

## **How do we know what the new self really looks like? How can we know we are not being duped by our old selves?**

In answering these questions, it is not as helpful to say, "Here is what the new self looks like," because when we read the answer, we tend to immediately begin looking for evidence in our lives that proves we are already living in the new self. The Bible tells us many things about how our lives should look in Christ, i.e., how our lives will show whether we are living more in the new than the old self. The Bible's guidance on this is important to look for. However, it can also be very helpful to look for evidence of the old self as well. The Painful Pattern Tool can help you greatly with this. Remember, in every trial the old parts of us, who were born into sin, will seek to emerge. It is a useful part of introspection to seek to identify that. After all, the Lord will speak to acting against the old... so we might as well figure out what He is speaking against, as well as what He is prompting us to embrace.

In seeking answers to the questions above, we can come from a different angle, one which enables us to really check for old-self deception. We may begin to gauge our how well we do our parts in the new-self by relating it to questions that cause us to introspect for consistency, or lack thereof, in our personal practical application skills. Here are some helpful introspection questions... "Am I able to discern God's Spirit's counsel in any given trial? In this particular trial, am I confident that I know exactly what God wants of me? In this particular trial, is my heart at peace or not?"

As Christians, it is important to recognize that old-self interest can prevail in our own lives, not just in the lives of unbelievers. It is important to know how our walk with the Lord can be more applicable to everyday life in between times we go to church. To see other opportunities to apply God's Word to our lives and to live in the new self, we must realize that daily life decisions are huge spiritual moments that include, not only career moves and illness and such, but any trial during which emotion and strong desire are present. Frustration with a teenage child, the compulsion to work all the time, annoyance at the neighbor's unsightly yard, an upset when your brand of a product is not on the shelf at the store; such situations are examples of deeply spiritual moments... they are trials. When, in those trials, we do not discern what God would have us change in us, we will tend to have a limited idea of what the new-self looks like. If we don't see each of our trials as trials, how can we expect to have a clear idea about the extent to which God is giving us specific, corrective feedback on what to do, how to change, and how to live in the new self?

We can say Christ is in charge of our life, and then lean on our own understanding while trying to determine what He wants us to do. Christ is not actually in charge of decisions we make when we do that. This is because we really aren't submitting the decision to Him. To submit a decision to Him in a trial, we must hear His guidance, change our heart, and follow through with what His Spirit counsels us to do. We have each done this in some trials only to find it hard to repeat in other trials. In tough trials, our old-self interest will motivate us to act a certain way, and our old-self will resist the idea of changing from that course quite strongly. Of course the Lord will want us to do something else. By definition, in such trials we will experience an internal, uncomfortable struggle (heart disturbance) whether it is uncertainty, fear or whatever.

In the process of following Christ during trials, we must not seek to fulfill our desire to blame our confusion, frustration or whatever on anyone else but our old-self. That's tough; however, it is exactly what we must work to surrender during a trial when surrendering isn't happening naturally for us. Let's say that differently. Surrendering means letting The Teacher,

God's Holy Spirit, instruct us in the decisions about what we are to do in what is an already discomfoting, perhaps even nerve-wracking trial! This may sound un-inviting, but it is exactly what we can experience when our new-self seeks to emerge over our old-self. It is what we can experience when we are having to work hard with the Spirit to surrender old desires. While there will be times we may fail to hear the Spirit correctly or in a timely manner, our effort in seeking out His guidance in detail, our effort in working to recognize our old-self interest, our effort in working to acknowledge the changes the Lord would make in us; these ensure that our failure doesn't turn into an inadvertent, old-self permission to gloss over the failure. Our part in trying to work with the Spirit builds, if nothing else, a godly humility that will reflect well in your conduct before God. This is part of what the new self looks like. This is different from an attitude that dismisses spiritual failures in a way where we really don't hold ourselves to trying much harder to do any better at interacting with The Teacher within.

To let Christ lead our lives and our decision-making processes, we must have a point of reference that is literally out of our personal, conscious control. The new self demonstrates this view. Jesus said that in the daily, practical application department, the outside point of reference we need is Him, and the Holy Spirit (John 14:26) is the One Jesus secured for us to guide us and teach us how to follow Jesus - the out-of-the-worldly-box-reference-point! Tying in with the Holy Spirit to keep our spiritual eyes on Jesus, our Holy reference point, is part of what the new self looks like.

Part of what the new self looks like involves having a godly ambition not to settle for the changes we initially make in our lives when we first choose to follow Christ. It is a godly ambition that seeks to make more changes, not for ourselves, but for the Lord. Having said that, the initial changes we make when first following Christ do count. They count just like the first ten miles of a 1000-mile journey count. Such changes represent the beginning of a walk with the Lord as His disciple. Those changes are not evidence that the entire journey has been completed, nor are they proof that the directional signs along the journey will not be missed. Walking with the Lord in the new self involves being disciplined during trials, not just at church or in Bible Study. Jesus secured the permanently indwelling Teacher, the Holy Spirit, to assist us with being disciplined in our hearts during trials. When we do not quench the Spirit during trials, we are able to be disciplined by Him during those trials. As we are disciplined, our new-selves (who we are in Christ) are strengthened and grown. The initial changes in our lives are simply the beginning of the life-long process of being molded, or if you prefer, disciplined.

Satan influences our old-selves to seek to turn Scriptural Truths into mere facts by which we consciously reason. Satan does this while causing us to unknowingly have our decision-making processes continue to function according to our own clever ways of problem-solving. This happens when we aren't continually working to read the heartfelt directional signs of God's Spirit. When this happens, Satan's attacks are more wily than we imagine.

For example, a person may undergo a spiritual/religious conversion with the intent to change their life. The conversion offers the opportunity to get things straight in one's life by letting God lead. The person's behaviors change in the sense that the person attends services, reads religious materials, and socializes with people of similar faith. The person's rationale becomes based on religious (some might say Biblical) rules of conduct. However, because Satan's routine daily attacks on a person's thinking are not continually recognized and dealt with, the person has heart disturbances (all of which are an annoying mystery), and the spiritual dynamics behind the person's trials continue to follow old patterns in ways that only discernment of God's Holy Spirit can reveal. Only the person's conscious reasoning is actually different. If

someone challenges the person's faith or reasoning, the person may defend their faith quite vigorously. Because the person is now a believer, instead of being upset because someone did something "wrong" to them, now the believer may become upset because what others do *is* wrong because God and the Bible say so. Regardless, the believer still may not see that their upset and troubled heart means the Spirit is saying their own thinking contains a faulty mental error!

Based on a person's interpretation of "how to live for Christ," a believer may stand stronger against injustice. By thinking *about* God's Truth, as compared to applying it and transforming the heart to change old-self desires during the trial, a believer may be even more resilient in fighting against the injustices in their world... but with old-self tainted motives. The believer may find it difficult to be truly at peace unless things go according to his "righteous" desires. Or, depending on how Satan attacks, the believer may become more passive in the face of injustice. The believer may become very outwardly tolerant, though inner turmoil and annoyance continues. In each case, the uncomfortable disturbance in the heart appears to be a confirmation of being in the new-self, when in fact it is an indication of Satan's attack on the believer. The spiritual problem arises when the disturbance is permitted, by the disciple of Christ, to remain untransformed. This is one of the ways the old self tricks, or dupes, us.

If, in a trial, a man believes he is in the new-self (when from God's view he really isn't), then various problems arise due to old-self deception. The man will have a difficult time consistently experiencing the peace of Christ. This is often because he prefers to focus more on the growth potential for others. It is a way of vicarious spiritual living through others. Subtly the man may even think that if other will grow, then this will reflect that his new self is alive and well. On the other hand, the failings of others tend to resonate uncomfortably within the man. This means that the man's personal resistance to the Spirit's corrections in his own life still continues and his submission to being disciplined personally is limited. This inner resistance is difficult to discern unless the man is really willing to look for how the Spirit seeks to change the man. Just reading about the new self in God's written Word doesn't help the man to overcome this problem because there really isn't a desire to associate "being disciplined" with "being changed." The man has a harder time transforming his heart. And, he can actually become tolerant of his heart's disturbances, which is a hardening of the heart and a quenching the Spirit in the heart.

Eventually, at some point, a man like this will recognize that more of life should be making sense, and that to some degree his "being in the new-self" should have become more agreeable (peace-filled). In the meantime, what is worse is that *because* he believes he is *already* experiencing the new-self to a great extent, the thought that his heart indicates something to the contrary seems to be the same as turning his back on the principles laid down by God. He thinks his life reflects God's Truth. As such, questioning how he is living his life seems to be the same as questioning God's Truth, maybe even the same as questioning God's written Word! Because *the man actually believes he already understands God's principles enough*, he does not realize that his unwillingness to really evaluate his old-self versus new-self is how he is resisting the Spirit's counsel in his own life. This vicious circle develops without his being aware of it, and it is a result of believing himself to be capable of objectivity by reasoning and Scriptural knowledge alone. This erroneous belief prevents him from using God's spiritual form of feedback (Holy Spirit speaking to the heart) to correct his *unconscious*, faulty mental errors. Inadvertently then, there is a great hesitancy to look in a different direction for practical applications of God's age-old, timeless answers. Such a person will often bear a great deal of

unconscious guilt (unconscious because he distracts himself from it), and he will resist the idea of discernment as involving change.

Unfortunately, when old-self deception causes us to experience these sorts of self-inflated views of our new-selves, it often takes some kind of traumatic trial or series of trials to get our attention and precipitate the corrections God seeks to make in us. While the above description of the "duping of the old-self" may not be exactly the same for everyone, we all experience it in one form or another. The idea is to be the new self, which means that this time next year, we should not look the same as we do today, spiritually speaking of course.