

Makeover: A Whole New You

By Mary Kane

Makeovers. I searched the word *makeover* on the internet. As you probably suspected the search engine generated millions of hits. These days you can makeover just about anything if you have enough money; you face, your hair, your house, your wardrobe— even your husband! I even found a virtual makeover website where you can upload your picture and give yourself a makeover online. Unfortunately, one thing that we can't easily makeover is our character. How I wish it was that simple. Check into the Character Clinic for a weekend of nipping and tucking and voila—a whole new me, complete with sterling character and crystal-clear integrity. Bad habits and sinful attitudes are removed with a quick slice of the surgeon's scalpel. While there are no quick fixes for our character aberrations, God does leave us with a character makeover plan. It's not quick, easy or pain free, but it is very effective. It will require hard work, humility and a little open heart surgery performed by Jehovah Raphe—our Great Physician. As you will see from our study today it is God's will that you be made over into the image of Christ. Before we begin, please take a moment to come before our Lord. Ask Him to forgive you for any sin and open your heart to the teaching of His Word.

Now, please turn to Ephesians 4 and read verses 17-24.

Please fill in the missing word from verse 17:

"...that you should no longer _____ as the rest of the Gentiles..."

The word *walk* as used in this verse is defined as a way of life, or the way one conducts himself on a daily basis. As the word *walk* suggests, our relationship with Christ is not just a onetime quick decision or something that we dust off on Sundays. Christianity is a way of life—the only Way of life. When we accept Christ as our Savior we give up our plans and live for Him; we become slaves of Christ.

According to verse 17, how do the rest of the Gentiles walk (the term *Gentiles* refers to any person who is not of Jewish descent)?

They walk in the "futility of their mind." The original word used for *futility* in verse 17 is loaded with meaning and application for modern day Christians. From the Greek, the word *futility* transliterates as *mataiotēs* which means "that which is devoid of truth; frailty; want of vigor; depravity, perverseness." We can deduce from this definition that apart from Christ there is no truth. We can also reason that strength and power are imparted to those who accept Christ and walk with Him. The Greek word *mataiotes* is derived from *mataios* which means "devoid of force, truth, success or result, useless, of no purpose, fruitless. My life before Christ was very *mataios*; useless, powerless, devoid of truth and purpose. Have you ever felt as if you couldn't get anywhere in life; or that no matter how hard you tried, things always stayed the same? Perhaps that was because you're trying to live out your Christian life apart from the truth of God's Word.

Below I listed several definitions of the word *futility*. After each definition please list an antonym (word/s of opposite meaning):

Devoid of truth: _____

Frail: _____

Weak: _____

Perverse: _____

Useless: _____

Purposeless: _____

Failure: _____

Fruitless: _____

Now please go back and highlight or circle all the things you just wrote in the blanks. All the characteristics that you just circled are attributes that God wants to instill in your heart. It is His will that you be strong, useful, pure, and live a life of purpose and success. You may be thinking that you

could never be all of those things, but God has called us, it is His will for us to be transformed and He has enabled us to become all those things.

Please read verses 18-19 again.

Please describe what our lives were like before we came to know Christ.

Darkness, ignorance, and uncleanness were our heritage before we came to Christ. Our minds were full of darkness; we were alienated from God, ignorant, blind, lewd, unclean and greedy. I am struck by how greedy I was before I came to Christ; not in the sense of greed for material possessions, but in the sense that all of my thoughts revolved around pleasing myself. I had very little concern for the wants and needs of any other person.

What was the condition of our heart before Christ (verse 18)?

We were blind. Blind to the truth of God's Word. Thankfully God has a remedy for our blindness.

Please read Ephesians 1:18 below and underline or highlight what God will do for our blindness:

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints..."

God has promised to open the eyes of our heart so we may see Him and realize the great hope we have in any situation because He is the God of hope. We have hope that we can be changed, that we can become like Christ. This is not "worldly hope" in which we hope something *may* happen

in an iffy sort of way, but Biblical hope in which we *know* that something will happen because of God.

Have you given up hope that you will ever be able to overcome a certain character flaw?

Let me encourage you to begin hoping again. In Christ, we always have reason to hope and it is His will for you to gain mastery over this sin.

Now, let's go back to our text for today.

Please read verse 22 and list what we are to "put off."

Why must we put off the "old man"?

Because the "old man grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts." Ouch! The word corrupt means to perish or to destroy. Notice the word that precedes *corrupt* in verse 22; write it in the blank:_____. What will happen to our corrupt nature over time? If we don't deal with our corrupt nature, like cancer it will grow and spread to every other part of our body, leaving a path of destruction in its wake.

Please reread verse 22.

What place does our former conduct have in our lives now?

No place. We are to “put off” all these things. All those old habits that used to seem so vital now cause us so much shame. Thankfully, we can trade that shame for grace at the foot of the cross.

If you have a shame that you need to trade in for grace, please take a moment right now and give it to Christ. Verbally tell Him that you accept His grace in place of your shame. Thank Him for His goodness.

Look at verse 20 again for a moment. In the NKJV the verse says “But you have not so learned Christ.” *Learned* is a very interesting word in that it means “to learn by use or practice, to be in the *habit* of (emphasis mine).” After we become Christians we need to put off our old habits and put on a *new habit*—Christ. *Put off* means to “put down, stop, lay down, to *wear or carry* no longer (emphasis mine).”

If we are told to put off something then it is implied that we have a choice whether or not to continue to carry it. Can you think of some things that you have *carried* for far too long? Grudges, sin, bitterness, hatred—those things are all a part of the old life. Put them down. Do have something that you have *worn* for far too long... a reputation... a label that some may have stuck on you, maybe even deservedly so? Liar, cheater, adulterer, thief...lay it down. In Christ, you no longer have to wear that reputation. Put it down. That was part of the old life, the old you. Christ took all of those old labels and shames and nailed them to the cross. Quit letting the enemy exact payment from you for a debt that Christ has already paid. It is finished.

We know that we need to put off the old nature but how do we get rid of something that is stuck to us like skin? How do we put off our old nature? Verses 23-24 contain life altering information that can change your past as well as your present and future.

How are we to “put off the old man”?

We put off the *old man* by being renewed in the spirit of our mind and by putting on the *new man*. The word *renewed* means “to be renewed in the

mind, to be spiritually transformed, to take on a *new* mind." Have you lost your mind and are in need of a new one? Well I have Good News—in Christ you can have a new mind! When we act on what we have learned from God's word we are putting off the old man and putting on the new man. We put off the old man by changing our thinking; we exchange the "wisdom of the world" for the wisdom of Christ. Everything about us can be changed when we come to Christ; the way we think, act, our behavior, habits, decision making processes, our world view, everything can be changed.

In verse 24, the word for *new* is derived from the word *neos* which means "recently born, young, youthful." As the definition implies, one thing that should mark our relationship with Christ is growth. We grow in Christ as we saturate our hearts with His Word and act on what we have learned. Like me, you may be fast approaching fifty. Although your body is aging, your mind can be continually renewed. In Christ we literally can be "young at heart."

In order to gain a little more insight on putting on the new man, please look up Romans 12:2 and write it in the space provided:

As you may already know, the word *transformed* in Romans 12:2 is derived from the same Greek root as the English word *metamorphosis*. Metamorphosis is the process which transforms caterpillars into butterflies or moths. The original Greek word means "to change into another form, to transfigure." I am very glad that God has given me the opportunity to be transformed into a completely different person than I was 10 years ago. Thankfully, I can be a different person than I was even a month, week or a day ago. The word *metamorphosis* is in the "present passive imperative form"; *present* meaning *now*, *passive* meaning the action is happening to the subject of the sentence (which is you and me), *imperative* meaning this is a command—not an option. In short, God commands us, right now, to be about the work of transformation. We have a choice: we can remain as everyone else around us and conform to the standards of the world or we can be transformed by renewing our minds. Hopefully we will choose to cooperate with God and become all that He has planned for us to be.

Please name something that you hope to become in Christ.

As with butterflies, the process of metamorphosis does not happen overnight; for people it can take months or even years. In reality, as Christians we should post a permanent "Under Transformation" sign on our lives as long as we are upon this earth.

How has God changed you over the past few years?

Perhaps you may be wondering how exactly we go about "renewing" our minds. Please read James 1:21-22 and record the answer below:

We renew our minds by reading, accepting and acting upon the truth of God's Holy Word. The KJV reads, "...and receive with meekness the *engrafted* word which is able to save your souls." When I saw the word *engrafted* I was taken back twenty-five years to my botany class in college. I remember learning from my professor about the process of *grafting* branches.

To *graft* a branch, first a living branch must be cut off from a stock tree or bush. Then, a site is prepared by cutting off a branch on the recipient tree. Next, the graft branch is placed where the original branch was lopped off. Through a tricky process, the graft branch is connected to the recipient in such a way that it can receive nourishment from the host tree or bush. The new branch will then begin to grow and produce new fruit. As Christians, if we wish to change, we must undergo the same process; lop off the old man with its corrupt habits, *engraft* the Word of God and the new man and begin to produce new fruit.

The word *engraft* also refers to something that can germinate, grow and produce. The Bible tells us that God's Word is living and active. As humans

our words are dead and barren. We cannot change our selves by our own words or wisdom. Trying to change ourselves under our own power is about as effective as attaching a dead graft to a living tree. But God allows us by the power of His Holy Spirit to engraft His words into our hearts and minds and produce a bumper crop of fruit.

Due to our own sin nature and sinful choices, every person on earth needs transformation and restoration. Do you need lots of change? Then you need lots of God's word. The greater the need for transformation the greater the need for God's word.

Why should we ask God to make us over into the image of Christ? Why go through all the work of deliverance, restoration and recovery? Why can't we just stay the way we are? In answer to this question, God brought the following scenario to my mind as I was working on Kelly Minter's "Nehemiah" Bible study.

Imagine that you are walking down a neighborhood street on a beautiful spring day in May. Like pieces of a patchwork quilt, tidy gardens decorate the lawns of many of the houses. You stroll past cozy bungalows complete with shutters and wrap-around porches. Here and there a white picket fence with a rose covered arbor adorns a brick walkway leading up to a front door. Suddenly, your eyes focus on a disturbing site in the distance: the charred remains of a house. Its windows are darkened by fire like so many black eyes, the glass blown out by a fiery explosion; the roof is partially caved in, its blackened timbers exposed for all to see. What was once a home filled with life and love is now an empty shell of a house whose treasures have been destroyed. All that remains are remnants and pieces of a former life scattered about the ground. Shocking. Painful. Searing. Amid the ruins, movement catches your eye. A woman walks about the burned out rooms; trying to ignore the carnage, she goes about her everyday routine striving to live a normal life amid the rubble and destruction.

Impossible, you might think; no one could live in a burned out house...yet so many of us do. We live devastated by the firestorms of life; our eyes are blackened by the consequences of our own sin or the sin of others. Shattered pieces of our hearts lay scattered about the ground. People are shocked by the carnage that they see. What if no one ever repairs the house? What if it is left, year after year among the beautiful houses, useless and burned—a monument to the devastation of the past. Like the house, we

stay stuck month after month, year after year, burned and broken; our lives a memorial to the work of the enemy.

But, we have a choice—Jesus offers to give us beauty for our ashes. Through the death and resurrection of Christ we may become a living witness to the healing power and grace of God! God promises to give us the power we need to rebuild the old ruins, to raise up the former desolations, to repair our ruined lives, even if they have been devastated generations.” Alleluia!

If you are serious about bringing change to your life, if you want to quit being a witness to the destructive nature of sin and let God be glorified through you, please implement the following recommendations.

Warning!—some of these will be painful and will require that you die to self.

- **Ask God to circumcise your heart.** Change must occur from the inside out. A right heart means right actions. Ask God to cut away from you heart anything that is sinful and leave only what is pure and healthy. This will mean letting go of some old habits and so-called “treasures” that are weighing you down. Let them go.
- **Ask God to break your heart.** Many years ago I struggled with a bad habit. No matter how hard I tried, I could not break free from this sinful pattern that threatened to ruin my life. I asked God to break my heart concerning this habit so I would no longer be drawn to it. God was faithful...He broke my heart and the habit. It was a long painful recovery but I give glory to God that I am now free from the sin that so easily beset me.
- **Ask God to give you a new heart attitude.** In order to be made over in the image of Christ we need a heart that beats only for Jesus; a heart that is undivided; a heart that desires only what He wants. Pray and ask God to help you desire only what He wants for you. You may be thinking that you don't honestly want what God desires for you, tell Him that. Ask Him to make you willing to have the desires of His heart.
- **Ask God to help you clean your heart.** If you are serious about transformation, you will be serious about what you allow to access

your heart. What are you watching at the movies? What are you viewing in your own living room? What are you listening to on the way to work? If your entertainment choices do not reflect the truth of God's Word you need to make some changes.

- **Ask God to help you strengthen your heart:**

- Pray: set a prayer time and stick to it.
- Study His Word: No excuses. You will make time for what is truly important.
- Memorize Scripture: Start with verses that resonate in your heart concerning this present season of your life. Write these verses on notecards and keep them with you to study over when you have a spare moment (mine are sitting next to me as I type).
- Fast: Tell God that you are serious about changing and ask Him to help you fast from food for one meal or for one day. When I am struggling for a spiritual break through, I often fast from my favorite desserts for a week or longer.

In the space below, please plan what changes you will implement in your life starting today:

In closing, remember you aren't making changes in your life to please you friends, yourself or your husband; you are making changes to please God. Also, please don't worry that you will "lose yourself" in this transformation process. It is only when we are made over in the image of Christ that we become who we truly were created to be.

In Christ you no longer have to be who you were;

you can be who you were meant to be.

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