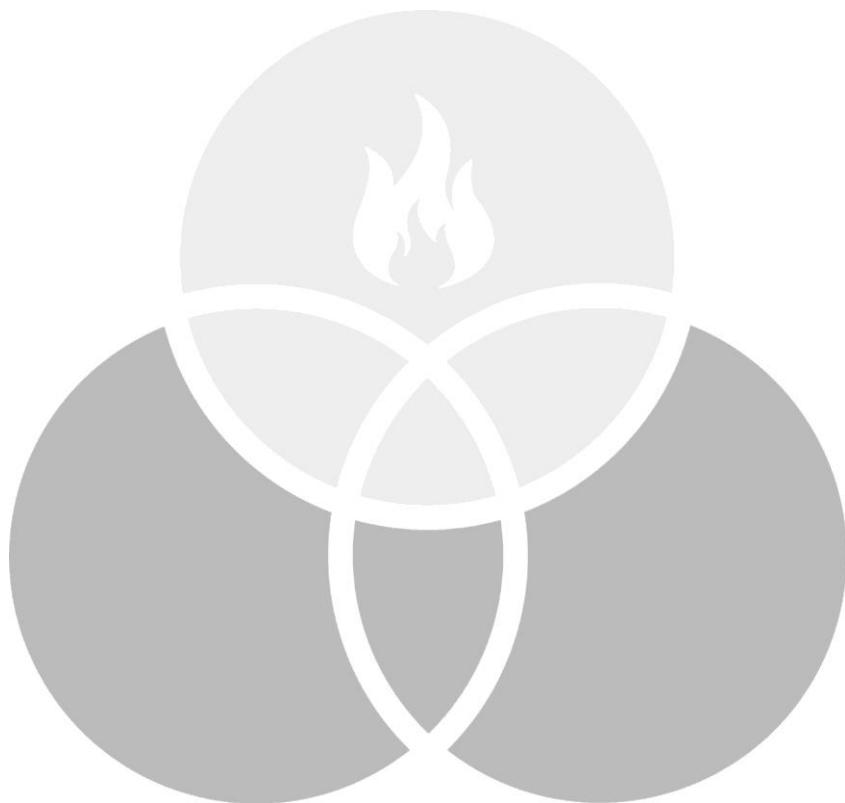


Spiritual Life

Application Guide



Dr. Dave Yarnes

Preeminence of the Spirit Circle

The preeminence of the Spirit circle can't be overstated. Within the 3 Circle Icon, we have positioned this circle on top and have used the image of the eternal flame as its symbol. At the center of the Spirit Circle is a foundational truth that you and I are more than flesh and blood. We are spiritual beings infused in a mortal body. For now, this infusion makes it impossible to fully dissect the natural from the spiritual until death, when the two will finally become distinct. This is not a call to religion as most would define it. For our purposes, this is much more personal and individualized.

Very few things are common across all audiences and all cultures. I believe there are three desires that are shared by everyone. We all have a need to be loved. We all want our lives to matter and count for something. We all possess an eternal component that longs to connect with God. Without this last spiritual connection, other pursuits become hollow and lack meaning.

Every person I have ever met wants their life to be significant and impactful. I have also observed, no matter how successful that person's life is or how vast their accomplishments are, without a meaningful spiritual connection, their life is somehow empty.

Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding

You did not evolve from meaningless, base elements of this earth—you were created. Your connection with your creator is foundational for a life of impact and meaning, a life of fulfillment and significance. The apostle Paul, a central character of the Bible's New Testament, prayed for a group of friends, and his prayer is forever recorded in canon scripture. His prayer from that ancient time still, to this day, concisely captures the preeminence of knowing and aligning our lives with the will of God. His prayer is found in Colossians 1:9-10: For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (NKJV).

There are several aspects in this short passage that are important and worth taking a moment to analyze. First, the Apostle Paul asks that his friends be “filled” with the knowledge of God’s will for their lives. This assumes that this knowledge is not automatic. Paul’s heart felt desire is that they become “filled,” suggesting that large degrees of knowledge and clarity are obtainable. He also continues to ask that this filling would come with Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding. He closes this section by saying that once they have and apply this understanding of God’s will, they will live life in a “worthy manner,” be pleasing to God, and be fruitful for every good work.

Intuitively, each of us senses that we possess eternal attributes. Whether this is defined as a soul or a spirit, universally there is a sense of an eternal component that connects us to God. I find it remarkable how few resources allow for spiritual alignment as a core part of life planning.

My doctoral work is concentrated around biblical studies. Although I don't presume to be an expert, much of my life has been devoted to biblical reading, research, and presentation. One simple concept I believe fits the entirety of my research more than any other—the grace of God. From the beginning of the Bible to the end, I believe that Grace is the overarching theme. Jesus Christ Himself, as He walked this earth, not only taught about the subject but modeled it in the flesh.

Grace of God

So what is this grace of God? Why is it important in developing a fulfilling life? It's more than just forgiveness; God gives His best without regard to our performance. Grace is the most important central idea in the Bible, Christianity, and all of Gods world. Grace is the love of God shown to the undeserving and ungrateful. Grace is His peace, blessing, and unmerited favor given freely to all who seek it. In grace, God gives nothing less than the entirety of Himself. The man Christ Jesus is the embodiment of Grace.

Throughout the ages, God's true nature was shrouded until He came, Himself, in the form of Jesus Christ to tell us the nature of our Father God. In the remarkable depiction of the prodigal son, Jesus Christ tells the story of a man who had two sons. One took his inheritance and consumed it on a debaucherous lifestyle. Once it was all spent he came back home to his father. Expecting to be chastised ridiculed and demoted to the point of a slave. Christ Jesus gives us an intimate depiction of the grace of God through the father's response to this wayward son. Consider this scene from the book of Luke, which I feel is one of the most remarkable depictions of God's Grace

And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry (Luke 15:20-24, NKJV).

While he was a long way off, the father went to him, lavished the best of his household on him, forgave him, and welcomed him back as a son and appointed him to the highest honor he could. This is a picture for all of us of the grace of God. None are beyond His reach.

This is also a profound understanding of God giving us His best when we have no ability to deserve it. The grace of God is neither earned nor deserved; it comes through the realization and personal application of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Simply believing in Christ, His sacrifice, and inviting Him to be master of my life atones for my Sin. There's no catechism to follow,

no rituals that I can perform, and no act of service that merits this. It is solely based on the grace of God. This grace further launches me into a life of meaning and purpose where I am connected with God in a way that is intimately beyond the realm of this physical world. His love and compassion, and the desire for my betterment, is beyond human compare.

As we talk about the Spirit Circle, keep this as the foremost thought: the loving, forgiving, restoring grace of God that is available to each one of us through the sacrifice, death, and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ. There is no other topic in psychology, human history, or personal development that remotely compares.

Most High and Most Nigh God

As a child, I remember in grade school being introduced to the reality that the universe is infinite. This was a big thought and a little overwhelming. Simultaneously, there was a deep internal realization that somehow I was connected to this infinite universe. I knew this intuitively. As one person put it, “there was eternity in my heart.”

Since that time as a small child, when I developed an understanding of God, I have learned the God of the universe is powerful, infinite, and vast beyond human comprehension. His nature is that of purity and Holiness, yet somehow, further, God has great love. He exudes intimate knowledge and care for His creation. Even though God has incomprehensible authority, God is deeply interested in the smallest affairs of my life. So how does spiritual life develop? Like all aspects of our life, we grow into it.

You don't have to be a devout religious person to grow and flourish spiritually. As I understand it, religion focusses on our outward response to God. This can take the form of regular attendance to a church service or a Mass or one of many great spiritual expressions of our personal worship and faith. These have an important place in our lives and our culture, but there is something much deeper than our outward expression. Beyond the corporate relationship with God, there is the more intimate and personal understanding of God's principles and direction for life, along with my acknowledgement, alignment, and response to God. You don't have to be overly educated in spiritual matters to have this personal connection to God. It begins by understanding universal spiritual truths that influence and shape ourselves and our world. Faith, gratitude, and reciprocity are just a few. Prayer, meditation, and contemplation are often our response to these spiritual truths.

Where is the starting point to this deeper spiritual alignment? It begins at the point of conversion. This is perhaps the most profound concept in all of human history. Spiritual scholars, priests, poets, and writers have devoted centuries to this understanding. The materials written concerning personal conversion fill libraries and universities around the world.

Conversion happens at a singular point in time. Many cannot recall the exact date or time, but there in fact was one. We are born with a spiritual nature. Our spiritual nature from the time we are

young, however, lacks one important event to allow spiritual transformation—an act of our will, the sovereign use of our volition to choose.

The point of spiritual conversion has different terminology in different cultures and varying expressions of faith and religion. Some may call this “finding God,” “conversion,” “Spiritual awakened,” “rebirth,” or “being born again.” I believe the reason there is varying terminology is that personal conversion is so profound that we lack human ability to fully describe it. The account of Jesus Christ in the gospel of John gives profound, simple clarity.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:1-3 NKJV).

The conversation between Jesus Christ and Nicodemus the Pharisee provides a clear picture of the necessity of conversion and how it differs from religious observance. Nicodemus was a highly educated lifetime practitioner of his religion. The life of a Pharisee was one of painstaking observance to religious edicts; from clothing and diet to constant study of spiritual material, he was an extremely devout man. Yet in this conversation, he struggles to grasp the simple truth, that in order to be truly spiritual, there has to be a point of conversion. In each individual life, our God has endowed us with free will. No matter what my outward religious observance is, I have to come to a point of true spiritual conversion that enables a new spiritual life.

The Beginning of my Spiritual Journey

For me, true spiritual conversion took place one night when I was about 18 years old. I had very little formative spiritual background. That one evening, almost 40 years ago, changed my life and my very existence forever. I was standing outside of a small local bar, talking with a man I had never met before. There was something so significantly different about him that I was drawn to his conversation. After getting to know each other for a minute or two, I told him that I saw something in him that I desperately wanted and needed. He said to me, “You may have tried meditation or other external observances of religion, but you’re missing something and it is more important than you’ll ever know— you must be born again.” He went on to explain to me in very simple terms the foundation of Christian faith.

I had lived my life up until that point apart from God. My life and the mistakes and sins I committed and my very nature caused me to be self-reliant and separate from a spiritual connection with God’s Spirit. Although I had never heard the words this man had spoken before, I knew them to be truth of the highest level. No one had to convince me I needed God to come in to my very being and turn on the light where there had been only darkness and emptiness. I knew that my

whole life needed to be transformed. It happened that evening. With a very simple prayer, I used my own will and volition and said something like this:

“God, I want you to rule over my being and my nature. I realize that I’ve been living a self-reliant life and that many of the actions and sins that I’ve committed have been displeasing to You and have been hurtful to others. Even though I don’t fully understand, I know that You provided a sacrifice and an entry point for me through the birth, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Forgive me. Please come and live in me now. I want to be a new creature.”

There are few points in my life that I can look back to with any comparison of the significance of that night. I went from being temporal and mortal to possessing the eternal life of God. I went from darkness to light. There were many habits and mindsets that needed to be changed, corrected, and abandoned over time, but there was never another day on this earth that I was the same being. I literally, from that point on, possessed the spiritual nature of God within me.

Your development of this area is transcendent, existing outside the material plane and so not limited by it. This part of life contains the seedbed of truth: hope, compassion, peace, joy, and inspiration. It helps us to differentiate between the temporal and things of eternal value. This area is developed as you connect with the divine qualities in yourself, God, and others.

Without the Spirit Circle, this book is just about human psychology and skill development. As important as these two components are, they cannot take us to our highest destiny on their own. We could miss the experience of true fulfilment that comes from a true spiritual connection and inspiration. Through spiritual enlightenment, we gain ultimate perspective and new awareness of the purpose for life.

How AA Fosters Change

Change is hard. Change without God is often impossible. Perhaps the most noted and most influential of institutions to understand the role of the Spirit Circle and its influence in creating powerful change is Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). I don’t believe there is another single institution, cathedral, or temple that can lay claim to the amount and depth of changed lives to the degree AA can.

Advanced alcoholism is a debilitating and cancerous condition that drastically affects not only the life of the individual but also all of their personal interactions. For centuries, the unbearable effects of alcoholism were thought to be incurable. However, in

1935 in Akron, Ohio, Bill W. (a New York stockbroker) and Dr. Bob S. (an Akron surgeon) achieved lasting sobriety. They had both been long-time, hopeless alcoholics, but they were

miraculously able to reach and maintain an alcohol-free lifestyle. Their highest goal became to help others along this path.

They established the steps and concepts that would eventually be developed into AA. As part of their process, there was no church to join or catechism to follow, not even the simplest definition of religious context. Instead, they emphasized the simplistic approach to acknowledging a personal connection to a higher power. I encourage you to adopt this approach as you develop this component of life.

Millions of lives have been transformed through AA, going from failure to fulfillment through their steps. The first three steps focus on spiritual truths and connections to universal spiritual principles; they are simple, easy to apply, and profoundly transformative:

1. I admit I am powerless over alcohol - that my life has become unmanageable.
2. I believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity.
3. I make the decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood Him.ⁱⁱ

The Common Story

As I interact with thousands each year who often share their story of personal transformation, I am amazed at how many state an identical narrative concerning the discovery of spiritual truths. Although the stories may have different characters and various conditions, they closely follow a similar plot line. It goes something like this “I was helpless, at the end of my rope; I felt I had reached rock bottom. At that time, I felt an irresistible force telling me there was a God. I cried out to God, even though I didn’t fully understand or believe, and my life radically changed forever.”

The areas of desperation change. Sometimes there is an addiction, sometimes there is a loss of family, other times its financial collapse, but whatever drives the individual to this desperation, the heart of change becomes the deep acknowledgement of the need for God. When all human effort has failed, there is the ultimate surrender and appeal to God.

When we come to a point of deepest despair and desperation, this condition creates clarity that strips away any desire for trite or superficial answers. Maybe your life is not ravaged by alcohol, but are there other areas beyond your ability to change? Is it your marriage? Another addiction or habit to which you are powerless? For many, it might be a sense of emptiness and lack of true meaning, direction, and purpose in life. Maybe deeper fulfillment, peace, and direction, have evaded you.

Innermost fulfillment, more than you have ever imagined, starts with the three simple steps, similar to AA. One, we admit that without spiritual help, we are powerless over certain aspects of our lives. Two, we believe that a power, a divine influence that is greater than ourselves can lead us to true, lasting, fulfilling lives. Three, we make a decision to align our lives with divinely-inspired truths we

discover through this humble acknowledgement. We begin to shape our lives cooperatively with a spiritual connection to God.

Let me say emphatically you do not have to reach rock bottom before this spiritual acknowledgement and transformation takes place. You can start today. Often, our pride and self-reliance keep us from this simple conclusion: you need God's help. It just seems, unfortunately, that it takes dramatic events before this becomes our conclusion.

Knowing Jesus is Lord of All

In a remarkable portion of the bible, Jesus turns to His disciples and asks them an interesting question: “What do people say about me? Who do they believe I am?”

During His time on earth, there was great controversy and contention over that very question—people were polarized on the answer. Some wanted to kill Him and thought He was a devil; others wanted to lay down everything they had to follow Him.

That same debate goes on today. From the time of His humble beginnings in a stable in Bethlehem, more and more people throughout history have been confronted with this question: “Who is Jesus?”

Who is Jesus?

As a young man growing up, I was not a regular church attender. Although I had a family that attended church, I did not have any real or meaningful understanding of the bible or historic truths about Jesus. My exposure to information about Jesus and His claims was very limited. So my perspective on the claims of Christ and the question of who Jesus is, were largely like a big question mark in the back of my mind.

I could understand His importance, just from a simple view of society. I saw so many churches and television programs and so many things written about Him—especially around the Christmas season. Growing up, I could see the impact that Jesus had on society, even thousands of years after His birth.

My view was that Jesus was very distant and unapproachable, and His nature and His teachings were somewhat mystical and obscure. There was definitely a sense of reverence for Jesus at that time in my life and an understanding of His deity, but it seemed to me that this was removed from my life and did not have any real bearings on how I lived on a day-to-day basis.

This may be your understanding, or perhaps you have had more or less exposure to biblical claims of Jesus’ life, His words and His teachings, and the historical truths surrounding Him. This may be the first time you have seriously pondered the question: Who is Jesus? And what are His claims and does it affect my life now?

You may have had little or no exposure to help from your worldview and response concerning this question. Or you might have been brought up in an environment in which church and bible reading was done on a daily basis. In any case, this question may still remain unanswered to you: Who is Jesus, really? How does this impact my life today?

Jesus in History

Perhaps no other question has been so sought after throughout all of history. Wars have been waged; empires have been conquered; churches, cities, and nations have been built and destroyed. Oftentimes, man’s understanding and misunderstanding of this question has shaped history.

First, we might be inclined to think, if there is so much discrepancy, and so many different types of churches and religious beliefs concerning Jesus, is there a singular truth about Him that is relevant to my life? I can assure you, there is. I can also assure you that, as you are reading this and thinking of this question, that I believe this is a divine moment. I am also certain that truth and clarity can come to you concerning this topic.

The reason of my certainty has more to do with God's desire to answer this question in your life than it is in my ability to expound and clarify. No figure in all of history has more credible historic information compiled concerning his life. From verified, authenticated sources, meticulous records and documents, and verified archeological finds, we know with certainty that Jesus came to the earth in the humblest of circumstances, and that His life was lived out in a relatively small geographic area in Palestine and that at the early age of 33 He was subject to one of the most brutal and vicious executions known to man.

It's amazing to think that in that short period of time on earth, with the majority of His public appearances being a few short years before His death, such worldwide impact that transcends generations could have taken place. What happened in that short period of time would shape history and eternity for all mankind. Although generations of scholars have analyzed the significance of every word and moment of his life, the most profound truth of it can be seen in a very simple way, by the most humble of all people seeking this truth.

John the Baptist—Messenger of Jesus

Jesus came to take away the sins of humanity. Remaining largely hidden through His childhood and early adult life, Jesus began His short-lived public time by meeting with his cousin, John the Baptist. John, through miraculous circumstances from the time of his birth, knew that he was to devote his time to telling the whole world about how something that would change all history was about to take place. John had a special relationship with God and spent most of his life in solitude. His closest followers, his disciples, were with him as he publicly confronted people about evil in their lives, and as he preached that there was an all-powerful God who was coming soon to call into account all of humanity. John spent most of his time giving bold and outspoken messages on the outskirts of town. He was never afraid to confront evil or hypocrisy. In some cases, he would call groups of hypocritical church goers 'snakes' and 'serpents'. He spoke about immorality in the highest places of government. This controversial, radical public ministry were ended by his execution. But early in his ministry, during one of his many public messages, John saw something take place that he had been waiting for, for a long time.

John had been given a message directly from God that he focused on his entire life. God had told him personally that He was going to send someone to save all mankind from their sin and from eternal judgement. He told John that this man would be unlike any other man—this man would be the divine embodiment of God, walking in human form. In fact, God spoke so specifically to John as to tell him that his entire life and life's work was to prepare and challenge people about the coming of this divine man who would save them from their sins for all eternity and show them in a plain and clear way the attributes of God. This man would show mankind how to live a life of close relationship to God and one that would continue past death into eternity. In one of the most miraculous scenes ever recorded, as John was fervently challenging a large crowd of onlookers in a remote area, he glanced up and the fulfillment of the words God spoke to him took place in that moment—Jesus walked from the crowd and John knew instantly who He was and His divine nature, because God had given him a specific sign so there would be no mistaking it.

God had spoken directly to John that he would know who this divine man was, who was to become the savior of all mankind and the fulfillment of all Jewish prophecy about the messiah, that God himself would open up heaven and send a supernatural sign of His power embodied in the form of a dove and it would light upon one single person that John had been waiting for, for so long. At that moment, as Jesus stepped from the crowd, to make His way towards John, this sign took place. Heaven opened up, God's holy power in the shape of a dove came to rest on Him, and an audible voice from heaven spoke that this man, Jesus, was God in living form and the one who would save the world for all eternity.

John's response, in this overwhelming moment, captures the first of the simplest truths about the nature of Jesus. Immediately John said, "behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

Jesus Takes Away the Sins of the World

All of us have done things that have been wrong, knowingly or unknowingly, sometimes mistakenly, sometimes things we should have done that we didn't do, or things that we did that we shouldn't have. All of us have felt our conscience speak to us in that moment, feelings of guilt and regret, but oftentimes something much more lasting, something inside us, letting us know that our words and actions were wrong and the understanding that there would be an ultimate reckoning of our actions. Jesus came so that, through Him, all of our sins could be removed and we could have relationship with God. This is the nature of Jesus, and starting a real relationship with Jesus is the first step in living a powerful and divine life.

Holiness and Sanctification

The very important topic of sanctification and its relation to holiness is not spoken of much. I have not found much material or many teachings that were both biblically based and gave practical insight.

Sin and Sins

I want to start by looking at the nature of sin and its affects. Throughout the scriptures, you'll find two uses of the word "sin". The first is generally used in the plural—"sins". These are acts that are displeasing to God. They can be counted and they are tangible. For instance, if you could follow someone around and you had the heart of God, you could count their sins during a day's activities. These would be the instances they acted in a way that was contrary to scriptures.

In 1 John 1:19 we are assured if we confess our "sins," He is faithful and just to forgive us our "sins" and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We see that God is working with us in His amazing love to continuously wash and cleanse us from the deeds we commit that are contrary to Him and hurtful to us—"sins".

The second issue is "sin" singular—this is a *power* that causes us to commit acts ("sins") that are contrary to God. When any person comes to Christ, in the initial stages, the Holy Spirit begins to reveal the holiness and the nature of God and conviction comes. It is primarily conviction concerned with the acts we have committed that separate us from God's love and holiness—"sins". When the plan of salvation is first explained to us and the Holy Spirit bears witness in our hearts, we understand that we need forgiveness for the things we have done. We understand that something is between us and the God who created and loves us—these sins.

The Cry of the Repentant Heart

The first cry of the repentant heart is "please forgive me and cleanse me from my sins." We are made aware of the acts that separated us from God. How does this connect with sanctification and holiness? All of us who have entered into this born again experience in which we are made partakers of God's heavenly nature have gained first-hand experience with understanding the atonement of the blood of Jesus. God made provision for the sins I have committed by shedding the eternal sacrifice of the blood of Jesus that works to cleanse me of the acts that I've done and the punishment that is due.

The problem continues, though, and I'm sure all of us have had this experience in one form or another—when just after being cleansed from the sins that were confessed, we continue to do them again. This is not just an act of weak will-power. There is something much deeper at hand. We confess our sins again, and God forgives us and cleanses us again. The cycle continues.

The first cry of the repentant heart is "Lord forgive me for my sins," but after this cycle of sinning, confessing, and repenting continues, the second cry in maturity starts to build up inside of me: "God deliver me from what I am, for I am in fact a sinner. I am a person who is a part of a race that has, at its very nature, the ability to do things that are contrary to You." That is the nature of sanctification and holiness. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from sins, but we need some remedy for the power of sin that works in us to produce these acts that are contrary to God. Think of the analogy of a tree and its fruit.

Sins are the fruit of the tree, but “sin” is the tree itself, it is the roots and nature of it that produces this fruit.

Sin Nature

First of all, let me say you are born into this sin nature. Unfortunately, whether we are from a good or bad family, no matter what our country of origin is, we are born into a race of sinners. When Adam committed the first act of rebellion, all of us came from that lineage. You don’t need to produce any sins to demonstrate this nature. In our nature, before we are born again and regenerated, we have the propensity to rebel. To various degrees and levels of depravity, some of us appear on the surface to be more moral and self-controlled than others. But rest assured this power is there. The essence of sanctification is the second cry of the repentant person, the first cry is “God forgive me for the sins I’ve committed” but the second cry is “God I continue to do them, deliver me from what I am.”

The blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin, but God has made another provision to deliver me from the power of sin itself—the cross. I’m not trying to make too fine of a distinction here, but this is a powerful context that is often misunderstood. The scriptures are clear that God took sin and nailed it to the cross and that I was crucified with Christ according to Galatians 2:20. I would encourage you at this point to pray before reading on, because this thought can be elusive, but if you pray and receive revelation I believe it can be completely life changing. Again, the blood of Jesus cleanses me from my sins, but God made provision for me—he saw the dilemma I’m going to live in. Without some remedy, I am in an internal dilemma of sinning, confessing, repenting, and completing the cycle over and over.

Cleansing from Sins

How then does this work? Let’s think about the cleansing of sins themselves—how did that take place? It took place when we realized that our sins had separated us from God and those sins needed payment. He knew them, foresaw them, and his blood provides complete and total payment for sins. So how was this applied to my life? I received it by faith the provision might have been there all along, but it does not become affectual until I confess with my mouth and believe in my heart that this salvation through the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus is for me. I make proclamation—I make a distinction between a principle that is global and universal, and I make it mine—a portion of my life through an act of faith. From that point on, I know that I am saved. I know that I’ve passed out of judgement.

To many of you that are reading this now, you’ll begin to bear witness with me that it was the case with you as well—that by faith you received forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus. So then, it is also with the power of sin itself. Somehow we believe that the sins we’ve committed need to be fully remitted through an act of faith, but the power of sin is somehow remedied by an act of works on our part. Let’s take a look at this in scripture. Galatians 2:20 says “"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Praise God—the deliverance from sin and the beginning of sanctification and holiness also comes as an **act of Faith**. God made provision—He saw the dilemma I was going to live in, and He made provision for the power of sin itself to be crucified. He looked across time and realized the state I would be in—a man whose individual sins are forgiven, but the power of sin living inside me would continue to make me a slave, producing more of the very thing I do by nature—sins themselves.

Dead to Sin Itself

This crucifixion is not in the future tense, it is a present state, as exemplified by Romans 6:11, “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” This is profound, that the scripture is inviting us to literally do the work to make understanding that our bodies are freed from the power of sin by an act of faith, believing that the crucifixion of Jesus included my personal crucifixion. I don’t have to make myself better, because God saw the dilemma and He wants us to consider ourselves delivered from the power of sin.

You might say right now I don’t see that deliverance at work—I see the opposite. I would ask, have you received it by faith? Have you made it yours personally? Just as in the act of salvation in which the universal and ever-cleansing blood of Jesus must be made personal through an act of faith and confession, so is this deliverance from sin and the beginning of sanctification itself. Sadly, many have missed this.

Having received this revelation, the scriptures begin to come alive—2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” The power of sin, its very nature, is not for me to withstand and to primarily provide my own internal strength. It is to realize that in God’s provision, I am a new creature. We used to lose the battle when the enemy would come to us and entice us to sin, and we would follow him and, after committing acts that are contrary to God and our conscience, we would ask for the blood of Jesus to cleanse us over and over and we would vow to withstand more ardently. But when we receive this new revelation by faith, we realize that our defense is to simply begin to live a new life so that we understand temptation’s power and its nature. When temptation comes, I simply say that the person that it is looking for is no longer alive. Truly I have been crucified with Christ. I don’t resist sin as an act of will, but I receive the will by an act of faith. I’m in fact a new creature that is incapable of joining in the pursuit of sin. I have a new nature.

This is a subtle difference, but the victory in it is profound, I assure you. In my personal life I’ve said something like, “devil, the person you are looking for would gladly follow you in any temptation. You know that’s his nature—unfortunately he is no longer here. He died. This is a new man.” Imagine trying to coax a dead person into committing some act of sin with you—try though you might, you could shake them or try to persuade them, but there is no ability for them to participate anymore. They are freed.

That is the beginning of the state of the understanding of my freedom and my deliverance. It is not to try harder with white-knuckle resistance, but it is a matter of just receiving this grace of God for deliverance and, by faith, living a life of sanctification and holiness.

ⁱ All historical information concerning Alcoholics Anonymous is from http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/historical-data-the-birth-of-aa-and-its-growth-in-the-uscanada

ⁱⁱ AA Steps modeled from information on www.recovery.org/topics/alcoholics-anonymous-12-step/