

How Jesus Changes Us

Introduction. In Matthew 22:37, Jesus, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5, told the lawyer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Matthew's account substitutes "mind" for "strength"; the parallels in Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27 have both "mind" and "strength". It is a love that dominates our emotions, directs our thoughts, and is the dynamic of all our actions; in short, it involves the entire person.

Becoming a Christian is a complete change. The elemental sacrifice of self and the world (Matthew 16:24; Romans 12:1-2) is referred to as being "born again" (John 3:3). The old self dies and the new self comes alive. The steps that follow are how we are changed by the knowledge of Christ.

I. Our Intellect Is Changed By Testimony

- A. The intellect is the objective faculty of reasoning and understanding. John was eminently interested in proving Jesus to be God's Son (John 5:31-47; 20:30-31).
- B. Those who believe do so because of testimony (2 Thessalonians 1:10). The effects of preaching were the guarantee of its truth (1 Corinthians 1:4-6).

II. Our Emotions Are Changed By Mercy

- A. Emotions are instinctive or intuitive feelings. Knowing our true state (Galatians 3:22), and that God is merciful develops a feeling within us (Exodus 34:6-7).
- B. Emotions or feelings are clearly a part of the total experience of coming to Christ (James 4:7-10; 1 John 4:11). However, they are only one leg of the stool.

III. Our Will Is Changed By Truth

- A. Will is the faculty by which a person decides on and initiates action. In Acts 3:12-26 Peter appealed to the Jews with the truth of Jesus' crucifixion (cp. 4:4).
- B. In Acts 17:22-31 Paul appealed to the Gentiles with the truth of God's existence. This caused some to believe and join him (cp. v. 34).

IV. Our Conscience Is Changed By Conviction

- A. Conscience is an inner feeling that acts as a guide to one's behavior. When the sin of murdering Christ was exposed, they were stung in their hearts (Acts 2:37).

- B. Baptism's purpose is to cleanse the conscience from guilt (1 Peter 3:21). The Romans had "obeyed from the heart" (Romans 6:17-18) — they were convicted.

V. Our Beliefs Are Changed To Obey

- A. The gospel, after having appealed to the intellect, emotions, will, and conscience, develops faith in the heart (Romans 10:17; cp. Proverbs 8:33; Luke 11:28).
- B. Faith working by love produces the desire to serve God (Galatians 5:6; Romans 1:5; 16:26; 1 Thessalonians 1:3). Faith without works is dead (James 2:17).

Conclusion. The complete metamorphosis of heart, soul, and mind takes the greatest commitment to become like Christ (Romans 8:29). Nothing else in your life will be this difficult, but nothing else will be this glorious.