

Last month, we concluded by saying that we would begin exploring the attributes of self-image to better understand how they impact our transformation into the image of Christ. ***Failing to recognize the origin of these attributes makes it difficult to grasp the process required for change***—especially the transformation of our thinking that has developed over time. From childhood, if we grow up in an environment void of the word of God or the presence of God, there is little resistance to incorrect input. ***Proverbs 29:18*** tells us, ***“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.”*** So what are these attributes that are developed in our thinking prior to salvation?

1. The truth we have set our minds on regarding ourselves.
2. Our responses to lived experiences.
3. Our love for ourselves and for others.
4. The sources from which we seek validation.
5. Our behaviors.
6. Our patterns and how they developed over time.
7. The level of self-confidence we express.
8. How we respond to criticism.
9. Our sense of self-worth.
10. Our response to responsibility.

Regardless of our upbringing, every one of us was born into a fallen world over which Satan is called the “the god of this world”, (***2 Corinthians 4:4***). While Jesus will ultimately remove him (see ***Revelation 20:1 & 10***), for now, we contend with his influence on this world. All ten of the attributes listed above were shaped in us apart from the new nature we received when we were born again, as we shared in the last newsletter from what Jesus explained to Nicodemus in ***John 3:3***.

Ephesians 2:3 directly reveals the enemy’s impact: ***“...among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”*** The word “wrath” here implies conflict. So what is this conflict, what is this war? The nature inherited from our first birth puts our natural mindset in direct opposition to the Word of God, seeking self-vindication and self-preservation. As I’ve been emphasizing, our self-image has been formed over time, and our conscious mind clings tightly to control.

Jesus put it plainly in ***Matthew 16:25***: ***“For whoever desires to save his life [his natural life] will lose it.”***, (The ***Greek*** implies in this verse “to put to death”) ***Romans 8:6*** also states, ***“For to be carnally minded is death,”*** which effectively nullifies the impact of the eternal life we have been birthed into when we were born from above, through the Spirit. ***Verse 5*** adds, ***“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.”*** So, what are the “things” of the flesh?

Here are examples that relate directly to the ten self-image attributes we described above:

1. A “truth” established through lust, apart from the knowledge of God.
2. Fulfilling fleshly desires.
3. Addictions rooted in self-love, with no regard for others.
4. Seeking value in the acceptance of others rather than in God.
5. Emotional-driven behaviors.
6. The outcomes reflected in our choices.
7. What the heart has learned to trust in.
8. Our reaction to judgment or correction.
9. A sense of self-worth built on personal achievements.
10. How we express ourselves in self-control and in managing life’s responsibilities.

This shows just how delicate and vulnerable our self-image truly is— it’s been shaped by our natural upbringing. That’s why true transformation can only be accomplished when your spirit is born of God. Every person born into this world has been influenced by the wisdom of this world. When Adam disobeyed God, he handed over access in natural wisdom to Satan, who now leverages natural wisdom to manipulate mankind: masterfully separating humanity from truly knowing God.

Paul addresses this directly in **1 Corinthians 1** and **2. 1 Corinthians 1:21** says: ***“For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom [natural] did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”***

Take time to read the full context—**1 Corinthians 1:18–31**—and meditate on it. Once these verses take root in your understanding, **1 Corinthians 2:1–16**, will come into sharp focus. It ties directly to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew we mentioned above.

I’ll end with this scripture from **1 Corinthians 2:14**: ***“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”***

In Love,

JANN T. BUTLER



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 JUNE 22ND - GUEST SPEAKER DEAN BRAXTON
 AUGUST 2ND - CHURCH PICNIC [BYHISWORD.ORG/EVENTS](https://byhisword.org/events)