

BE
CONFORMED
TO JESUS

 DISCIPLESHIP
BOOKLET

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LIVING IN FREEDOM

APPLYING THE TRUTHS OF JUSTIFICATION

We previously discussed how our justification is a once and for all legal declaration that the Lord has rendered based on Christ's obedient life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection. Justification, however, is not just something for us to think on in a theoretical way. God's justification of us has practical and tangible effects for our lives. Grasping this will help us move into greater truth and a closer relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Living in the freedom that justification brings does not mean that our sin nature is gone. The Bible is clear that fighting sin is an ongoing battle for the believer (see the discussions on sanctification for more). The freedom that justification brings is a freedom that enables us to leave our guilt and shame at the cross and embrace the abundant, full life that God has for us. It is for freedom that we have been set free (Galatians 5:1).

3. What does it mean to believe God is “faithful and just”?

4. What does the end of this verse promise God will do? If true confession has occurred, what then should be the result in our lives? Results of our emotions?

LIVE IN FREEDOM

Read Galatians 5:1-6

7. What do you think the “freedom” of justification should produce in the life and attitude of the Christian?

8. Paul tells his readers not to again submit to a yoke of slavery (verse 2), then he explains what he means in the verses following—especially verse 4. What is the yoke that our flesh is always drawn to? (Read Romans 3:20 for help)

9. How will submitting to this “yoke” cause us to be miserably frustrated, soaked in self-condemnation?

SUMMARY

1. Justification is a once and for all legal declaration made by God the Father based on the life and work of God the Son.
2. Our justification frees us to live in a new way, without condemnation.
3. The freedom that justification brings allows us to leave our guilt and shame at the Cross because it has been fully and finally dealt with.
4. We must constantly remind ourselves of the gospel in order that we would not submit again to a works-based approach to righteousness.

NOTES

PUT OFF AND PUT ON

APPLYING THE TRUTHS OF SANCTIFICATION AND CHRIST'S VICTORY

We have already seen that in sanctification, it is God who empowers and transforms us. Nevertheless, there is another simultaneous reality that we see across the New Testament: By faith, we must be actively pursuing this transformation, putting ourselves in the presence of God to be transformed by him (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). We cannot be passive. By the grace of God and the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, we actively pursue holiness.

One way the Scripture speaks of what our active pursuit looks like, a favorite illustration of the Apostle Paul, is through the image of putting off and putting on. We are to put off the old man and put on Christ. We do this by God's grace, but it still requires action on our part. This week, we will consider what this looks like Biblically and practically.

Read Colossians 3:1-17

3. What do you think it means that “Christ is your life”? Is this true for you? (v.4)

4. After reading verses 5-9, are there any sins of which the Lord is convicting you?

5. Focusing on verses 12-15, how can you personally respond and obey in the circumstances of your life? What is God calling you to “put on?”

6. (See verses 15-16) What is the connection between sanctification and unity in the body? How can you pursue unity in the church and help other believers around you grow in their sanctification?

9. Why is it essential to keep in mind that this entire battle for obedience must flow out of Christ's victory and finished work? What will happen if this doesn't remain our hope?

SUMMARY

1. Sanctification is an ongoing process that the Bible describes in several ways. One way is through the imagery of putting off the old and putting on the new.
2. We are to be active in our sanctification, and this means we are to actively put on the new man as we seek to grow in Christlikeness.
3. As we grow and continue to put on Christ, the things of God begin to grow in appeal and we begin to lose our taste for sin.
4. We must be vigilant and active, never making provision for the flesh as we seek to be transformed into the image of Christ.

NOTES

THE RENEWED MIND

APPLYING THE TRUTHS OF SANCTIFICATION AND CHRIST'S VICTORY

It is difficult to emphasize just how significant the relationship between the mind and our sanctification truly is. Across both the Old and New Testaments, God makes it clear that what we dwell on in our hearts and minds will make or break us. This is an incredibly encouraging truth, while also a bit disturbing. What kinds of things are you filling your mind with? What kinds of music? Entertainment? Conversation? Education? News?

As we saw in a previous section on sin, the effects of sin are so pervasive that every part of us has been affected. Our bodies break down, our emotional lives are damaged, our hearts are wicked, and our minds have been skewed. We are called to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). This means that something needs to happen to our minds for our love of God to be as it should. Our minds must be renewed! The good news is, for those who believe the gospel, through regeneration their desires and minds have been radically altered—for good! Yet again, this pursuit is ongoing and we must be active by faith.

3. In what areas of life are you being conformed to the world? How do you need to practically respond in pursuing mind renewal?

4. Being transformed through mind renewal comes through fundamental things like Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, intentionality in what we place before our eyes, etc. Why is it often so difficult to do things that are so basic?

STAY FOCUSED

Read Isaiah 26:3-4

7. What does this passage teach, and how can you put this into action?

SUMMARY

1. Our minds are a battlefield, and to have victory in this battle we must, by God's grace, be active and engaged.
2. Our minds need to be renewed due to the pervasive impact of sin, and this renewal is possible by the work of God in the Word and church.
3. Renewal begins by engaging with the Scriptures on a consistent basis and filling our minds with the things of God.
4. As our minds are renewed and we think on things that honor the Lord, our inclination to choose sin over righteousness begins to lessen as we see the beauty of Christ in the gospel.

NOTES

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

APPLYING THE TRUTHS OF SANCTIFICATION AND CHRIST'S VICTORY

The Christian life is a life of battle. It is a life of warring against the flesh and against the sins and temptations that weigh us down. Scripture is clear that there are spiritual forces at work in the world today. References to the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2), the “evil one” (2 Thessalonians 3:3), and the devil as a “roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8–9) in the New Testament point us to a critical, yet unseen, reality.

We are not without hope in the face of such forces because we are not fighting from a position of weakness. We fight with the knowledge that the victory has already been won because of Christ’s death and resurrection! The victory of Jesus over sin, death, and the grave empowers his people to fight with confidence and faith. We believe that because of Christ’s victory, no spiritual force can separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:37–39).

3. What is the only offensive weapon mentioned? How does this change the way you think about fighting sin and the enemy?

4. What is the connection between prayer and the Word? Why is prayer essential in spiritual warfare? Who can you ask in your life to keep you accountable to consistent prayer?

Read Ephesians 6:19–20

5. What did Paul desire the result of this prayer and fighting to be? What did he want the opportunity for in his own life?

6. Are you engaged in the task of evangelism and mission? How do you think your engagement in this task will relate to the level of war in your life?

9. How does a person “take a thought captive?”

**SATAN’S TACTICS TO RUIN
AN IMAGE BEARER**

Deceive You (John 8:44; Genesis 3:1-5)

Disqualify You (2 Timothy 2:26)

Distract You (Matthew 4:8-10)

Discourage You (Revelation 12:9-10)

Kill You (John 8:44)

10. Which of these tactics are you feeling the most strongly in your life right now? What are some promises from Scripture you can call to mind to fight against these tactics when they come against you?

SUMMARY

1. The Christian life is a life of battle and war. This includes spiritual warfare that happens around us in realms unseen.
2. We do not fight from a position of weakness. The ultimate victory has already been won by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
3. We fight from victory for victory by consistently engaging with the Word and with God through fervent prayer.
4. Satan will come against us in various ways, but the promises of God are steady and true. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus.

NOTES

SUFFERING WITH HOPE

APPLYING THE TRUTHS OF SALVATION AND JUDGMENT

Few things cause more dissonance in the Christian life than suffering. We are promised life that is abundant and full (John 10:10), yet we are also told we must share in the sufferings of Christ (Philippians 3:10). These two ideas are not opposed to each other, as we believe the whole of Scripture to be true. Suffering comes to every life, and for the believer the question becomes this: how do we suffer? Not “how” in the sense of the actual cause of suffering, but “how” in the sense of our response to suffering.

Believers are called to suffer with hope. This hope comes not from ourselves, but from the promises of the Lord Jesus that have been revealed to us in sacred Scripture. No suffering can separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus. This hope in God does not put us to shame, for there is nothing steadier we can hope in! Directly related to the issue of suffering are some of the truths we have already studied—especially truths related to promised glorification of the church and Christ’s judgment of evil.

Above all, we look to our Lord Jesus and his suffering. For in his suffering, it has been dramatically demonstrated that from the worst of suffering and death, God has worked most powerfully for his glory and our good.

SUMMARY

1. Following Jesus comes with a promise that we will indeed suffer.
2. Because of God's justification of us, nothing can separate us from him. His love for us is unbreakable.
3. Because of God's promises of sanctification, suffering has the effect of refining our character and making us like Christ.
4. Because of God's promises of glorification, we do not grieve without hope! We grieve knowing death or Christ's return is only the beginning.
5. Because of God's promises of judgment, we can take heart, for God will right every wrong done to us in this life.

NOTES

BREAKING IDOLS

Read Exodus 32:1-10

Tony Evans defines an idol as anything we look to as our source for life other than God. We read a story like Israel creating a golden calf for themselves and think “I would never carve an image or worship a statue.” But idolatry is far less obvious than a golden calf. In fact, many of the things we commit idolatry with are not bad in and of themselves. They are often good things that God created for us to enjoy but when we take good things and make them ultimate things, we are depending on those things to be our source.

Believe it or not God has designed us to have desires for joy, peace, love, and comfort. Those are good and natural cravings, but those desires are meant to be found and satisfied in God himself (Romans 11:36). Our problem comes when we try to find legitimate desires in illegitimate ways. Not only are idols sinful and damaging to our intimacy with God but they leave us unsatisfied and unfulfilled. So, we must be active fighting against idols and doing our best to break their control in our lives. Over the next few weeks, we will work through a battle plan for break idols and then apply those principles to specific areas of struggle.

A BATTLE PLAN FOR BREAKING IDOLS

1. Confess the sin: the bible says if we confess our sins to God, he will forgive us (1 John 1:9)
2. Identify the lie: usually idolatry is rooted in a desire underneath the sinful action. We must pinpoint what legitimate desire we crave in an illegitimate place.

3. Replace the lie with truth: Once we have pinpointed the desire we must learn where the bible teaches those specific desires are meant to be found.

4. Apply grace and respond: It's one thing to know truth but truth applied is the transformation God wants. Let Jesus be the motivation to live the new truths you have discovered.

BREAKING THE IDOL OF CONTROL

Having a plan and being detail oriented is a good trait. But sometimes God has a purpose for our lives that conflicts with our plans. When this happens, many people struggle with letting go of their plans and adapting to God's will. Others struggle with the pressure of carrying the burdens of making everything go as they planned. When things don't line up with our plans we get angry, anxious, and doubtful. These tendencies may reveal an issue with the idol of control on our hearts. Having the idol of control is a failure to believe that God is sovereign and His will is perfect for our lives.

Read Isaiah 41:10

1. What are some reasons we should not fear or be anxious about how situations will "turn out?"

Read Proverbs 19:21

2. What does the bible teach about our plans?

CONFESS THE SIN

3. Do you feel pressure to have everything on your terms and in your timing? How does that impact your heart when things go your way? How does it impact your heart when things fail? (consider pride and/or despair: Jeremiah 9:23, Psalm 42:5)

4. Do you experience unhealthy swings of emotion when things don't go your way? (consider anger, frustration, and/or rudeness with others: James 1:20)

5. How has your desire for control affected your relationships?

6. Based on the things you have considered how would you verbalize a confession of sin to God? (1 John 1:9)

IDENTIFY THE LIE

7. What do you believe you would gain by having everything go according to your plan? (Consider power, superiority, acclaim: Mark 10:42-45)

8. Have you ever considered that you might desire power over others and scenarios? What does Jesus say about that in Mark 10?

9. Based on the things you have considered how would you verbalize the lie you are believing about being in control?

REPLACE THE LIE WITH TRUTH

*Read James 4:13-16, Proverbs 3:5-6,
Matthew 6:25, 33-34, Psalm 24:1-2*

10. How do these passages impact the way we think about God's sovereignty and the reason we should trust His plans over ours?

APPLY GRACE TO RESPOND

11. How do these passages reveal your need for the gospel?

12. How does God's grace in Jesus encourage you to find peace even when things don't go according to your plans?

13. How could you respond the next time you feel yourself getting angry when things don't go your way?

NOTES

BREAKING THE IDOL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Read Genesis 11:1-9

The desire to be approved of or recognized by people is something that lies at the heart of American culture. We live in a performance-based culture of celebrities and fandom. Social media is a platform that many use to portray themselves by a certain image. Truth is that God created all humans to worship something, namely Himself. But because of the sinfulness of the human heart, we can become desirous of the recognition of others. In subtle ways, we can even long for the recognition that others were made to give to God, to be given to us.

There is very real danger in allowing others opinion of us to make us either prideful or keep us from serving Jesus because we fear not being accepted. This is a struggle with the idol of significance, and it shows up in a variety of ways in our lives.

1. What does the story of Babel reveal about pride in the human heart?

Read Galatians 1:10

2. What does it mean to seek the approval of men over Christ?

CONFESS THE SIN

3. Do you ever find yourself doing good, spiritual things to get attention from people? What happens in your heart when they show you appreciation? What happens in your heart when they don't show you appreciation?

4. What kinds of things do you most often brag about yourself to others? Are there certain things you want people to know about you? Have you ever embellished the truth to impress someone?

Read James 4:6

5. What are some things you should confess in light of this passage?

Read Psalm 139:13–14, Galatians 2:19–21, 1 Peter 2:9–10

8. Based on what you read, why is it wrong to find your self-worth in the opinions of other people? Based on the things you have considered how would you verbalize the lie you are believing about desiring significance?

REPLACE THE LIE WITH TRUTH

Read Jeremiah 9:23–24, Colossians 3:23, Revelation 4:11

9. How do these passages show where our lives truly have significance in God's eyes?

APPLY GRACE TO RESPOND

10. How has God revealed your need for grace because of your desire for significance?

11. What can you do to make sure that your motives are pure before you do good things?

NOTES

BREAKING THE IDOL OF COMFORT

Everyone enjoys some time off with the ability to relax and enjoy the pleasures of life. In fact, God gave us rest and the bible even says that he made all things for us to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17). But when time off and pleasure becomes the main goal in one's life, there is a danger of worshipping the idol comfort. This is most evident when we look to escape from the pressures of life more often in hobbies and addictions instead of God. This could be something as seemingly harmless as vegging out in front of your favorite show, or as serious as a deep pornography addiction. People who worship comfort experience a rush of momentary pleasure, but they rarely experience the long-term power of God to give rest for those who look to him.

Read Matthew 11:25-30

1. What generally makes you weary and heavy? When you get weary and heavy in life would you say you tend to go to Jesus or something else?

REPLACE THE LIE WITH TRUTH

Read Hebrews 3:7-19

6. What does the bible say about sin and God's rest?

7. What can we learn from this truth in relation to the pleasures we look to for rest?

NOTES

APPENDIX: RESOURCES FOR SPECIFIC ISSUES

As you walk with Jesus and pursue greater conformity to his character, you will encounter challenges along the way. Perhaps most often, challenge comes as the Holy Spirit reveals an area of weakness and sin that needs to be addressed. Other times, you will be faced with a difficult trial or circumstance in family, relationships, or work. As you live on mission and pursue discipleship, you will meet people who need counsel or encouragement as they wrestle with difficulties and sin struggles.

We have put together a set of resources that address specific issues with God's Word and with the goal of Christlikeness. Don't suffer and struggle alone! Utilize these resources personally or in your d-group as you see fit and the Holy Spirit leads.

The resources are available at the link below or by scanning the QR code.



<https://www.highview.org/discipleship/resources>

