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The **FULL EDITION** of approximately 10-12 pages includes comprehensive excerpts from the program, fully quoted Scriptures, graphics, illustrations, and even extra study points that time prevented us from covering during the live program.



So, Where Do I Start?

James 4:8: (NASB) *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded...*

Tell me if this is familiar: You have decided that your life feels pretty empty, that what you have tried and how you have tried it just does not work. You know there has to be more meaning to life and so you are drawn to Christianity. While you may feel better, you slowly start to get that gnawing feeling that nothing has really fundamentally changed in your life. What do you do? How do you find the real bottom line change that you have been looking for and actually let it change you? If this description fits you or someone you know, then stay with us now, because we are going to get basic and practical! I am a Christian but want to REALLY be a Christian. So, where do I start? How do I allow Christianity to be the agent of serious change in my life?

Several weeks ago, we put this very question out to many of our CQ staff and asked for their very practical input on what they thought were some of the most important things for a new Christian to focus. Our content today is largely made up of their advice.

Kathy: After thinking a bit about it and remembering my own start, the Scripture that comes to mind is James 4:8: *Draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you.* I love the thought that the Scriptures are full of invitations for us to *come boldly unto the throne of grace...* Hebrews 4:16.

Focus Point: View the call to Christianity as exactly what it is - an invitation.

First we need to realize the call to Christianity is an invitation. Although there are many aspects to this invitation, there is one key point: *when you get an invitation, you answer it - you decide whether or not to accept it.* Matthew 11:28-30: There is an invitation in the words *come to me*. The Scriptures are full of little invitations. We are invited! Once you accept an invitation, what do you do? You comply with its conditions and you want to look and be your best! This reminds us of Luke 14:15-24, The Parable of the Wedding Banquet. This was an invitation, too. There were several invited who had excuses why they could not come. The invitation then went out to others until the wedding banquet was filled.

There is a difference between appreciating Jesus and his sacrifice and coming to him and being a footstep follower. Jesus says, *Come to me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest.* If you accept the invitation, you have to *allow* him to give you rest.

James 4:8: These are part of the conditions of coming to Jesus so we can actually be given rest. Change must take place and we have to understand the invitation first. Now that we are going to the event, what should we expect to be required of us?

Paul the CQ staffer suggests: 1 Corinthians 2:2: For I am determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. There is a lot in this little phrase. 1. Don't compare yourself with others. 2. Rely on the blood of Jesus only. Accept the forgiveness he gives. Forgive yourself; forgive others. 3. Be willing to be crucified with Jesus for the purpose of blessing all the families of the earth.

How am I going to present myself to be in harmony with this invitation? The answer Paul mentioned was what the Apostle Paul wrote, *I am determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ.* Paul, our CQ staff member, says we can use others as inspiration but do not compare. *Him crucified* means forgiveness is available to every one of us. We should be able to forgive others and ourselves as well. The idea of blessing all the families of the earth is that Christianity is more than just for the purpose of bringing you to Christ and giving you salvation. It is through Jesus and his body (the church) that all the families of the earth will be blessed as mentioned in the Abrahamic promise. Make sure we are putting Jesus as the centerpiece of our lives.

Do we truly realize we have been invited to a new life, to be lived in a new way with the promise of entirely new results? If we want to become a true follower of Jesus, what do we need to do right now? Starting on the path happens *by invitation* and then the *acceptance of that invitation*. Now we need to be willing to walk on a path, which is a path not designed by us, but by God through Jesus for us. Not our will, but His will.



Focus Point: Submit to God and His will daily, seeing each day as a new opportunity to submit.

Kathy and Joy both chose James 4 because it has the same “let me get started” approach.

For Joy’s suggestions, please see the Full Edition Rewind.

James 4:7-9: Be sober and serious about your life. Joy comments to submit to God. How do we find the will to continually submit to God? Look for specifics for things to do that maybe you would not have done, but now that you are following after Christ, you would do now. Look and pray for those opportunities to be presented to you. Joy is also warns we unfortunately tell ourselves exaggerations and lies. Try to find the truth about what and who you are and follow God that way.

These two inseparable points stated differently: 1 Peter 5:6-8: Submitting to God includes by very definition resisting the devil. This means whether it is a new walk or an experienced Christian walk, we can easily tell how our God-submission task is going by monitoring our Satan-resisting efforts.

How do we find the will to continually submit to God? You need a reason and a focus. What truly gets you going? We find the WILL when we find the WHY! Find your personal why.

Loni wrote: A few months ago, our Bible class had a study about “Inspiration.” As we talked about the things that inspire us, we discovered that inspiration could be many different things for different people. One person may be deeply moved by music or art while another may analyze a scientific detail of nature and be profoundly touched with awe for our magnificent Creator.

Focus Point: Find what truly inspires you and hold it fast in your heart, mind and hands.

I think a primary step for us in our Christian walk is to explore and discover what really lights a fire under us and truly motivates us to act, to get going, and channel that energy into service for the Lord. For each of us, that answer may be a little different. As we grow and mature, what inspires us to be about the Lord’s business may change, so it will be an ongoing process to rediscover throughout our life.

But the truly vital question is “How do we remain inspired?” The Christian walk is more like a marathon than a sprint, and in a marathon, there are times that you feel great and you are striding along with ease; but there are also times of fatigue, discouragement and hitting “the wall.” So, what do you do? I was reminded of a television commercial that quoted Newton’s Law of Motion: “A body at rest tends to stay at rest while a body in motion tends to stay in motion...” Don’t stop. Even if you feel like you are not moving mountains for the Lord, move a rock, or a stone or even a pebble...just keep moving.

The same thing that inspires me today may not be the same thing that inspired me a year ago. What makes me want to go as a Christian? Find what inspires you and hold onto it tightly. Your ‘why’ can change as your experiences change, as you grow and mature, or even due to the changes in the world. It will be an ongoing discovery throughout your life. Loni’s point is to just keep moving. It doesn’t have to be big but just keep moving.

Isaiah 40:28-31: When you find what truly inspires you, it can give you that adrenaline rush that makes you want to conquer the world in the next five minutes. While this is an exhilarating feeling, it certainly is not a lasting transition. What do we do with the inspiration? How do we find the lasting transition?

For Stephanie’s suggestions, please see the Full Edition Rewind.

Focus Point: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time - take small steps with a daily inspirational focus and train your mind towards spiritual things.

Stephanie suggests small *baby steps* are what can really make a difference for us in our lives. We can see this is coming from her personal experience. One of those baby steps is to have a Scripture at the beginning of the day, an inspirational thought with that Scripture, and then challenge yourself to see if during the day you can come back to that Scripture. Her point is that your day will form itself around lessons from that Scripture. This applies the idea of actual change.



Philippians 4:8: This Scripture is a practical application. You can break the Scripture down and work on one aspect or lesson from the Scripture every day; a simple way to apply the idea of actual change. Do not be just an appreciator of Jesus if what you are trying to do is follow Jesus. *Inspiration* combined with *daily baby steps* can be a transforming process, for it joins our biggest thinking (our inspiration) with our smallest tasks (baby steps)! Now, how can our small steps bless others?

Laurie: My advice for a new Christian is to get involved in projects where your skills can be put to good use. Not only will you be serving the Lord with something that comes naturally to you (that you enjoy), but your time will be spent serving instead of doing less productive activities. An added bonus is getting to know your fellow co-laborers in Christ a little better, developing strong relationships in the Lord for years to come!

What is interesting is that none of the individuals who shared their thoughts with us spoke to each other! They all approached this with a different perspective and we end up with a combination of very sound advice. Laurie is saying another great way to have your life be transformative is to get involved. Volunteer your time and do something to further the cause of Christ.

Focus Point: Learn to go beyond receiving to contributing and then to co-laboring!

Christianity's benefit is not just to receive blessings but it is also a way to bless. It is wonderful to see everyone work together for the cause of Christ. Christian Questions is a great example of this. There are many people who volunteer their time with so many different talents. **1 Corinthians 12:17-22:** The Apostle Paul is saying we all have different talents to offer and ways of approaching our Christianity. You do not look at what you contribute as more important than others but look at what you contribute as the part of a whole. By doing this, you are helping others to create a firmer focus of their Christianity. When you co-labor, you are completely engaged in whatever the opportunity is before you so you can be a part of something much bigger, which is transformative.

Julie suggests: Our journey is really summed up in the profound text of **Micah 6:8**. Such a simple admonition! Do what is right! Love mercy! Walk humbly with your God. This pathway is one to peace regardless of the storms going on in our lives. But easier said than done, right? **Step one: Surround yourself with light: 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6:** Light needs to be your entire motivating factor and focus in your life. Do not let your life go a moment without light! This is such an important part of allowing your Christianity to truly transform you.

Focus Point: Find and dwell in true light for it will always overpower darkness - *if we let it shine!*

You can have the most powerful flashlight, and when you're in a dark place it is useless unless you turn it on. For practical ways to surround yourself with light, please see Julie's suggestions in the Full Edition Rewind. To live in light is to make a choice over and over again that you will abide only where you can truly see, that you will work with integrity, that you will speak that which brings goodness and that you will dwell on only those things that feed life. This is a daily, baby step challenge! **1 Thessalonians 5:15-24:** All of these things are daily and sometimes moment-by-moment choices. Be inspired and choose rightly! Even if you are not a new Christian, this is a good program to check your life and say, how am I doing and what am I focusing on? Light, humility, inspiration, small steps, contributing - all are ingredients for learning to live a Christian life. But there is more - to continue to live such a life we need what is next:

STEP 2: Gain Knowledge (Please see the Full Edition Rewind) Put yourself in the position to learn why you want to be surrounded with light so that you can understand the plan of God and how it relates to everyday life.

Focus Point: Realize that Christianity is a journey of experience, choices and lifetime learning.

2 Timothy 2:14-15: It is easy to *wrangle* about words because we all can study, think and conclude. Our learning therefore must be done with diligence! It is great to learn things, but what if you are learning the wrong thing? We want to know what the Bible really teaches and how it can actually change your life. We also want to know what the prophecies say so we can understand what is happening in the world around us.



Ella wrote: We need to STUDY THE WORD, PRAY about what we are studying, and then check our studies with other Christians. Therefore, FELLOWSHIP is most important. If we don't listen to the ideas of others and consider the results of their studies, we become stuck in our own mindset, which may need some tweaking. Fellowshiping, if done with THE RIGHT HEART ATTITUDE, leads to understanding, not necessarily agreeing, but understanding another's views. This is very important since it is through fellowship that we LEARN to LOVE our brethren. That is not always easy, but if we sincerely PRAY about it God will give us the experiences we need to achieve this most important goal.

Ella's comments are about studying and taking the responsibility to learn into your own hands, but it is important to check those studies and thoughts against those whom you respect. We need to learn to co-labor in our studies. When you are a disciple, you are trying to learn of the master and follow the master. Jesus said many things in the context of all of the Holy Scriptures. It is our daily challenge as Christians to study what he said so we can see what the real plan of God is and how it works.

1 Corinthians 12:27: There are many different parts of the body but you are an individual member of it. Debbie: Work with what you know for sure, your *Thus saith the Lord*. A turning point for me: I asked myself, “What DO you know?” I was determined to worship what I knew and to investigate all else with God's guidance. John 4:22-23: Learn from those sources that you believe have been able to find real truth to help fill in the gaps.

Focus Point: True Christianity is about maturing into one who is responsible for truth.

1 Peter 3:15: Give an account for the hope that is in you with gentleness and reverence. We have to learn to have the right blend of humility mixed in with aggressive learning. If you preface your aggressive learning with humility it can be very fruitful. Our learning is always subject to being derailed by our own ego, so baby steps are often necessary to overcome this.

Ella added: STOP THINKING YOU ARE NOT WORTHY - NOBODY IS WORTHY AND YET WE ARE CALLED. When I was mentally considering whether I should consecrate my life to God or not, it was Romans 8 that did it for me. Romans 8:28-39 are very faith strengthening. If God called us and is with us and is giving us this opportunity for eternal life, who are we to question Him? We must move forward doing what He gives us to do and trust Him to carry out the rest.

If God called you, who are you to stand in His way? Romans 8:28-30: See how logical and sequential the mind of God is regarding His plan for our calling to follow Jesus? God does not just arbitrarily pick. He has a purpose for us which is why He calls us.

Focus Point: Learn to trust God's judgment on your behalf. This is not as easy as it sounds!

We need to focus on being more than conquerors. Romans 8:31-39: If we want our Christian life to be the focus of our life, then those mistakes, challenges and difficulties will serve as stepping-stones so we can move forward and move up in our maturity level. DO NOT FEAR. FEAR IS SATAN'S TOOL. John 14:27: Jesus is focusing us on the fact that he did it first; therefore we don't have to be worried.

Focus Point: Trust to the point that you will not act based on your fear but will act based on God's will.

Luke 12:32: The Father has chosen *gladly* to give you the kingdom. What makes us so good? It is because of our willingness to follow after Jesus' faithfulness and our willingness to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. It is God's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. He *wants* to give it to you. Isaiah 41:13 What do you do, how do you act, what do you think, where do you go? Take this program and use it as a tool to help you be faithful day after day, moment by moment, baby step by baby step, inspiration by inspiration, co-laboring by co-laboring. Don't wait! Get started!

*So, where do I start?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*