

Spiritual Principles of Change

- 1. The Body is God's Temple.** (1 Cor 6:12-20, Romans 12:1-2)
- 2. Gluttony and Sloth ARE sins.** (Proverbs 19:15,24 ; 21:25 ; 23:21 ; Ecc 10:17-18 ; Philippians 3:19; Isaiah 22:13)
- 3. You must replace the Love of Food with God's Love.** (Philippians 3:19, John 6:35, Rom 14:13-23, 1 Cor 8:8)
- 4. The body, mind, and spirit are linked. (Your physical health is influenced by your spiritual and mental state).** (Luke 10:27; Col 3:8-10; Rom 8:5)
- 5. In order for any significant change to take place in your life (physical or spiritual) you must be born again. (You must totally commit to the transformation and admit you need God's help).** (Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:13-23; John 3:1-21)
- 6. Once you are born again, the Holy Spirit will help you to make the right choices (physically and spiritually).** (Mark 1:8; John 14:26; Acts 1:8; Romans 5:5, 9:1, 14:17, 2 Tim 1:14)
- 7. Prayer, through keeping you connected to God, will reinforce Godly habits.** (Acts 14:23; Romans 12:12, Philippians 4:6, Col 4:2)

1. The Body is God's Temple. (1 Cor 6:12-20, Romans 12:1-2)

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Christ – the resurrected Lord – lives on within the heart and life of the true believer. We have a strong stewardship responsibility to take care of our body – God's Temple. As Christians we must realize that if anything is to be done on Earth for Jesus it must be done by us. We think in Spiritual terms, but while on Earth we act through our physical bodies. Whether we are spreading the Good News, ministering to the poor and sick, or helping our fellow Christians, we need our physical bodies. So if we are to be effective Christians we must do everything in our power and control to care for our bodies. Medically we know that 75% of all chronic health problems are due to poor choices we make about how to care for our bodies. We also know that people who maintain good health habits - eat more fruits and vegetables, exercise daily, do not smoke or do drugs – have less health problems (less heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, etc.), take fewer medications, and spend less time at the doctor's office and hospital. Therefore, they are better able to do the work of God on Earth. We are not made into "better" Christians by being healthy, but, the healthy Christian can do the work of God better. So realizing that your "body is God's Temple" is a key step to acknowledging why as a Christian you MUST take your health seriously and do everything in your power to care for your body.

In 1st Corinthians 6:12-20 Paul makes very clear to the Christians in Corinth that the body does matter. The Corinthians believed that since they were Christians all that mattered was their spiritual state. As long as they believed in Jesus their sins of the flesh did not matter. They believed that when they died their bodies would be destroyed and the Spirit would be raised. Therefore, anything done with their bodies did not matter

spiritually. The sin the Corinthians were actually committing was sleeping with prostitutes, but, this is just one example how their belief in the body/spirit separation leads to sinning. In verses 12-20 Paul makes the argument that how Christians treat their body does matter to God. In verse 13 Paul says “The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.” In 12:15 he states that “Your bodies are members of Christ.” Here Paul uses the word “Christ” to refer to the Christian community. He is making the point that each Christian, in his or her daily life, makes up the various body parts of the Christian community and through them Christ’s work on Earth is performed and the personality of Christ is expressed. Anything that is to be done on Earth for Christ must be done by individual Christians, using our God given flesh and blood bodies. With these bodies the lost are witnessed to, the sick are comforted and the poor are uplifted.

In order for us to effectively do the work of Christ on Earth we must keep ourselves as healthy as possible. Satan will attack us both spiritually AND physically, knowing that if a Christian can be made ineffective in the world through physical illness, less good will be accomplished in the name of Jesus. Knowing this, we must make sure that we do not do anything to our bodies that will increase the chances of illness and lead to physical destruction such as eating too much (gluttony), drinking too much, taking harmful chemicals into our body by smoking or doing drugs, and not keeping ourselves physically fit (slothfulness). Paul concludes this section in verses 18-20 by saying “the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

2. Gluttony and Sloth ARE sins. (Proverbs 19:15,24 ; 21:25 ; 23:21 ; Ecc 10:17-18 ; Philippians 3:19; Isaiah 22:13)

Proverbs 19:15

Laziness brings on deep sleep; an idle person will suffer hunger.

Proverbs 19:24

The lazy person buries a hand in the dish, and will not even bring it back to the mouth.

Proverbs 21:25

The craving of the lazy person is fatal, for lazy hands refuse to labor.

Proverbs 23:21

for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe them with rags.

Ecclesiastes 10:17-18

Happy are you, O land, when your king is a nobleman, and your princes feast at the proper time—for strength, and not for drunkenness! Through sloth the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks.

Philippians 3:19

Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things.

Isaiah 22:13

but instead there was joy and festivity, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating meat and drinking wine. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Gluttony is, simply put, eating and drinking more than you need.

Sloth is, simply put, laziness.

Gluttony and sloth are harmful to the body – God’s Temple. The Bible clearly instructs us to stay away from sin, of which gluttony and sloth are two. Sin is the outcome of a relationship set up between you and the devil whereby you declare yourself boss over your eating and your actions. Thus, you choose to have an active, exciting life or you choose to “go with the crowd” and drift along, lazy-like, eating and drinking more than you need, calling your own shots, as boring as that is.

So, your sin is not the wrong of your eating atrociously or your lazy way of drifting along, it’s your allowing yourself to be the person to whom that is happening, letting your heart give you bad directions, and killing your dreams. As Christians, if we truly believe that the body is God’s Temple and that with our bodies we are here on Earth to do the work of Jesus, then we must do everything in our power to avoid sins that are harmful to our physical self. Therefore, we must acknowledge that gluttony and sloth are sins where by we destroy the image of God (our bodies) and make us less able to carry out our work as Christians.

But, the good news about the sins of gluttony and sloth are that you can be delivered from them. So, you have a choice. Either you believe God can deliver you or you believe He can’t. Or, you want to be delivered. Or, you don’t. But, the moment you say you want to be delivered, the power of God becomes yours. Thus begins your growth in grace as the life of the Holy Spirit exerts itself against your tendency to continue living as you wish. When you are born from above you will realize that the life of God has entered into you as eternal life and as light. When you walk in light as God is in the light, the sins of gluttony and sloth will no longer be.

3. You must replace the Love of Food with God’s Love.

(Philippians 3:19, John 6:35, Rom 14:13-23, 1 Cor 8:8)

Philippians 3:19

Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things.

John 6:35

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Romans 14:13-23

*Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another. I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. **Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God.** Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble. The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.*

1 Corinthians 8:8

"Food will not bring us close to God." We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.

Jesus made it clear that our love for God must take priority. We are to love God supremely and not allow our love for other “things” to take the place of our love and reliance on God. Food can become an idol – a man-made God. God gave us food to nourish our bodies, but, with the abundance of food in our society today we often find that the last reason we eat is for nourishment. We eat for taste, emotional comfort, pleasure, reward, and socialization. And with the pleasure of food so near and available it is often easy to develop a “Love of Food”, an emotional reliance on food that can lead to destruction of our bodies.

However, the devoted Christian will not allow that to happen. He or she will make sure God’s love is supreme. So, when God’s Love is in our hearts, when it has been poured there by the Holy Spirit, we are at all times a fountain of love ready to be rivers of living water. The knowledge that God loves you and me beyond all limits compels us to go into the world to love others in the same way and rely on no other love than God’s Love.

4. The body, mind, and spirit are linked. (Your physical health is influenced by your spiritual and mental state).

(Luke 10:27; Col 3:8-10; Rom 8:5)

Luke 10:27

He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

Colossians 3:8-10

But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.

Romans 8:5

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

God created man in His own image. Man is an integrated being. Body, mind, and spirit are linked up together to the extent that one influences the others. Studies show that a person's physical health is better if that person is "right" spiritually and mentally. We also know that when people take care of their physical health by adopting healthy lifestyle practices they typically have better mental and spiritual health. Jesus understood this fundamental principle. He said in Luke 10:27 : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." To give to God one part of our whole self (body, mind, or spirit) and withhold the others will surely lead to destruction. We live well when we understand and appreciate the "wholeness" of life and surrender our whole selves to God.

5. In order for any significant change to take place in your life (physical or spiritual) you must be born again. (You must totally commit to the transformation and admit you need God's help). (Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:13-23; John 3:1-21)

Titus 3:5

*He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of **rebirth** and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

1 Peter 1:13-23

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been

born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

John 3:1-21

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

Nicodemus had a hard time understanding the meaning of being “born again.” His lack of understanding led Jesus to teach some of the greatest spiritual truths. One of these truths is the absolute necessity of rebirth. On the Damascus road, Saul experienced this life transforming event. The change in his life was so significant that his name was changed from Saul to Paul. If we really want significant changes in our lives the fact is that “we must be born again.” We must accept that our lives are in need of change and that we are helpless to make that change happen without God’s help. This is true both spiritually and physically. Anyone who has ever tried to make any significant change to your physical self (lose weight, start an exercise program, stop smoking) has most likely seen how difficult it is for human will power to overcome the bodies physical desires.

Being born again by the Spirit of God means that we must first be willing to let go before we can grasp something else. We must let physically and spiritually go of our fears and desires and totally surrender to the will of God. Only then can we be

transformed physically, mental, and spiritually into the person Christ has always meant for us to be.

6. Once you are born again, the Holy Spirit will help you to make the right choices (physically and spiritually). (Mark 1:8; John 14:26; Acts 1:8; Romans 5:5, 9:1, 14:17, 2 Tim 1:14)

Mark 1:8

I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Romans 5:5

and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Romans 9:1

I am speaking the truth in Christ - I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit

Romans 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 1:14

Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

The work of the Holy Spirit is a major teaching in the New Testament. A vital part of life is making choices. The Holy Spirit is our helper. He will lead us in making sure that our choices are the right ones. The work of the Holy Spirit is to awaken us out of our lazy states, working through our conscience, penetrating into every recess of our hearts, so that we won't miss out on the Abundant Life, which comes when we live lives of integrity, in truth and openness to God. Thus, when the Holy Spirit comes in, bad choices are turned out and the energy of God is put into us, enabling us to will and do what is right. Do not make an error of thinking of the power of the Holy Spirit in terms of power in any form you have ever experienced before. The Holy Spirit is a living, acting, energizing, illuminating person, who is in charge of making our faith a dynamic,

developing, flowering entity. The passion of the Holy Spirit is the proof and guarantee that we are on the road to becoming mature Christians. We are not alone. The Holy Spirit is with us.

7. Prayer, through keeping you connected to God, will reinforce Godly habits. (Acts 14:23; Romans 12:12, Philippians 4:6, Col 4:2)

Acts 14:23

And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

Romans 12:12

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.

Philippians 4:6

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Colossians 4:2

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.

Being born again and receiving the Holy Spirit are the initial steps to transforming your life. But life does not end with these steps, it begins – true life in Jesus. As born again, Spirit filled Christian’s life goes on with all its struggles and temptations. We must maintain our connection to God in order to know God’s will for our life and to receive strength for continuing the tasks at hand. Daily prayer is the Christians main tool for staying connected to God. The Bible clearly instructs us to pray for strength, knowledge, and guidance. We are to “persevere in prayer” and “devote ourselves to prayer.” The Bible also tells us to pray with thanksgiving. We are to thank God for all the joys, big and little, in our lives.

For individuals making a change in their health habits it is extremely important to ask daily for God’s help in making and sustaining the change. Medically we know that trying to overcome the forces of our bodily desires and society’s temptations is nearly impossible. This is why only 5-10% of people who try to make lifestyle changes (lose weight, exercise, change eating habits, stop smoking) succeed. As Christians we must realize that we have the power of prayer to guide and sustain us through all challenges. Through the transforming power of daily prayer bad habits are paralyzed and Godly habits take over.