



## GETTING CLOSE TO GOD

Romans 12:2, Luke 15:11-24

- *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2)*
- **“The way we think determines the way we feel, and the way we feel determines the way we act”, so the key to transformation starts with our thoughts.**
- **In our TRANSFORMED Spiritual Growth Emphasis we’re applying the principle of Romans 12:2 to 7 key areas of our lives.**
- **Transformation is what changes us from “emptiness to fullness” and from “defeat to victory” in our lives.**
- **The further we get away from God the more trouble we experience, while the closer we get to God the more transformation we experience in our lives.**
- **Most people want to be “close to God,” yet find themselves far from Him.**
- *“All we like sheep have gone astray. We have each turned to our own way.” (Isaiah 53:6)*
- **The first step to experiencing transformation, vitality and victory in our lives is to “get close to the Lord.”**
- **The *Parable Of The Lost Son* helps us to understand how to “get close to God” (Luke 15:11-24).**

**Getting Close To God Requires:**

### **BECOMING FED UP WITH WHERE WE ARE IN LIFE**

- *“He wasted all his money in wild living . . . and he began to starve. . . . When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger!’” (Luke 15:14;17)*
- **Nothing of significance happens in our lives until we become dissatisfied with where we are.**
- **God will often allow adversity in our lives until we become dissatisfied and ready for change in our lives because He loves us and wants what’s best for our lives.**
- **God - “You’ll find Me when you get serious about finding Me and want it more than anything else.” (Jeremiah 29:13 Msg)**

**Getting Close To God Requires:**

## BEING WILLING TO OWN UP TO OUR SIN

- *“When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you.’”* (Luke 15:17-18)
- **We have to “own up” to the fact that we haven’t been living by God’s way and will for our lives before we will experience transformation in our lives.**
- *“Your sins have separated you from your God, and have hidden His face from you.”* (Isaiah 59:2)
- **If we feel distant from God right now in our lives, He’s not the one who moved.**
- **We move away from God because other desires, things and people become more important to us than Him - which is called “idolatry” in the Bible.**
- **We are as close to the Lord as we want to be.**
- *David - Have mercy on me, O God, because of Your unfailing love. Because of Your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against You, and You alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in Your sight. You will be proved right in what You say, and Your judgment against me is just.”* (Psalm 51:1-4)
- **When we pray to the Lord with a broken and repentant heart like David did, the Lord will forgive our sins and begin to free us from our struggles.**
- *“The Lord says, ‘No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow.’”* (Isaiah 1:18)
- *“If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9)
- **We need to make it habit to have a REGULAR SPIRITUAL CHECKUP**
  - *“Test yourself to make sure you’re solid in the faith. Don’t drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourself regular checkups. If you fail the test, do something about it.”* (2 Corinthians 13:5 Msg)
  - **We need to check on how we’re doing with: 1) Loving God (Mark 12:30), 2) Loving Other People (Mark 12:31), 3) Becoming More Like Jesus (Romans 8:28-29, Ephesians 4:13), 4) Serving God by Serving Others (Ephesians 2:10, 1 Peter 4:10), and 5) Fulfilling our Mission (Matthew 28:19-20).**
- **This week’s Memory Verse - “Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone. A new life has begun.”** (2 Corinthians 5:17)

### Getting Close To God Requires:

## BEING WILLING TO OFFER UP OURSELVES TO THE LORD

- The Lost Son - *“I will go home to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and You, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.’”* (Luke 15:18-19)
- **When we move from self-centeredness to God-centeredness we are on the pathway to experiencing real transformation.**
- *“We all . . . are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”* (2 Corinthians 3:18)

- **Transformation is a process that begins with offering ourselves to the Lord.**
- *“Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.”* (Romans 12:1-2)
- **When we “offer up” our lives to the Lord, our Heavenly Father responds with love, acceptance and forgiveness.**
- *“Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. . . . Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up in honor.”* (James 4:8-10)
- **We begin to experience the Lord’s transforming presence and power when we return to Him and draw close to Him.**
- *“So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’ But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet.’”* (Luke 15:20-22)
- **The “good life” that people perceive their living is nothing compared to the “best life” that our Heavenly Father provides for those who come to Him.**

### **Getting Close To God Requires:**

#### **BEING WILLING TO LIFT UP OUR PRAISE TO THE LORD**

- The Father - *“Kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.”* (Luke 15:23-24)
- **Life becomes a party when we begin to experience the Lord’s transformation in our lives.**
- *“Sing to God, sing praises to His name; life up a song to Him . . . His name is the Lord.”* (Psalm 68:4)
- *“Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will praise His holy name. Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things He does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle’s!”* (Psalm 103:1-5)
- *“I will sing to the Lord because He has been good to me.”* (Psalm 13:6)
- **It’s been scientifically proven that worshiping the Lord lengthens and improves one’s life.**