

## How Will I Choose to Live the Life That's Ahead of Me?

**James 1:22:** *But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.*



We have all heard the saying, “Life is what you make it!” It is usually at the approach of a new year or a birthday or some landmark life event that we turn our focus inward and think about changes we would like to make. Normally, these changes are aimed at finding a greater measure of happiness, health or fulfillment in our daily lives. So, what should we decide needs changing and even more importantly, how will we decide to implement those changes? On the surface this may sound easy, but for the vast majority of us it is not. Life tends to get in the way, along

with old habits and second thoughts. Then there is our old friend, our comfort zone! Why would we want to leave that place, as it is so comfortable? What can we learn from the Scriptures to help us actually implement God-honoring life changes?

We can and should resolve to make positive changes at any time of year, but many people start off the new year with ambitious goals.



Forbes Magazine asked 1,000 Americans in October 2023 for their New Year's resolutions. The most popular was “improving fitness,” followed by “improving finances” and “improving mental health.” Certainly, these changes and others on the list, like “making more time for loved ones” and “improving work-life balance” are important goals. We want to look at the perspective of how a Christian can use goals in a spiritually-minded way to achieve the ultimate goal of bringing glory to God.

We will discuss life choices that can shape our future. As we review these choices, we suggest establishing some ground rules for mental and emotional processing. To truly move forward, we need to ask ourselves relevant questions about the current status of our lives motivated by a “discovery and improvement” perspective and NOT with a critical and self-loathing attitude. Otherwise, our negativity effectively sabotages what God can use when working with us.



### Life Choice Question 1:

LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND ASK, WHERE AM I IN MY LIFE?

Do I see my life through the lens of comparing myself to others,

OR

do I compare myself to the person I can develop into?



Do I give into peer pressure,  
OR  
do I engage in personal introspection that  
provokes a desire for growth?

And here's a really important question:



Do I imagine what I would like to be  
OR  
do I envision what God would have me become?  
This has to do with perspective and attitude. Our motivation for  
striving to improve is all for the purpose of honoring God.

**Whatever our mirror experience reveals, take heart! Change IS possible if we choose to live in Christ:**

**James 1:13-17:** *13 Let no one say when he is tempted (meaning to test, entice, discipline), I am being tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted (enticed) when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.*

We are *carried away* when we don't resist our own faulty thinking, weaknesses and predisposition to selfish, depraved and sinful things. This is why it is important to take an honest look in the mirror.

*15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*

These scriptures compare earthly desires with spiritual development and focus. James goes on to reveal a five-step process for making progress toward honoring God.



**Our first step is to IDENTIFY—Allow sound, spiritually-driven thinking to take root. Recognize who we are in Christ! If we've been called to come up higher, we are different from others:**

**James 1:18-25:** *18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. 19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.*

James identifies who we are striving to become—a *kind of first fruits among His creatures*. This is our job, our calling. This is the goal of our spiritual growth. **IDENTIFY** the overall road we want to be on.



**The second step is to IMPLEMENT—Use this spiritually-driven thinking to override and conquer unreliable emotional reactions. It's good to have emotions, but we want to lead with a more stable foundation:**

*21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.*

We are drawn to God's word and strive to put aside *all that remains of wickedness*. When we ask where we are in life and how should we grow, James answers, *Here is how to grow toward God—putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness.*



**The third step is to EXECUTE—Work at making our efforts become habits of thinking and habits of action:**

*22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.*

So often this is where it breaks down. We hear the word, we get inspired by it, and we feel like we can conquer the world because of it. Then we don't do anything about it! Become *doers of the word*.

Identify the direction in which we are going, decide how to get there and then act on that plan. James is building the ultimate "self-help" book here, but the only way to accomplish it is to "self-implement" the helps God gives us in His word.



**The fourth step is REVISIT—We need to consistently check our actions to keep us on a track for our progress. Don't look in the mirror only once a year:**

The second Friday of January here in America is now called "Quitter's Day"! It is thought that around 80 percent of Americans who make New Year's resolutions give up around 10 days later. The changes we are talking about here are too important to quit.

*23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.*

This is a reminder to stay the course. We need to keep the mirror in mind and within reach because we need to frequently revisit our aims and progress. We are fallen and imperfect. We get excited and then fall down. Get up! Look in the mirror! Re-establish who we are and what we are planning—**REVISIT**.



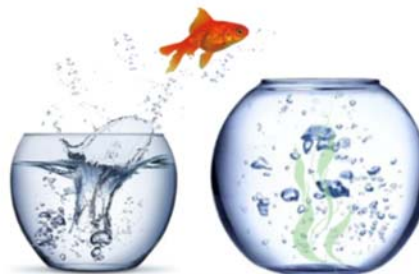
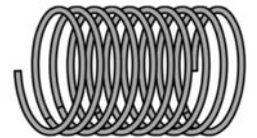
**The fifth step is RESET—Focus on finding God's blessing by abiding in His guidance and liberty in Christ:**

*25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.*

The law of liberty in Christ is the law of being freed from sinful action resulting from the enticements of this sinful world. We are freed to act above such things. We **RESET** from from where we were to where God is drawing us so that we can honor Him.

We picture these five steps in a circle because they are a continuous cycle to **IDENTIFY**, **IMPLEMENT**, **EXECUTE**, **REVISIT** and **RESET**; however, it's really more in the shape of a spring. We don't just go around in a circle. Ideally, the whole circle keeps moving forward, even if just a little bit, even if we sometimes have a setback and slide backward.

Imagine having a stretched-out spring. We follow these five steps around continuously. We keep moving forward, little by little, coming around again to start at the place of identification and progress up another spiral loop.



**Choosing to Change and Changing to Grow:**

Honestly and positively evaluating where we stand in our Christian lives is a critical step toward developing Christian maturity. Embracing the fact that we need to change gives us permission to continue walking the narrow pathway towards Christlikeness.

It is human nature to slide back at times. If we use those experiences wisely, they will help us choose to live our lives in a God-honoring way.

Embracing the hard-to-accept fact that we are likely our own worst enemies is the first decisive step towards choosing to live in a more Christlike way.

**It's inspiring to know that identifying our need to change can bring honor to God.  
How do we take this conclusion and make it into a new beginning?**

Once we have settled in on the fact that we **DO** need to change and that our change **DOES** need to always have God in a primary position, the true effort begins. Next, we take the process that James laid out for us and determine which parts of our life and character to work on first. This is a **BIG** job, so let's remember to take it one step at a time!

It is so easy to be excited and inspired and say, I'm overhauling **EVERYTHING**! When we decide to overhaul everything, we can get overrun with the details.





**Life Choice Question 2:**  
**How do I decide what needs changing and what should stay the same?**

**Q.** We introduced our comfort zone as “comfortable.” Is comfort positive or negative for the Christian? Don’t we all need to recharge?



Comfort can be both positive and negative for the Christian. We can have a natural (earthly) comfort zone—a physical comfort zone where we get very relaxed. Here, we can become almost lethargic, not wanting to move beyond that comfort zone. This is not necessarily a good thing.

However, we can also develop a spiritual comfort zone. In fact, comfort is critically important to the Christian. Why else do the scriptures talk about having the peace of Christ? Isn’t that “comfortable”? That is the kind of comfort zone we work on developing.

Rather than creating a comfort zone that takes us away from God or stagnates our growth towards Him, it’s important to have a mental space where we can take a breath, think and reflect.

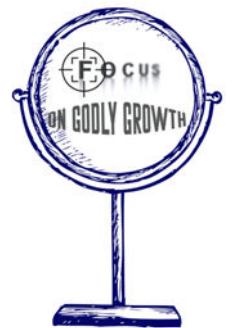
**Rick’s  
Experience**

When I am constantly working on the outlines for Christian Questions, thinking of the next topic, putting scriptures together, I can get burned out.

There are times when I just have to walk away—sometimes for five minutes, sometimes until the next day. The Lord’s work is still there, but I am pushing the pause button while I get my mind back in gear so that when I come back, I am refreshed. Being able to walk away and refresh is a comfort that is a beautiful thing. Comfort can be deceiving, but it also can be energizing. We need to use our mirror to figure it out.

Our mirror experiences show us that our focus should be on godly growth, not what is earthly convenience. Spiritual comfort zones may not be as convenient as physical (natural, earthly) comfort zones, but they are still places to rest, relax, smile and laugh, and then get going again.

The Bible gives us straightforward directions on understanding the dilemma between the earthly comfort zone we want to do away with versus the spiritual comfort zone we want to grow along with us.



As I seek change, what is my fundamental motivation? Am I sowing life seeds of fleshly comfort, happiness and convenience?



**If we are, we need to IDENTIFY that! Our results will, at best, be elusive:**

**Galatians 6:7-10, 12:** *7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life.*

This is a great principle, and the metaphor of reaping and sowing is profound. But technically, we reap much more than we sow. For example, on average, planting a seed for one wheat plant yields approximately 100 more seeds. Our actions, like literal seeds, can have exponential results—to our benefit or detriment.

If we're continually sowing seeds to make our life more comfortable, we might not be working on increasing our spiritual growth. We want to be careful that our quest for comfort doesn't supersede our spiritual growth and maturity. We also have to make sure we have a quest for the kind of comfort that helps us to spiritually rejuvenate. We want our spiritually-profitable comfort zone to grow along with us.



**IMPLEMENT! This motivation check reminds us of the consequences or benefits of seeking change:**

*9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.*

*In due time*—this metaphor of sowing and reaping a harvest is about patience. A farmer doesn't plant a seed and the next day a full-grown stalk of corn appears.

This helps us understand that choices for true change don't bring instant gratification but instead bring lasting change! It takes time.

Anything worth working toward is worth putting the effort into developing the kind of comfort that rejuvenates us to move to the next step. Sometimes, comfort is just sitting and reading a book so that our mind goes in other directions, and then we come back. When we walk away and take a little time off, we often return to what was bothering us and see a simple solution.



**EXECUTE! Let us not lose heart in doing good—there is a high-level satisfaction in doing good as Jesus did, but we are warned to stay focused on the most important things. We are to be on our guard that our change stays focused only on the most important things.**

*10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. 12 Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.*

These were legalistic Jewish Christians who wanted the Gentile Christians to be circumcised like they were, but Paul revealed their motive: they desired *to make a good showing in the flesh*. Other translations say they wanted *to make a good impression*. They wanted to impress others.



If we only are comfortable when we are impressing others, that is the kind of comfort zone we want to pull the plug on and put behind us.

Though they may look similar, doing good to all is very different from making a good showing before all. One is following God's principles; the other is egotistically driven to say, I am superior to others. We can't be going down that road!

Is my choice to change a personal comfort-based choice, or is it based on Christlikeness?



We have discussed **IDENTIFYING** what needs changing and what motivates that change. Is it the physical (earthly) comforts of life, or is it the spiritual comfort of being Christlike? Then, we **IMPLEMENTED** (planned our change) and **EXECUTED** (acted on our plan). Now, we **REVISIT**. Why? Because we mess up.



**REVISIT!** Even after Pentecost, the Apostle Peter was not exempt from his own comfort-based desires. The comfort challenge for Peter was falling prey to social pressure at the expense of spiritual principles.

**This is the Apostle Paul putting a stop to a situation involving the Apostle Peter:**

**Galatians 2:11-14:** *11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, (meaning Christians of Jewish descent) he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.*

Peter knew the Gentiles were Christians without having to follow the customs of the Law of Moses like some of the Jewish Christians chose to do. He was eating and fellowshiping with them until the Jewish Christians showed up. Then Peter ignored the Gentiles, apparently giving way to social pressure. The New Living Translation says—*He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision.*

Even Barnabas, Paul's trusted friend and fellow missionary, treated the Gentiles like they were outsiders and not Christians at all. Unfortunately, Peter sought a level of social comfort that was damaging and not Christlike, and it influenced others.

If it could happen to the Apostle Peter after he received God's spirit and had been doing all this work with the Gentile Christians, then it could happen to any of us. The Apostle Peter, as with us, needed a **RESET!**



**RESET! Correcting this needed external input. Discomfort can jar us out of our misplaced comfort:**

*14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas (Peter) in the presence of all, If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?*

The Apostle Paul called out the Apostle Peter in public. Why not just pull him over to the side and whisper that what he was doing was wrong?

Paul could have corrected Peter in a quiet manner. Then Peter would have had to go about trying to figure out how to correct his behavior. Instead, because Peter was a public figure and one of the foundation pillars of God's people on earth, he needed to be corrected publicly so everyone influenced by his poor decision could see the importance of the correction.



Choose to change those things that bring us away from our purpose of honoring God.

Although we have no record in Scripture about Peter's response, we are sure he acquiesced. We are sure he understood, corrected his behavior and continued being the great leader he had become because it was for the good of all. He must have recognized his error.

This is why resetting is such an important part of our choices. We have to **RESET** because we keep failing.

**Our conclusion is to learn the higher comfort of walking the way a Christian ought to walk:**

**Ephesians 4:1-6:** *1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.*

**While making the choice to change requires discipline, it brings powerful benefits:** *3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*

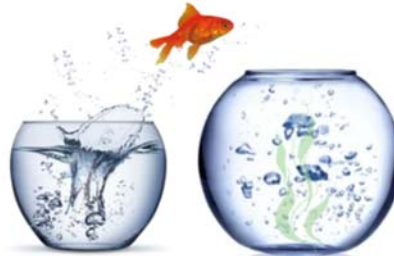
All this fits together into one objective:



All those called to follow Christ come from different walks of life with different experiences. All come with different baggage.



...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one spirit, one body, one bond of peace. This is the new spiritual comfort zone we are walking towards. While growing in Christ, these are the changes that bring such goodness to our lives.



**Choosing to Change and Changing to Grow:**

**Let's ask our four mirror questions:**

1. Am I spiritually sound in my personal comfort?
2. Do I get so preoccupied with trying to navigate life's social issues that my choices to mature in Christ get overshadowed?
3. How regularly do I review what I am seeking to change and how I am doing it?
4. Am I truly following the motivation to, first and foremost, find comfort in Christ?

There are a lot of questions to ask ourselves as we move forward. Understanding that personal comfort is one of the primary areas in life we may need to focus on as we seek to grow in Christ can be—well—uncomfortable!

**We have looked at ourselves honestly and identified the areas of life to focus on on changing. How do we proceed from here?**

As we move forward, it's important to again stress that personal comfort is NOT inherently bad for a Christian. The challenge comes when personal comfort stifles our primary objectives of growth, maturity and comfort in Christ. Proceeding, then, comes with clear attention to balance that is implemented with wisdom, as we want our efforts to succeed!

While we want to be of the mindset to serve God all the time, as human beings, sometimes we need to pause and reset. We need to take a *selah* moment to “pause and consider.” If we deny ourselves this pausing and resetting, we are denying ourselves part of the growth process.



**Life Choice Question 3:**  
**How do I actually make the necessary changes  
to provoke positive movement forward in life right now?**

(Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/scotthutcheson/2024/12/28/framing-new-years-resolutions-lessons-from-science-and-leadership>) Scientifically, people who set approach-oriented goals—focused on adopting new habits or introducing positive changes—are significantly more successful than those who set avoidance-oriented goals, which emphasize quitting or avoiding behaviors.

They activate different sections of our brains.

For example, instead of resolving to “stop eating junk food” (an avoidance goal), reframing it as “eat more fresh fruits and vegetables” (an approach goal) makes the resolution more positive, engaging your brain’s reward pathways. The key is to align with how our brains naturally respond to motivation. By focusing on what you want to achieve rather than what you want to avoid, you’re setting yourself—and others—up for success.

This positive reinforcement increases the likelihood of long-term success, which is why it’s not enough to stop doing something; we have to walk towards something else. Replacing with something positive helps us from running out of motivation. We avoid being overwhelmed with stress, frustration and failure. Small wins help to reinforce the new behavior and increase the likelihood of success. That’s why the image of a spring fits so well with this process—even if you slip backwards, you keep moving forward.



Let’s go through James’ five steps again.



**IDENTIFY!** I must consciously change the way I perceive my own thinking. I have to make the changes to provoke positive forward movement. My own thinking is not gospel truth!



Here’s a way to test that:

**Does my natural thinking lead me to believing  
in myself as a called-out follower of Christ?**

Probably not. Therefore, our natural thinking may need to be altered.

**We need to adopt a higher way of looking at things:**

**Romans 12:3:** *For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment...*

**Proverbs 29:23:** *A man’s pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.*

All of our thinking should bend towards lifting us higher, and that includes having an accurate assessment of who we are.

We all know pride is a problem, and we shouldn't think too highly of ourselves since it's only through Christ that we can do anything at all. But on the opposite end of the spectrum is shame and self-deprecation, which only discourages. That can be a form of pride, too, because the focus is all on ME.

Thinking that which either discourages me OR encourages my ego is not the kind of thinking that provokes Christian growth!



**IMPLEMENT!** At his conversion, Jesus told Saul (who would become the Apostle Paul) what his true purpose in life would now be. Jesus showed Saul what would be required and instructed him to stand up and move forward.

Paul's story of his conversion to Christianity was publicly told three times; once by Luke and twice by Paul himself (**Acts 9:3-7, 22:6-9, 26:13-16**). Here in this third and final account of Paul's conversion, Paul is before King Agrippa of Rome, telling the story from his early life as the Pharisee known as Saul and then his conversion. It is so dramatic that the king actually says, *In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian!*

**Acts 26:16-18:** (Paul is describing what Jesus told him to do) *16 But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; (Showing Saul that he would be taught new beliefs) 17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in me.*

Think about the power of those words from Jesus! Saul of Tarsus was on his way to destroy followers of Christ. Once he got to where he was going, he preached the word of God through Christ because of this new objective. This is what he was to **IMPLEMENT** instead of what he had been doing previously. He was now different!

Jesus showed Saul the gross errors of his thinking, beliefs and actions. He changed Saul's paradigm—his complete way of thinking. He changed Saul's life plan and showed him how to implement something entirely different.

Habitual beliefs—driven by imperfect human desires—stifle our spiritual expectations. Raising our awareness of Jesus in every area of life will give our beliefs a chance to be elevated. **IMPLEMENT!**

We want to create space for new God-honoring habits by weeding out as many of our earthly habits as would be inappropriate for a disciple of Christ. We're not going to receive a vision like the Apostle Paul, but we can still stand up and walk towards Christlikeness, one step at a time, looking for that new comfort zone in the peace of Christ.



**EXECUTE! Changing the basis of our thoughts can elevate the desires of our hearts. If we change the basis of what we are thinking, the desire of our heart will follow:**

**1 Corinthians 9:24-25:** *24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.*

If we absolutely believe ourselves to be involved in THE race of our lives, the discipline needed to run will follow. If we believe this, something changes inside of us because our belief drives it. **EXECUTE!**



Using Paul's metaphor of winning a race, remember we are running our race with our fellow Christians. From strengthrunning.com, we learned that professional runners don't train alone, and they have coaches. We talked about the dangers of peer pressure, but on the opposite side is peer support and guidance. When you perceive yourself to have an "audience" of people who are either watching you or will know the results of your efforts, you're more likely to perform better. In psychology, this is called "social facilitation."

(Source: Wikipedia) Social facilitation is a social phenomenon in which being in the presence of others improves individual task performance. That is, people do better on tasks when they are with other people rather than when they are doing the task alone.

In other words, belonging to a group will help you run faster or train more consistently with positive peer pressure.

- If you have a horrible run, you can get support from other runners.
- If you have a coach, you can have any question that comes up during training answered.
- If you have a great race, you can share it with other runners.

The spiritual comparisons are obvious.

We are working together—that is why it is called *the body of Christ*. The Scriptures never tell us to isolate ourselves from one another. They always bring us together for mutual encouragement or to find what we need to move forward—to **EXECUTE**. When we fall, we help each other get up again.



**REVISIT! Is Christ regularly shining through us in every aspect of life? If not, refocus:**

**Philippians 4:12-13:** *12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

We can cope through Christ because like him, our objective is to be God-honoring. Strive for new habits of consistent performance regardless of everyday circumstances. It's important to **REVISIT**.



We get so much coaching from the Apostle Paul! Our circumstances change all the time and are often beyond our control. But if we are strongly anchored, we can withstand the storm. Christians experience the same awful experiences as everyone else and yet can do it with peace and even joy. This is our new comfort zone. It is where we want to be comfortable; where we want to rest so that we can reset and move forward.



**RESET! The record of the Apostle Paul's life is simply summed up in his presentation to King Agrippa:**

**Acts 26:19-23:** *19 So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but kept declaring... (to all) that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.*

Paul was given a completely different vision than he had set out on the road to accomplish, and so he said, *I did not prove disobedient*. He turned his mindset around, stood on his feet and followed Jesus.

*21 For this reason some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death. 22 So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; 23 that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of his resurrection from the dead he would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.*

Paul did nothing but preach Christ after this. He made a life choice based on the input he was given and changed everything in his life. He had established an unflinching approach to his new life. This is Christlikeness in action. This is a dramatic example of resetting.

While we are not the Apostle Paul and won't reset in this exact way, we can still get up, try again and continue to **RESET!**



**Choosing to Change and Changing to Grow:**

Choosing to change in ways that bring us to become better reflections of Jesus is a cyclical process. Simply deciding and acting will not get the job done unless we dedicate ourselves to continually and repetitiously deciding and acting.

**This approach builds the spiritual maturity necessary to truly run  
THE race of our lives!**



We do not try to do it all at once. We just take the next small step. What is YOUR next small step? The victory is in the next small step.

The bad news is that the change we desire does not come quickly. The good news is that the change we desire is worth repeatedly working for!

**Having the ingredients for change and making the choice to use them is the purpose for this whole conversation. So, where does this choice lead?**

When our choice to change some things about our lives is motivated by a desire to live more fully in harmony with God's will, the end result can be pretty exciting. While a life of discipleship is promised to be a life of trials and challenges, our choices to elevate our thinking and actions will absolutely feed our capacity to meet and overcome whatever may come our way.

This is an exciting process and introduces a new comfort zone that feeds spiritual maturity and wanting to grow up into Christ.



#### Life Choice Question 4:

**What do I want my life to look like as I take steps towards Christlikeness?**

**Jesus, in a very simple way, told us what our lives should look like:**

**Mark 12:28-31:** 28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the foremost of all? 29 Jesus answered (by quoting from **Deuteronomy 6:4-5** and **Leviticus 19:18**), The foremost is, HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 30 and YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH. 31 The second is this, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF...

**Making God-honoring choices for change helps us give God our heart's undivided sincerity:**

**Psalms 63:3-4:** 3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You. 4 So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.

Our heart's undivided sincerity is focused on loyalty to God. My lips will praise You—this is such an honoring way to live. We can't quantify His lovingkindness.

**Making God-honoring choices for change helps us give God our **soul**, our deepest life devotion:**

**Psalms 63:6-8:** *6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches, 7 For You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. 8 My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.*

Throughout this Psalm we see the tremendous attachment of our **soul**—our deepest life devotion—which *clings* to the deliverance of God Almighty in our lives.

**Making God-honoring choices for change helps us give God our **minds**, our brightest intellect:**

**2 Corinthians 10:5:** *We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*

*We are taking EVERY thought captive to make sure they are God-honoring thoughts.*

We do not just bring our “Sunday church brain” into captivity. It’s our “other six days of the week” person, our brightest intellectual thoughts, that we bring *captive to the obedience of Christ*.

**Making God-honoring choices for change helps us give God our **strength**, the core energy of our lives:**

**Romans 12:1-2:** *1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*By the mercies of God, we present ourselves as sacrifices, and we have to be transformed. That transformation doesn’t happen by the flip of a switch. It happens through the process of moving toward heavenly aspirations and spiritual maturity and away from who we were.*

**All these characteristics will inevitably come out of our clearly applied godly choices for change. They all contribute to the main purpose of our lives:**

**1 Timothy 6:12:** *Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

In summary—fight, run and sow:

- *Fight the good fight*
- *Run the race of your life for an unperishable crown (don’t forget the benefits of positive peer pressure!)*
- *Sow seeds that are worth exponentially reaping*

Our transformation is on the inside—to which you were called and shown on the outside—and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. Moving towards Christ grows from the inside out.

**Jesus added the importance of outwardly living those characteristics for all to see by loving everyone:**

**Luke 6:27-28:** *27 But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*

We are to apply all we have learned and express it on the outside with a Christlike love for everyone, even those who are difficult—and yes, even towards our enemies.

We are all works in progress!

Be easy on each other and on ourselves by not beating ourselves down. When we fail, we fail. We bring that failure before God and say, *I'm sorry*. Then get up—just like the Apostle Paul—and move forward. This is what we are called upon to do. These are the life choices that can bring us lasting change.

Finally, our God-honoring choices for change will help us apply our strength and energy to being able to glory in weakness!

**The Apostle Paul shared how this can become a reality:**

**2 Corinthians 12:7-10:** *7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.*

After the Apostle Paul was converted, he worked hard for years, preaching and living the gospel. But he had an issue that he thought was hindering how effective he could be. (The Bible does not identify what the ailment was.) Paul asked three times for it to be removed, thinking it would be a great help in his ministry.

**This was Jesus' response:**

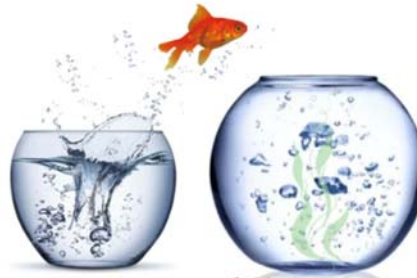
*9 And he has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*

Paul now understood his weakness was the opportunity in which the strength of Christ could dwell. *Because I am weak, I am not depending on me; I am depending on him. I am going to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*

**Here is Paul's response:**

*10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Even though our circumstances might not look how we would like, learning to be able to glory in our weaknesses is to say that because Christ is in me, I can be content in a comfort zone of Christlikeness.



**Choosing to Change and Changing to Grow:**

As Christians, we have the liberty to choose how we will live out our call to discipleship. Instead of being creative in how this unfolds, let's focus on having a clean heart and a clear mind before God. Let us choose principles of godly righteousness and Christlike devotion as the basis for our life changes.

**Then, let us find joy and happiness in the blessings of those changes.**

All our changes should be to honor God. We have been given a clear path to making choices in order to make changes. Keep the mirror close. Follow scriptural principles, not our own imaginations. Put aside our earthly comfort zones so we can adapt and make room for spiritually-driven comfort zones where we can pause, reflect and then go back to work. This is what a true Christian life looks like. This is what change in Christ is all about. This is what it means to be faithful.

**So, how will I choose to live the life that's ahead of me?  
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...  
...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*



## Next episode

Episode 1367:  
What Happens When We Wrestle with God?



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## Bonus Material and Study Questions

### Recommended additional study:

#### Ep. 1338: Do My Habits Glorify God? (Part I) Personal Habits

*Revealing the different ways habits are made and how to change them.*

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1338-habits-part-i/>

#### Ep. 1317: It's Time to Change, but How Much Is Enough?

*Prioritizing our needed life changes and setting up to accomplish them*

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1317-change/>



Parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with this short, animated video for kids at ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube:

- What can we do when we're sad or frustrated?

<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/what-to-do-if-sad-or-frustrated/>

- What is pride?

<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/what-is-pride/>

- Why can't we have everything we want?

<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/why-cant-we-have-everything/>



# Study QUESTIONS

Ep.1366: How Will I Choose to Live the Life That's Ahead of Me?

See:  **CQ.Rewind**  
SHOW NOTES

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1366-bad-habits/>

1. **WHERE AM I IN MY LIFE?** What needs changing to develop your Christian maturity?
  - a. **IDENTIFY:** Who are you striving to become? (James 1:18-20)
  - b. **IMPLEMENT:** How are you using spiritually-driven thinking to put aside worldliness? (verse 21)
  - c. **EXECUTE:** How are you *a doer of the word*? Are you moving towards your spiritual goals? (verse 22)
  - d. **REVISIT:** Why do you need to revisit your goals? (verses 23-24)
  - e. **RESET:** How do you reset after a failure? (verse 25)
2. **HOW DO I DECIDE WHAT NEEDS CHANGING AND WHAT SHOULD STAY THE SAME?**
  - a. **IDENTIFY:** What is your fundamental motivation for change? (Galatians 6:7-8)
  - b. **IMPLEMENT:** Are you impatient to see results? What is a “comfort zone” you can use? (verse 9)
  - c. **EXECUTE:** What are the dangers in wanting to make a good impression on our brethren? (verse 10-12)
  - d. **REVISIT:** Why should Peter have revisited the motivation for his behavior in Galatians 2:11-13?
  - e. **RESET:** How did Peter receive an “external” reset from Paul? Why was it public? (verse 14)
3. **HOW DO I MAKE THE NECESSARY CHANGES TO PROVOKE POSITIVE MOVEMENT?**
  - a. **IDENTIFY:** What needs to change in our thinking—what are the two sides to this? (Romans 12:3)
  - b. **IMPLEMENT:** How was Saul/Paul an extreme example for us in implementation? (Acts 26:16-18)
  - c. **EXECUTE:** What helps us execute our plans? (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)
  - d. **REVISIT:** How does Paul coach us to look at our experiences? (Philippians 4:12-13)
  - e. **RESET:** How did Paul reset his life? We're not Paul; how do we reset our lives? (Acts 26:19-23)
4. **WHAT DO I WANT MY LIFE TO LOOK LIKE AS I TAKE STEPS TOWARDS CHRISTLIKENESS?**

Using Mark 12:28-31 where Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5:

  - a. How do we love the Lord our God with all our **HEART**? (Psalms 63:3-4)
  - b. ... with all our **SOUL**? (Psalms 63:6-8)
  - c. ... with all our **MINDS**? (2 Corinthians 10:5)
  - d. ... with all our **STRENGTH**? (Romans 12:1-2)
  - e. Summarize 1 Timothy 6:12. How does this verse show both aspects of Christian growth?
  - f. What is the admonition in Luke 6:27-28? Is this difficult for you? How are you working on this?
5. What did the Apostle Paul implore the Lord to do three times? (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
  - a. How did Jesus respond?
  - b. How did Paul respond to further knowledge of why he was afflicted?
  - c. How do you think you can glory in weakness? How can you change your mindset in this?