

"Think On These Things"

33

From Glory to Glory



Character development is said to be the most important work ever entrusted to human beings. During the next hour, we will explore both our privilege and our responsibility to become Christ-like in character. Join us now for this powerful time of personal renewal as Pastor Stephen Wallace takes us "From Glory to Glory."

Good morning, brothers and sisters. {Good Morning} Happy Sabbath to you. {Happy Sabbath} So good to have you here. It's a privilege to study God's Word in God's house on God's day. Amen? {Amen} But if this is going to be a blessing, we must have, first and foremost, God's Spirit. **Spiritual things are only spiritually discerned.** {1 Cor 2:13-14} I've said it several times before, but I must say it again. God forgive us for our all too human tendency to be self-sufficient when it comes to studying His Word. We are studying His Word today, but we are not just studying any topic, we are studying **the most important work ever entrusted to human beings**; and what is that? **Character building** {Ed 225.3}, character building, how to **be changed from glory to glory** {2 Cor 3:18}; and since **the Biblical term for character is glory** {Ex 33:18-34:7}, that's really saying how to grow from one character stage of development to another is the topic of this seminar.

It is a very spiritual topic because character has to do with the mind. Indeed, **the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character.** {ST 310.1} "**As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.**" {Prov 23:7} We must be "**transformed by the renewing of our minds.**" {Rom 12:2} When you're talking about what goes on in the mind, you're talking about spiritual things, and it is not easy for us to understand these things. In fact, it is impossible for us to understand these things without the help of the Holy Spirit. Impossible.

My dear friends, I want with my whole heart for us, as a result of our study today, to clearly understand the truth, more clearly perhaps than we've understood it ever before. But I want us to do more than just more clearly understand the truth. I want us to more fully experience **the sanctifying, liberating power of the truth** in our personal lives. Are you with my on that? Is that your desire? {Amen} I pray that it is... I pray that it is. Jesus said, "**You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.**" {Jn 8:32} Jesus also prayed, "**Sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy Word is truth.**" {Jn 17:17} **There's liberating, sanctifying power in the truth.** But we cannot experience that except by the Spirit of Truth. So as has been our practice, we need to begin our study, before we open the Bible, we need to open our hearts and invite God's Spirit to come in. Are you prepared to do that with me again this morning? I would invite you to kneel with me for a few moments of silent prayer. I want to give you time to personally invite God's Spirit into your heart and then I will pray in our behalf corporately.

My Father in heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ I come into Your presence this morning, first of all to give You thanks for the privilege of coming here on this Your day, to this Your place, to worship You in spirit and in truth. But Father, if we're going to be able to do that, we must have the Spirit of Truth here, not only in our midst as a congregation, but in each one of our hearts. So to that end, Father, we open the door of our heart and we say, "Come in." Fill this body-temple with Your presence. Quicken and energize our mental and spiritual faculties. Enable us, I pray, not only to grasp the truth with the intellect, but most importantly to embrace it with the affections and submit to it with the will, that we might not only come to understand the truth, but we might come to stand under the truth, to yield to it, to let it have its sanctifying, liberating way in our lives. Please, Lord, we want this

to be more than an intellectual exercise. We want this to be a life-changing experience. So by the Spirit of Truth, make that happen, I pray. Work a miracle and use this poor earthen vessel. Through it, for the sake of Christ, and for the edification of His bride, pour out the blessing of truth. Please, Lord, remove anything that would obstruct the flow, and cleanse anything that would taint or defile it. Make me an empty and clean vessel that You can fill with the pure, refreshing water of life, and let it flow through. And please, Father, grant this prayer, for I ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

I'd like you to turn to page 71 in your study guide, the printout. I realize that there are several of you who've just come on board who don't have a handout, and I'm sorry. But of course you could have had you been with us. If you come back this afternoon, maybe we can spare you one. We have been looking at the importance of mental dietary, and it's direct and dramatic effect on the character that we develop. There is a truism that you have heard, *"We are what we eat."* That's usually used in reference to physical dietary, and it's certainly true there. But it's especially true as applied to mental dietary, what we feed the mind. *"We are what we eat,"* my friends. What we feed the mind through the senses directly shapes and fashions the way we think.

See the mind, again, is a marvelous computer and it is programmed through our senses, the eyes and the ears especially, but all of our senses are involved. All of the senses are involved. Now, because of the direct and dramatic effect of mental dietary upon the character that we develop, it is imperative that we be very selective regarding what we feed the mind. Amen? Very selective. We need to make sure that we don't feed the mind carnal food. There's a whole lot of junk, carnal food available. But my friends, we have got to determine, for the love of Christ, to starve the old man and feed him nothing. That is imperative. But at the same time, we need to determine to feed the new man conscientiously, consistently, deliberately, faithfully. Starve the one, feed the other. That's the only way we're going to be able to keep the flesh nature from regaining the ascendancy and keep the spiritual nature reigning and Christ through it in control of our lives. So important.

Our last study this morning was entitled, **"Looking Unto Jesus."** {Heb 12:2} That is our motto, indeed our mandate, and for the love of Christ, that must become our magnificent obsession. I want to hear an "amen" there: That must become our magnificent obsession. {Amen} If we are going to gain consistent victory over temptation and experience continual growth into Christ-likeness of character. We noted this morning how that is imperative if we are going to gain consistent victory over temptation. Why? **"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,"** {1 Jn 5:4} and all that is in the world; and what is in the world? **The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,** {1 Jn 2:16} and those are the three categories of temptation. Every temptation you and I experience comes under one of those three headings. So if we are going to overcome these temptations, it is only by faith.

How do we get faith? **"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."** {Heb 12:2} As we look to Him, He initiates that faith, and as we keep looking to Him, He strengthens and matures and perfects it. We can, by faith, **walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh.** {Gal 5:16} We can walk on water. Amen? {Amen} Peter, what a profound and insightful story that is. {Mat 14:25-31} How could he walk on the surface of the Sea of Galilee? Only by keeping his eyes on Jesus. The moment he took his eyes off Jesus, what happened? What happened? Gravity took over and down he went. What is the equivalent of gravity in our own Christian experience? It is our **natural bent towards evil.** {Ed 29.1} The only way, my dear friends, you and I are going to be able to walk above the seething cesspool of carnal thoughts and feelings, is to keep our mind's eye riveted on Jesus Christ. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} You take your mind's eye off of Christ, and I promise you, *"gravity"* will take over and you will sink and it is scary how fast and deep you can sink. Just ask David... When he took his mind's eye off of Jesus and **got it on Bathsheba.** {2 Sam 11:2} Scary how fast you can sink. That was the topic of this morning's study.

I'm sorry you missed that if you weren't here. That was an important study, but we have another important study right now. We must recognize how it is absolutely imperative to keep the mind's eye riveted on Jesus if we are going to experience continual growth into Christ-likeness of character. If we're going to experience what? Continual growth into Christ-likeness of character. Not only is it essential to be **looking unto Jesus** to experience consistent victory, but it is essential to keep **looking to Jesus** to experience continual growth. Are you with me? {Amen}

Now, that verb **"looking"** again, for the sake of those of you who weren't here. The Greek is very interesting; it is made up of two words. **"Apo"** which is a prefix, which means **"from,"** and **"horao"** which means **"to stare."** You put those two together and you have: **turning your mind away from everything else and getting it riveted on Jesus.** That's literally what that Greek verb means. Please notice if you are going to fix your mind's eye on Jesus, you've got to turn away from everything else. Of course the devil knows that and so he is very, very interested in diverting our mind's eye from Christ. Because he knows that if he can keep us from focusing, fixing our mind on Christ, we will inevitably sink... and drown in the cesspool of our own carnal thoughts and feelings.

My dear friends, it takes diligent, persevering effort, enabled by divine grace, to discipline the mind's eye and to keep it focused on Christ. We are not to change ourselves; we can't change ourselves. Only the Holy Spirit can change us. But we must cooperate with the Holy Spirit by **looking unto Jesus.** Amen? {Amen} It's only in beholding Him that we can be changed **"from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord."** {2 Cor 3:18} I'm not exhorting you to change yourself, but I am exhorting you to keep your mind's eye on Jesus so that His Spirit can change you into the likeness of what you're beholding. Does that make sense? Do you understand that? Absolutely crucial not only, again, to gain consistent victory, but to experience continual growth.

My friends, the exciting thing about it is that that which at first may well be a duty... Okay, I'll acknowledge that; at first it may well be a duty that we just have to diligently strive to accomplish to keep our mind's eye off of the things of the world and onto Jesus. I promise you though, the more you behold Christ, the more you see His beauty, His love, the less and less you will think of it as a duty and the more and more it will become a delight. Please know that and take courage! This mental, spiritual discipline may be, at the onset, a tough go, but if you hang in there, you will find that **Jesus will draw the mind like a magnet.** {2MCP 595.2} Remember that phrase we read this morning. He will draw the mind like a what? Like a magnet. There is tremendous drawing power in the love of Jesus Christ. His loving-kindness draws us, remember that? **Jeremiah 31:3, "Yes I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you."** His love attracts us; it's incredibly attractive, the love of Jesus. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen}

And that love is ultimately revealed in **"Christ and Him crucified."** {1 Cor 2:2} That's why Jesus says, **"I, if I be lifted up, will,"** what? **"...will draw all unto Me,"** {Jn 12:32} and this is why, by the way, Paul the Apostle says, the master preacher of the gospel, says what? **"I am determined to know nothing among you save Christ and Him crucified."** {1 Cor 2:2} Because therein is the power of the drawing love of God revealed, Christ and Him crucified. No wonder John the Baptist, the most powerful of prophets, what was the essence of his message? **"Behold the Lamb of God."** {Jn 1:29} **Behold the Lamb, the Lamb slain** {Rev 13:8}; that's what attracts our minds. My dear friends, the more we behold Him, the more attractive He becomes, until He becomes our magnificent obsession. And **looking unto Jesus** is no longer a duty, it is our greatest delight. That's when the Christian experience really gets positive, and really gets powerful! It's when we take our eyes away from everything else and keep them constantly and exclusively on Jesus Christ.

I've got to share this statement because - I shared it once before - but it is so relevant here, bottom of page 71. **Review and Herald, May 30, 1882: "To be living Christians."** To be what? **"Living Christians."** Which would imply that there are dead Christians. Are you with me? In fact,

there's a whole lot of those. But I want to be a living Christian. Are you with me? {Amen} Okay, here's the secret: **"To be living Christians, we must have a vital connection with Christ. The true believer can say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' {Job 19:25} This intimate communion with our Saviour will take away the desire for earthly and sensual gratifications. {Amen} All our powers of body, soul, and spirit should be devoted to God. When the affections are sanctified, our obligations to God are made primary, everything else secondary."** Jesus truly becomes, my dear friends, our magnificent obsession.

The more we behold His love, the more we become enamored with Him, and we say with the bride in **Song of Solomon 5:10 and 16, "My Beloved is... Chief among ten thousand. Yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend,"** the very best friend I have; this is the One I love with my whole heart. My dear friends, when you have that kind of experience, you will realize that Jesus draws your thoughts and your feelings like the magnet, and you will have supernatural power on a moment-by-moment basis to **"bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."** {2 Cor 10:5} Though the old man will still be tugging at you, the pull will not be nearly as noticeable because your mind will be obsessed with Jesus. That's the secret. That's the secret.

Now, how do we develop such a relationship with Jesus? You can't have this kind of obsession with the loveliness of Jesus until you get acquainted with the loveliness of Jesus. Amen? You've got to understand how lovely He truly is if that loveliness is going to be the number one attracting influence on your mind and heart. This is why Paul says, again, in **Philippians 4:8**, the verse from which we take the title of today's study. **"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate"** - or King James, **"think"** - **"on these things."** You see, that's where we've got to turn our mind. We've got to turn our mind onto the virtues that constitute the character of Jesus Christ, and that's what those things are. They're all ultimately revealed in Jesus Christ. It's as we behold that, and only as we behold that, that the Holy Spirit can change us into the likeness of what we're beholding, and make us true and noble and just and pure and lovely, and of good report and virtuous and praiseworthy. In beholding you are what? ...changed, changed into the likeness of what you behold.

Great Controversy, page 555; note this. We have established this before, but I want to re-establish it in this context. **Great Controversy, page 555: "It is a law,"** It is a, what, class? {law} **"It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed."** But notice how the change takes place, next sentence: **"The mind gradually,"** the mind what? **"...gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell."**

Now, work with me on that statement. First of all, **"It is a law..."** What does that mean? What law is that? {Pastor drops the pen.} That's called the law of gravity. Tell me, is a law a respecter of persons? I really don't think this pen should drop when I let go of it, after all, I am an ordained minister of the gospel... {Pastor dropped the pen.} It doesn't make any difference, does it? What about personal belief? I refuse to believe that this pen is going to drop. I just know it won't because I don't believe it will drop. {Pastor dropped the pen.} It doesn't make any difference, does it? What about personal preference? You know, I would really like this pen not to drop this time when I let go of it. I really don't want... it to drop. {Pastor dropped the pen.} What am I illustrating? I'm illustrating the simple, but profound, truth that law is inexorable. Hear me: it works whether you like it or not, whether you believe it or not, no matter who you are. It is the way it is. Are you all with me? We are talking here about a law. What is this law? It is just as sure, just as inexorable as the law of gravity. What is it? In beholding we are, what? ...changed. Changed into the likeness of what we behold. My dear friends, there's no escaping this. You become like what you behold. Are we all together?

Don't fool yourself on this one, and it is easy to do so. Why? Because the change is not radical, it's not rapid, it's what? It's gradual. **"The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell."** And precisely because the adaptation, the change, is gradual, so many of us have ourselves fooled into thinking we are not being adversely affected by beholding that which is unchrist-like, but I'm here to tell you, you are. By law, you are being adversely affected. Don't fool yourself on this. Please don't fool yourself on this! You need to ask yourself every time you make a choice as to what you are going to feed your mind, through your senses, you need to ask yourself, *"Do I really want to become like what I'm going to behold?"* Because by law, that's what's happening. Are you with me on this? By law, that's what's happening. You are becoming like what you behold. Therefore it's crucial to carefully choose what you behold. It's making you the person you actually are. Not the person you appear to be - that's a whole different story. Come on now, you know that. We can put on a pretty good show and fool people into thinking we're something we're not; but what we really are goes on up here between the right and the left ear, **"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he;" {Prov 23:7}** and what makes us what we really are is what we behold. So this is precisely why, if we are going to be Christ-like in character, if we are going to be **transformed by the renewing of our minds {Rom 12:2}**, we have got to keep the mind's eye focused constantly on Jesus Christ. Constantly.

Review and Herald, May 30, 1882: "To have a steady and ever-growing love for God..." Pause. Do you want that? ... I need to hear a little more enthusiastic "amen." I'll give you a second chance. **"To have a steady, ever-growing love for God,"** do you want that? {Amen} Good; if you really want it, you will heed what follows because it's the only way you're going to get it. **"To have a steady and ever-growing love for God, and a clear perception of His character and attributes, we must keep the eye of faith fixed constantly on Him..."** **"We must,"** what? **"...keep the eye of faith fixed constantly on Him."** **"God must be ever in our thoughts."** **"Constantly,"** **"ever,"** do you get the message here? If we want to have a continual growth experience into Christ-likeness of character, we have to continually behold Jesus Christ. It's only in beholding that we can be changed. Does that make sense? Constantly, fixed constantly on Him - the eye of faith. Remember that verb in **Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus"**? That's in the present active tense; that means on-going continuous action. Continually looking, taking our eyes away from everything else, and fixing them on Jesus. That's what we're talking about here. God must be ever in our thoughts. That's the only way, my dear friends, that we can be **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. {2 Cor 10:5}** It's by keeping Him the theme of our thought-life. Is this coming clear?

Now some of you might be saying at this point, *"Come on, man, let's get real. Surely you're not telling us that we must always have our mind's eye on Christ, are you?"* Well, first of all, let me assure you that I am simply sharing with you what the LORD is saying. Okay? I mean I am not making this stuff up. I am speaking from what inspiration has to say. He is the One that is telling us that if we want consistent victory and continual growth, we must keep our mind's eye fixed, how much of the time? Constantly on Him. Okay? But how is that possible? Is it possible? Oh, yes it is. **"All His biddings are enablings."** {COL 333.1} But some of you might be saying, *"Get real, I'm not some monk living in the 17th century in a monastery with nothing to do but pray and study the Bible and discuss theology with the brethren. You know, I live in the 21st century. I've got all sorts of nitty-gritty mundane things that demand my attention. Come on, you can't really be serious about having Christ continually in your thoughts, can you?"* Yes, you can. How, though? How? Work with me on this. Bless your hearts, work with me on this.

This is a spiritual discipline that most of us have absolutely no acquaintance with. I mean, we're clueless regarding this kind of spiritual discipline, and that's precisely why we're so Laodicean. That's precisely why we're so lukewarm. Please, what is it that we need to understand that we might be able to keep the mind's eye constantly on Jesus? First of all, recognize with me that God has given us the capacity to think about more than one thing at a time. Hasn't He?

You'd be surprised how many things that I think about as I'm up here. I'm looking at your faces; I'm reading them constantly, and I'm thinking, *"I wish he would wake up."* Or, *"Oh, I wish she would stop talking and listen,"* not to me, but to what the Lord might want to say through me to her. All sorts of interesting thoughts go on. Besides I'm looking at the clock and I'm, I'm under pressure because it's ticking. I'm thinking about my team here with the cameras, etc. And when the lights went out, I was really worried about the lights. All sorts of stuff going on in my mind, hopefully while I'm thinking about what I'm saying to you at the same time - hopefully. The Lord has given us the capacity to think about more than one thing at a time, hasn't He? In other words, my dear friends, we have what's called peripheral vision even in the mind's eye.

Work with me. My physical eye, ok? ...is looking at my brother back here with the camera, Jeff... become a dear friend. I'm looking right at Jeff. OK? But while I'm looking at Jeff, I see Pastor Hartman up here. I see the Academy kids over here. I see the lights up here. I see these front pews. I see my notebook right down there. What is that called? That's called peripheral vision. My eye is focused on Jeff, but I still see lots of other things.

So it is with the mind's eye. Our thoughts are required to focus on specific things, and they may not always be directly spiritual in nature. Are you with me? But that doesn't mean we have to lose sight of Jesus in the process. {Amen} Why? Because if we develop the capacity to do so, we can keep Him at least in our peripheral vision. Does that make sense to you? We can keep Him at least in our peripheral vision, and that, my dear friends, is a very precious discipline to develop. Sure, your mind's eye is going to be directed to things that aren't directly and specifically spiritual. But that doesn't mean you have to lose sight of Jesus. It doesn't mean that you have to lose sight of Jesus.

Now, how can we develop an abiding awareness of Jesus' presence, even in our peripheral vision, if only there? How can we develop this? I want to recommend to you training yourself to be continually aware that Christ is with you. He is what? He is with you. Please, work with me on this. David says, **Psalm 16:8, "I have set the LORD,"** what? **"...always before me."** What does Jesus say? **Matthew 28:20, "I am with you,"** what? **"...always, even to the end of the age."** Now, you see the only way, my dear friends, that we can set the Lord always before us, is to train ourselves to be aware continually that He is always with us. Does that make sense to you? So what we need to do is train ourselves to begin every day by asking God, in the person of His Spirit, to come into our hearts and to spend that day with us. Then as we proceed to go through the day, let's not forget that **He is with us always.** Didn't He promise to do that? Yes. So what we need to do is cultivate an awareness of His abiding presence. Are you understanding what I'm trying to explain here? I need a little feedback. Don't just give me that TV stare. Okay? I need to know that you understand what I'm trying to communicate here.

Let me share what inspiration has to say on this. Education, page 255, the book **Education, page 255,** listen: **"As a shield from temptation and an inspiration to purity and truth, no other influence can equal the sense of God's presence."** Wow! This isn't just one positive help, this is the number ONE blessing. I'll read it again. **"As a shield from temptation and an inspiration to purity and truth, no other influence can equal,"** what? **"...the sense of God's presence."** By the way, in the immediate context of this statement - look it up and read it. Education, page 255, she is speaking of Joseph and how he handled the seductive advance of Potiphar's wife. What did he say? **How could I do this and sin against God? {Gen 39:9}** You see, what was a shield against temptation for him? It was an awareness that he was in the presence of who? God. God, his best Friend, was there watching him. **How could he possibly do such a thing in the presence of God?** You see, my dear friends, we wouldn't think of doing something inappropriate if we were in the presence of someone we really loved and respected, would we? We do inappropriate things in secret, with the drapes drawn and the doors closed, so no one will see. But my dear friends, can you ever draw the drapes and close the doors so God doesn't see? No, He sees absolutely everything. Not only everything that you do in the realm of

behavior, but He sees everything you do in the realm of your thoughts. **He doesn't see as man sees, man looks at the outward appearance, but He looks where? At the heart, {1 Sam 16:7}** and when you are aware that He is there and you love and respect Him and you want to please Him, that's going to be a tremendous motivation, a tremendous incentive not to disappoint Him and disobey Him even between the right and the left ear. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} As you continue to be aware of His abiding presence, you are not only empowered to overcome temptation, but you are beholding who? Him, and in beholding you are what? ...changed. That's why we read, **"As a shield from temptation and an inspiration to purity and truth, no other influence can equal the sense of God's presence."** Do you see what a tremendous asset and advantage this is to us if we cultivate this awareness of Christ's abiding presence? Please understand that.

Review and Herald, March 15, 1906: "Sanctification means habitual communion with," who? **"...with God."** **"Sanctification means,"** what? **"...habitual communion with God."** Habitual, what does habitual mean? Ongoing all the time, yes. How is that the case? **John 17:17, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is,"** what? **"...truth."** How do we habitually commune with God, then, that we might experience sanctification. It is by the study of and contemplation of the Word of God. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} Ultimately that is a study of and a contemplation of Jesus because **He is the Word made flesh. {Jn 1:14}** Are you with me? Please don't separate the study of the Bible and the contemplation of the truths therein from a study of the person of Jesus, who is the Truth. {Amen} Okay? Don't separate those.

Is it possible to separate those? You better believe it is. Were the scribes and Pharisees students of the Bible? Come on, now, were they? They were professional students of the Bible. Jesus said to them, **"You search the Scriptures,"** what? **"...daily, for in them you think that you have eternal life." {Jn 5:39}** They were studying the Bible as an end in itself, but the study of the Bible is not an end in itself, it's a means by which we come to know Jesus, **"whom to know is life eternal." {Jn 17:3}** Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} That's why He says, **"You search the Scriptures daily for in them you think that you have eternal life, but they are they which testify of Me." {Jn 5:39}**

"Please, keep studying the Bible, but use it as a means to get acquainted with Me - I am the only one who can sanctify you."

My dear friends, if you study the Bible as an end in itself, it won't sanctify you. It won't! It will just make you more bigoted and self-righteous and give you a phony sense of superiority because of all you know more than everybody else. By the way, that's Laodicea's problem! We think that we're what? **"Rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing," {Rev 3:17}** because we have all this truth, but our problem is we haven't let the truth have us, because we haven't recognized that the Truth is first and foremost a Person, who we are to submit our whole being to, out of love for Him. Amen? {Amen} When we have that kind of relationship with the Scriptures as the revelation of Jesus Christ, then its study will be a life-changing experience, and the truth will sanctify us. It will sanctify us. There's power in it to do so.

Paul's words to Timothy: **"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Verse 16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." {2 Tim 3:14-17}** {Amen} You see, the study of the Bible is to make us like Jesus. If we are not studying for that purpose, then we will not be blessed in the study of the Bible. The scribes and Pharisees studied it every day, but did it make them like Jesus? No. In fact, it made them like Satan. Is it possible for Bible study to be used against Jesus Christ? Absolutely, it is. Some of the most diligent Bible students in the world were the ones that

crucified Jesus Christ. Come on now, hear me. Obviously Bible study in and of itself, then, is not a sanctifying, life-changing experience. Is it? It's the motive behind the study. You know, this is what worries me about so many of us.

First of all, most of us don't study the Bible at all. Come on now, admit it. But then there's a pretty good group that study the Bible to prove everyone else wrong and themselves right. Come on now, I'm telling you the truth; you know I'm telling you the truth; and the only time we get that holy book down and dust it off is so that we can argue somebody into a corner and convince them that we are right and they are wrong. My dear friends, that kind of study just makes us scribes and Pharisees. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} God help us study the Bible, but for the right reasons. I'm not telling you not to study the Bible, I'm telling you to study the Bible for the right reasons. If you do, it will change your life. {Amen} It will change your life.

Let's really get practical now, okay? This whole concept of beholding Christ, what does it require us to do? **Bible Commentary, Volume 6, page 1098**, top of page 73: "**Beholding Christ means studying His life as given in His Word.**" Oh, I like that. All of the sudden, we know precisely what it means to behold Christ. What does it mean? **...studying His life as given in His Word.** First and foremost that's what it means. So since beholding Christ is absolutely essential if we are going to be changed into His likeness by the power of the Holy Spirit, what is also essential? Since beholding Christ is studying His life as given in His Word, what is absolutely essential if we are going to grow from glory to glory? What is absolutely essential, my dear friends? The study of the Word of God. The study of the Word of God. My dear friends, I commend to you the study of the Word of God. If you want to be like Jesus, it's not optional. Are you hearing me? It is not optional. The only way we can be changed is by beholding Christ. That's our cooperative role; and **what does it mean to behold Christ? It means to study His life as given in this book;** and do you know what I've just done? I've just identified why so many of us are so unchrist-like in character, because we spend so little time studying this book. God help us make changes. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen}

My dear friends, we've got to make changes if we're ever going to be changed from glory to glory into the character-likeness of Christ, and thereby become effective witnesses for the king and fit citizens for the kingdom, and I'm here to tell you the King is coming soon! {Amen} We have got to make changes. Please! For your sake I beg of you, get your mind's eye off of all of the other garbage that so fills our day and get it focused on Jesus. Please! You're not going to be changed unless you do that. This is not optional. Nobody can do it for you. You have got to do it yourself. Some of you might be saying at this point, *"Man, you can just harangue and harass us to study the Bible because you're a pastor and you've got nothing to do but study the Bible; it's really easy for you, but I'm busy. I've got a schedule; I've got a life; I've got an income to make. I've got grades to get."* Listen, my dear friends, **what profiteth it a man if he gain the whole world, but lose his own soul? {Mk 8:36} {Amen} "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." {Mat 6:33} Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen}** It is not a matter of not enough time, it's a matter of priorities. Will you admit it? You know that's true.

By the way, if your daily schedule has any time reserved for watching TV, videos and music, or playing computer games, or surfing the web, or reading some trashy magazine, or some novel, please know that your claim not to have time for the study of the Word of God simply isn't true. It's not true. Don't fool yourself on this one. Bless your hearts, if I sound angry with you, I'm not. I'm just real earnest; I'm pleading with you; get real with yourself. We've got to make time, and we make time for the things that are most important. Admit it. The things that are most important, we make time for. I ask you, is there anything more important than the study of the Word of God? If the only way we can be changed from glory to glory and we have to be if we're going to be fit citizens for the kingdom or effective witnesses for the King. If the only way we can be changed is by beholding the glory of the Lord, and **beholding the glory of the Lord means studying His life as given in the Word**, then I ask

you, is there anything more important than Bible study for a Christian? Is there? {No} It's priority number what, then? {One} One.

I have a question for you. Does that fact reveal itself in your daily schedule? Come on, now, be honest with yourself. Don't play games with yourself on this one. Does that fact reveal itself in your daily schedule? Have you given the first and best time of your day to the study of the Word of God? Don't resent me for probing and making you honest with yourself. I'm doing this for your own good. We have ourselves fooled in these matters. If it's priority number one, you will make time, and you will give the Lord not the little bits and pieces that are left over, you will give Him the best time because He is your best Friend. {Amen} And you will start the day with Him, with meaningful time in the study of His book.

I have a recommendation for you, bless your hearts. It's my own practice, highly recommend it. I keep with me the book *Desire of Ages*, love that book! An inspired commentary on the Biblical account of the life of Christ. Here's what you do: You start out by reading the Biblical passages that the chapter is an inspired commentary on. Important: Don't let Spirit of Prophecy supplant Bible study. Let it supplement Bible study. Read the Biblical passages first, and then read the inspired commentary on those passages. What are the Biblical passages? Well, they're at the beginning of each chapter, down in brackets at the bottom of the first page. They're there. The Biblical passages that the chapter is an inspired commentary on, read that first and then read the inspired commentary. I promise you that if you start your day doing that, giving significant time without distraction, you will have a life changing experience if you are studying for the purpose of becoming like Jesus, and dependant upon the Holy Spirit. You will have a life-changing experience. What do you do when you get to the end of the book? What do you do? You go to the beginning. I can't tell you how many times I've been through *Desire of Ages*, and every time I read it, it's a whole new experience! I come across things I never saw before and I ask myself, "*How come I never saw that?*" That's the way it is when you're dealing with inspired things. They are limitless, and you can always learn something new, and deeper and more precious and insightful, reading it and studying it. Friends, life-changing experience will be yours if you make that your practice; I promise you. I promise you.

The more you study - hear me now - the more you study, it might at first be a duty, but the more you become enamored with the loveliness of the life of Him you are studying, the less and less it will be a duty, and the more and more it will become a, what? ...a delight. You won't have to make yourself study, you will eagerly look forward to studying. In fact, you will **jealously guard against anything encroaching on your study time {GW 100.1}**, and you will hate to see it come to an end. You know, by a miracle of grace that can be your experience if it isn't now. Please know, I speak from personal experience. There was a time when Bible study was the toughest thing I ever tried to make myself do. Grit my teeth and make myself do it, because after all, you know, I was a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, in fact, I was not only a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, I was a Seventh-day Adventist ordained minister! I've got to study the Bible, make myself do it, duty mode: grit my teeth; gag it down. Do you know what I managed to become with that approach? A really fancy **white-washed tomb. {Mat 23:27}** It's called hypocrisy. **A form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. {2 Tim 3:5}** Is there any of that going on? Come on, now, possibly here in this congregation right now? But it's not until - hear me - it's not until I pled with the Lord to reveal to me His loveliness, and then cooperated with Him in the process by choosing to cease my indulging the appetites of my old man, and feed exclusively my spiritual man the best food, and as I hung in there, my spiritual palette, my mental palette, was completely re-educated, and now, you know what I can honestly say? I don't crave the junk food any more, but I crave the Word of God. There have been times when this boy has sat down to study God's Word in the evening and gotten so enamored and so caught up in what was happening that when I got up to check what time it was, the sun was coming up the next morning.

I promise you, that if He can do that for me, He can do it for anyone in this room. Promise you that. Promise you that.

The more you study, the more His Spirit will reveal truth to you. Bless your heart, the truths that I have had the privilege of sharing with you, are the result of my own personal study, my own quest for a life-changing knowledge of the truth. I'm just sharing with you what He has helped me come to know, so that you can experience **the liberating, sanctifying power of the truth {Jn 8:32; 17:17}** as well, if you haven't yet.

By the way, whatever you study and discover, **the best way to make it your own is to share it immediately with somebody else. {AA 206.2; TM 352.2}** Give it away. Give it away. By so doing, it becomes yours; you understand it even better. That's why I'm indebted to you, bless your hearts, for this seminar. I am. You've given me the tremendous privilege of coming to understand much more clearly than I ever have before the truths that I've been sharing with you. Because in the very act of sharing them, you come to understand them better.

Make time, my friends, make time. Don't try to, what? Find time; but, what? Make time; and do it in the morning. I highly recommend it - in the morning. That requires, of course, that you get to bed at a decent hour. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} That requires, of course, that you not go to bed with a full stomach. Now we've quit preaching and started meddling, haven't we? You see, if you go to bed with a full stomach, your stomach's got to do that job and keep you half awake in so doing all night, and your sleep isn't very refreshing. But if you go to bed with an empty stomach at a decent hour... By the way, **one hour of sleep before midnight is worth two after. {7MR 224.3}** You can wake up in the wee morning hours, when it's really quiet, and no one else is around to bother you, and you can get out the Word of God and have a wonderful spiritual experience with Jesus. But you've got to get serious. You've got to make changes. You've got to make changes. You can't be watching TV until 11:00 o'clock, and hope to do that. Are you hearing me? You can't do that.

Now, got to warn you, got to warn you, please get this warning. As you behold Christ, will you be aware of being changed into His likeness? Will you? Listen. **Bible Commentary, Volume 6, page 1097: "It is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, which Jesus said He would send into the world, that changes our character into the image of Christ; and when this is accomplished, we reflect as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. That is, the character of the one who thus beholds Christ is so like His that one looking at him sees Christ's own character shining out as from a mirror."** Others see it, but what about us? Listen: **"Imperceptibly to ourselves..."** What is it? **"Imperceptibly to ourselves, we are changed day by day from our ways and will into the ways and will of Christ, into the loveliness of His character. Thus we grow up into Christ, and unconsciously reflect His image."** What? **"Imperceptibly to ourselves... unconsciously we reflect His character."**

In fact, what are we aware of? We are more aware, every day, of our faults and defects and imperfections. You see, **the closer we come to Jesus, the more what? ...faulty, defective, sinful we see ourselves to be in contrast. {SC 64.2}** Watch out, be warned, don't be discouraged. You might be tempted, as you behold Christ, to think you're not getting better, you're getting worse. My dear friends, you're not getting worse. I assure you, you're not getting worse. You've always been that bad. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} You have always been that bad. You're just now coming out of your self-righteous, self-deception. Praise God for unveiling your eyes so that you can see the way it really is with your soul. Don't you think that those who are **rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing and don't know that they are wretched, poor, blind, miserable and naked {Rev 3:17}** would have to experience some pretty startling reality checks? Expect it. Don't resent it, praise God for it. Get on your knees, confess it, and then **behold the Lamb {Jn 1:29}**, and **in beholding you will be changed. {2 Cor 3:18}** Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} Please, my brother, my sister, it's priority number one. Will you stand with me for prayer?

Father God, please help us! Help us to get serious about cooperating with the Holy Spirit by fixing our mind's eye on Jesus. Help us to let Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, be the first thing to dawn on our mind's eye every day, so that we can carry with us throughout the day that lovely image superimposed upon the screen of our thought life. And though our thoughts might be directed to other things, help us to retain an awareness of the lovely person and character of Jesus that we might constantly behold Him, and thereby be continually able to grow from glory to glory into His likeness. This is my prayer; please grant it for I ask it in Jesus' name. And everyone said, {Amen} Amen. God bless you, my friends.