



Biblical Structure for Christ-like Change

The most devastating decision that anyone can make is to reject God's love that was demonstrated and verified through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Conversely, the most eternally significant decision anyone can make is to respond to God's love and believe in Jesus for forgiveness of one's sins and, as a result, receive salvation and the gift of eternal life.

See *This is the Gospel ... the Good News!* at

<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/This%20is%20the%20Gospel%20-%20The%20Good%20News.pdf>

Authentic believers in Christ have righteous standing before God Almighty, but they cannot initially comprehend the full spectrum of life-changing spiritual realities that accompany salvation.

See *Spiritual Realities Before and After Receiving Christ* at

<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Spiritual%20Realities%20Before%20and%20After%20Receiving%20Christ.pdf>

Thankfully, God has given us His Word, the Bible, to instruct believers fully regarding the changes that accompany salvation and how to live in light of these Christ-centered realities.

Romans 15:4, For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Some of the spiritual realities associated with salvation focus on a believer's secure relationship with God. This relationship, grounded in divine mercy and grace, gives every believer a foundation for consistent Christ-like growth. Growing in Christ-likeness requires you to deny self-gratification in order to glorify God.

Refer to:

Do All for the Glory of God at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Do%20All%20For%20the%20Glory%20of%20God.pdf>

Becoming a Christ-like Servant at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Becoming%20a%20Christ-like%20Servant.pdf>

Is Dying to Self Really Necessary? at <http://wordtruth.net/PDF/Dying%20to%20Self.pdf>

Gratifying Yourself or Glorifying Your Savior at

<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Gratifying%20Yourself%20or%20Glorifying%20Your%20Savior.pdf>

Your growth in Christ-likeness is not due to your own personal strength or insight. As a believer in Christ Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you; and He equips and empowers you to make Christ-honoring changes. The Bible clearly identifies these changes, so consistent Bible study is foundational for your continued growth in Christ. The Holy Spirit does not place divine truth into your mind randomly but, instead, teaches you God's truth when you read, study, and obey His Word.

(See *Holy Spirit: The Divine Developer* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Holy%20Spirit%20Divine%20Developer.pdf>)

Your motivation to make Christ-like changes is grounded in your loving response to Jesus for sins forgiven and His gift of eternal life. Since Christ now lives within you (Colossians 1:27b), by the Holy Spirit you have the power to make personal Christ-like changes and to produce the God-honoring works that He has ordained (Ephesians 2:8-10). These results are evidence that your faith is truly alive (James 2:18 & 26).

Colossians 1:27b, ... Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Ephesians 2:8-10, For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

James 2:18 & 26, But someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. . . ." ²⁶ For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

See *Good Works are not Good Enough and do not Work* at

<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Good%20Works%20are%20not%20Good%20Enough.pdf>

THE PROCESS

When a person believes in Christ, he receives the gift of eternal life and becomes a new creation.

John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Effective conformity to Christ-likeness is a continuing process. By divine power, you are enabled to obey the commands and teachings in God's Word for every area of your life (your thoughts, words, and actions).

James 1:21-25, Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;²⁴ for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.²⁵ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

2 Peter 1:2-4, Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

As you submit to the Holy Spirit's control, you put off the old patterns of sin and put on the new practices of righteousness and holiness that are presented in Scripture.

Romans 6:11-14, Even so consider yourselves to be 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 lusts,¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:16-23, Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.²² But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 12:1-2, Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Ephesians 4:20-24, But you did not learn Christ in this way,²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,²⁴ and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

(See Addendum at the conclusion of this article)

Philippians 2:12-13, So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

2 Timothy 2:19, Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

1 Peter 4:1-2, Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,² so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

THE “PUT-OFFS”

In order to put off the self-centered habits of the flesh (*such as Galatians 5:19-21*), you must first identify them in your life.

Galatians 5:19-21, Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

You are to faithfully and consistently examine your life (Matthew 7:3-5, 1 Corinthians 11:28-31, 2 Corinthians 13:5) according to the standards of God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12-13).

Matthew 7:3-5, Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

1 Corinthians 11:28-31, But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. ³⁰ For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

2 Corinthians 13:5, Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test?

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 4:12-13, For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

As you specifically identify sins in your life, you must . . .

- Repent of them (*turn away from them*)

Proverbs 28:13, He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes *them* will find compassion.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10, I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful *to the point of repentance*; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. ¹⁰ For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading to salvation*, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- Confess them to the Lord

1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- Decisively put them aside (*do not continue in them*)

Romans 6:1-3, What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

Romans 6:12-14, Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as instruments of unrighteousness*; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as instruments of righteousness to God*. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

2 Corinthians 10:5, *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

Ephesians 4:25, 29, 31, Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another . . . ²⁹ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear . . . ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Ephesians 5:4, and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Colossians 3:2, Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

Colossians 3:5-9, Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ⁶ For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices,

2 Timothy 2:22, Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

THE “PUT-ONS”

As you put on righteous deeds in the power of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of glorifying God, you are demonstrating your love for Him and pleasing Him in all things.

- As you put on righteous deeds ...

Romans 13:13-14, Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.

2 Timothy 2:22, Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Titus 2:11-12, For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,

1 Peter 4:2, Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

NOTE: Verses listed in the previous “put-off” section sometimes tell what to “put on” in the same passage. Similarly, verses listed in this “put-on” section can also mention sinful behaviors to “put-off.”

- in the power of the Holy Spirit ...

Galatians 5:16, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Ephesians 3:16-21, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 5:15-19, Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.

- for the purpose of glorifying God, ...

1 Corinthians 10:31, Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Peter 4:11, Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- you are demonstrating your love for Him ...

Matthew 22:37, And He (*Jesus*) said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.” (*insert added*)

1 John 5:3, For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

2 John 1:6, And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

- and pleasing Him in all things.

2 Corinthians 5:9, Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

Colossians 1:10, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

In addition, by living in a Christ-like manner you clearly portray the power of the Gospel to change lives.

Romans 16:19, For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-10, We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers; ³ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, ⁴ knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you; ⁵ for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸ For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. ⁹ For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

IN CONCLUSION

As a believer in Christ, biblical change is initiated in your life through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. ⁷ For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. ⁸ So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

Titus 3:5, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

As a result, you are divinely empowered to make biblical changes in your thoughts, words, and actions as you die to self and grow in Christ.

Luke 9:23 And He (*Jesus*) was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” (*insert added*)

Philippians 2:12-13, So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

Through a consistent study of God’s Word coupled with faithful obedience to divine truth, you will continue to be conformed to the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though you will be tempted toward self-gratification throughout your life, you can be an overwhelming conqueror as you purposefully flee temptation and humbly obey God’s Word in order to glorify God and serve others in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

See also: *You Can Change . . . One Step at a Time* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/You%20Can%20Change.pdf>

ADDENDUM – Ephesians 4:20-24

A casual reading of Ephesians 4:22 might lead one to think a believer can personally “put off” the old self (old man/old nature). However, a believer cannot put off his/her “old self” since a believer’s old self (old man/old nature) was crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6, see below).

Romans chapter 6:1-14, What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this,

that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin. (underlining added)

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be 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 lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

The emphasis of Ephesians 4:20-24 reminds a believer to cease living as he/she did prior to receiving Christ and, instead, live daily in a Christ-like manner. The J.B. Phillips New Testament captures this emphasis.

Ephesians 4:17-24, This is my instruction, then, which I give you from God. Do not live any longer as the Gentiles live. For they live blindfolded in a world of illusion, and cut off from the life of God through ignorance and insensitiveness. They have stifled their consciences and then surrendered themselves to sensuality, practicing any form of impurity which lust can suggest.

But you have learned nothing like that from Christ, if you have really heard his voice and understood the truth that he has taught you. No, what you learned was to fling off the dirty clothes of the old way of living, which were rotted through and through with lust's illusions, and, with yourselves mentally and spiritually re-made, to put on the clean fresh clothes of the new life which was made by God's design for righteousness and the holiness which is no illusion.

The Holman Christian Standard Bible echoes the clarity of the Phillips translation.

Ephesians 4:17-24, Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their thoughts. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. ¹⁹ They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.

²⁰ But that is not how you learned about the Messiah, ²¹ assuming you heard about Him and were taught by Him, because the truth is in Jesus. ²² You took off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires; ²³ you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; ²⁴ you put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.

Before salvation, we all established habits that were based on our own self-centered desires and understanding. According to Ephesians 4:17-24, growing in the Christ-life involves changing those habits to a new godly way of living as the Holy Spirit renews one's mind.

The verse texts quoted in the Addendum are accessible at Bible Gateway (<https://www.biblegateway.com/>)

**You are invited to read "The Changed Life," a teaching by Pastor Steve Cole on Ephesians 4:20-24. It can be accessed at <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-31-changed-life-ephesians-420-24>*

* Portions of this study headlined by **The Process**, **The "put-offs"**, and **The "put-ons"** are used by permission and adapted from Lesson 7, page 2 of **Self-Confrontation**, a 480 page biblical counseling and discipleship reference manual produced by the Biblical Counseling Foundation (<http://www.bcfministries.org>). Phone: (760) 347-4608. Fax: (760) 775-5751. For Orders within USA: (877) 933-9333.

E-mail correspondence: admin@bcfministries.org and E-mail orders: orders@bcfministries.org