

Introduction

In this challenging time, all of us have serious questions. Some of the questions I've been asking are: when will life go back to normal; will this pandemic lead a severe economic recession, perhaps a depression; how much freedom and liberty will we lose when the dust settles; will America become more of a socialist country as a result of this pandemic; and when will we see a one-world government?

However, the most important question we should ask is *what is the Lord saying to the church in this hour?* As a pastor, this is my number one question. I want to encourage you to make this your number one question also.

If I had to pick one thing the Lord is saying to His people at this time, it would be this: *Jesus wants to transition us from fitting Him into our lives to making Him the life we live by.*

As we continue with our study of John 6, Jesus gave us seven steps that are a guide of how we can live by His indwelling life.

Last week we looked at four of these steps. This week we will look at two more.

As you will see, the two steps that I will talk about today will help you go further in the Lord faster. These two truths will help accelerate your spiritual progress in the Lord, which is so needed in this hour as everything around us is shaken.

5. Jesus really can satisfy the deepest desires of your heart.

At one time or another in our Christian journey, we've probably all heard songs or sermons that stress Jesus Christ is all we need. That if we have Him, we have everything.

But if we're honest, there's many times when we don't really believe that.

If we take off our Christian masks and get real for a second, isn't the American Dream often more appealing than Jesus? There are many times when the thoughts of making a lot of money, enjoying success, influencing thousands, having nice cars, a beautiful house, eating great food with close friends, and taking rejuvenating vacations is more appealing than sitting at Jesus' feet to listen to His words.

Sadly, much of the American church has exchanged intimacy with Jesus for a Christianized version of the American dream.

How can I make such a judgment, not knowing people's hearts?

It's actually pretty simple. Jesus said that we will know them by their fruit. That means, we can look at a person's life and see what is produced externally to know what is going on internally. We can look at how a person spends their time, what they talk about, and how they spend their money to know what they believe in their hearts.

Just look at how most believers—who claim to love the Lord with all of their hearts—spend time, money, and energy. Few use their best resources to grow closer to the Lord in intimacy, pressing in to know Him deeper.

If you are going to transition from fitting Jesus into your life to making Him the life you live by, you must confront the lie that *Jesus Christ can't truly satisfy the deepest desires of your heart and soul.*

Advancing in the Lord is impossible if we don't expose this lie and confront it head on.

By the way, this is the same lie that Adam and Eve believed in the garden. Let me explain.

When offered the tree of life, Adam and Eve believed the lie that God's life could not satisfy their deepest desires. They had to have more. Their eyes craved beauty. Their minds desired wisdom and knowledge. Their

souls yearned to become someone significant. Deep down, they believed the lie that only the forbidden fruit could silence their hunger within.

Breaking it down further, they believed that the self-life was more satisfying than Christ and His uncreated, indestructible life. So, they ate what would prove to be deadly fruit, both for them and all humanity after them.

Fast forward 4,000 years. The tree of life reappears. The eternal Son of God, incarnated in human flesh, stands before a crowd of selfish seekers and once again invites humanity to partake of Him as the tree of life, the spiritual bread that can quench our deepest longings.

After miraculously multiplying bread for the multitudes—foreshadowing that He was an unending supply of spiritual bread for our hungry souls—Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and who believes in Me will never thirst” (John 6:35).

Here’s where we must confront the age-old lie that duped Adam and Eve. Do we truly believe that Jesus is spiritual food that can satisfy our hungry hearts and quench our thirsty souls? Do we truly believe that intimacy with Jesus can do in us spiritually what food does to us physically?

Believing the truth that Jesus is all we need to be fully satisfied is an essential step toward living by His indwelling life.

6. Living by Christ’s life begins when living by your life ends.

Watchman Nee said in *The Spiritual Man*, “It is essential for a regenerated person to understand what he has obtained through new birth and what still lingers of his natural endowment.” I have found this statement to be so true.

One of the secrets to living by Christ’s indwelling life is to know deeply the true condition of your flesh and the glorious transformation of your regenerated, born-again spirit.

As God’s illuminating light shines into both of these parts of your being, it enables you to live by His life in a greater way.

Seeing the depravity of your self-life compared to the glory of Christ’s indwelling life helps you to make spiritual progress in the Lord.

Let’s spend some time looking at both the depravity of our flesh and the glory of our new spirit.

The Depravity of the Flesh

Jesus said, “The flesh profits nothing” (John 6:63). Let me take a second and break this down.

The flesh is every part of us that has not been regenerated. Specifically, it is our bodies, which is dead because of sin. It is also the parts of our souls that have not been conquered by Christ. Simply put, the flesh is the coupling together of the unredeemed body and the unrenewed soul.

In short, we live in the flesh when our self-life in our soul becomes the life-source that we live by, empowering the five senses of our bodies and the mind, will, and emotions of our souls.

Putting together a few verses, the components of the flesh are *sin* and *me*. Paul said that “sin . . . dwells in me. . . that is, in my flesh” (Rom. 7:17-18). *Sin* is the power of sin; our sin nature. *Me* is the self-life contained in our souls, which is the source of our sin natures.

When Jesus said that our flesh profits nothing, He meant that our unredeemed bodies and unrenewed souls, coupled together, were utterly incapable of doing anything of value for God. He was emphasizing that our flesh can’t assist God with anything nor can it transform us inwardly. Our flesh is a helpless and useless agent to God.

I have learned the hard way, as I have earnestly sought to live by Christ's indwelling life in fullness, that spiritual progress is hindered until we know the utter depravity of our flesh. This can't be head knowledge. It must be revelation that is given to us by the Holy Spirit.

I realize this is not a revelation that we want. Trust me. I don't want it any more than you. But over the years, though it might sound a little strange, I have grown to appreciate seeing the depravity of my flesh. Does that mean I love to mope around in misery and condemnation? No. But I have discovered that seeing the condition of my flesh in God's light accelerates living by Christ's indwelling life. The quicker I realize that my flesh is depraved the quicker I surrender to the Lord and rely on His transforming life.

You see, without this painful but precious revelation, we will continue trying to live for God by our own strength and effort, striving relentlessly to obey Him, please Him, and serve Him in the power of the flesh. And like all of the great men and women of God throughout history, including Paul, we will fail miserably.

We can't live by Christ's indwelling life until we know, by experience and revelation, how utterly depraved, corrupt, defiled, and irredeemable the flesh is. Not just the evil side of our flesh, but even the good side. Whether good flesh or evil flesh, it is still flesh in God's eyes.

Please hear my heart. One of the most loving things that God can do is reveal our flesh to us. His jealous love for us motivates Him to shed light on the futility of our flesh. Because the Father loves us beyond comprehension and wants to conform us fully into the image of His beloved Son, He must show us that the flesh can never please Him. Only Christ can please Him.

Though God loves us beyond comprehension, we can only please Him by the measure of Christ that possesses us inwardly. Only Christ—*never my flesh*—can please God (Rom. 8:8). The more Christ fills, possesses, and directs our spirits, hearts, and souls—including our deepest beliefs, desires, ambitions, thoughts, feelings, and inclinations—the more we will please God.

Please don't come under condemnation. This is meant to be Spirit-led surgery that separates the body and the soul from the spirit, enabling you to live daily by Christ's indwelling life (Heb. 4:12).

The Separation of Soul and Spirit

Here's a secret I've learned about the Spirit-led life. Before we can make progress in God, there must be clear separation, discerned by our spiritual senses, between the body, the soul, and the spirit. This separation helps us distinguish between our spirit where Christ dwells and our flesh where sin and self dwell.

If we are truly going to exchange our self-life for Christ's indwelling life, we have to see the clear distinction between our flesh and our spirit. We have to see just how irreparable and defiled our flesh truly is.

You see, our flesh is so depraved that not even God can redeem it. He can only put His life into us, regenerate us, and crucify our flesh, putting our old man into the grave never to rise again.

In this age of the feel-good gospel, where it's not the gospel if it's not "good news" to inherently selfish people, we have lost the biblical reality of utter depravity. We are so concerned with making sure that people know God loves them and has a plan for them that we have failed to mention our true condition apart from Christ.

As Watchman Nee said in *The Spiritual Man*, "No amount of education, improvement, cultivation, morality, or religion can turn man from being fleshly. This is determined by birth." Nee continued, "The flesh is so corrupt that even the all-powerful God cannot transform the flesh into something that pleases Him. The flesh is consigned to death. To wrath. To judgment."

It's impossible to please God and to fulfill His will in the flesh. God looks at the flesh as utterly corrupt and unable to please Him. The sooner that we can see the flesh as God sees it, the sooner we can make spiritual progress.

Nee continued, "Knowing the utter corruption of the flesh, God does not try to alter man's flesh. Instead, He gives man a new life and brings his flesh to death. So hopeless is the flesh to please God, the Lord must bestow a new life, His uncreated, untreated life, upon those who receive Christ as Lord. This is regeneration or new birth."

Speaking of his flesh, Paul said, "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (Rom. 7:18). Jesus said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

In our flesh, there is nothing of value to God. Nor is there any ability to do anything of value for God. Our flesh must be utterly crucified so that Christ can fill us and possess us.

Before moving on, when we see the utter futility of our flesh in God's eyes and desire to lay our self-life down, we then have attained "poverty of spirit" (Matt. 5:3). Strange as it might sound, the Lord said that the poor in spirit are happy and blessed. Why? It's not because we delight in pain and self-abasement. Rather, it's because true poverty of spirit enables us to enter more fully into kingdom living.

Put another way, when our life ends living by Christ's life begins. This is what poverty of spirit means.

The Glory of Your Regenerated Spirit

If we only saw the depravity of our flesh we would be the most miserable people on the planet, moping around with a heavy load of guilt, shame, and condemnation.

To make spiritual progress in the Lord, not only must we see the true condition of our flesh, we must also know the glorious condition of our born-again spirits, including realizing that glorious One, Christ, dwells in us by His Spirit.

Seeing this, in addition to seeing the depravity of our flesh, inspires us to shift our life-source. We gladly exchange our self-life in our souls as the source of life that we live by for the life of Christ in our spirits.

Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life" (John 6:63). It is the indwelling Spirit who gives life to your spirit, and from your spirit, life to your heart, soul, and body.

Let's take a minute and look at the glorious condition of our regenerated spirits because the glorious One, Christ, dwells there.

Because Christ is in you, your spirit is:

1. Born-again and regenerated (John 3:6; Titus 3:5);
2. Resurrected and alive (Rom. 6:11; Rom. 8:10);
3. Righteous, holy, and complete (Eph. 4:24; Heb. 12:23);
4. Christ-like (Eph. 4:24);
5. A partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:1-4);
6. One with Christ (1 Cor. 6:17);
7. A reservoir of Christ's virtue, wisdom, knowledge, and faith (Col. 3:12-13; 1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Pet. 2:1);
8. A spring of life-giving water to a dry, desperate, and thirsty world (John 7:38);
9. Sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

Truly seeing the depravity of our flesh and the glory of our born-again spirits puts a strong desire in us to lay down our self-life so that we can live by Christ's life within.