

## A 60-day plan of transformation into Christlikeness

### Day #6: The 2 Warnings (legalism, secularism) and The Promise of Transformation

1. Warning #1: Legalism. This plan includes several spiritual disciplines/exercises. While all the spiritual exercises in this plan are based on the Word of God and practiced by Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul, there is always the danger of legalism. In legalism, the disciplines become a means whereby the believer comes to believe that he is a better person *because* of the exercises. If getting up an extra 30 minutes early to have quiet time with the Lord causes you to think you are gaining merit before God by doing so, you should not follow this plan. Better not to follow the plan than for the plan to make you into a self-righteous person who enjoys going around telling people how you schedule time with the Lord daily. Take, for example, the Apostle Paul. He fasted before he was saved and fasted after he was saved. Before salvation, he looked at fasting as a means of gaining merit with God. After salvation, he fasted to better prepare himself to access the unmerited grace of God for strength/focus/transformation. It is not the act of fasting, it is the intent that matters. All the spiritual exercises that will be covered in this series must be done with an attitude of putting one in a position to receive the grace of God. They should never be viewed as gaining merit. When you practice the spiritual discipline of solitude with God, it is to take time to put oneself in a position to receive grace, not to earn it. While spending time alone with the Lord is better than taking no time, if taking such time makes one self-righteous or legalistic, then it is better not to do it at all—at least until one gets the right attitude.
2. Warning #2: Secularism. We live in a world saturated with secularism. This secularism has an inherent disdain for anything that smacks of spiritual disciplines. This attitude is one reason why the spiritual disciplines or sacrifices for Jesus Christ are not taught in many churches. This disdain is not completely unwarranted. History has plenty of examples of saints who abused spiritual disciplines. Instead of using them as opportunities to put oneself in a position to receive life transforming grace of God, some have practiced them for their own sake without regard to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Consider, for example, the practice of auto-flagellation wherein one beats oneself, a practice that continues to this day in some areas of the world. The problem is that Christ never did this nor enjoined others to flagellate themselves. Consider the secularist David Hume's comment about those who have engaged in spiritual disciplines in church history:

Celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues:—for what reason are they everywhere rejected by men of sense, but because they serve to no manner of purpose; neither advance a man's fortune in the world, nor render him a more valuable member of society; neither qualify him for the entertainment of company, nor increase his power of self-enjoyment? We observe, on the contrary, that they cross all these

desirable ends; stupify the understanding and harden the heart, obscure the fancy and sour the temper.... A gloomy, hair-brained enthusiast, after his death, may have a place in the Calendar; but will scarcely ever be admitted, when alive, into intimacy and society, except by those who are as delirious and dismal as himself.

This is the attitude of the age in which we live and it is shared by many Christians in spite of the fact that many of these disciplines were practiced by Moses, Daniel, Jesus, John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, and Early Christians. Sure, they have been abused because of legalism, but to deny their efficacy is to deny the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and other powerful saints. If you talk to others about the nature of spiritual disciplines, expect to receive scorn in the godless/secular age in which we live. This is most unfortunate and very difficult to overcome.

3. The Promise of Transformation. If one is a believer in Christ who avoids legalism, he can be guaranteed transformation. There never has been one person who has ever tried the spiritual disciplines with the right attitude who has not been transformed by them with a transformation that is noticeable to others.
4. Transformation is nothing less than living out authentic Christianity. The idea that one can go week after week, decade after decade, without transformation is foreign to the New Testament. Christianity, when lived out, is transformative in a way that exhibits supernatural qualities. While this transformation has many qualities, the core transformation is the inner person into being a person who “loves God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and his neighbor as himself.” Transformation is not behavior modification. Transformation is about making the tree good and the cup clean on the inside so that it is natural and pleasant to be like Christ. In transformation, for example, the believer will find it natural to love and bless one’s enemies and difficult to hate and curse others. This cannot be faked. In sum, transformation is more about being like Christ on the inside, rather than simply following certain acts of Christ.
5. Today’s Bible reading.
  - a. For 5 days you have already been engaged in the spiritual discipline of solitude with God. This spiritual discipline was used by Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul to gain spiritual strength and perspective. If they needed it, we need it even more. So, by getting alone with God daily, you are following the practice of Jesus and this will transform you. Read the passages on the spiritual discipline of solitude: Matthew 4:1-2; Mark 1:35; 3:13; 6:31, 46; Acts 9:9, 11. Following Jesus does not mean being nice, it means really following His example, especially how He gained strength and perspective.
  - b. Transformation. Transformation is what Christianity is all about. Read the following passages that reveal the supernatural transformation that authentic Christianity offers: 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 5:1-5; 2 Pet. 1:4-11; Col. 3; Eph 4:11-13.

Read Colossians 3 slowly and out loud several times. Memorize the verse(s) that you will implement in your life today.

**The 60-day transformation of the mind, heart, and emotions into Christlikeness**

Day 1 – A life that lacks nothing (Psalm 23).

Day 2 - Satan, the enemy (Eph 2:1-3; 1 Jn 3:8; John 8:31-44; 1 John 2:15-16).

Day 3 – Review, reflect, journaling, and Psalm 19.

Day 4 – The six areas of inner transformation

Day 5 – The Word of God, Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1.

Day 6 – The 2 warnings (legalism, secularism) and the promise of transformation.

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