God’s Plan for Your Life: Spiritual Maturity

III. And I in You: Epistemological Reprogramming-Going from a Human Viewpoint to a Divine Viewpoint

Review and Preface

- God’s plan begins with our heart made ready to receive God’s Word.
- God’s plan is for us to grow to full spiritual maturity
- God’s plan is for us to abide in Christ, or live our lives by the person and protocols of Christ.
- God’s plan is for us to be empowered by God through his Holy Spirit

Human viewpoint - this is the viewpoint of the world and yourself, which includes all things in time such as historical and personal events, from the mundane to the catastrophic, and all things in between like relationships, vocations, the universe, health and politics and so on all the way to the person of God, which stems from human observation and human capacity. How humans see things apart from God.
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**Divine viewpoint**-like human viewpoint it includes all things in time but unlike human viewpoint it also includes all things in eternity, it is the viewpoint of these things stemming from the perfect, omniscient, omnipotent, just, sovereign, loving, immutable and holy God. And God, being perfect and infinite, has a perfect and infinite viewpoint which he makes available to us in his Word.


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Human viewpoint can share a point or more with divine viewpoint *(whether ever realizing it or not)*. However, even at that it does not elevate human viewpoint with divine viewpoint because with divine viewpoint, there is always more and like we are learning, divine viewpoint is consanguineous. All concepts and points are interrelated

**Ex:** You are cold and need a jacket and someone has mercy and gives you a jacket to wear. Divine viewpoint and human viewpoint agree but only on that point.
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It may be that beyond that you strongly disagree with God on the matter of a permanent remedy for that person’s state of poverty. Maybe they are irresponsible and you make excuses for them while God says that if a man will not work (meaning he can and will not) then he should not eat (meaning he has no right to complain if he has no food and goes hungry).

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Thus, many people, when discovering that on one miniscule point they agreed with God on a matter suddenly but erroneously believe that the rest of their wrong thinking, wrong priorities and wrong way of life are validated. Wrong!

God’s plan is not for us to see how much we agree with God or God agrees with us but to trade our human viewpoint for divine viewpoint.
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Let’s look back, now, at our guiding passage for this study:

John 15:4-7

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

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Christ not only commanded that that we abide in him but that he abide in us:

4 Abide in me and I in you.

What does our Lord mean and how do we have any control over Christ abiding in us?

We can know what he means by a later reference in the passage
Abide in me, and I in you.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you

The second verse is an antecedent for the first. This concept will be amplified or echoed in the passages we use in this section. So what our Lord has in view when he commands us that we are to have him (“I”) abiding in us is his Word. And this is something over which we have determination.

I want you to look at one other thing that Christ said which represents the sum of both parts of the passage.

Abide in me + I in you =?

What do we get? What is the product of you abiding in Christ and his Word abiding in you? I believe Jesus refers to this end product of the two in verse 10:

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love

Obedience.
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It is not enough to have half the equation truth.

What does the Christian life look like when someone tries to abide in Christ but not have Christ’s Word abiding in them? They may be a Christian but then they start down a road of attempting righteous living based on their own ideas. **Do-goodism.** The principle is reflected in the Bible:

**Romans 10:4**
For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

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And what does the Christian life look like when someone tries to have Christ’s Word abide in them but not living a life abiding in Christ, one that is directed and prioritized by that Word? It is merely *academic* truth which becomes an intellectual play toy or *academism*. Paul’s letter to Corinth refers to the egotistical us of Biblical knowledge:

**1 Corinthians 1:8**
Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up.
Epistemology simply refers to the “theory of knowledge”. It is like anthropology, theology and so on, the knowledge or science (logy or logic) of something. In this case, it is the science or knowledge of knowing. How do we know what we know, how do we determine what we know. What presuppositions or assumptions exists that are valid in our minds which effects the way we receive information, process it and come to conclusions.

Ex: Suppose you grow up in a very superstitious home. You then have been programmed to deal with life from a certain viewpoint.

Ex: Suppose you grow up in a very shallow environment where the latest fashions, gossip of people, petty comparisons with your neighbors and so on are of supreme concern. This will affect your general priorities in life and how you, too, receive information.

Ex: Suppose you grow up in a home that is philosophical, scientific or even religious (not necessarily Christian) or a combination of the above.
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All of these go into the programming of your mind which produce, in you, a template or framework from which you approach, view and live your life. The result are actions which reflect your thinking.

*What impact might this have on the Christian?*

Stop and answer..........

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**Axiom:** *You are what you think, not what you think you are.*

People tell themselves all the time they are this, that and the other when something else is true. As well, people often like to tell others how important certain things are to them which they believe will reflect well of them but in reality, when you study their life, their actions tell another story. These are people who spend their life trying to convince themselves and others they are what they think or wish they were but instead, what is really on their mind, what they are preoccupied with, shows through in their actions.
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And if you are a believer and are preoccupied with Christ which means being preoccupied with his Word, then you will be what you think which, in this case, is the right thing.

But wait….there is more....

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On the other hand, after you have had a template formed in you and you enter into adulthood, what then? Then there is the everyday bombardment of “the world”. Thus, it either reinforces your faulty frame of reference for how you view the world and receive truth or it acts as an adversary seeking to disrupt your divine viewpoint as a Christian. Men and women who are not regenerate or who are living led by the flesh, are inevitably attracted to the message which stems from the world, the flesh and the devil.
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That is to say, they are far more interested in values and collective mind of the world than in the mind of God and in his realm. And if you are a Christian and I just described you, you are not properly oriented. Your priorities are tragically misaligned.

In the Scriptures the word *world* κόσμος (*kosmos*), is sometimes used to represent the people of the world but also used to refer to the world as a system. This is brought out in 1 John where we are given the imperative to not love the world. That is not with reference to its people but its system and its products.

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1 John 2:15

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

Remember, that is not to say everything that comes from our flesh apart from being Spirit-filled is categorically bad or sinful but it is not Spirit-led or with a divine viewpoint as its template. Thus, while we may have craftsmen who produce nice things, great men who produce advanced civilizations and so on, these “things” are not the end in and of themselves which is what the unregenerate man will generally value. They love the thing, itself, and neither the purpose of the thing or the granter of the blessing.
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His or her magnificent car is not a gift and pleasure but a prize and possession to be compared to others. His or her home is something to constantly be compared to with others and their personal self-esteem is gained from this. Understand, the Christian is never told not to enjoy any such possible logistical blessings but they are not to be loved, valued and esteemed as symbols of personal worth of worthwhile status, they are to be appreciated and utilized as blessings from God and even then, if you have sacrificed the wrong thing to get these, then they may not be blessings at all.

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Thus, human viewpoint is all around us saturating the culture. Apart from natural resplendency (and even then nature can wrongly be worshipped) our world of human or engineered things have with them a value system of human reference.

Even a good government can only represent sound morality, they are not commissioned to be those who preserve the gospel and sound doctrine, they can only, at best, enforce morality, justice and secure peace and freedom. Even if they don’t intend to do so in light of God’s Word but do so anyway, they are good.
Thus, divine viewpoint ultimately can only come from one source and that is his Word. And who has been commissioned to exhaustively communicate or teach divine viewpoint with the objective to make disciples? Who are they which God gave the imperative to be the guardians of both the gospel and the information which comes after one is saved, that is our doctrines, that one may be a disciple? The church. The well-known and unalterable commission:

Mark 16:15
15 And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

Matthew 28:19
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

Thus, this is why RLC has a serious program intended teach the Word of God to its people, because God has commissioned it so.
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The Transformation Process - From Human Viewpoint to Divine Viewpoint

Romans 12:2 (ESV)
Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Here we have a negative command and a positive command.

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Do not be conformed to this world. The word for *conformed* is συσχηματίζω (suschēmatizó) which means to have an outward force or produce a pattern. To be put in a mold and squeezed until you come out looking like the mold.

This is precisely what being conformed to the world is and how it is done. The world is forever trying to bully people into its value system, its way of life, its political correctness and has done so since the beginning of time. Cain murdered his brother because Abel posed a threat to his way. The world will put pressure on you to conform.
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Be transformed by the renewing of your mind (epistemological reprogramming). The word for transformed is from μεταμορφόω (metamorphoó). This refers to a fundamental change in the constitution of something. An inward or constitutional change which produces a change in the reality of the thing, it is reconfigured or transfigured.

As a note, the word here is what is called a present passive imperative which means, as an imperative it is a command, as a present tense it is continuous action, as a passive voice it means you do not perform the action of the verb, instead the action is done to you, even though you are the subject in the sentence. We yield, and God does the work.

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The Christian life, the abiding life, just as Jesus our Lord described, is not one of conformity but of transformation. He is the vine, we are the branches; our nourishment and ability to bear fruit come from what source? Christ’s Word and Spirit.

This is why it is so critical and so essential that the Christian life be understood as one of progression from inner transformation. While there are outward manifestations of inward change, each person must be left to demonstrate those in their own unique context.
What is the Result of being Transformed

Remember what God promises us through Paul if we will permit ourselves to be transformed? He says from this, “that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Remember in the last lesson when we dealt with when people like to say, “the Bible doesn’t say so explicitly, therefore I am not bound to it”. That is fine, I suppose, if you are a child because that is how children speak. Not everything is presented in black and white in the Scriptures. Much of what we believe and teach comes from Scripture compared with Scripture and from doctrinal conclusions formed by doctrinal constructs. In your soul a complex is built of elementary to advanced doctrines.

The word from which the phrase “by testing you may discern” is translated is δοκιμάζω (dokimazo) which means to prove something to be right, which is how it is sometimes translated. It has in view a process of examination, comparison, elimination through putting an idea up to scrutiny and testing and a final product.

What do you do with the ideas which enter your mind from which you build your life and determine your activities? How much scrutiny to you allow for your thinking or are you constantly defensive about everything when someone puts it to the test, never mind yourself?
Ex: Recently I was with some people at a dinner where one of the people at our table proclaimed that she believed milk from cows was bad for you. After some questioning I discovered she merely accepting this because of its source, without vetting their real training and credentials and whether it had much peer acceptance. She failed to prove or test her thinking, what she believed was true.

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You and your Personal Theology

Every believer has what is called a personal theology. There is the church’s theology to which you belong and then there is your personal theology. It is represented by how you live your life.

Some people have a minimal theology. I am saved and from there I do my own thing with little consideration to God’s Word and plan for my life. I’m okay, he’s okay and we’ll deal with my failure to be a disciple later. For now I have things I want to do, I’ll live my life my way.
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Some people have an *intermediate theology*. While it does influence their life it is not comprehensive. Their emphasis on spiritual matters, on being a disciple, is not of the utmost concern. If it fits into their schedule, they will do it. They do, though, have a few important items or practices of which they can be proud and like to show off as proof their personal theology has permeated their life.

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Then some people have a *comprehensive theology*. That is, most or almost all of what they think is subject to the Word of God. Ideas they have are vetted by God’s Word to see if they are acceptable concepts upon which they may build their life and if not, they discard them. They structure their lives based on a preoccupation with Christ.
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Let’s look at the deliberately progressive nature of discernment by way of God’s Word which is to transform us, in our Christian life, which Paul presents in the text. He says by being transformed through the renewing of our minds we will be able to discern what the, “good, acceptable and perfect” will of God is for your life:

- **God**-the word here is ἄγαθός (agathos) and is used in its basic sense. That which is obviously and clearly good. Something which requires little more than a child’s understanding but still, it requires honesty about what is right in front of you. Sadly many believers cannot even consistently identify the difference between what is good and bad.
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**Acceptable**- the word here is εὐάρεστος (euarestos) which indicates deliberation on a matter which includes a plan of action and a culmination of that action. Here we move from the elementary to comparing Bible principle with Bible principle and making intermediate level decisions which are acceptable or well-pleasing because they have been developed in, by and through God’s Word and Spirit.

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**Perfect**- the word used here is τέλειος (teleios) which refers to a comprehensive effort involving any and all related doctrines of God’s Word from which we develop our plan of action and execute it at the highest possible level of Biblical principles. It is what you might call theological calculus.
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**Which Brings Us to a Very Important Issue.**

God never, ever at any placed requires you to be a scholar of any sort of way in order to understand and apply his Word and mature into a saint of great wisdom and biblical understanding. You will never find this demand in God’s Word. What he requires is what we have already covered, something that all of us possess and over which we have determination:

- Our heart made ready to receive God’s Word.
- Be filled or yielded to God’s Spirit that he may illuminate our minds which means a teachable approach

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Let’s look at some correlating passages underscoring the critical element of taking in God’s Word so that we go from human viewpoint to divine viewpoint:

**Colossians 3:16**

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
Philippians 2:5 (KJV)
Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Luke 8:10
10 he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’

Hosea 4:6 “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...”

Finally, how do we, then, learn the Word of God?

I am going to ask you to participate.
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**Remember:** You cannot believe it unless you have learned it and you cannot learn it unless you have been taught it and you cannot be taught it unless you have organized your life in a manner which facilitates the regular intake of sound Bible doctrine. What does your life look like in light of that?

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**Closing Comments and Preparation for the Second Part of the Transformative Process in the Christian Life:**

*Knowledge puffs up* - And do not be mistaken, theology, as an academic matter, is very attractive to the flesh. There are many men and women who understand that the Bible represents the potential to gain information organized and expressed in a manner unlike other sources. It is unique, special.
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Thus, when motivated by carnality or our flesh to study the Bible we do so in a purely academic manner, without personal application by faith. This is not to say there is not to be an academic element to our understanding of the Scriptures since we use vocabulary and concepts to communicate divine viewpoint. But it does not end there. Our call by God is to apply it, by faith; to constantly integrate it by faith, or by believing it, into our lives.

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The Scriptures present a two-step process of our transformation. These are not meant, necessarily, to be viewed so categorically but nevertheless there are two parts to the Christian’s process of being transformed by God’s Word.
• Learning God’s Word
• Applying God’s Word by faith,( i.e. believing God’s Word) by which we are then inwardly changed through the ministry of the Spirit indwelling us
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When you hear the Word of God it is with the intention to believe it, to utilize its information and *mix it with faith* so that it becomes your reality, greater than anything your human senses can experience. If there was ever a stopping point for many believers, it is here. While they believed the gospel for salvation, the extended and repeated learning and believing of God’s Word in their life regarding as their post-salvational way of life alludes them.

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Thus, we will cover learning of God’s Word and mixing it with faith in our lives. It will be as straightforward and clear as an attempt to make the exercise of faith come alive. It will be practical in every measure with one example after another, over and over, so as to establish this in your mind. That is because without faith the transformative power of God’s Word does not take place. It is only when we renovate our mind and trade our human viewpoint with divine viewpoint, by faith, which is by believing what we have learned, that we are transformed otherwise all we have achieved is academic learning.
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Hebrews 4:2 (KJV)
For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Next Week:
III. And I in You: Stepping into the Divine Matrix or Mixing God’s Word with Faith