

## CHANGE AND HARD WORK

Opening Questions:

- Can we become better human beings if we don't change?
- Is it not true that the hardest things in life are often the most valuable experiences?
- Did Joshua say that following him would be easy?
- If I am unwilling to undergo difficult change or engage in hard work, can I be a successful follower of Joshua of Nazareth?
- Who is genuinely our model for change?

The heart of the solution has been given. Make Joshua of Nazareth, your Leader and live by truth and rightness for love. Making him your leader is not easy and will require a change in views, beliefs, perspectives, behavior, and lifestyle, contrary to the false “gospel” of Christianity. In fact, the “grace” Paulians will be especially offended by this chapter.

When people hear that Joshua wants people to change their lives to live according to his principles, they get offended. This is especially true of Christians and Bibilians because they have been taught and believe that “believing in christ” and “receiving God's grace” is all that is necessary to “go to heaven”. Most also believe that partaking in some religious rituals like “going to church”, or merely trying to be a “good person” according to the world's standards which means primarily abstaining from doing wrong, is what will “get them to heaven”. Unfortunately, they are only too happy with that false “gospel.”

Sadly, non-theist and agnostics seldom get this far, as they typically have thrown the baby (Joshua of Nazareth) out with the bathwater (Christianity) long ago and will not consider the fact that most of what they have heard and experienced regarding “jesus christ” from Christians is inaccurate or wrong. It is also much more difficult for a non-theist or a relativist to examine their own lives since they have no standard to do so except their conscience or some arbitrary and deficient standard.

Non-theists have to push past the false beliefs and fallacies of their circles – as well as having rejected the falsehoods of Christianity - and get back to the reasonable life questions such as:

- Is it reasonable that human beings – very complex organic machines with a spiritual component – just happened by natural forces?
- How is it possible to know right from wrong?
- If forgiveness, for example, is real and yet it is not physical, doesn't that mean a non-physical reality exists?
- Do I have a soul and if I do, what happens to me when my body dies?
- Do I get to choose my state/place/condition after I die?
- If I choose to live by love as defined by Joshua of Nazareth, why would that be bad, wrong or harmful – would the quality of my life be better or worse?

After they arrive at the place reason will lead them after answering those questions, the most critical question becomes, what is wrong with the Real Joshua of Nazareth's core teachings as revealed in the four gospels or this book? What is wrong with true love, sharing, caring about what is true and right? Doesn't everyone need a leader? Shouldn't people choose the best leader possible? On what objective basis should I believe that I am the best leader for my life? Doesn't fear, self-pride and selfishness pretty much make it impossible to be a best-type leader? Is there anyone who can love me more than my Father-Creator and His Son?

If those who hear Joshua's truths about love and life and get it to some extent but are not willing to do it, they use various ploys to avoid the truth or explain it away. For those who are offended, the end of the communication will often end with some statement like, “we are not willing to change our way of life—we have been living this way for these hundreds of years...” In other words, defending their “way of life” is a very high priority—so high, wars regularly start over that. Stated yet another way, not being willing to change due to selfish reasons *is* the way things are—that *is* the status quo of humanity and "the world" Joshua entered into, describes and rebukes.

Change is difficult, especially personal characteristic change. *Changing ourselves is one of the most challenging endeavors of life, and yet it is perhaps the most valuable and meaningful endeavor of life...without change we cannot become better human beings.*

Setting our goals high is what makes an opportunity for an exceptional life. Striving after those goals and accomplishing them – if they are genuinely noble - makes for an outstanding life—a life well lived.

Hard work is not something most people look forward to but is often a matter of perspective. Some people's physically hard and unenjoyable work is another person's comfortable and enjoyable work. Are we talking about effort regarding “hard work” or some other characteristic? I think for most people when they speak of “hard work” they are speaking about something *they don't want to do*. It could be easy physically or mentally, but if they don't like the work, it is considered "hard." So, really, “hard work” for most people equals work I don't want to do, or I don't like to do.

In this case, there is no way of getting around the hard work of self-change. The reason self-change is so tough is due to our self-pride and lack of humility.

Since many walk around in the delusion that they are the cat's meow (yeah, I know, old saying) or that they are God's gift to the world, they see no reason to change anything about themselves. The self-focused, narcissistic society of selfishness and self-esteem encourages this in those leaning towards humility and cements it for the arrogant. However, if you want to follow Joshua and BE part of the solution instead of part of the problem, you are going to have to change. For that matter, if we want to be a better human being, we are going to have to change.

The solution as stated in this book is straightforward to understand. Make the historical person of Joshua of Nazareth – the one who defeated death to prove all he said and did was true and right – your Leader. If and when you do that, the first thing he will ask of you is for you to change—to give up a life lived out of fear, self-pride, and selfishness—of taking from, taking advantage of, hurting and neglecting others—to give up living for or working for money and material things and instead start working for Joshua and the kingdom of God. We must be willing to sincerely look in the mirror without rose-colored glasses and honestly see. And then we must start practicing a life of love with others.

That dear reader will involve change—significant change and that change all starts with our seeing our guilt and shame and then having our spirit re-born from above.

Joshua answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” 5 Joshua answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water (*the natural birth marked by the breaking of the mother’s water*) and the Spirit (*the spiritual birth*) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, “You must be born from above.” (John 3)

Sadly and tragically, many Christians have been taught to believe they were “born again,” due to some ritual (usually baptism) they partook in as a child or adult or due to some merely emotional experience they had in the past. The truth is that being born from above will involve significant change, and it needs to happen after we are adults. No children need to be born from above, for their relative innocence keeps their spirit alive, and it keeps them open to considering truth. It is once we pass into adulthood that our spirit dies, we stop listening well to our conscience or justify our bad behavior and thus embrace the world, and we enter into the darkness of the walking dead.

Ultimately, the solution begins with *you*, dear reader. If *you* don't allow the Creator to take you out of the cage you are in individually, then you will always be part of the collective problem. If you refuse His invitation to bring you to a higher level of existence, then you will remain in the cage, and you will continue

to be part of the problem despite all your religion or protestations or denials to the contrary.

Here is what the Creator's Messenger said regarding getting out of the cage of self-pride and fear and selfishness.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word, and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24)

How does a person pass from death into life? Joshua was talking to living people when he made that statement, so he was not talking about physical life - please read the teaching in context to confirm this. He answers plainly. One passes from spiritual death (a person with a dead spirit) to spiritual life (one's spirit made alive) by *hearing **his** word - which is to listen to and receive what **he** (not "the Bible") says as true because the person hearing believes that God sent Joshua.* Being born from above is the only sure way to avoid condemning one's self through a life lived in bondage to self-pride, fear, and selfishness - and instead, entering into eternal Life!

The Light provides another view of the same event—the event of a person passing from death to life, in these sayings:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again (from above) he cannot see the kingdom of God—I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:3, 5)

These two sayings have the same thing in view—a human being passing from an existence with a dead spirit - a spirit that died at some point after childhood. To a reality with a living spirit, a reborn spirit—that is with the ability to know, commune with, and love our Creator and Father as Joshua reveals Him.

### The New Birth Analogy: Being Born Out of This World

Each human being must pass through a second birth experience if they wish to enter eternal Life. The first is the natural birth which all people experience and which birth is universally marked by the breaking of the water of the woman giving birth. The second is the spiritual birth where a person's dead spirit is made alive by the Father's Spirit—the living water to which Joshua refers. Joshua uses simple and universally known concepts and imagery to convey essential truths. In this case, he used the birth experience. A baby in her/his mother's womb is essentially asleep - completely unaware of life outside the womb. It is in a dark, virtually silent place, asleep, being fed and provided oxygen without any effort of his/hers own. It is in a state of existence that, while real and true, is very different than life outside the womb.

When the baby is born, he/she enters into a whole new realm of existence. Sound and sight and taste and smell are now actively used to understand his/her new domain. He/she must now choose to eat food and drink water to sustain the body. He/she now uses their spiritual components to navigate the new realm. The heart is used to make choices about what to think and how to behave. The soul is used to express emotions associated with thoughts and experiences and nudge us with our conscience. The mind is used to understand the new realm, both physical and metaphysical components of the new realm outside the womb.

The same is true of the new spiritual birth. A person moves from one realm of existence to another - from no faith at all or faith in the wrong thing(s) (in the womb or the world) to new faith or faith in the right Person (out of the womb or into the kingdom of God). Just like a baby in the womb, the person who has reached adulthood - but has not been born again or born from above - exists in a spiritual realm of darkness where the use of their heart, soul, and mind are dysfunctional or misguided. They live in spiritual darkness with the manifestations of hopelessness, despair, depression, anger, frustration, lovelessness, internal pain or suffering, lost-ness, confusion, etc. The person whose spirit has not been made alive by the new birth is ruled by a dark nature of self-pride and fear and selfishness—they exist to “better” and protect their lives in the world at all costs. They are spiritually asleep in the darkness just like the baby in the womb or a person in the world.

The person who has been born from above or gain, in contrast, have “come out” of the darkness of the “womb” / world and have entered into a new realm (the kingdom of God). They did what was required to be free from the cage of self-pride and fear and selfishness. They have left the darkness and have come into the Light. They now have a new understanding of life and now live to help others out of the darkness. They are not despairing or depressed or loveless or hopeless or lost or confused about essential life matters and life in this world. In short, they have had their spirit made alive due to their seeing their need to get out of the darkness, and have placed their faith in the Light of the world to remove them from the darkness of this world and its ways. They have become a new person with a different life perspective and purpose and a new understanding of how to live the new Life they have been given through their faith in Joshua and the Father HE reveals.

If a person has not experienced these things - if they are not born from above - then "they cannot enter the kingdom of God," or stated another way, they will condemn themselves and terminate their existence one day.

One experiences these things by first seeing their need to be made alive. In other words, a person must see or sense at some level that they are living a life of spiritual death:

- A life not knowing or caring about what is right or wrong, true or false;
- A life of ignoring their Father and His Messenger and Leader;

- A life of living by their self-pride, fear, and selfishness and all the wrong and hurtful things said and done as a result;
- A life of living for money or material things;
- A life of hopelessness regarding death.

Once a person sees that is *true of them*, they will sense great remorse over that wasted, empty, loveless, hurt-and-take-from-others life and turn to the Father to make them alive to a life of caring about what is true and right and living by love. A person deserving death being offered Life freely; from being guilty of ignoring the Life and hurting other people; will be most thankful for the forgiveness offered by the Father—they will be as a butterfly having changed from a caterpillar—they will be a new person! Not a perfect person for that will be striven for by hard work, but rather a new person—a new perspective, purpose, motivation, etc.

What are the primary manifestations of passing from death to life—from having one's spirit made alive by God's Spirit and thus entering into an existence of faith in one's heavenly Father and Joshua? The primary manifestations are a dramatic change in one's life perspective; a new found love for their heavenly Father as revealed by Joshua and a desire to know the One's who made me alive:

This is eternal life that they may know You, the only true God, and Joshua of Nazareth whom You have sent. (John 17:3)

How do you get to know God and Joshua His Son? Stated another way, how do you get to know the Creator of life on the earth and His Messenger? By reading Joshua's words - *not* anyone else's - as a child would, and believing what he says. How do you know you believe what he says? How do you know if you love him?

If you love me, you will do as I say. (John 14:15)

The primary manifestation of loving someone in authority over us is to be eager to do what they want.

### The Change: From Child to Adult and the Death and Rebirth of Our Spirit

As we saw back in chapter three, all people (except severely disabled people) are born with all three metaphysical components (heart, soul, and mind) and their spirit. Those components develop over time as we grow. Children are known for their innocence and their willingness to accept what is told to them as true. Innocence is defined as "freedom from guilt or sin through being unacquainted with evil," or, "not knowing what wrong is, accepting things at face value, and having an intuitive predisposition to do right, trusting people."

As children, we know that we exist due to something outside ourselves, even though we cannot understand that Source—we have an innate trust in that which created us, even if told that falsehood that our parent's created us. (The truth is, our parents just brought together the raw materials of sperm and egg and the Creator's miracle of genetics took over to create our bodies (the “hardware”) while the Creator Himself continues to be the Source of existence of our spiritual or metaphysical components (the “software”).

To use the other metaphor, as children, we exist outside of the cage of fear, self-pride, and selfishness even while we still are influenced by those weaknesses. In other words, if children have both light (truth based knowledge, a functioning mind, and a working conscience) and darkness (self-pride and fear and selfishness) – the light in children is greater than the darkness.

However, something happens as we human beings start reaching adulthood—as we enter into our teenage years. We transition from the innocence of childhood and its fundamental outlook and relational dynamic of trusting others; to the non-innocence of understanding what is wrong and wanting what is wrong to some degree, and to *not trusting others* because of the wrong-ness we experience with ourselves and the people we encounter or with whom we have relationships. This lack of trust extends to all beings, including the *One who designed and created us*. We impugn human characteristics or wrong attributes on the Creator and thus decide he is not worthy of our trust/faith; or that he will condemn us for our wrongs; or worse that He does not exist; or worst of all that HE is the reason for our faults and wrong-wanting. Religion plays the primary role in this wrong understanding of our Creator/Father.

When we leave innocence and a simple trust/faith in our Source, our spirit “dies” in a sense, or we become spiritually blind, deaf and dumb—we *fall into darkness*. We enter into this darkness when we turn away from simple faith/trust in our Creator to trusting only in ourselves or to a limited extent in others we deem worthy. We also leave reason as the primary way to understand the reality in which we find ourselves. This does not mean we don't use reason at all, instead, that we primarily use reason well only when we stay away from life's most essential "why" questions.

So, there we are, “walking dead” as teenagers. We have our hearts, souls, and minds, but our spirit dies as we walk away from innocence and *start living some version of, “everyone has to do it to survive in this world” or “everyone does it, therefore so will I” or “I need to do this to get what I want”*. We enter into the darkness of a life now *guided by fear, self-pride, and selfishness*. We walk into the cage of self-pride and fear and selfishness and close and lock the door. We put ourselves in a prison of our own making.

We live to preserve our life in this world, often at any cost as we value our body and partake of the delusion that our body *is* who we are. We reject faith in anything we cannot prove by physical means or validate with our senses. We reject sound reason and objective evaluation when it points to “places where we don't want to go.”

However, even in this self-inflicted state of darkness, our Creator provided a sign or manifestation of being in this state of soul/spirit, and that sign or indication is emptiness in our soul...at some level, we sense an incompleteness, longing or emptiness within ourselves. Our being able to detect this emptiness can range from shutting it down altogether and thus not sensing it at all; to only sensing it during specific experiences or thoughts; to obvious and even continuous pain. We have some level of understanding that we are missing something important.

Then, what is most common is people try very hard to fill that emptiness with something other than our Father and His love.

- Money
- Education
- Careers
- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Sex
- Another person (boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse)
- Vicarious “relationships” (e.g., Facebook, etc.)
- Thrill-seeking
- Entertainment, etc.

There are many ways that people seek to fill the emptiness they experience in their soul. But those ways *never* satisfy. Oh, we can hide the void for a time with these things, but it will always come back IF we are listening. Many people try very hard not to listen, and consumer electronics have made that quite easy. How many people are bound to their smartphone and are always looking to electronically delivered content to avoid quiet times of self-reflection?

Just like a lock can only be opened by the right key; like only the correct password can gain one access. The only Person that can fill the emptiness of our soul; that can bring our dead spirit back alive; is our loving Father the Son of Man reveals!

For this reason, the Creator sent His Life—to bring us, our spirits - back alive and to set us free from the cage we place ourselves in! For this reason, the Creator, our Father, sent his Light—to bring us out of the darkness. For this reason the Life and Light said this:

I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me will not remain in darkness. (John 12:46)

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born from above (or again) he cannot see the kingdom of God; I say to you, unless one is born both naturally and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:3, 5)



If you continue in my word (NOT "the Bible"), then you are truly disciples of mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free! If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed! (John 8)

This necessary experience/event that Joshua speaks of above is required to bring our dead spirit back to life; he does not want us to "remain in darkness"—he does not want us to remain bound in our prison. If a person has not been born from above, then they cannot see - nor enter - the kingdom of God. Sadly, when many people get a slight understanding of what the Light is saying here, they will immediately claim they have been "born again" even when they have not. These are the religious crowd of some particular sects.

How can a person know if they have been born from above? That is like asking a man who has been in prison and tortured for years if he knew when his rescuer got him out of that prison! You will know! That is like asking a woman blind from birth when her eyes are healed, and she opens them and sees a most beautiful sunset if she knew when her eyes were opened! She will know!

Many will claim that they love the Lord our God with all our hearts, soul, mind and strength, but claiming something does not necessarily make it true. We can only love a Person if we truly believe they exist; and in respect to Joshua and our Father, if we have genuinely transferred our faith/trust/confidence to those Persons and thus gotten to know them. We also cannot place our faith in something or someone who frightens us. Religion makes our Father frightening.

How can a person know if they have indeed been born from above? How can a person know if they genuinely love their heavenly Father with all that is in them? That is like asking a child who loves her parents - and those parents are taken away when she is ten years old - if she will know when she is reunited with them six months later! You will know!

How can a person know they have indeed been born from above? That is like asking a genuinely remorseful prisoner who is heading for the electric chair if they will remember when the prison warden came and stopped the execution to tell him he was pardoned due to the victims believing he was genuinely remorseful and that a pardon is granted.

Here are some objective signs of that new birth or of entering the kingdom of God or eternal life:

- If we have changed significantly from a person who was primarily guided by self-pride and fear and selfishness, to a person who lives and fights for what is true, for what is right, and who desires to love Joshua, our Father and others above all things;
- If we now think about and want to talk about our Father and Joshua, our new first loves, most of the time;
- If we see our sin and our wrongness and are moved to change;

- If we hate the wrong in this world and will do what is required to bring change, no matter what;
- If we are truly willing to lay down our lives (physically die) out of love for our friends;
- If we don't live for money and material security and entertainment and pleasure and for those from whom we get something back, and the other things the people of the world live for;

*Now would be a perfect time for self-reflection from the reader.*

This change is a requirement to set a new destiny for ourselves. The kingdom of God is all about internal change first and then followed by external manifestations of that internal change. This chapter provided what is required for the inward or inner transformation. The following chapters will make clear the life changes or external changes that will occur if we have entered Eternal Life.

Chapter Summary:

- Allowing ourselves to be changed, and then working to improve ourselves is required if we are going to live an exceptional life and be an exceptional human being. While personal change is difficult, it is also the most rewarding experience we can have in this life;
- Hard work is part of following Joshua. The easy way that Christianity presents is a false, empty, bankrupt and shallow substitute to the real life of caring about what is true and right, seeking to live out love, and thus being a real change agent in this world;
- If we will not change ourselves nor be willing to work hard, then we will never be in a place to change others or have a significant beneficial impact on others—we don't want to be a disciple/disciplined;
- The most critical internal change that can occur in a human being is to have our spirit made alive and thus move from death/darkness into Life/light and begin our journey through faith in our new found Father and Master;
- The most important external change for a human being is committing to change ourselves to be more like The Light of the world—to behave and live differently as he instructs.