

Steps to Spiritual Freedom Part 3
“Gaining Control of Your Spiritual Walk”
Sunday, October 18, 2009
By Pastor Edward J. Thomas Jr.

Pastor Thomas started the sermon by talking about the health of our personal walk with God as individuals. It is easy to find ourselves drifting closer to and farther from God throughout the course of our lives. Part of that has to do with the fact that our walk with God is a direct reflection of our belief system. Pastor Thomas described this as the fact that our understanding and *belief* of who God is in relationship to our life in Him impacts every action and thought that we have. If we understand who God truly is based on His word, it will directly change our actions to make sure that we are fulfilling our will for our life through Him. If we don't really believe that God is all powerful, intertwined in our daily lives, or cares deeply about what we are doing, our actions will not be as focused or dedicated to His purpose. It all comes back to belief.

Titus 2:11-12

¹¹For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹²Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

According to this scripture, misbehavior on our part can be directly linked to a lack of belief that the grace of God brings salvation and is for everyone. To believe that God brings salvation will allow us to deny worldly lusts, and cause us to live righteously.

John 8:31-32

³¹Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

³²And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Jesus was very aware of who he was and how that impacted the plan for his life. His beliefs about who he was made it an option for Jesus to say that the people should continue in His word and be free in the truth.

There are two things that give us strength in our spiritual lives. First, having the mind of Christ will make us strong. The scripture describes having the mind of Christ as a trait that allows for a man to be instructed. The best way to be strong is to remain aware of the fact that no matter how far we have come in our walk with God, we always need to be instructed. But if we are receiving instruction and filtering that through our own perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, it will do no good. We have to have the mind of Christ.

I Corinthians 2:16

¹⁶For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ.

The second thing that will give us strength is the Holy Ghost.

Acts 1:8

⁸But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and

in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 2:38

³⁸Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We have to know who we are in order to live a victorious life. That is why it is so important to read the “I am” list on a daily basis from parts one and two of this study series. Knowing who we are in Christ by allowing our mind to be renewed through him and having His Holy Ghost living in us will make us strong in who we are. As Christians, it is important that we have our beliefs in order so we can be powerful through God. Once we are strong in who we are, we can live a life that is characterized by victory and God’s peace.

		Faith Appraisal:				
1. How successful am I?		1	2	3	4	5
I would be more successful if:	_____					
2. How significant am I?		1	2	3	4	5
I would be more significant if:	_____					
3. How fulfilled am I?		1	2	3	4	5
I would be more fulfilled if:	_____					
4. How satisfied am I?		1	2	3	4	5
I would be more satisfied if:	_____					
5. How happy am I?		1	2	3	4	5
I would be happier if:	_____					
6. How much fun am I having?		1	2	3	4	5
I would have more fun if:	_____					
7. How secure am I?		1	2	3	4	5
I would be more secure if:	_____					
8. How peaceful am I?		1	2	3	4	5
I would be more peaceful if:	_____					

Sometimes it is hard to accurately understand how our faith is doing. With our physical man, it is easy to look in the mirror and see how we are doing with our health. If we are slim, toned, and eating well every day, chances are we are doing pretty well. With our spiritual man, it is not always that easy though. Pastor Thomas gave us the tool of the Faith Appraisal above to help us start to assess what kind of shape our faith is in.

If the second part of each answer is based on something physical, it may be an indication that we are not doing too well in the faith department. What we believe we need in order to function to the best of our ability in all facets of our life says a lot about our belief system. And our belief and all of our faith should be in God.

When assessing our beliefs, it is important to reference two things in order to know that what we believe is right. First of all, we should rely on the Word of God. Secondly, we

need to assess the personal feedback we receive from God through the form of our goals and desires.

Pastor Thomas explained goals and desires in this way:

Goals are any specific direction that reflects God's purpose. It is a large, overarching direction that is sustaining, and cannot be impacted by any one person or group's feelings about it. Goals are set in stone.

Desires are something that depends on the cooperation of others in order to be accomplished. Desires are written in sand. They change and grow depending on circumstances that surround them.

To make this point a little bit clearer, Pastor Thomas told this story:

There was a business man who had worked hard all his life, and was finally about to take a cruise with his wife for some much needed time off. It was the Friday afternoon that he and his wife were set to depart for the airport to fly to the location their cruise was leaving from, but there were just a few last minute things that needed to be taken care of at the office. Reluctantly, the business man went in to get them wrapped up so he could enjoy his vacation with the comfort of knowing everything was tended to before he left and sent his wife ahead to the airport without him.

As he went about his tasks, he lost track of time and realized he was going to miss his flight. He was desperate to make it to that cruise! The man called a friend who had a friend who had a plane and called in every favor he could. Within the course of an hour, the man found himself on a small private plane leaving from a local airport. He arrived in his connecting city and then realized that he had no way to make it from the airport to the cruise pier. He called a taxi, and jumped in. Then, they were stuck in mid afternoon rush-hour traffic. He handed the driver a \$50 bill, and they found a back route on the side streets that got him to the pier just in time to depart for the cruise with his wife.

The goal was for that business man to get on the cruise no matter what. That did not change at any point in the story. It was what drove him to do all the things he did. But the desires changed according to the need at hand. Originally, the desire was to make it on the flight leaving with his wife, when that was no longer an option, the desire changed. At every point of the story, the goal was written in stone, but the desire was written in sand.

God has a desire for man. We can see through the whole Bible what this desire is.

Ezekiel 18:32

³²For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

I Peter 3:9

⁹Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

God also has goals. These do not change. There is nothing that any man, woman, or child can do that will change God's goals.

One of God's goals is to return to earth a second time.

John 14:3

³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

John 14:28

²⁸Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

His second goal is to reward us for all of our actions. We will account for everything we do while we're here on Earth and our rewards will be according to what we have done. In the second scripture in Corinthians below, we see that what kind of reward we will receive is based on our behavior. As followers of Christ, we can impact how many and what kinds of rewards we receive, but we cannot change the fact that God's goal is to give us rewards. It is part of His plan for all of us.

Romans 14:12

¹²So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

I Corinthians 3:11-15

¹¹For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

¹²Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

¹³Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

¹⁴If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

¹⁵If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

One of the steps to spiritual freedom is changing our desires and goals to line up with God's. This means that we need to adapt to God's calling and direction for our lives, not only for our overall purpose and life's goal, but in every step of every action we take. When someone gets baptized in Jesus' Name, it is a fresh start that redefines the goal of our life. Baptism is the first step toward lining our lives up with God's goal for our life.

Finding God's direction is a much more gradual process. Finding out what God wants us to do can be accomplished by turning to God in prayer daily, fellowship, and reading his words in the Bible.

Romans 5:3-5

³And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

⁴And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

⁵And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

James 1:2-4

²My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

³Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

⁴But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Trials allow God to direct us. It is easy for us to fall into the trap of thinking that we are only growing in God when things are going well and everything is easy. Pastor Thomas reminded us that this is not the case, actually the opposite is true. It is in the valleys of our lives that we grow closer to God because we are forced to rely on Him. When we listen intently to God's voice for direction through the hard times, we grow. In James, the writer says "the trying of your faith worketh patience...that ye may be perfect".

In the same way trials shape us and bring us closer to God, so does correction. The goal and catalyst for correction is love in the first place. If God didn't care about us at all, and had no desire to have a relationship with us, there would be no need for him to correct us and keep us in line. It is because God loves us that he reaches out to steer our path closer to him. To see this a little more clearly through scripture, Pastor Thomas brought us to

I Timothy 1:5

⁵Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

So why are we talking about correction and trials while trying to understand more about God's desires and goals? Because God wants us to have His goals and desires for our life. We don't get to choose our own goals and desires and still fulfill God's plan for us. It just isn't designed to work that way. As Christians, we have to be humble and go to God for direction on these things if we are going to succeed. Understanding God's goals and desires and making them our own is a challenging process, but when we get it right, our lives will be overrun with the fruits of the spirit. We all want a life that is characterized by love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. It's getting there that's the hard part, and it's hard because Satan does not want us to get this part of our Christian life right. That's why it's so important to be aware when Satan tries to impact our belief system and get us to rely on our own feelings or perceptions.

Eight Keys to Spiritual Significance

1. Godly Goals

The first thing a Christian has to do in order to be spiritually significant it to establish Godly goals. We can start to do this by understanding God's goals for us.

I Peter 1:3-10

³According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

⁴Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

⁵And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

⁶And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

⁷And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

⁸For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

¹⁰Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

The first thing to do to gain some Godly goals is to start with what God has done for us. He saved us! Our response to that should be to apply the characteristics listed in the scripture in II Peter. None of the things on that list have anything to do with our talents, intelligence, or gifts. They all are given by God to every man equally.

2. Significance-

The key to significance is time. The things that last and stand the test of time are significant. If we want to increase our significance, we must spend our time and focus on eternal things that will last longer than our lifetime here on earth.

I Corinthians 3:14

¹⁴If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

I Timothy 4:7-8

⁷But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

⁸For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

3. Fulfillment-

The key to fulfillment is discovering our role. This is the biblical principle of growing where we are planted. To be spiritually significant, Christians have to know how they fit into the body of Christ and embrace their part. Each of us are created to be unique and have a very special part in God's kingdom. If we use that uniqueness for God's purpose and influence, we can further the kingdom of God by doing what we are specially equipped to do. That's fulfillment!

I Peter 4:10

¹⁰As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

4. Satisfaction-

The key to satisfaction is quality. Think in terms of relationships in your life. One of the biggest factors in whether or not they are satisfying is the quality that is put in. If two people are in the same room all the time, they might have quantity time that is off the charts, but they don't have quality time. As Christians, we are tasked to be a light to the world, so we have to put in some quality if we are going to reflect Jesus Christ. We should be looking for some quality righteousness to make our lives more satisfying! What would our lives look like if we based every relationship reflect our hunger for righteousness?

Matthew 5:16

⁶Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

5. Happiness-

The key to happiness is wanting what we have. The Bible talks a lot about being content. This does not mean that we can never hope to improve our situation, but we should always be able to find peace with however much or little God has given us in the first place. The key to happiness will never be found in possessions, or having what we want.

God gives us everything we will ever need to find true happiness through his love, blessings, and salvation.

6. Fun-

The key to fun is uninhibited spontaneity. While it's not a commonly discussed topic in church, God gives us the ability to have FUN. Being in tune with God and his goals and desires for our lives allow us to free in Him. We no longer have to worry about what others might think of us, because we become completely aware of God's role in our life as father and as a judge. No one else matters!

Another freedom that can be found in God that allows us to have fun is the ability to worship Him without restraint. This fun is something that brings peace to the deepest part of who we are, and allows us to forget all our worries, stresses, and responsibilities and enjoy one on one time with God as our creator.

7. Security-

The key to security is relating to the eternal. Security cannot be found in this life or in the “things” it brings. We see in scripture that none of the things in this life will ever be able to separate us from God.

Romans 8: 35–39

35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36. As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How much more security could we ever have than the promise that God will always be closer to us than anything in this world and that he has designed us to be conquerors through him?

8. Peace-

The key to peace is to establish internal order. God gives us peace when He is the center of our life. We can control our mind, will, and emotion by relying on God and allowing him to hold us close during the challenges we face. We need to apply the principle of God’s peace to our lives every single day we live.

Romans 5:1

1. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Pastor Thomas closed by asking each of us to take a good look at ourselves in the spiritual mirror and examine our beliefs, goals, and desires. If we are striving to be true followers of Jesus, we have to line all of these things up with God. If we do, we will have true spiritual success and significance.