

A man had worked hard all his life for the same company, but was still struggling to make ends meet. So you can imagine how honored he felt when he's lifelong boss gifted him, and only him, a small chest, beautifully decorated. He went home and put it where everyone could always see it. Years later, on his death bed, he was surprised to be visited by his former boss's lawyer who asked, "Who would you like to leave it all to?" "What all? This small, battered house? My rusted-out car? The \$3 in my account?" Suddenly the lawyer noticed something on the mantle, and in shock asked "You never got the gift out of the chest?!" "I-I-I thought the gift was the chest!"-----his former boss had no children, and inside was the deed to his entire fortune. He died in poverty when he could have lived in luxury.

The Trouble: Too many Christians settle at the point of being "forgiven"

SERIES: the way of *THE WAY*

TITLE: Deepen Devotion

Mission Motivated- *The Gospel propels our efforts and behaviors*

Cultivating Community- *Proximity with fellow disciples as we move towards maturity together*

In some ways, the previous 2 values are dependent on this next one: Outreach-Inreach-Upreach

Deepen Devotion- *A humble awareness of our own internal poverty that births a hunger for more of God's indwelling*

The Trouble: Too many Christians settle at the point of being "forgiven"

If that's all you've made of your faith walk, you're like that man who never enjoyed the contents of the chest

Not only are you *missing out* of the full Christian experience, but you're likely often *frustrated* with life.
Not-yet-Christians hear me, there's more than not going to hell.

The Truth: Christianity is about being *forgiven AND formed*

I don't just want to keep my children alive; I want to help mold them to be great people

**Quick Disclaimer: much of what shaped this message is from DEEPER by Dane Ortlund*

So how do we deepen in devotion, how exactly is formation taking place?

2 Biblical reasons and an encouragement. Here's the first:

We need, not only initially but continually, a healthy self-awareness of our own *sinfulness*

You often heard the metaphor that we were drowning...no, we were drowned, dead and sunken to the bottom. Initially at salvation a miraculous thing takes place: NEW BIRTH

Most of us might agree with that, but what after once we've become disciples of Jesus?

James 4:9 Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Why does God want this for us?

Dane Ortlund, "Deeper"- "One reason some Christians remain shallow their whole lives is they do not allow themselves ever more deeply throughout their lives, to pass through the painful corridor of honesty about who they really are. This was the mistake of the church at

*Laodicea. Jesus diagnosed their error: 'You say I'm rich, I have prospered and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked (Rev 3:17).'
"I never met a deep Christian who did not have a correspondingly deep sense of his or her own natural destination... We will not grow, not deeply anyway, except by going through the painful death of being honest about our own spiritual bankruptcy."*

Our sin may come dressed as **immorality** (2 Peter & Jude)
or as **false morality** (Galatians and Colossians)

Once we have this awareness of our sinfulness, people tend to take one of 4 approaches to resolving this:

4 ways people approach formation:

1-God then me. (God saves me but I am solely responsible whether I grow or not)

2-God not me. (God saves me and He alone is responsible whether I grow or not.)

3-God plus me. (God does some and I do some; it's a split effort, 50/50)

And then there's the way the Bible presents formation, growth, deepening

4-God in me. (God does all and I do all because I am united spiritually to Christ) (marriage- 100/100)

1 Corinthians 15:10 But **by the grace of God** I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, **I worked harder** than any of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Colossians 1:29 **I labor** for this, striving with **his strength that works** powerfully in me.

Philippians 2:12-13 Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, **work out** your own salvation with fear and trembling. ¹³For **it is God who is working** in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.

The idea of unity with Christ is at the core of what it means to be a Christian and necessary to go deeper.

Paul explains: **Romans 6:1-5** What should we say then? Should we continue in sin so that grace may multiply? ²Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized **into** Christ Jesus were baptized **into** his death? ⁴Therefore we were buried **with him** by baptism into death, in order that, **just as** Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been **united** with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection.

"I want to go deeper in this unity; I have an awareness of my own internal poverty; I want more of God's indwelling... How?"

Let me approach that answer scripturally/theologically first, and then we'll address it practically

We need an initial and continual self-awareness of our own sinfulness, but not without also this:

We need an expanding comprehension of the love of Christ for us

I know it sounds too simple: self-awareness and Christ-awareness...got it; but hear me out-

Paul is about to pray one of the most powerful prayers on behalf of the church- it's not that he wants them to have superpowers, or have all the doctrines memorized, or have an eschatology all figured out...

Ephesians 3:14-19 For this reason I kneel before the Father ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. ¹⁶I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, ¹⁷and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

2 things:

strengthening of inner being- a phrase which the Greeks knew and understood as three things: a person's **reason** (*discernment*), their **conscience** (*morality*), and **will** (*desires*)

Christ dwell in them- this the Greek word *katoikein* which is the word used for permanent, not temporary, residence

I always read these as and thought that in itself was the win, the point.. but Paul presents them as a *means*, a *bridge* to something else...what??

V18-19 comprehend and know Christ's love and so to be filled with God

I pray that you, being **rooted** (inner man strengthening) and firmly **established in love** (Christ dwelling),

Now, once were rooted and established, he's gonna tell us what his prayer is for them-

¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, ¹⁹and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul prays that the we would be given supernatural power to know how much Jesus loves us; not just to **have** the love of Christ, to **know** the love of Christ.

Keep in mind, he was writing to believers, to people who were saved, and would agree that Jesus loves them. He's saying, you know... but you don't *know*.

Every day, I ask my kids "wanna know a secret?" "what?" "I love you" "I know that already"

In one sense, they do know, but in another sense, they don't even begin to comprehend it.

Just like I realized about my parents once I had kids.

What is this love? What do we mean by the love of Jesus?

Dane Ortlund defines it as **"His settled unflappable affection for sinners and sufferers"**

We may often *underestimate* the love of God... but we could never *overestimate* it

V18- length, width, height, depth- a cross! *picture

You will only go as deep as you have settled into your heart that Christ has settled His heart for you already.

He's not looking for a way out, He's not frustrated with you

We need a continual self-awareness of our own sinfulness.

We need an expanding comprehension of the love of Christ. Now here's the encouragement:

We have the help of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:12 Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God.

As we behold Jesus, the Father pours His Holy Spirit into us that we may know Him deeper

So what does this look like in real life, applicably? How do we deepen devotion?
You're gonna be disappointed, but church fathers have been saying it for thousands of years:

Read the Bible and Pray habitually

Make these a daily habit- don't take time, make time. Plan for it as you plan to eat, shower, gym, etc.

Plan to do these two spiritual disciplines together-

Inhaling and **exhaling** (breathe in the word, breathe out prayer)

Going through life without these 2 is like going through life holding your breath.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Read it in light of Jesus- as you come across strange or difficult passages, ask "how does this point to the love of Christ?"

The Gideons Introduction:

"The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good the design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents."

1 Thessalonians 5:17 pray constantly

Pray with scripture as your guide.

Direct commands? Example to follow/ not follow? Promises from God?

St Ephraim the Syrian- "Prayer preserves temperance, suppresses anger, restrains pride and envy, draws down the Holy Spirit into the soul and raises man to heaven."

Inhale- Exhale- be aware of your sinfulness- behold Christ's expanding love

Christianity is not merely about avoiding hell; it is about abiding evermore deeply in Christ

A life of deeper devotion with Jesus is a life of ongoing awe and amazement- it's anything but boring, anything but stale. Can you imagine your life this way?

"Aslan," said Lucy, "you're bigger."

"That is because you are older, little one," answered he.

"Not because you are?"

"I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger."

-CS Lewis in Prince Caspian

May we grow, so that we may we find Christ bigger.

CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

Next Steps:

- Evaluation (8 signs)- self-evaluate and then have someone else also
- Prayer & Worship night- Wednesday the 13th
- Communion

BULPEN-

Martin Luther- “For as long as he is persuaded that he himself can do even the least thing towards the salvation, He retains some self-confidence, and does not altogether despair of himself, and therefore he is not humbled before God, but presumes that there is- or at least hopes or desires that there may be- some place, time, and work for him, by which he may at length attain to salvation.”

Dane Ortlund- *“What is the bible? It is your greatest earthly treasure. You will stand in strength, and grow in Christ, and walk in joy, and bless this world no further than you know this book.”*

Dane Ortlund in Deeper says that Repentance and faith are not our contribution, but connectors to Christ himself. We don’t seek an experience of repentance or a tingling feeling of faith; we seek Christ. (pg 47-48)

Emotions vs affections

D.O. *“If Jesus went to the cross when we did not belong to him, he has proven that he will hang in there with us now that we do”*

Pg80-81 blockages

Your life doesn't disprove Christ, love. This life proves it. Your suffering doesn't define you. His death. He endured pain voluntarily. You endure involuntarily. Your pain is meant to push you to flee to him.

Do you know how God treats his *children* who misbehave and mistreat His love? He loves them all the fiercer.

William Barclay- *“There is no man who is outside the love of Christ; there is no place which is outwith the reach of Christ; there is no experience which the love Christ will refuse in order to gain one man.”*

CS Lewis- “No amount of falls will really undo us if will keep picking ourselves up each time. We shall of course be very muddy and tattered children by the time we reach home. But the bathrooms are all ready, the towels put out and the clean clothes are airing in the cupboard. The only fatal thing is to lose one's temper and give it up. It is when we notice the dirt that God is most present to us: it is the very sign of His presence.”

Dane Ortlund- “fighting is winning...the struggle itself represents life”

Dane Ortlund- 9 wrong ways to read the Bible:

1. *The warm fuzzies approach*—reading the Bible for a glowing, subjective experience of God, ignited by the words of the text, whether we understand what they actually mean or not. Result: frothy reading.
2. *The grumpy approach*—reading the Bible out of nothing but a vague sense that we’re supposed to, to get God off our backs for the day. Result: resentful reading.
3. *The gold mine approach*—reading the Bible as a vast, cavernous, dark mine, in which one occasionally stumbles upon a nugget of inspiration. Result: confused reading.
4. *The hero approach*—reading the Bible as a moral hall of fame that gives us one example after another of heroic spiritual giants to emulate. Result: despairing reading.
5. *The rules approach*—reading the Bible on the lookout for com- mands to obey to subtly reinforce a sense of personal superiority. Result: Pharisaical reading.
6. *The Indiana Jones approach*—reading the Bible as an ancient document about events in the Middle East a few thousand years ago that are irrelevant to my life today. Result: bored reading.
7. *The magic eight-ball approach*—reading the Bible as a road map to tell me where to work, whom to marry, and what car to buy. Result: anxious reading.

8. *The Aesop's Fables approach*—reading the Bible as a loose collection of nice stories strung together independently, each with a nice moral at end. Result: disconnected reading.
9. *The doctrine approach*—reading the Bible as a theological repository to plunder for ammunition for our next theology debate at Starbucks. Result: cold reading.

The right way to read the Bible is the *gospel approach*. This means we read every passage as somehow contributing to the single, overarching storyline of Scripture, which culminates in Jesus.

MATURITY MEASURES:

1. Bible engagement

Transformation can be recognized when we regularly interact with God's Word. Our mind is sharpened by the Bible, our perspective is shaped by the Bible, and our actions are directed by the Bible.

2. Obeying God and denying self

Discipleship is the process of obedience to the One who is in authority over you. Transformation can be seen when we progressively set aside what we want, live under the lordship of Christ, and pursue His kingdom's priorities.

3. Serving God and others

Transformation is evident when personal needs and even dreams are set aside for the needs we see in others. We understand our service to God is reflected in our service to others.

4. Sharing Christ

Living out the effects of the gospel is certainly important, but maturing believers know speaking about the message is also important. Transformation is evident when we talk about the Source of our changed lives.

5. Exercising faith

Transformation is seen in believers when we increasingly choose to trust and obey God, regardless of any inner risks, outward risks, or tugs from others to choose a safer path. Our lives are characterized by faithful obedience to God's will.

6. Seeking God

Transformation is seen when our desire is to know God more deeply and experience His work more fully. As we mature, we seek to deepen our communion with God.

7. Building relationships

Faith is personal but it is not intended to be private. Our horizontal relationships should develop just as our vertical relationship with God does. We are meant to live in community with other believers, where we can mutually love and encourage one another. As we build relationships with those outside the community of faith, we reflect Christ to them.

8. Being unashamed (transparency)

Transformation is evident when we are unashamed to present our own lives as being aligned with Christ.

Mature believers do not hesitate for their lives and words to be on display for all to see Christ in them.

Jeremiah 3 acknowledge guilt

John Newton, "I asked the Lord that I might grow"

*I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek, more earnestly, His face.*

*'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer!
But it has been in such a way,
As almost drove me to despair.*

*I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once He'd answer my request;
And by His love's constraining pow'r,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.*

*Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry pow'rs of hell
Assault my soul in every part.*

*Yea more, with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe;
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.*

*Lord, why is this, I trembling cried,
Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?
"Tis in this way, the Lord replied,
I answer prayer for grace and faith.*

*These inward trials I employ,
From self, and pride, to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou may'st find thy all in Me."*