

Success in Christian Leadership

Key# 3: Progressively Becoming Less and Less Like the World Around You!

When you committed your life to Christ, you came just as you were. God accepted you and looked beyond your weaknesses to your potential. Though you are no longer at enmity (at odds) against God, you retained the fallen system of thought and action that comes with our human nature. As Christ moved in your life, introducing His system of righteousness, He began to “sanctify” you. To be sanctified means to be separated from those old thoughts and actions left over from the world’s system. Sanctification is a process of discovery. It only happens with time. It is progressive as long as you are on this earth and willing to submit to its processes.

Four Possible Positions

1. You can be in the world and refuse to visit the church.
 2. You can be in the world and visit the church.
 3. You can be in the church and visit the world.
 4. You can be in the church and refuse to visit the world.
- (This may sound a bit tricky, but if you stop to think about each of the four statements, above, it will make sense.)

When you first visited the church (whether in a building, called a church or through interaction with God’s people, called His church) you experienced the opportunity to receive Christ as Lord and Savior. This may have taken a number of visits. When you received Christ, you became part of the church, but you still had the desire to visit the world. This was because you spent most of your previous life getting the world’s system ingrained within you. As a new believer, you still had every bit of the world inside as when you were not in Christ. It is only in the process of time that sanctification has its effect and Jesus begins to change your heart. The desire to visit the world gradually diminishes. Ultimately, the goal of every believer is to get to the place where she or he has no taste for the old habits and attractions of the world. This goal is never completely achieved on this side of heaven. However, we can get close.

Sanctification

“To be separated *from* evil and set apart *to* God”

“To progressively realize our potential *in* Christ”

Sanctification is the process of bringing our fallen human nature progressively under the influence of our born-again nature (“the new man”). Sanctification is purely an act of God’s grace. We cannot sanctify ourselves, for that would be works, not grace. Our proper response then, is to commit to His Lordship in every area of our lives. Only then will we be changed through the application of His Word, and by the power of His Spirit. Complete sanctification is not possible in this life, but we can become more like Him and less like the world every day.

TWO CONDITIONS FOR SANCTIFICATION

- 1. Faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior**
- 2. A willingness to submit to change**

The World - What Is It?

*(1 John 2:15-17 NKJV) “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world; **the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;** is not of the Father but is of the world. {17} And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”*

“Do not be conformed to this world.”

(Romans 12:2a NKJV)

We could describe the world as:

The system of thoughts and action that fallen mankind practices in his enmity (opposition to) against God.

According to 1 John 2:15-17, “*all that is in the world*” consists of **the Lust of the Flesh + the Lust of the Eyes + the Pride of life.**

The natural man is conditioned by these three components. Every person is limited by or stained with an evil he or she cannot escape. Those without Christ have no way to blot out these stains. They are in no position for lasting success as we have defined it for a

Christian. Those without Christ only have the possibility of brief flashes of worldly accomplishment that will soon enough burn up or burn out.

**The Lust of the Flesh,
The Lust of the Eyes,
And the Pride of Life**



What is the Lust of the Flesh? The lust of the flesh could be called, “*The List of the Flesh.*”

It is a seemingly endless list of evil capacities man is capable of. These are described in various Bible translations as, “*Acts of the sinful nature,*” “*Effects of the corrupt nature,*” “*Desires of the sinful nature*” and “*works of the flesh.*”

There are lists of our evil capacities throughout the New Testament. Scripture describes one of them as “the works of the flesh.” It is found in the Book of Galatians, Chapter 5, beginning with verse 19.

*(Galatians 5:19-21 NKJV) “Now **the works of the flesh** are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, {20} idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, {21} envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**”*

What is the alternative to the Lust of the Flesh?

There must be **another list** of those things that redeemed man is capable of. We find this immediately following the “*List of the Flesh.*” It is a spiritual list - the “**Fruits of the Spirit.**” The contrasts are obvious.

*(Galatians 5:22-25 NKJV) “But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. {24} And **those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** {25} If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”*

There is another way to describe this contrast, which is revealing and brings the issue home to each of us.

*(Proverbs 16:25 NKJV) "There is a way that seems right to a man, But **its end is the way of death.**"*

*(Proverbs 12:28 NKJV) "In the way of righteousness is life, **And in its pathway there is no death.**"*

What is the remedy for worldly living (sin)? Simply stated in Galatians 5:24: "Crucify the flesh."

"To Crucify" (Greek "*stair*," Latin "*crucify ere*") means:

"To impale on a cross in order to extinguish self."

This is a public display of the powerlessness of the one being crucified (that is, the powerlessness of "self"). Crucifying the flesh is the only way to escape the world. Remember, the world has been previously described as:

The system of thoughts and action that fallen mankind practices in his enmity (opposition to) against God.

"Self" must die." It is a painful decision, a sacrifice that leads to peace with God and life in the spirit. It is a choice, daily.

What is the Lust of the Eyes? The Lust of the Eyes is the enticement, entrapment and captivation by what they see.

When the eyes feed the flesh (remember the definition of the world, given above), the war against God begins to heat up. Self climbs back on the throne of life. Sanctification takes a step backward as the believer visits the world once again. Recognizing the temptation or enticement should be enough for alarm bells to go off... and for the believer to take immediate steps to captivate the flesh, allowing no further contribution to the war against God.

What is the remedy for the Lust of the Eyes? Go to war, pull it down, cast it out and take it captive once again!

*(2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NKJV) "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, {5} **casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,**"*

What is the Pride of Life? The Pride of Life, simply stated, is an attitude of boastful self-centeredness... a self-serving and selfish confidence.

Those who have such an attitude have no fear of God. By their attitudes, they make themselves like God in their own eyes.

*(Isaiah 14:12-15 NKJV) "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! {13} For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; {14} I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, **I will be like the Most High.**' {15} **Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit."***

The Pride of Life causes people to refuse to acknowledge in any way, their dependency upon God. They take credit for their every success. Unfortunately, what they consider their successes are only temporal and ill-defined. Such people miss their eternal rewards, have no present guarantees and are blind to their own vulnerability.

Blind to their own Vulnerability!

"I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;"

(Proverbs 21:24 NKJV) "A proud and haughty man; "Scoffer" is his name; He acts with arrogant pride."

(Proverbs 14:3 NKJV) "In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride, But the lips of the wise will preserve them."

(Proverbs 16:18 NKJV) "Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall."

What is the remedy for the Pride of Life? Do the will of God!

Does that seem too simple? The remedy is as simple as it can be. Find out what God's will is, and just do it! If you do, there are some valuable results to be gained.

First Result: You will abide forever with God.

*(1 John 2:17) “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but **he who does the will of God abides forever.**”*

Second Result: Voices that rise against you are stilled.

*(1 Peter 3:17 NKJV) “For this is the will of God, that **by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men;**”*

Even if you experience some measure of suffering in doing God’s will, it is still better than the consequences of living with the pride of life. God is faithful.

(1 Peter 2:15 NKJV) “For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”

(1 Peter 4:19 NKJV) “Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”

(1 Peter 4:2 NKJV) “...that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

Guidelines for Doing the Will of God

1. Practice humility until it becomes a continuous, habitual part of your life.

*(Romans 12:16 NKJV) “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. **Do not be wise in your own opinion.**”*

2. Be an overcomer.

*(Romans 12:21 NKJV) “Do not be overcome by evil, **but overcome evil with good.**”*

3. Ask God to help you pick your friends. Some of your old relationships may have to end.

(1 Corinthians 15:33 NKJV) “Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.”

*(2 Corinthians 6:14 NKJV) “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For **what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?**”*

4. **Make a lifestyle out of discovering what you might be doing that does not please God. Stop doing it. Resist any temptation to return to it.**

(Galatians 5:1 NKJV) “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

5. **Walk in the wisdom God gives you. Ask Him to increase it daily. Be filled with the Spirit.**

(Ephesians 5:17-18 NKJV) “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. {18} And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,”

**Who and what will you love?
Your answers will determine your eternity!**

Remember...

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world. {17} And the world is passing away, and the lust of it;

...but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

(1 John 2:15-17 NKJV)