensive answer to: Can a Christian listen to non-Christian music? Can Christians dance the salsa or do the Electric Slide with their friends? How long should Christians date before getting married? Is dating before marriage even a viable option? What is the right age to marry and have children? How long should a church service be? And, how should Christian ministers perform funerals and weddings?

Many Christians in the past have tried to answer these questions with man-made laws and traditions; however, God gives us a much better way- the way of the Spirit. The way of the Spirit is to be humble and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit in all the areas of life that the Bible doesn't address specifically. In Galatians 5:19-26, Paul outlines the "acts of the flesh" in

contrast with the “fruit of the Spirit,” giving us a clear sense of right versus wrong. But notice how he ends the section with a command to “keep in step” with the Holy Spirit.

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Keeping in step with the Spirit doesn’t mean that every Christian gets to pick and choose the commands they will obey or not. Rather, when we follow the Spirit, He will fill in the gaps of our understanding, helping us apply biblical principles to the specific situations we face in our daily lives. In a sense, the Bible provides broad parameters for the disciple to live within, and then the Holy Spirit guides them in what is right. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:23 (KJV), “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” Certainly, Paul is not writing that all things, including sins, are “lawful” for him (that would be a contradiction in terms to everything he wrote). He meant, rather, that all things outside the realm of sin are lawful, things like dating and dancing, which we listed in the questions above. Thus, lawful things need to be filtered by the Holy Spirit to each individual to ensure they are “beneficial.”

At this point, some well-intentioned Christians may want to resolve the supposed issue of having “grey areas” in Christianity by stretching the application of certain passages to cover said areas. But God did not intend for the stipulations of the New Covenant to be meticulously codified like it was in the Old Covenant. The cults, who do not have the Holy Spirit, try to do this very thing. Wherever there is a lack of clarity on a moral question, their false prophets make up a law for all to follow. This is why Mormonism forbids drinking caffeine, among other things. If that were God’s intention, there would be laws in the New Testament, similar to the 613 laws of the Old Covenant.

The fact that there are moral grey areas in Scripture is proof that God wants His people to be Spirit led. It is for this purpose that the Father sends the Holy Spirit to indwell every believer. This partnership between the Spirit and the Christian is described in Ezekiel 36:27, “And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” The Holy Spirit desires to teach us both how to keep God’s law and to know His perfect will for our lives (Romans 12:1-2).

Consider the following application of Psalm 101:3 for an example on how not to use the Bible for the grey areas of life. David wrote in Psalm 101:3, “I will not look with approval on anything that is vile.” Some use this verse to teach that Christians should never watch television. However, if that were the law, then all TV, including the nightly news and Andy Griffith, would be just as sinful as pornography. But we ought to know there is a difference between good and evil when it comes to media. In other words, we cannot take a general principle about not looking on evil and approving it, and now apply it to everything in life, with no regard to the context or to each person’s own conviction and conscience.

A better way to apply Psalm 101:3 would be to say, “I will not watch and approve of anything on television that is vile.” Notice the emphasis is on the act of approving, as well as on what is considered “vile.” This interpretation complements well what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:30, “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.” As a result, we should conclude in this matter, “I will not watch anything that causes me to sin.” If we avoid taking Scripture out of context, we can allow God’s Word to set our boundaries, and then personally follow the Spirit’s leading to obey the specific things He wants us to do or not do.

Paul also wrote in Romans 14:23, “everything that does not come from faith is sin.” Which means, whatever we do (even something morally neutral), if not done in faith (with the conviction that it is God’s will), is sin for us. Likewise, James taught in James 4:17, “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.” Furthermore, the author of Hebrews wrote in Hebrews 5:14, “But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” So instead of trying to make a Christian law code that needs constant updating—we are to be trained by the Holy Spirit to distinguish between good and evil. The Spirit was sent to guide us into all truth and empower us to live a life that is pleasing to God!

We shouldn’t endeavor to do this alone, but in community, under the care of trusted elders and deacons in the local church (Hebrews 13:7,17).

Under the Spirit's leadership, our fellowship with other disciples will be like iron sharpening iron, as we all mature and get better at discerning God's perfect and pleasing will for our lives (Proverbs 27:17).

Lesson Six Review

1. What do God's commands reveal to us?
2. Why is God said to be jealous and judgmental?
3. Describe some of the things David said about God's Law.
4. What did Jesus say about His commands?
5. List some of Jesus' commands in Matthew that stand out to you.
6. Why is it important to be led by the Holy Spirit?
7. Can Christians choose which commands to obey?
8. Describe why it is important to following the Holy Spirit's guidance in a church community.

Faith Confession from Lesson Six

As a born again child of God I love all of God's commands and consider them to be the foundation of my life. I joyfully follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in all that I do so that I may please God in every area of my life.

Journal Ideas

Consider the following starter sentences:

- "Since falling in love with God's commands, I..."
- "I sense the Holy Spirit is leading me to..."

- “I like sharing with others Jesus’ command to...”
- “I pray that I will...”
- “I pray others would know...”

CONCLUSION

Ephesians 4:1, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

My earnest prayer is that, having read this book, you will never see yourself the same again. That you would know that you are no longer the “old self,” but a “new self” in Christ, “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:23-24) As you embark on a new life of Christ-centered identity, never forget that your spiritual transformation came to you by grace, and, thus, will always be kept by grace. Remember there is a difference between “receiving” your calling and “living worthy” of your calling. You had no other option but to “receive” a calling to be Christ-like because it was something you could never earn. And it is from that place of receiving that you will always be empowered to live worthy of what you have been given.

Think of the journey ahead of you as if you were given the International Space Station as a gift. Imagine you now possess the world’s most expensive facility, worth approximately 150 billion dollars. Would you now spend the rest of your life working to earn the gift, like you were paying it off? Remember- it’s already paid for and has already been freely given. So, would you not rather be so grateful for the gift that you resolve to steward it wisely to accomplish the purpose for which it was made? Since you do not need to pay it off, the best response would be to enjoy it and use it to benefit humanity.

In the same way, don’t try to spend the rest of your Christian life on earth “earning” the gift of Christ-likeness. Instead, joyfully receive your new Christ-like nature and use it for the glory of God and to bless His Church. Jesus said you are the light of the world and the salt of the earth- never settle for anything less than being a world changer, history maker, and roof breaker (Matthew 5:13-16).

Remain in a place of rest where you are too blessed to be stressed. Reject the notion of being beautifully broken because the truth is, you are beautifully healed. And stay far away from stinking thinking- be so heavenly minded that you change the earth for good! Christ died so that He could multiply Himself in people like you across the globe. Therefore, be inspired to live on fire for Jesus all the days of your life!

In closing, consider the story of the twelve Jewish spies sent to explore the Promised Land. Ten of the spies said, “We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” But Caleb, along with Joshua, said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.” (Numbers 13:30,32) What was the difference? It wasn’t what they saw—they were looking at the exact same things: giants, a strong army, and a fertile land. The difference was how they saw God in themselves. See yourself in Christ and go conquer the world for Jesus!

APPENDIX

I thought it best to include my responses to popular passages that are often brought up to object to Christian perfection and entire sanctification. Since they did not fit well into the flow of the book, I added this appendix for them, enjoy!

1 // Philippians 3:8-16 (KJV), “8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

Comment: This lengthy passage is at the conclusion of Paul’s major thought, which he began in Philippians 1:4-6. There he prayed with confidence in God completing His work in their lives. It was in the same vein he commanded them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling in Philippians 2:12-13. In other words, we are to not stop doing the work of God. And according to Jesus, what is the work of God that merits salvation? It is summarized in John 6:29, “Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he

has sent.” It was worth noting that Paul makes a very similar point in Romans 10:9-10- it is when you “believe in your heart” that you are saved.

Thus, in Philippians 3, Paul wanted to make clear that even he had not been completed and perfected in regard to God’s entire salvation plan. However, what he was lacking and still pursuing had nothing to do with his spiritual soul, but rather with his body. In other words, Paul had not yet attained the perfection of his body (nor has anyone still to this day except Christ). That is why he desired to share in the sufferings of Christ (death) that he might be closer to receiving his new body in Christ’s second coming (resurrection).

Follow his train of thought starting in verse 10, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” Notice that what he had not attained yet was the perfection of his body. Yet, at the same time, he wrote in verse 15, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule.” Therefore, there was a perfection he had not yet attained (the resurrection of the body) and a perfection he had already attained (a perfect spiritual soul). Consider the breakdown below for further clarity:

1. In Philippians 1:4-6 Paul declared that he was confident God would complete His good work in their lives.
2. In Philippians 2:12-13 Paul commanded the saints to continue to work out their salvation so God would fulfill His good purpose in them.
3. In Philippians 3:8-16 Paul let the saints know that he had not attained the final stage of his salvation; that is, a resurrected body (physical perfection). Yet he reminded them that they should live up to that which they had already attained (spiritual perfection).

It is easy to see how Paul’s phrasing might confuse some in this letter but let us remember that Paul is never going to contradict himself in Philippians, or in any of his other letters. The “already and not yet” was a common theme in Paul’s writings. There were things he taught that Christians have “already” and there were other things they do “not yet” have. With regard to salvation, we “already” have a new spirit, but have “not yet” received our new bodies.

Shockingly, Paul had to combat false teachers that claimed they did. That was actually a subject Paul addressed in 2 Timothy 2:17-18 (emphasis mine);

17 Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have departed from the truth. *They say that the resurrection has already taken place*, and they destroy the faith of some.

Hymenaeus and Philetus taught that Jesus had already secretly returned and had given them their resurrected bodies and, thus, they were super-apostles with special authority and wisdom. He had to warn of their false teaching because it was destroying people's faith in the real second coming of Jesus. So let's put this in perspective: the problem Paul faced was not people thinking they hadn't been spiritual perfected, but rather that they had been physically perfected as well! That is why he takes the time to explain what God has done already, and what God will do in the future. Therefore, let us not fall into either of the two ditches: one ditch is believing we are not perfect in our spiritual soul because we live in a sinful body; the other ditch is believing that because our spiritual soul has been perfected our body has been perfected too.

2 // Romans 7:21-24, "21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?"

Comments: As with Paul's thought in Philippians, most people do not allow the entire book or immediate context of Romans speak to give clarity to this passage. Nothing Paul described in Romans 7:7-24 has to do with being a born again Christian, but rather he is describing his life as self-righteous, unregenerate Jew. The reason he used present verbs is because he is re-telling his past with the knowledge he now has in the present. This is called an "autobiographical reconstruction."ⁱ We do this whenever we tell a story and say things like, "I believed his lies because I am gullible." Certainly, the person in the present isn't gullible anymore because they now know what the person said was untrue. But when they tell the story they speak in the present tense, "I am gullible."

That is exactly what Paul is doing both here and in 1 Timothy 1:16-17, “But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.” How could Paul literally be the worst of sinners in chapter one and at the same time in chapter three of the same book command Timothy to appoint elders that are “above reproach... temperate, self-controlled, respectable, etc.?” If Paul wasn’t using the literary technique of autobiographical reconstruction in both Romans 7 and 1 Timothy 1, then Paul is a terrible hypocrite and shouldn’t be a leader in the church because he is wretched, the worst of sinners, a slave to sin, and unable to control his actions.

Thankfully, there is a much better way to understand Paul in Romans 7:21-24, just keep reading into chapter 8 to see the full context and point Paul is making:

Romans 7:24-8:4,9-11, “24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

“9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.”

In the wider context, Paul’s point is that prior to being born again, it is impossible to live for Jesus because we are still “in the flesh.” The flesh is too powerful of a slave master for the soul to break free from, even if we know

the commands of God and the good we ought to do. The only way to actually obey God's commands and be delivered from the slave master of our flesh, what Paul calls, "the body of death," is to be born again and set free by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit-led life is one in which the spiritual soul is perfected, free from bondage to the sinful flesh, to love and serve God. Though we still live in the body it is no longer our slave master, Jesus is. We live free from the flesh by offering our body as a living sacrifice and setting our mind on the Spirit so we can be renewed in our thinking every day. To this end, Jesus called us as His disciples to deny ourselves and take up our cross that we may follow Him (Mark 8:34). Also, this is why Paul summarized his point again in Romans 12:1-2.

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Therefore, you have no excuse to live in the realm of the flesh, but have all the power and resources to live every moment in the Spirit. God's good, pleasing, and perfect will is not just a hope to discover when you get to heaven, but the reality in which you are supposed to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ on earth.

ⁱ For more on this perspective being Paul's autobiographical reconstruction read, *A Study of Romans 7:14-25 as Paul's (Auto) biographical Reconstruction*, by Chan Tsz-on at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/48535863.pdf> (accessed 2 September 2019).