

Next
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Nextness

God's Next Most Needed Thing

Suggested Reading: Ephesians 1:1ff, John 17:22f, Psalms 139:13–16, Psalms 71:6, Matthew 10:29–31, Gen 1:27, Acts 17:28, Jeremiah 1:4f, Psalms 51:5, Ephesians 2:1ff, Philippians 2:12

Who Are You?

You are a creation of God, fearfully and wonderfully made. As you prayerfully read the suggested Scripture passages above, you will see that God knew you before He laid the foundations of the earth, that He knew every detail of your creation, even the number of hairs on your head, that He wove you together in your mother's womb, and that He was there when you were born. You will also read of another "you" who was conceived in sin and from birth has no righteousness of your own. Which one are you? You are both; there are two of you.



- The Real You
- The You Plus Sin

The Two You's

The Real You—In the heart of God, there is the you that He chose before the foundations of the world, perfected in Christ



Jesus. There is a bumper sticker that sums it up: "God don't make no junk!" All of God's creation was perfectly made; you too are fearfully and wonderfully made. There are no exceptions. As we discussed earlier in the book,

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Life is not only made up of a few large decisions, such as what college to attend, your career choice, who to marry, whether to have children, where to buy a house, etc. Life is primarily made up of a myriad of small decisions every day. It is important that we are obedient to God's leading even in these small things, because each of these decisions closes off other life paths and opportunities for transformation. In the "Life's Decisions"

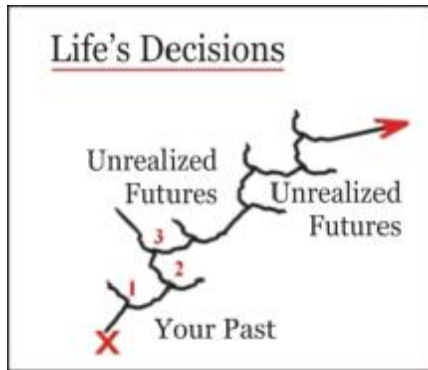


diagram at right, if you make the right turn at "1," a left turn at "2," and another right turn at "3" even though that's not where God had directed you, there are a whole series of unrealized futures that are no longer available. Time moves on, and decisions not made have been left in the past. When we choose to follow our own path, time

passes, those unrealized futures do not happen, and we are not changed. Transformation is a process; the more we are disobedient, the less we are like Him in this life. God waits for obedience—without it, there is no transformation.

Prayer: Engage your heart and pray: "Father God, I give you permission to show me the *next most needful thing* in my life. Share your heart with me and provide me with that inner witness of your Spirit that this is the way of Life. I want to will both Your **willing** and Your **doing**. Forgive me for all the wasted time in my life when I have been disobedient to you. I give you irrevocable permission to deal with everything that the enemy has added to my life, and I give you permission to change me into the likeness of your Son, Jesus. Father, I want Nextness in my life."

you were created in the image of God, a shadow, perfect, with the potential of becoming real as God Himself is real. This is the real you. We will call that you, "YOU."

The Real You Plus Sin—Then there is the other you. To that perfect creation of YOU is added "everything else." What has been added? Everything of the Kingdom of Satan that is presently in your life. God did not create you with sin attached; sin has been added by the enemy: sin that comes down through the generations, sin that comes in through trauma, sin from your willfulness and disobedience, etc. Sin is the "everything else" that has been added. We will call that you, "YOU Plus."

At the same time that God saw the YOU in creation, He also saw the YOU Plus and had already made provisions for your redemption. God presently has a specific plan tailored to YOU Plus to deal with the "everything else" that is in your life, and also a specific plan to deal with the YOU, to change you into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This plan is both Restoration and Transformation.

Restoration—Reiterating a little of *Scope* section at the beginning of this book; restoration is being restored to humanity's initial state in the Garden of Eden by removing the enemy's kingdom from your life. The fall in the garden did not come as a surprise to God—He had foreseen it even before the foundations of the Earth and had made provisions in Himself to make the way of recovery possible. Because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross in complete obedience to His heavenly Father, you can be empowered to remove the enemy and his kingdom from your life, and you can choose to replace it with the Kingdom of God.

Transformation—But restoration is not enough; it just restores you to a place where you can more fully

enter into God's eternal purpose—that we would be transformed into His likeness by His indwelling Life and by a walk of obedience, from shadow into reality. His purpose has not changed. We are called to a dependant, intimate walk of obedience, eating continually of the Tree of Life (Genesis 2 and 3), which is the person of Jesus Christ. Foundational to this walk is being born again, to restore the life of God in us, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit to empower us to walk the Christian Life in dependant obedience. Transformation is being changed into the image of Jesus Christ, being changed from shadow into reality through obedience to Jesus Christ.

Restoration and transformation are absolutely foundational to our walk as Christians. It is important to understand that restoration is not transformation. Removing the enemy from our



lives does not change us into the likeness of Jesus Christ; it just returns us to the state of Adam and Eve in the Garden, but without the Life of God. We still must receive the Life of God (being born again) and the baptism of the Holy Spirit

(empowerment) and live a life of obedience to the Person of God in order to be changed into His likeness. Restoration and transformation are the two foundational themes in the Christian walk. God's plan for our salvation is made up of both restoration and transformation.

God's Plan

Restoration and transformation do not happen in two-dimensional Christianity—adherence to a theology or to doctrine won't do it, and doing good for God won't do it; only the Life of God in our lives and a walk in obedience in three-dimensional Christianity can make it happen. Only God knows the plan; only God knows what must come next. The Christian

life is a series of *next most needful things* in obedience to God's prompting. It is Him executing His plan in our lives by His Life in the third dimension. This is Nextness.



The plan for your salvation exists only in the mind of God. He planned it for you from before the foundations of the world. If only God knows the plan, then it means

that you don't know the plan. The concept of obedience to God presupposes that you do not have a plan of your own; it means that you must participate in His plan, in His timing, and by His power. That is called obedience.

Helping God

Now if you insist on helping God out by telling Him what you want and what He must do in your life, then the change does not happen—only religion happens. God's plan is put on hold until you are willing for the *next most needful thing* for your life. God is a gentleman. He will not force you to do His will for your life. He waits until you are willing to follow His program.

If God is doing something in your best friend's life, and you decide He should also be doing it in your life, and you pester Him for it, that is usually a problem. That "something" is most likely not the *next most needful thing* for you; it will not change you into the likeness of Jesus. Yes, God may have that "something" also for you in your life at some point, but not next and not now. It is His program, His plan. Your part is obedience; His part is both the **willing** and the **doing** (Philippians 2:12f) in accordance to His plan. Only obedience causes you to change, and obedience is not obedience if it is out of order. If God wants A, then B, and then C in your life, and you insist on B first, then A, and then C, that is not obedience. God will wait until you are willing and ready to do A first. What He is doing in someone else's life doesn't apply to yours.