

The Prosperity Matrix: **Spiritual Life Application Guide**



*Discover What Matters Most,
and Set Your Course*

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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.