

# MOMENTUM

## Study Guide #5: A Man Transformed

As long as you live here on earth you are going to battle daily with your sinful flesh. There's just no way of getting around it (Romans 7:15-25). The great news is that although you will always struggle against the sinful desires of the flesh, you never have to be defeated by them (1 Corinthians 10:13). God's promise is that when you "live by the Spirit, you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16-17).

To "live by the Spirit" means you are taking charge of your life in such a way that you are making constant, continuous decision and course adjustments throughout the day in order to conduct yourself in a way that always glorifies God.

**QUESTION:** In every event, at every turn, you are faced with the decision "what do I do?" Living by the Spirit means you are consistently seeking His guidance. How does the Holy Spirit lead us? How do we know what the Spirit wants us to do? (see John 14:26; 16:13 and 1 Corinthians 2:10-13).

As you read God's Word, studying it, memorizing it and meditating on it, the Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance what God says you should do, every time you face a decision.

**QUESTION:** Is it possible to remember something you do not already know?

I know, silly question. But please give it some serious thought. I bet most of us tried it in High School and even in college. Didn't work then, so what makes us think it will work now? The fact is, we can't remember what we do not know. We can't bring God's Word back to memory to help us in the middle of temptation if we have not hidden it in our heart.

Read John 16:13-14 and John 14:26.

As you study God's Word, it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to help you comprehend it. He will guide you in understanding how to apply it to your life. As you follow His leading, as you apply His truth to your life, you will be living by the Spirit. One of the major results is that you will not gratify the sinful desires of the flesh.

Notice that Jesus said the Holy Spirit will "remind you of everything I have said to you." In order for the Spirit to "remind" us of what God says, we must first read, study and memorize His Word. The Spirit then takes what you have hidden in your heart and uses that to guide you (Psalm. 119:9).

**QUESTION:** When is the last time you memorized a Scripture verse?

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**QUESTION:** Why did you memorize it?

**QUESTION:** In what practical instances have you used that verse in your life? (give at least one example)

When the Apostle Paul instructed us to "live by the Spirit" he wrote it in the present tense, active voice and imperative mood. Let me explain. The present tense simply means that the action being described (in this case, living by the Spirit, making every decision in life based upon the Truths that the Spirit reminds me of) - that action is happening right now ... right now ... as well as right now and right now. In other words, it is something you need to do every moment of every day.

The active voice means that only you can perform this action. I can't do it for you and you can't do it for me. If it's going to get done, you have to do it. So, living every moment of every day under the direction of the Holy Spirit is something only you can do. Only you can hear His promptings as He guides you into God's truth. Only you can make the decision to yield to His will and immediately apply that truth to your life.

The imperative mood simply means this is not an option for us - it's a command. God expects us to conduct our life, every moment of every day, according to the leading of His Spirit.

**QUESTION:** So how are you doing with this? Are you truly living by the Spirit? If no, why not?

**QUESTION:** If you answered "no" to the above question, whom are you living by?

Notice that the verb "live by" indicates forward movement. In other words, the guy who is living by the Spirit is in the process of going from where he is right now to where God wants him to be. It's a lifelong journey we often call "spiritual growth." Only as we submit to the Spirit's control in our life will we grow spiritually.

The fact is, you cannot live the Christian life by your own strength and resources any more than you could save yourself for eternity (Galatians 3:1-3). We must live it by the Holy Spirit. Now, understand that the Spirit of God is not some force or power for you to use (sorry Yoda). He is a Person of the Godhead to whom you are to yield, and let Him use you! Holy living doesn't come from the things you do for God, but

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from what He does through you as you live by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

**QUESTION:** Take a moment and write down your thought about what we've been talking about here. What is God challenging or encouraging you about?

One of the ways we live by the Spirit is by saying "no" to the constant cravings of our sinful flesh, and saying "yes" to the Spirit's rule in our hearts and minds.

Read Romans 12:2.

To "conform" means to put on a mask so as to appear to those around you as something you're not. When a Christian conforms to the pattern of this world, he is adjusting his behavior to imitate the traits or features that are characteristic of the people around him.

**QUESTION:** What masks do you tend to put on?

**QUESTION:** Who are you around when you put those masks on?

**QUESTION:** Why do you put on those masks?

**QUESTION:** What's wrong with that and why?

The meaning of God's command couldn't be any clearer. His instruction to not conform to the pattern of this world was also written in the present tense. Just as a quick reminder, that means the action being described (in this case, not pretending to be something we're not) is taking place right now - present time/present tense. This is an on-going action that never ends; never takes a break.

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Let that sink in guys ... I mean really sink in. We are not to conform to this world's pattern. Not now, not ten minutes from now, not five hours from now; not today, not tomorrow, not next week, not even when the going is tough. Never are we to try to be like, act like, look like or live like the world around us!

When we disobey this command, there can be only one reason. We are doing so for the self-centered purpose of gaining man's approval. Ultimately we are trying to please self - are we not? Paul asks the question, "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Am I trying to please men?" He then goes on to declare, "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

**QUESTION:** Why, when trying to please others (and self) can I not be a servant of Christ (hint: read Matthew 6:24)?

**QUESTION:** Read 2 Corinthians 5:9-11 and Acts 5:29. What must our primary aim in life be?

**QUESTION:** What do the words "goal" (2 Cor. 5:9) and "must" (Ac. 5:29) mean to you?

So how are you doing with that? Is it your goal in life to please God? I'm not asking if this is your "desire," but is it your goal? Is it what you're pushing for day in and day out? Are you pressing forward toward the goal of winning God's ultimate prize (Philippians 3:14)? Are you always seeking first God's kingdom in your heart (Matthew 6:33)? Don't forget, God "tests our hearts" (1 Thessalonians 2:4) and He knows what your real motivations are (1 Samuel 16:7).

The bottom line is that as a child of God, you belong to Him. When you choose to conform to the world's way of thinking and doing things, you are committing spiritual adultery (James 4:4). So what choices are you making every day?

Read the following verses, and then answer the questions below: 1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 13:20; 22:24-25; Psalm 1:1; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 Peter 5:8 and Matthew 18:8-9. Now, please re-read 1 Corinthians 15:33.

**QUESTION:** What kind of influences do (not "should" but "do") the following have upon your thinking? (note: answer this honestly)

- Television & Movies
  
- Internet

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- Secular Music
- Books & Magazines
- Workplace
- Church
- Bible
- Fellowship with other believers

**QUESTION:** In looking at your response to the above list, where and how do you typically spend most of your time? (rank them: 1 = most time spent and 8 = least time spent)

Paul tells us (in Romans 12:2) not to be conformed to the pattern of this world, but instead be transformed. The Greek word Paul uses for "transformed" is metamorpho-o from which we get our English word "metamorphosis."

A metamorphosis is the supernatural process whereby something changes from one thing into something totally different. It is a complete and total change, not only of appearance but of behavior and character as well. In other words, it is 100% different from, and totally unlike what it was before.

What makes a metamorphosis so fascinating is that the change takes place from the inside out! Imagine taking some colorful construction paper and cut out a pair of butterfly wings. You then went out to your back yard and dug up a large earthworm. Setting it on the dining room table and – using a straight pin – you pinned the wings to the worm. What would you have? A squirming worm and a slimy dining room table! The reason you don't have a butterfly is because the nature of the butterfly is not within the worm!

A caterpillar will change into a butterfly because the nature of the butterfly is already within. As it goes through the process we call metamorphosis ... that which is on the inside changes what is on the outside.

**QUESTION:** What (or Whom) is on the inside of every Christian (Galatians 2:20)?

**QUESTION:** From our understanding of the word "metamorphosis," what does your answer to the above question mean?

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As a Christian, you have a brand new, holy nature created by God and placed inside of you (Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:24; 2 Corinthians 5:17). This new nature is who you are at the core of your being. Now think about this: we are to be “transformed.” That which is on the inside – your new, holy nature – is to be lived out on the outside.

In other words, our everyday lifestyle should be characteristic of who God is – the nature He has created and placed inside us. The things we say and do, the choices we make, the thoughts we think are to reflect that new nature. It is how we let the light shine before men (Matthew 5:16 note: it’s not our light, only Jesus is the light – John 8:12).

Before salvation, your old nature got you into the habit of thinking “how can I please myself?” Everything was about King Me. Every thought was geared toward one thing – my pleasure, my joy, my happiness ... me, me, me! That kind of thinking led to a self-centered, self-worshiping kind of life. Everything about my life was ultimately said or done to benefit me.

God says, in order to honor and glorify Him, that old nature kind of thinking needs to go. You see, our new, holy nature is best lived out when we renew our mind. That word “renew” (Rom. 12:2) refers to a total and complete renovation – an extreme mind makeover if you will. In other words, to glorify God in our every day living (to be transformed) our minds need to be thoroughly overhauled because we must glorify Him first in our every moment thinking.

This renovation involves completely gutting out the old, selfish way of thinking and replacing it with a new, God-centered way of thinking. The new nature God has placed within you wants you to change your way of thinking from “how can I please King Me?” to “how can I please the King of kings – God?”

**QUESTION:** Describe what your life looks like in the following areas when your mind is focused on "How can I please myself?"

- In my work life
  
- In my home life
  
- In my family life
  
- In my free time with others
  
- In my free time when I'm alone
  
- In my church life

**QUESTION:** How does renewing your mind (gutting out the old way of thinking and replacing it with the new way of thinking) bring about a transformation that changes you from the inside out?

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**QUESTION:** Describe what your life looks like in the following areas when your mind is focused on "How can I please GOD?"

- In my work life
  
- In my home life
  
- In my family life
  
- In my free time with others
  
- In my free time when I'm alone
  
- In my church life

When our mind is totally focused on how to glorify God, our heart will desire to please Him and our behavior will be godly. But this doesn't happen automatically.

The fact is, "you were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Notice that our fleshly desires are "deceitful." They lead you to believe that fulfilling them will be satisfying. They try to convince you that keeping them happy is what life is all about. They are deceiving you, lying to you, and telling your mind untruths.

**QUESTION:** Name some ways in which the sinful desires of the flesh can and will deceive you.

**QUESTION:** What is the result/consequences of yielding to these desires?

Think about this: when you renovate a home, it's best to use tools to accomplish the task. When we renovate our mind, it's best to use a God-given tool best suited to the task.

**QUESTION:** Read John 17:17. What tool has God given us to gut out the old way of thinking and replace it with new (what will renew our mind and help transform our life)?

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**QUESTION:** How does it do that?

Jesus' prayer asks the Father to make us holy, to set us apart from sin by using His absolute Truth which is found only in His Word. You see, Scripture is the tool the Holy Spirit uses to renovate our mind. Studying God's Word, memorizing Scripture, meditating on His truth and walking in obedience to it will change your thinking, which in turn will transform your life!

**QUESTION:** When building something, what good is the tool to you if it just sits in the toolbox?

**QUESTION:** Are you currently (and effectively) using the tool God has provided you, or does it "sit on the shelf"?

**QUESTION:** If you are currently using it - HOW are you using it?

**QUESTION:** If you are not currently using it, why not?

**QUESTION:** Read Romans 13:14. Why are we to not even think about how to gratify the sinful desires of the flesh?

If you were to permit yourself, for even a moment, to think about how you can fulfill the desires of your sinful flesh, your life would begin to focus on that as your objective, and the things you say and do would end up striving to achieve that goal.

**QUESTION:** To keep your decision-making process, and thus your daily lifestyle free from sin, what must you do (see Psalm 119:9, 11, 104; James 1:22)?



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**QUESTION:** When should you be doing this?

**QUESTION:** Now let's put some feet to this study. How do you plan on making this real in your every day life?

**QUESTION:** Why is it so important that we live by the Spirit and live transformed lives?

**QUESTION:** Read Matthew 5:14-16. What is this "light" Jesus is referring to? (see John 1:7-9; 8:12; 9:5; 12:36, 46)

When you accepted Christ as your savior, the truth of Galatians 2:20 and 1 Thessalonians 5:5 took place in your life. You became a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and the Light of the World came to dwell within you (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). When we live by the Spirit, when we are transformed men, we are letting the light of Christ that is within us shine for others to see.

Read Ephesians 5:8. When you live by the Spirit, you are living as a child of light - you are a man transformed!