



MAKE US ONE PERSONAL 301



Hope Christian Fellowship

*Making disciples who
live & love like Jesus*

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WHO AM I?

(All scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation, 2nd Edition, unless otherwise indicated.)

In our culture, we still ask the question, “Who am I?” Thank God, He has answers for us!

The Lord has created us as complete persons. If we are going to succeed in our Christian walk, then we need to have a clear picture of who we are.

When it comes to describing who we are, the world’s picture is confused and distorted. Seeking solutions from the world, then, can be very discouraging.

The Bible give us great insight into the way God has made us. Let’s go to the Word of the Creator for our insights about ourselves.

How God Made Me

GENESIS 1:26

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our _____, to be _____ ourselves. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

So, the Word of God describes us, “human beings in ‘our’ image, to be like ourselves.” We have been made in His likeness! We are to be **like** Him!

Only human beings possess this amazing gift.

While theologians have debated implications of the phrase, we can best understand image-likeness in a simple way.

God has revealed Himself as a Person, with all the attributes of personhood.

God thinks, plans, remembers, appreciates beauty, establishes priorities, distinguishes right from wrong, makes decisions and carries them out, and so forth.

When God made human beings in His image, He gifted us with this same wonderful range of capacities.

These capacities of His, reflected in human nature, make us persons and constitute the image-likeness of God.

All human beings, men, and women, share these gifts equally.

GENESIS 1:27-28

So God created human beings in his _____ image. In the image of _____ he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

Some of us will be more intelligent than others, some will have more sensitivity to beauty. There will be varying talents and levels of talent.

The existence of these and other human capacities makes each of us human and reflects something of the glory of a God who possesses every quality to perfection.

Who Have I Become?

I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, I now have a relationship with the Lord. Something wonderful has happened.

I have been given a new **identity!**

Without Christ, it is only natural to shape our identity by the attitudes and opinions of our parents, our friends, and the society around us.

Rather than allowing the thinking and experience of the world, we now define ourselves by the truths of God’s Word. It is through these truths that we can discover our deepest identity, and know how God really sees us.

Since God’s Word helps us to understand that we have become new creatures in Christ.

We have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his light, life, and love.

In him, we now enjoy complete forgiveness from sins and limitless privileges as unconditionally accepted members of God’s family.

Our past has been changed because of our new heredity in Christ, and our future is secure because of our new destiny as members of his body.

God’s Word teaches us that the most important thing about us is not what we *do*, but *whose we are* in Christ.

In Scripture, *doing* (our actions) should flow out of *being* (our identity). The better we grasp our identity in Christ, the more our actions should reflect Christlike character.

Who Defines Us?

The question, "What defines us?" needs to be answered. Are you defined by the world? Or by the Word of God?

If you want to be defined by the Word of God, how does that happen? Because we have the written Word of God, we can see how the Lord defines us. We find out what His Word says, and then we change our thinking to match His. We come in to agreement with what He says, rejecting what the world tells us.

Let's look at a few scriptures that define us by how God sees us when He looks at us. Now let's remember these descriptions are based on the fact that you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

- **I am a child of God**

JOHN 1:12

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the _____ to become children of God.

EPHESIANS 1:4-5

Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. ⁵ God decided in advance to _____ us into his own _____ by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

- **I am loved by God**

JOHN 3:16

For God _____ the world so much that he _____ his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

1 JOHN 3:1

See how very much our Father _____ us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him.

- **I am valuable to God**

MATTHEW 6:26

Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more _____ to him than they are?

- **I am free from the power of sin and death.**

ROMANS 8:2

And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has _____ you from the power of sin that leads to death.

- **I am a friend of God**

JOHN 15:12-17

This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³ There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my _____, since I have told you everything the Father told me. ¹⁶ You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

- **I am a citizen of Heaven**

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

But we are _____ of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.

Along with these six that we have discussed, we have added an addendum to this lesson which goes into even more details of our identity in Christ. (see page 10)

After you have looked at each one ask yourself these questions:

- Which five from the list of biblical descriptions do you relate to the most?
- Which five seem the most remote to your experience?
- Ask yourself how can you make these more real in your thinking and practice?

Here's a special truth we all need to know!

Until He returns we will all need to keep growing!

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

And I am certain that God, who _____ the good work within you, will _____ his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

I think we can see how special we are to the Lord. As we have seen, the Bible gives us insight into how wonderfully and beautifully God has really made us.

I think we can also see that God has made us to be intimate with Him.

In fact, not only have we been made to be intimate with Him, but we have a future filled with opportunities and purpose!

JEREMIAH 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a _____ and a _____."

MAKE US ONE – PERSONAL 301-01 ADDENDUM

I am accepted...

I am God's child.	John 1:12
As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus Christ.	John 15:15
I have been justified.	Romans 5:1
I am united with the Lord, and I am one with Him in spirit.	1 Corinthians 6:17
I have been bought with a price and I belong to God.	1 Corinthians 6:19-20
I am a member of Christ's body.	1 Corinthians 12:27
I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child.	Ephesians 1:3-8
I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.	Colossians 1:13-14
I am complete in Christ.	Colossians 2:9-10
I have direct access to the throne of grace through Jesus Christ.	Hebrews 4:14-16

I am secure...

I am free from condemnation.	Romans 8:1-2
I am assured that God works for my good in all circumstances.	Romans 8:28
I am free from any condemnation brought against me and I cannot be separated from the love of God.	Romans 8:31-39
I have been established, anointed and sealed by God.	2 Corinthians 1:21-22
I am hidden with Christ in God.	Colossians 3:1-4
I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me.	Philippians 1:6
I am a citizen of heaven.	Philippians 3:20
I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.	2 Timothy 1:7
I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.	1 John 5:18

I am significant...

I am a branch of Jesus Christ, the true vine, and a channel of His life.	John 15:5
I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.	John 15:16
I am God's temple.	1 Corinthians 3:16
I am a minister of reconciliation for God.	2 Corinthians 5:17-21
I am seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realm.	Ephesians 2:6
I am God's workmanship.	Ephesians 2:10
I may approach God with freedom and confidence.	Ephesians 3:12
I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.	Philippians 4:13

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

What does it mean to you that, as a human being, you bear the image of God when other creatures do not?

What are some characteristics that we share with God?

Since you entered the Kingdom of God by accepting Christ as your Savior, what has changed about your identity?

Are you prepared to continue growing and changing now that you have entered a new Kingdom?

HOW GOD MADE US

(All scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation, 2nd Edition, unless otherwise indicated.)

Like a leaf on a tree or a snowflake falling from the sky, not one of us has been made the same, but all of us have been made in the image of God.

GENESIS 1:26

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be _____
_____. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

In this lesson, we want to begin to discover how unique and wonderful we really are.

My Body, God’s Temple

Each one of us has been given an incredible body. Think about it for a moment, each one of us has a head, two arms, a torso, two legs.

And on top of all that, we can do some amazing things!

- We can see with our eyes
- We can hear with our ears
- We can smell with our nose
- We can taste with our tongue

And if that isn’t enough -- we can feel with our hands, feet, and other parts of our body.

It is an incredible thing that our body works as one, even though scientists have declared how complicated each part is!

We are truly wonderfully and beautifully made!

The thing that makes us all the more special is we have been made to be the temple of the Living God!

With that great privilege comes some responsibility, as we will see in the following passage:

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18

Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a _____ with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? ¹⁵ What _____ can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what _____ can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ¹⁷ Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the LORD. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. ¹⁸ And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty."

Take a few moments to consider what God is saying to us through these verses. How do they impact you on a personal level?

So, we have been given a body, but we are much more than that. We have been given a personality as well.

Made a Person, Given a Personality

Since we are made in the image of God, we are each an individual person, individually and ultimately accountable to God.

MATTHEW 12:36

And I tell you this, you must give an _____ on judgment day for every idle word you speak.

ECCLESIASTES 11:9

Young people, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must _____ an account to God for _____ you do.

While we have been given the privilege of personhood we have to stand before that Lord for everything we say and do.

As the old saying says, "With great privilege comes great responsibility." With that in mind, how do these verses inspire you to live?

My Personality

A person's personality has certain psychological aspects to it. For instance, you and I have thoughts and feelings. We also make decisions and have a conscience.

Next, we will examine a few characteristics of personality and see what a wonderful gift God had given us.

- **My thoughts**

Our ability to think and reason is a God-like quality. Animals think, but operate on instinct rather than reason.

ISAIAH 55:8-9

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far _____ anything you could imagine. ⁹ For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”

God *invites* us to, “Come and reason together . . .” with Him (Isaiah 1:18 KJV). Our thoughts are one of those qualities that make us special and able to commune with God Himself.

For instance, our beliefs come from our thought life. If I say, “I believe in God.” That is what my thinking has led me to believe.

- **My attitudes**

These are patterns of thinking that are developed over time, you have developed certain attitudes and beliefs toward a whole group of things, such as work, church, family, government, etc.

These attitudes have a big impact on how you think, feel, and act toward certain things.

PROVERBS 13:16

Wise people think _____ they act; fools don’t—and even brag about their foolishness.

PROVERBS 15:28

The heart of the godly _____ carefully _____ speaking; the mouth of the wicked overflows with evil words.

- **My feelings and responses**

Another aspect of our personality is that we have been given feelings. Our emotions have a great influence on our personality.

Feelings are very personal. No one else can determine what you’re feeling. And no one else can control your responses.

Others come to know your personality because of the way you express your feelings. They can see your attitude toward something by the way you respond with your feelings.

Whether it be with anger, sadness, joy or hope, your feelings and responses say a lot about you.

- **My will and decisions**

God has given us a will. That means we get to make choices about how we will live our lives. God holds us accountable for the decisions we make.

We can't blame anyone else for the decisions we make, but we do get to make the choice. Other people may inspire and influence us, but our choices are ours alone.

What a wonderful gift God has given us, the gift of choice!

- **Our Conscience (God speaks, LISTEN!)**

As we have seen, we have a personality that has the ability to think, feel, and make decisions. Some of you may be thinking, "That's great, my dog can think, feel, and make decisions, so what's the difference?" The difference is our conscience, which animals do not have.

Our conscience is what makes the difference. Our conscience is the God-given part that tells you something is right or wrong. Sometimes people will make statements and you will realize they have either a guilty conscience or a clear conscience.

When the Lord made us, He placed within us our conscience to keep us from having any excuse for sinning.

ROMANS 1:18-20

But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. ¹⁹ They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰ For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have _____
_____ for not knowing God.

Many people have become hardened against the Lord and as a result, have lost touch with their conscience and refuse to listen what it is saying to them.

If that is you, you need to pray to the Lord to soften your heart and help you to become sensitive to his voice again. It's one thing for unbelievers not to hear the voice of God due to the hardening of their hearts. But we who *can* hear Him *need* to listen to our conscience and immediately obey it. Our conscience can protect us from the Devil's lies and temptation.

We have the responsibility to listen to God when He speaks.

People who are living in sin, people who are not Christians, are spiritually dead. Their spirit is

dead. God is not living in them.

When we came to Jesus and gave our lives to Him, He gave life to our spirit and came to live inside us.

ROMANS 8:9-11

But you are not _____ by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)
¹⁰ And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. ¹¹ The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, _____ in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

Where is our spirit? It's within us. It is not physical, yet it is real. If we cut a person open, we will not find fear or anger inside.

Yet these emotions are a very real part of each one of us.

We are more than a physical body with a personality. When God created man, He made man in his own image. Just as God is a spirit, he created each of us with a spirit.

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

Re-read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and discuss the passage in depth.

Many people live their lives thinking that their personality and attitudes are things they cannot change or control. Has this lesson helped you to see these things differently? If so, how?

VALUES, THEY'RE IMPORTANT

(All scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation, 2nd Edition, unless otherwise indicated.)

At Hope Christian Fellowship, we are mission led, values driven.

Our Mission:

Making Disciples Who Live and Love like Jesus

Our Values:

- Love God Completely
- Love Self Correctly
- Love Others Compassionately

Let's look at these core values a little deeper:

Love God Completely:

To know God and his character and grow into conformity with his Son in faith, hope, and love.

- Faith: a radical **trust** in the sovereignty and goodness of God. God is in control and has my best interests at heart.
- Hope: **anchored** in the promises of God.
- Love: a deepening love for God (mind, emotions, will, actions) based on **growing** intimacy with him.

Love Self Correctly:

To see myself in the light of God's character and grow in humility and obedience.

Love Others Compassionately:

To see others in the light of God's character and grow in love and service.

MATTHEW 22:37-39

Jesus replied, "You must love the _____ your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: 'Love your _____ as yourself.'

That means we follow the mission He has given us, as we live out the values He has commanded us to devote ourselves to.

As we follow His mission, and devote ourselves to His values, we are *envisioned* for life and ministry.

These values bridge the gap between mission and vision.

If we fail to live our proper values, whatever we are envisioned to do will not come to fulfillment or bear the fruit that we hope for.

"All that is truly valuable in human society both honors God and develops man."

What Are Values?

Values are the things in life that are **most important** to you.

They are the guideposts and convictions that shape your decisions, actions and everyday life.

MATTHEW 6:19-21

“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹

_____ your treasure is, _____ the desires of your heart will also be.

Three Biblical Insights from this verse:

- There is a big difference between the **temporary** nature of the world and the **eternal** nature of God’s Kingdom.
- Where you **invest** is where you will **reap** rewards.
- Values are an issue of the heart. They begin there and express themselves in your **actions**.

Values & Character

The difference between values and character can be simply stated this way: Values are what you live by, character is what you **become** in life.

Now *Christian* character is a little different. Christian character is very simply the life of God living within and through you.

Paul refers to Christians as “new creatures” and Peter says that we “partake of the divine na-

ture.”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a _____ person. The old life is gone; a _____ has begun!

2 PETER 1:4

And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to _____ his divine _____ and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.

Our character is to be grounded in our personal relationship with Christ and in our commitment to godly values.

Character is who God knows us to be. It is who we are when no one else is looking. We are what we are becoming. The test of character is what we would do if no one ever knew. Character is, in large measure, a function of our integrity, convictions and moral fortitude.

The thing that makes the difference in Christian character verses worldly character is that we answer to God first and foremost.

Christian character is character lived out in the reverence for and respect for God, as opposed to simply honoring man.

Perhaps you have heard it said about a person, "That was out of character."

What they are saying is that is not how the person normally functions, whether it be good or bad.

So a good question to ask yourself is, "Do my values and my character line up?"

Values are the messages and stewardship, deposited by God into the life of every believer.

Core Values

Over time our stewardship begins to yield a series of core values.

Core Values are life preferences. They reflect the convictions and/or key assumptions by which you live your life.

Often followers are unaware of the values they live by.

In this exercise, you will seek to identify and define six core values of/from your life.

The way forward is first to distill the lessons from the past.

Take some time and look back upon your life. Consider what some of the essential themes of your life might be? What are some patterns that repeat themselves? In particular, look at the turning points of your life, and the lessons they yielded.

Themes could include the role of relationships, passion toward God, priorities of your life, lessons from past hurts, your view of the world, your desires for the future, how you relate to the church and culture.

You might see themes totally different from those listed above.

Here are some questions that might help you think through your themes.

Some of the important lessons God has revealed about his desires for my life are:

- Some of the important things I have learned about boundaries, the balancing of work, family, church life, and my personal life are . . .
- Some convictions I gained about what's important in life are . . .
- Some important insights I have gained about people and relationships are . . .
- Some important lessons God has taught me regarding character and trust-worthiness are . . .
- Some of the key deposits and stewardship that I dare not forget or that has put into my life are . . .
- The few things that are most important to me are . . .

As your values have begun to reveal your values let's remember that:

- Values are about your inherited preferences
- Values reflect the convictions and core assumptions of an individual.
- Values reveal and communicate to others what's important to you.
- Values inform behavior and decision-making
- Values also provide the first hint of the unique contribution you make to others.
- Values are your life imprint

You value many things, but core values are your few, nonnegotiable values.

What we are asking you to do seeks to help you identify your core values.

Values definition: Being

It is easier to *do*, but it is more important to *be*.

Let look at some core values examples and definitions:

- Leadership: Everything rises and falls on Godly leadership
- Authentic: Genuineness and vulnerability are the most important assets.

- People: The person and his life is the prized possession of Christ, far above programs and accomplishments.

NOW LIST THE SIX VALUES YOU HAVE RECEIVED AS YOU GO THROUGH THIS EXERCISE.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Values: Who am I?

Purpose: Why do I exist?

As a follower, we are called into relationship. It is the call to *be*.

In Mark 3:13-14, one of Jesus' first challenges to his disciples was that they would first come and "be with him," before they would go out and minister "for him."

The result of living this way as a disciple and making "being" a priority is God granting greater spiritual authority for ministry.

Jesus first desire is for us to know Him and clarify our identity in Him, and then to participate in the wider work of helping others come to know him. The challenge is that it is typically easier to do than to be.

We will, each of us, continue our own personal growth journey until the Lord comes to take us home. In the next few pages, there is an addendum to this lesson—a list of Character qualities that you can use to evaluate yourself and plan for future growth.

MAKE US ONE – PERSONAL 301-03 ADDENDUM

VALUES

Accountable	To hold yourself accountable to a code of ethics derived from your values. (Romans 14:1-22)
Abilities	A person's talent, skill, or proficiency in a particular area. (Exodus 28:3)
Attitude	An outward expression of an inward feeling. (Genesis 4:1-16)
Boldness	Confidence that what I have to say or do is true and right and just in the sight of God (Acts 4:29)
Commitment	To obligate or pledge oneself to something. (Revelation 3:14-15)
Compassion	Meaning "to enter sympathetically into one's sorrow and pain." (Mark 6:34)
Contentment	To be satisfied with the loving provision of God in any and every situation. (Philippians 4:11-12)
Courage	Christian courage is the willingness to say and do the right thing regardless of the earthly cost, because God promises to help you and save you on account of Christ. (Deuteronomy 31:6)
Dependability	Fulfilling what I consented to do even if it means unexpected sacrifice. (Psalm 15:4)
Diligence	Visualizing each task as a special assignment from the Lord and using all my energies to accomplish it. (Colossians 3:23)
Discipleship	
Discretion	The ability to avoid words, actions, and attitudes which could result in undesirable consequences. (Proverbs 22:3)
Endurance	The inward strength to withstand stress to accomplish God's best. (Galatians 6:9)
Faith	A submissive response to the presence of God (Hebrews 11:6)
Faithfulness	"Full of faith. Generally understood as keeping one's word. When one gives a promise or makes a commitment, he or she is counted faithful when the promise or commitment is kept. (2 Timothy 4:7)
Family	A group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, enabling interaction between members of the household in their respective social roles. God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. (Ephesians 6:1-4)

Fasting	the laying aside of food for a period of time when the believer is seeking to know God in a deeper experience. It is to be done as an act before God in the privacy of one's own pursuit of God. (Acts 13:2)
Fidelity	Faithfulness to a person, cause, or belief, demonstrated by continuing loyalty and support. (Matthew 19:5-6)
Friendship	Close trusting relationship between two people. (Proverbs 17:17)
Forgiveness	Clearing the record of those who have wronged me and allowing God to love them through me. (Ephesians 4:32)
Focus	Keeping our focus on Christ means that we're purposefully fading out everything that pulls us away from connecting with Him. (Colossians 3:2)
Generosity	having a heart to spend time, money, or labor for others without being rewarded in return. (2 Corinthians 9:7)
Gentleness	Showing personal care and concern in meeting the need of others. The absence of harshness. (I Thessalonians 2:7)
Goodness	Virtue and holiness in action. It results in a life characterized by deeds motivated by righteousness and a desire to be a blessing. (Matthew 5:16)
Gratefulness	The attitude and expression of thankfulness, making known to God and others the ways they have benefited my life. (I Corinthians 4:7)
Hospitality	The cheerful sharing of myself and my possessions, including time, food, shelter, and spiritual refreshment with those God brings into my life, whether friend or stranger. (Hebrews 13:2)
Humility	Recognizing that it is actually God and others who are responsible for the achievements in my life. (James 4:6)
Initiative	Recognizing and doing what needs to be done before I am asked to do it. (Ruth 2:1-13)
Involvement	The act of participating in something. (Matthew 5:13-16)
Joyfulness	The spontaneous enthusiasm of my spirit when my soul is in fellowship with the Lord. (Psalm 16:11)
Judgmental	An attitude of judgment without mercy toward others. This attitude may stem from these sources: a strict legalistic viewpoint of the world, an overbearing conscious or tendency to be negative in thought, speech and actions. (Matthew 7:1 NIV)
Love	Compassionately giving to the basic needs of others without thought of personal reward or repayment. (I Corinthians 13:3)

Loyalty	Faithful adherence to another person. (Proverbs 18:24)
Meekness	Yielding my personal rights and expectations to God. (Psalm 62:5)
Obedience	The act or practice of obeying. Dutiful or submissive compliance to the authority of another. Freedom to be creative under the protection of divinely appointed authority (2 Corinthians 10:5)
Patience	Calm, steady perseverance, even in the midst of difficult situations. (Romans 5:3-4)
Praise	To express approval or admiration of. To offer grateful homage to God. (Psalm 9:1)
Peace	Resting in God's sovereignty, the absence of turmoil. (Isaiah 26:3)
Procrastination	The act of willfully delaying the doing of something that should be done. (Joshua 18:3)
Punctuality	Showing high esteem for other people and their time, resulting in timeliness in arrivals and completion of duties. (Mark 13:33 NIV)
Resourcefulness	Wise use of that which others would normally overlook or discard (Luke 16:10)
Responsibility	Knowing and doing what both God and others are expecting from me, especially when duty or commitment is involved. (Romans 14:12)
Reverence	An attitude of deep respect tinged with awe. (Ephesians 5:21)
Self-Control	Control of one's self. Instant obedience to the initial promptings of God's Spirit (Galatians 5:24-25)
Sincerity	Eagerness to do what is right with honorable and transparent motives. (1 Peter 1:22)
Studious	Devoted to the practice of study. (Joshua 1:8)
Submission	Submissive conduct or attitude. The ability to humble yourself enough to take advice and instruction. (Ephesians 5:21)
Teachable	
Tolerance	An attitude of acceptance of others as unique expressions of specific character qualities in varying degrees of maturity. (Philippians 2:2)
Truthfulness	Earning future trust by accurately reporting past facts. (Ephesians 4:25)

Virtue

Moral excellence, purity of spirit. (II Peter 1:3)

Wisdom

The quality of being wise, knowledge of what is right coupled with action. Seeing and responding to life's situations from God's reference point and in obedience to His Word. (James 1:5)

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

Discuss the value of examining your own life.

As you have gone through this lesson, have you found areas of your life that are positive? Negative?

Have you considered the plan you might make to continue and improve positive areas?

Have you considered plans you might make to minimize and correct negative areas?

MY PURPOSE, MY ROLES

(All scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation, 2nd Edition, unless otherwise indicated.)

What Determines My Worth?

Once we have committed our lives to the Lord and enter His Kingdom, we must choose who or what we are going to believe, finding truth and rejecting lies. Will we believe what the world tells us about our identity, or will we believe and embrace what God says about us?

Our purpose and our roles will be determined by wherever we find our worth (our source of truth).

Our culture tells us that we were formed by some cosmic accident or random chance and that our value is determined by our accomplishments. It encourages us to pursue significance and meaning through the things we do. If we were formed accidentally, then we really aren't worth very much and have no real purpose.

The Word of God gives us a greatly different view of our creation and our value. Scripture tells us that our worth is determined by some significant things:

- First, we were created **by God Himself**.

GENESIS 1:26A

Then God said, "Let _____ make human beings in _____ image, to be _____ ourselves.

We were created to be *like* God! Wow — that is incredible.

- Second, the very fact that God intentionally created us indicates that we have **purpose**.

GENESIS 1:26B

. . . They will _____ over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

Mankind is indeed over the fish, the birds, the livestock, etc. What other created being has tamed any other created being? What other created being has the ability to converse, to have relationships, to have communion with God Himself?

- Third, we are so important to God that, even though we have all sinned, He paid the highest price to redeem us.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:20A

For God bought you with a _____ price. . .

1 CORINTHIANS 7:23

God paid a _____ for you, so don't be enslaved by the world.

It is in God that we have an unlimited and unchanging source of meaning and purpose. Our identity is based upon who we ARE and what Christ did for us.

Our performance (what we do) does not determine our identity. The opposite is the truth— our identity in God is the basis for what we do, including acknowledging and receiving the price that was paid for us, Christ's sacrifice for our sin.

If we perceive ourselves to be worthless or inadequate, this will be manifested in our behavior. If we choose to acknowledge the truth of Scripture, we will begin to see God and ourselves in a new light.

In spite of what our culture and experiences have taught us to feel, the New Testament tells us that we became new creatures when we trusted in Christ.

In Him, we have been granted great dignity, security, forgiveness, unconditional love, and acceptance, hope, purpose, righteousness, wholeness, and peace with God.

We may not feel that these things are so, yet Scripture does not command us to *feel* the truth but to *know* and *believe* the truth.

This is a matter of acknowledging its authority by taking God at his word in spite of how we feel or who we think we are.

Many Christians have a "gas station" relationship with God. They go to Him because they want to get "filled up," but they are unconcerned about being like Him and representing Him in the world. This is not God's design or purpose.

My Life's Purpose.

- I will seek **first** your Kingdom and your righteousness

MATTHEW 6:33

Seek the Kingdom of God _____ else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

- Because the Bible is the **source** of truth for my life, these three essential values are at the center of all I do:

- Essential Value 1 (loving God completely): To know God and his character and grow into conformity with his Son in faith, hope, and love.
 - Faith: a radical trust in the sovereignty and goodness of God. God is in control and has my best interests at heart.
 - Hope: anchored in the promises of God.
 - Love: a deepening love for God (mind, emotions, will, actions) based on growing intimacy with him.
- Essential Value 2 (loving self correctly): To see myself in the light of God’s character and grow in humility and obedience.
- Essential Value 3 (loving others compassionately): To see others in the light of God’s character and grow in love and service.

MATTHEW 22:37-39

Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with _____ your heart, _____ your soul, and _____ your mind. ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: Love your neighbor _____ yourself.”

My life’s purpose emerges *from* these essential values. They clarify the biblical roles I am to embrace.

My life’s purpose statement

- My life’s purpose is to love and please God while loving and serving others.
 - I want to live and love like Jesus

JOHN 13:34-35

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love _____ . Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵ Your love for one another will _____ to the world that you are my disciples.

- I have been called to follow Christ and to be a fisher of men

MATTHEW 4:19

Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to _____ for _____ !”

- I will be a witness to those who do not know him and participate in the Great Commission to go and make disciples.

MATTHEW 28:19-20

Therefore, go and _____ of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ _____ these new disciples to _____ all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my _____, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

- I want to glorify the Father by bearing much fruit, and so prove to be Christ’s disciple.

JOHN 15:8

When you produce much _____, you are my _____ disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

The Biblical Roles I am called to:

(Michael S Ross)

- Biblical Role 1 (husband): To love and serve my wife/husband in such a way that she is free to live up to her full potential as a woman of God.
- Biblical Role 2 (father): To love and serve my sons and daughters, their spouses and children (grand and great-grand), in such a way that they know that Dad and Mom know and love God.
- Biblical Role 3 (son): To love and serve my mother and father in such a way that they know that they are honored and cherished.
- Biblical Role 4 (friend): To love and serve my friends in a way that nurtures commitment, transparency, and vulnerability in relationships of mutual acceptance and esteem.
- Biblical Role 5 (neighbor): To love and serve my neighbors in such a way that they want to know Christ (seekers) or grow in him (believers).
- Biblical Role 6 (minister): To love and serve unbelievers and believers in such a way that seekers are evangelized and Christians are edified.
- Biblical Role 7 (leader, speaker, writer): To love and serve followers, listeners, and readers in a way that help them manifest eternal values in a temporal arena by helping them discover how to be intimate with God and to have a better understanding of how they can inspire, influence, and impact the culture in which they live

Remember that each one of us will have to **give an account** to God for how we treat those we are called to love and serve, just like He love and served each one of us.

1 PETER 4:5

But remember that they will have to _____ God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead.

ROMANS 14:12

Yes, each of us will give a personal _____ to _____.

MATTHEW 12:36-37

And I tell you this, you must give an _____ on judgment day for every idle word you speak. ³⁷ The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.

Our culture encourages us to live our lives as we see fit, to speak freely, to use our bodies as we desire. But, the Bible warns us that there will be a day of judgment. Each of us will give an account of the life we lived, even down to the careless words we speak. This should not cause us to merely live in fear, but to evaluate our own hearts and curb our ways—even to the point of the careless words we speak. Who we are and what we do are important and significant. Let us not waste our lives, but use them as God intended—to be like Him.



Years ago, there was a young wife who began to have an adulterous affair. She struggled greatly between enjoyment and guilt. She went to her godly mother, a leader in the church, to ask for her sympathy and support and said, “I don’t want to talk to the *church leader*, I want to talk to my *mother*.”

What this young woman failed to realize is that her mother had the same values and the same purpose as the leader because she was simply ONE person (unified) who had the *roles* of mother and leader. The mother could not change her values to suit the daughter’s preference. She was unified in what she knew to be right and true.

In this lesson, Pastor Mike has shared his own personal roles as God has defined them for him. Your roles will probably be different, but as a Christian person, your source of truth will be the same. He has shared his roles merely as an example and asked Karen to share hers as well (see addendum to this lesson).

We encourage you to take some time to pray. Seek God for insight and clarity. Sit down with pen and paper and write down your roles, based upon your source of truth. You will be amazed at the clarity this brings to you as you continue in your journey with the Lord.

ROLES

KAREN A ROSS 10/15/2017

Wife

To love and serve my husband so that he is free to live up to his full potential as a man of God. To build, help, and support him in his roles. To honor him as I would honor the Lord.

Mother

To love and serve my sons and daughters, their spouses and children, and grandchildren. To live my life before them in such a way that they know that their mother knows and loves God.

Daughter

To love and serve my mother and father in an honoring way. Now that they are deceased, to continue to speak well of them and honor them with my words and behavior.

Sister

To relate to my brothers and sisters in love, acceptance, and forgiveness. To live before them in such a way that they know their sister knows and loves God.

Friend & Neighbor

To love and serve others in such a way that unbelievers may want to know Christ and believers want to stay with and grow in him.

Leader

To love and serve others, helping them connect to God and encouraging them in their relationship with Him so they can be led by His Word and His Spirit to fulfill their destiny and affect the culture in which they live.

MY ATTITUDE, MY WILL

(All scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation, 2nd Edition, unless otherwise indicated.)

At Hope Christian Fellowship, we have a goal for every Christian. That goal is to present everyone mature in Christ just as Paul encouraged us in Romans and Colossians.

ROMANS 8:29

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become _____ his Son so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

COLOSSIANS 1:28-29

So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, _____ in their relationship to Christ. ²⁹ That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me.

We have discussed the challenges we face as we mature in Christ:

- It is a process.
- It takes discipline and effort, it is not automatic

We must understand this truth very well—**If you want to become mature in Christ, you must continue to grow.** As it says in 2 Peter, we must “make every effort,”

We are confident that the Holy Spirit will lead you through your daily experience and give you opportunities to grow spiritually. After all—we are God's children.

ROMANS 8:14

For all who are _____ by the Spirit of God are _____ of God.

We do not become spiritually mature in a month or two. Our goal should be to grow continually until we die or until He returns.

What Do We Need to Do to Grow?

First and foremost, we ...

- **Change the way we THINK**

When you became a Christian, you were “born-again.” That means God gave you a new spirit, and the Lord himself came to live in your spirit. Without the presence of God in your spirit, that part of you is still dead.

The wonderful thing that the Lord has done for us, the thing that makes us different from any other created thing, is that He has *partnered* with us.

Not only are we made in His image but we also get to think like Him.

Once again, this is a process. It does not happen overnight. Look at the insight Isaiah gives us:

ISAIAH 55:8

“My thoughts are _____ like your thoughts,” says the LORD.

“And my ways are _____ anything you could imagine.”

Isaiah confirms to us that our thought pattern when we become a new Christian is different from God's.

Becoming a mature Christian is learning to think like the Lord thinks.

Philippians 4:8 gives us a way to start this process of thinking like the Lord.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your _____ on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable.

Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

“Fix your thoughts” simply means that you train yourself to think in a new way – focusing on what is true, honorable, etc. The Holy Spirit does His work in you, guiding you to look at things from a godly point of view.

The key to growing this way is to learn what the Bible says and applying it to your life. The Holy Spirit will guide you and give you an understanding of how the Lord thinks.

- **Change our attitudes.**

Another thing the Lord will help you do, which is critical in the process of maturity, is to change your attitude about many things you have previously thought.

ROMANS 12:2

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you _____. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

What is an Attitude, and How are Attitudes Different than Feelings?

Well to start, attitudes and feelings are linked, but different. Feelings and emotions are not the same as our thoughts.

Your attitude about something *reveals* what you think about a particular issue. You may or may not have some strong emotions attached to your thinking (anger, hatred, fear, or even sorrow)

If you were to look up in a larger dictionary the word “attitude” here are some of the definitions you would find:

- **A habit** of thinking (Remember we would like you to develop habits that pleasing to the Lord. This includes our thinking habits.)
- A fixed **opinion**
- A **pattern** of thinking
- A point of **view**

Attitudes are so ingrained into our lives that they become what we call second nature. They become so much a part of us that they are ingrained into our subconscious, and we automatically respond to them without much thought.

We show our attitude as we respond to our daily activities. The things we say and do and the emotions we express reveal our attitudes.

Your thought patterns are revealed by your attitudes. What are some of the ingrained attitudes that you have formed over the years?

How Are My Attitudes Changed?

Attitudes are not easy to change. Sometimes they involve perspectives that we have had for years. Even though there are times when the Lord helps us change quickly, most of the time attitude change is slow and at times can be very discouraging. Often we are even unaware that we have an attitude about something until a circumstance happens to draw attention to it.

No matter what we face, the Lord is with us. In the case of our attitude, He is there. He will give direction and support to anyone who wants to change to be more like Him.

It takes work to change.

Sometimes we learn something that gives us a different perspective. Perhaps we realize that our perspective had been wrong, or lacking in some way. This new knowledge helps us to change our pattern of thinking. This is not always difficult. Reading the Bible and receiving its truth is often sufficient to help us change both our thinking and our attitude.

However, sometimes just reading the Bible is not enough for us to change the way we think. One of the best ways for us to change our way of thinking is to not read but study the Bible and memorize it as well.

Some of our studies might be how Jesus handled things in the Gospels, or we find Philippians 2:1-5 and understand how the Lord wants us to approach life. The books of Psalms and Proverbs are also very helpful in the development of heart attitudes and wisdom.

We may struggle with change. During those times, it is a good practice to study and even memorize scripture. We can combine study and memorization with prayer, asking the Lord to change the way we think.

ROMANS 12:2

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by _____ the way you _____. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Not My Will But Yours Be Done

We cannot change our attitudes or develop new attitudes by using our own will power. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to **help us put into practice** the attitudes we are learning and memorizing from the Bible. We must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, to break down so you can break through.

A very good place to start is in our own homes. Human nature is such that we tend to let down our guard with those we feel the most comfortable. The problem is, that means our families bear the brunt of our un-guarded behavior. If we can practice godly attitudes toward our families, especially our spouses, we will have an advantage as we venture out into other relationships.

The truth is, we have no excuse. The Lord even instructs us to love our enemies! Granted, this is a difficult attitude to gain, let alone maintain. Are we willing to obey our Lord in this way? Let's look at the scripture to see how we are doing:

LUKE 6:27-36

"But to you who are _____ to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. ³⁰ Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. ³¹ Do to others as you would like them to do to you.

³² "If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! ³³ And if you do good only to those who do good

to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! ³⁴ And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.

³⁵ “ _____ your _____! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶ You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.

The Power of Faith

Jesus was instructing his disciples in these matters. Their response was to ask Him to increase their faith. Evidently, what He was asking them to do felt like it was impossible to them.

“Faith is a submissive response to the presence of God.”

Mike Ross

LUKE 17:4-5

Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive.” ⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, “Show us how to _____ our faith.”

A relationship with God lived out in faith, has great power not only to change our thinking but also to change the entire course of our lives.

A testimony from a woman who was changed:

Before I became a Christian, I was pro-abortion. I had totally embraced the popular idea that our bodies belong to ourselves and therefore it was my prerogative to choose how I used mine and what I would do with an unwanted entity living inside me. I believed Planned Parenthood, who claimed that a fetus was merely tissue. That thinking affected my attitudes, and I became very vocal and even militant in defense of my viewpoint.

Even after I gave my life to the Lord, I didn't really think about this issue enough to change my thinking. Then, as I read the Word of God, I learned that God knew me while I was still in my mother's womb (Psalm 139:13-16). I read that the Apostle Paul was called by God, even while he was still in his mother's womb (Galatians 1:15). I began to wonder if God had called me while I was still inside my mother.

Then, I received a publication in the mail called *The Last Days Newsletter*. That particular issue drove the point home. It contained an article about abortion, complete with pictures of the results. Shocked into facing reality, I finally realized exactly what I had been promoting, and I wept over it all night, getting my heart right with God and receiving His cleansing forgiveness.

Since then, I have been very vocal *against* abortion, knowing that a baby inside the womb is a creation of God, precious from the point of conception. I have also realized that my body does not belong to me. It belongs to the Lord!

This is just one example of how we can become more like God in our thinking, our behavior, and our example to others.

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

The Bible encourages us to “make every effort.” What are some of the ways we can make effort toward our spiritual growth.

The Bible says that God transforms us into new persons by changing the way we think (Romans 12:2). Has your thinking changed since you became a Christian? If so, how?

MANAGING MY EMOTIONS

(All scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation, 2nd Edition, unless otherwise indicated.)

Another area that we, as Christians, must learn to master is our emotions. Attitude and emotions, even though similar, are not the same. One goes by thinking, the other by feeling.

Our feelings are very important in our daily life. They are a gift from God, and we must learn how to direct and enjoy our feelings if we are going to please the Lord.

The Bible has a lot to say about feelings. One of the great scriptures of encouragement is Nehemiah 8:10.

NEHEMIAH 8:10

And Nehemiah continued, “Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don’t be dejected and _____, for the _____ of the LORD is your strength!”

What emotion is he trying to encourage them not to have? What is he influencing them to turn to?

We need to discover how your feelings can help you become a better Christian. In other words, we need to get “in touch” with our feelings.

Get “in touch” with your feelings:

- Learn to **identify** them
- Learn how and when to **express** them
- **Admit** what type of feelings you have
- Don’t let your feelings **control** you
- Learn how to make **decisions** inspired by how you feel

Have you ever ridden on a big roller coaster? The ups and downs and wild turns can really shake you. Our emotions can be very similar.

One day you can be excited and joyful, the next moody and miserable. Some people have difficulty sharing any kind of emotions, others are **led** by their emotions, still others **vent** too much of their emotions.

What Did Jesus Do?

We need to study the Bible and see how Jesus reacted to situations, and ask the Holy Spirit to teach us and guide us in our emotions.

Ask Him to help you express the joy of His salvation. The Lord wants you to experience the joy of living with him.

Just like Jesus, we must respond in God's way to our feelings.

Controlling our emotions does not mean just holding them in, but in reality, it is learning to *manage* your emotions no matter what situation you face.

God has given us emotions to feel in life, to express our emotions in ways that will bring glory to God Himself.

*“How we think is what we
feel is what we do.”*

Mike Ross

Proper Attitudes are the Key to Proper Emotions

How we respond emotionally to situations is determined by our attitudes.

If you want to change the way you express your feelings, you must first develop new attitudes based upon the teachings of the Bible.

Let us look at a time when Jesus became angry and discuss what He was thinking, how He expressed His anger, and what His attitude might have been.

MARK 3:1-6

Jesus went into the synagogue again and noticed a man with a deformed hand. ² Since it was the Sabbath, Jesus' enemies watched him closely. If he healed the man's hand, they planned to accuse him of working on the Sabbath. ³ Jesus said to the man, "Come and stand in front of everyone." ⁴ Then he turned to his critics and asked, "Does the law permit good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?" But they wouldn't answer him. ⁵ He looked around at them _____ and was deeply _____ by their hard hearts. Then he said to the man, "Hold out your hand." So the man held out his hand, and it was restored! ⁶ At once the Pharisees went away and met with the supporters of Herod to plot how to kill Jesus.

We see here that Jesus was angry. However, he did not vent his anger. He was saddened, but he did not vent his sadness. Jesus knew what they were thinking. He was justified to feel anger and sadness. Even so, He controlled those emotions and spoke calmly and logically to those who sought to accuse Him.

How to Release Wrong Feelings

The Bible gives us great way to release our “wrong feelings.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

Don't worry about anything; instead, _____ about _____ . Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ _____ you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

What should we do with feelings that we know are wrong or that we worry about? In our prayers, give them to the Lord. Tell Him what you are thinking and how you feel and then give them to Him in prayer while looking to change the way you think.

The only way to change the way we think is to change our attitudes. Challenge yourself and ask God to help you to think differently about feelings you have toward things. Notice that we are encouraged to be thankful, “. . . thank Him for all He has done.”

Don't allow your emotions to control your life, but as Philippians 4:8 says, think upon things that are pleasing to God and bring glory to Him.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. _____ your _____ on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

We all experience feelings such as fear, anger, or hatred at different times. We cannot allow our old patterns of thinking to control our emotions, words, and actions.

What are some ways that you want to change? Ask yourself, “How can I begin to think like God? What do I need to do that I have not done before?”

As you study the Bible and pray God will help you learn how He feels about the things you face in life, He will give you power to respond in the same way.

2 PETER 1:3-4

By his divine power, God has given us _____ we _____ for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. ⁴ And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

Another question we must ask ourselves is, “How am I supposed to think about other people?” Having an attitude of love, acceptance, and forgiveness is something we all must allow the Holy Spirit to master in and through us.

We know that the Lord has forgiven us when we fail. In turn, we must learn to forgive others, moment by moment, if necessary. You may be tempted to be angry and hold a grudge, but instead be ready to forgive them in the same way Christ forgave you.

JOHN 13: 34

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. _____ as
_____ have _____ you, you should love each other.

It takes time to learn how to manage your feelings in the way that God wants. The feelings of love, joy, and peace may not always be present in you, but they should be growing stronger each day.

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

Consider yourself in the area of your emotions. How well do you “manage” your emotions? Can you rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10?

Have you considered the difference between stifling and suppressing your emotions and learning to manage them? Discuss the differences.

Since you became a Christian, have you grown in this area? If so, describe how you have changed and why.

MAKE US ONE – PERSONAL 301-07

MATURITY

(All scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation, 2nd Edition, unless otherwise indicated.)

The Development of Spiritual Maturity

When we see a baby or little child doing something wrong we correct or train them. However, we do not hold them accountable at the same level as a teenager or adult. Why? Because we *expect* them to be immature at that stage of their life.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:11

When I was a _____, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child.
But when I grew up, I _____ childish things.

Here in First Corinthians, Paul talks about growing up, becoming a man, and putting away childish things. The word translated as “putting away” is the Greek word *katargeo*, which means to “cut off” or “cast off.” It is described metaphorically as a surgical removal of childish things. It is a deliberate, purposeful action.

As we continue on our journey toward spiritual maturity, we continue to change the way we think. Childishness actually becomes distasteful to us in all its forms: selfishness, cowardice, arrogance, moodiness, a lack of responsibility, fits of rage, failure to accept personal accountability or to fulfill commitments, etc.

One of the hindrances to growing in maturity is that we may not be sure of what that looks like. Different people may think of maturity in different ways.

Let us give some attention to defining maturity so we can continue on our journey with clarity of mind and purpose.

What Maturity is NOT

- **The Passing of Time**

Both Christians and their leaders sometimes think that spiritual maturity is primarily just a matter of regular church attendance.

They think if you come to Sunday services, prayer meetings, and Bible studies that means you are a mature believer. All you have to do is show up.

When it comes to maturity, let's not confuse growing up with showing up. Maturity involves more than marking the passing of time.

HEBREWS 5:12-13

You have been believers so long now that you _____ to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like _____ who need _____ and cannot eat solid food. ¹³ For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right.

It is clear that God *wants* us to grow up, to become mature. Only infants need to be fed by others. Considering the length of our lives, infancy is actually supposed to be a very short time! Even small children learn how to feed themselves, even though they may be a bit messy in doing so.

Paul is exhorting us that God *wants* us to go on to handle solid food. We should get to the stage where we are feeding ourselves, not expecting others to feed us anymore. And beyond that, we should also begin to feed others, teaching and helping them!

There is no place for selfishness in Christianity. If we are to be like God, we must love and give ourselves to others.

- **Having Talent**

Sometimes we think because people have a special talent that they have special anointing and as a result are somehow more mature because of their talent or anointing.

No one has it all together, regardless of how gifted he or she might be. People can be great, let say in music, while their lives are falling apart.

Talented people are not exempt from messing up. Being gifted is not the same as being mature.

- **Having Knowledge**

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-2

Now regarding your question about food that has been offered to idols. Yes, we know that "we all have knowledge" about this issue. But while knowledge makes us _____, it is _____ that strengthens the church. ² Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn't really _____ very _____.

We can be so impressed by someone's knowledge that we make the mistake of thinking the person is mature because of it. Knowing truth and living truth, however, are separate matters.

The truth that someone has in his or her head needs to be lived out.

Information does not equal transformation. Knowledge and maturity are not the same.

What does it mean to mature as a Christian?

ROMANS 8:29

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to _____ so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

COLOSSIANS 1:28-29

So we tell others about Christ, _____ everyone and _____ everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. ²⁹ That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me.

We are called to live and love like Jesus — *That* is what a mature Christian looks like.

Here are some ways the Holy Spirit might want to change us so that we can live and love like Jesus:

- **Commitment to seeing things through**

GALATIANS 6:9-10

So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we _____. ¹⁰ Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

Maturity involves sticking with things. It is about being committed, finishing what we start.

Let us consider marriage as an example. One of the ways to build a good marriage is to choose to be lovingly incompatible, acting in love toward one other, even when you disagree. If you can only be loving toward those who agree with you, what does that say about your maturity level?

ROMANS 15:5

May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete _____ with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus.

- **Controlling Your Tongue**

JAMES 3:2

Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For _____ we could control our tongues, we would be _____ and could also control ourselves in every other way.

- Refuse to gossip

PROVERBS 26:20

Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel _____
_____.

EPHESIANS 4:29

Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and _____, so that your words will be an _____ to those who hear them.

- Don't complain or argue

PHILIPPIANS 2:14

Do everything _____ complaining and arguing,

Complainers are not fun to be with. They tend to drain those around them with their negative comments. Decide instead to be an encourager – seek to offer hope instead of despair. Ask yourself how you can build others up rather than tearing them down. Not complaining is a mark of spiritual maturity.

Most people do not enjoy being around argumentative people. We tend to avoid them. All they want to do is prove themselves right, but their attitude makes them wrong! An argumentative person may as well wear a flashing neon sign around their neck saying, "BEWARE—IMMATURITY ALERT!" Instead, why not practice talking less, listening to others, seeking to offer encouragement and love.

- **Develop Patience**

PROVERBS 3:5-6

_____ in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. ⁶ Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

ISAIAH 40:31

But those who _____ in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

Patience is all about trusting. We cannot have patience if we do not trust.

- **Continue to Grow**

That is what Paul was focusing on when he wrote about moving past childish things in 1 Corinthians 13:11.

Facts about Spiritual Maturity

- It is a process.
- It takes discipline and effort. It is not automatic!
- The #1 barrier to spiritual growth is the flesh. (wanting our own way, instead of God's way)

GALATIANS 5:16-25

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

Since you have become a Christian, have you considered "growing up" in God? Have you been aware of God's desire for you to continually mature? Or has this lesson been an eye-opener for you?

Has this lesson changed your thinking about what maturity is or how it is obtained? If so, how?

TEST

Name _____

Test Score _____

THIS IS AN OPEN-BOOK TEST. You will need a score of 80% to receive a certificate of completion.

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the correct answer in each of the following multiple choice questions.

1. When it comes to describing who we are, the world's picture is
 - a. Confused and distorted.
 - b. Right in some ways and wrong in others.
 - c. Completely correct.
 - d. None of the above.
2. What helps us to understand that we have become new creatures in Christ?
 - a. Others
 - b. The World
 - c. God's Word
 - d. Our pastor
3. ?? My body is God's
 - a. Work.
 - b. Possession.
 - c. Flesh.
 - d. Temple.
4. ???We have the _____ to listen to God when He speaks
 - a. Right
 - b. Responsibility
 - c. Need
 - d. Courage
5. What is to be grounded in our personal relationship with Christ and in our commitment to Godly values.
 - a. Our Character
 - b. Our life
 - c. Our attitudes
 - d. Our work
6. My life's purpose is to love and serve others while I
 - a. Do what makes me happy.
 - b. Love and please God.
 - c. Do what makes others happy.
 - d. None of the above.
7. To change our attitudes, it takes
 - a. No time at all.
 - b. Others
 - c. The church
 - d. Work
8. _____ is a submissive response to the presence of God
 - a. Faith
 - b. Love
 - c. Hope
 - d. Sadness

9. _____ involves sticking with things. It is about being committed.
- a. Life
 - b. Pressure
 - c. Stress
 - d. Maturity
10. Maturity is
- a. Automatic.
 - b. Easy.
 - c. A process.
 - d. Head knowledge.

INSTRUCTIONS

Circle the correct answer (T for true, F for false) in the following true or false questions:

- | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|----|---|---|---|-----|--|
| T | F | 1. | The Bible gives us great insight into the way God made us. | T | F | 8. | We are so important to God that, even though we have all sinned, He paid the highest price to redeem us. |
| T | F | 2. | Until His return, we all need to keep growing. | T | F | 9. | We need to change the way we think in order to grow. |
| T | F | 3. | Our attitudes do not have an impact on how we think, feel, and act. | T | F | 10. | Becoming a mature Christian is learning to think like the Lord thinks. |
| T | F | 4. | Our conscience is the man-given part of us that tells us when something is right or wrong. | T | F | 11. | Our feelings are very important in our daily life. |
| T | F | 5. | When we came to Jesus and gave our lives to Him, He gave life to our spirit and came to live inside us. | T | F | 12. | Maturity is the passing of time. |
| T | F | 6. | Our Mission here at HCF is: Making leaders who live and love like Jesus. | T | F | 13. | We are called to live and love like Jesus. |
| T | F | 7. | Christian character is living the life you want to, not thinking of anyone else. | T | F | 14. | Complainers are fun to be around. |
| | | | | T | F | 15. | Patience is about trusting. |

When you have completed your test, tear it out of the book and turn it in to the office or to your Home Group Leader.

If you score 80% or above you will receive a certificate of achievement.

