



Freedom's Gate

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The Real You

“Who are you?” I bet your response was your first and last name, right? If I were to dig a little deeper you would tell me the name of your parents, where you live, and what school you go to. If I dug even deeper, you would tell me the friends you hang with and the fun stuff you’re involved in. All those things define who you are on the outside, but who are you on the inside?

Did you know that whether you are a believer or not, you were created in the image of God? The Bible says that God is a spirit. If God is a spirit, that must make you one too. The real you is a spirit, you have a soul and you live in a body.

The story in Genesis chapter 2 is about Adam and Eve eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent, who was the devil, had told Eve that if she ate of the tree she would not surely die. It looked like he was right. She went right ahead and ate of that tree and did not fall over dead. She found herself still standing there. Was God a liar? No, the Bible says God is not a liar, but the devil is the father of lies. The devil tricked her.

You see, Adam and Eve were created to live forever. When they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they took on the spirit of death. Death now entered the human race and spread to all men (Romans 5:12) and man became a sinner. With sin came death and now, what was designed to live forever would experience death. With sin came separation from God because God couldn’t look on sin. There had to be a sacrifice that would take care of the sin problem. The first thing God did was to provide a blood covering for Adam and Eve’s sin (Genesis 3:21).

From that time on, there were blood sacrifices to cover man’s sin until God sent Jesus. God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to shed His blood on our behalf. He was the final sacrifice. He shed His blood for all of man-kind and didn’t just ‘cover’ man’s sins (Old Testament), but He took them away (John 1:29). When we accept His sacrifice, we become saved or what the Bible says, “born again.”

When you become born again the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in you (and you **in Christ**). You are wall to wall Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-12). You change into a different person. You’re like a caterpillar that transforms into a butterfly. You become a totally new creature in Jesus. The old things about you pass away and you become brand new. It’s still you, you’re just completely different. You look the same on the outside, but you’re totally changed on the inside. The Spirit of God actually lives in you!

A caterpillar crawls around and eats whatever it is that caterpillars eat, but when it becomes a butterfly, it no longer eats the same food, nor does the same things. It doesn’t even look the same. It is completely transformed. It is born again into a new creature. That is similar to what happens to you. You were once without the Spirit of God. When God moved in, you became a new creature, the old you (sin nature) passed away. The new you is able to live free from your old lifestyle because you have the Spirit of God inside you!

So, why is it, if you are like a butterfly and a new creature in Jesus, that it still appears like you are the same old you doing the same old junk you did before you were saved? What is the problem? Why do you struggle with bad habits and bad thoughts? You know the

kind I’m talking about. The thoughts that if other people knew you had, you’d be ashamed.

The problem is you are still feeding on caterpillar food. You see yourself as unchanged. It has to do with your thinking. You have to line your thinking up with the Word of God. You have to, on purpose, see yourself the way God sees you and say about yourself what God has said about you (Romans 12: 1, 2). If you don’t change the way you think, you will continue to act like you always do. You will stay in the same rut doing the same old stuff you did before you were born again. You don’t magically change, it takes effort on your part to choose right thoughts and kick out the ones that are contrary to the Word of God.

The blood of Jesus was like ransom money. He bought you back and put you in right standing with God. The Bible calls that righteousness; it says you were made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. At the same time the Holy Spirit moved in, God also placed you in Jesus. God saw it just as if you were the one that died on the cross (Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20). You became full of love Himself. The only reason it doesn’t appear that way to you is #1 – you may not have understood it enough to know it and #2 – it has a lot to do with your thinking and coming in line with God. If you see yourself as always having a problem and “I can never change,” you won’t! You know the old saying, “You are what you eat.” It’s the same saying for your spirit, “You are what you think.”

When it becomes a butterfly, it no longer eats the same food.

When God placed you in Christ, you became a whole new creature. You have a **new disposition** and a **new mind**. Here in Indiana, we show cattle. When you get a show calf in for the first time, often they start out resistant and even somewhat nutty, but as you work with them, over time, they settle down and become quiet and easy to handle. In the process of teaching a calf to accept the halter and walk, we also begin working with their hair by combing, brushing, and blowing on them. What else are we doing besides working hair? We are renewing that calf’s mind. We’re causing that calf to understand that we’re not out to hurt it. Once it understands, it settles down and begins to trust us. Its whole disposition changes. Why? Because we renewed its mind. We changed that calf’s thinking from being scared and timid to relaxed and trusting.

It takes time to renew your mind just like it takes time to halter break a calf or train a pig to walk with a whip. Generally it doesn’t happen overnight. Neither will your mind be renewed overnight. You have to, on purpose, set aside time to focus your attention on the Word of God, just like we have to, on purpose, set a time each day to go to the barn and work with our animals.

The more you align yourself and your thinking with God, the more you will experience Him. It’s not that God is keeping things from you, He’s actually trying to get them to you. Start **receiving** the mind of Christ often and you will begin to see a change in your thoughts.

The next time someone asks, “Who are you?” remind yourself who you **really** are! You have Love, Himself living in you. You have the mind of Christ and His nature in you. If you will start saying what He says about you and on purpose choosing to think about His thoughts towards you, it will cause you to act like the new creature the Bible says you are. You will find yourself living the **new and living way** (Hebrews 10:20).

Joe Pranger will be teaching from the book “Sit, Walk, Stand” by Watchman Nee starting January 13, 2008 at First Baptist Church, 110 South Oak Street, Kendallville Indiana. 6 - 7:30 PM For more information you may contact our office at 260-349-0928 or email us at info@newandlivingway.org.

“Can we keep it?” was the question posed by our son and daughter. They are always finding some critter to keep. This time it was a caterpillar. Getting out a quart jar, we went out and found some twigs and leaves. After covering the jar, we set it on the kitchen table and the kids watched their new ‘pet’ eat, eat and eat some more. To our amazement, a couple mornings later we had a cocoon on the twig.

Eventually, the cocoon lost its appeal. The jar made its way to the back of the counter and stayed there for a couple months. Many times I thought to throw it out and get it off the counter but just never got to it. We thought it was dead, it won’t come

out, it’s been too long, just throw it out, etc.

Don't Throw Out The Jar



By Bethany Days

December 21st, my daughter came running in, “Mom, look. You’ve got to come see this,” she exclaimed very excitedly. In total amazement (again) there it was. A big beautiful butterfly in our jar. It was gorgeous and we were quite excited. The Lord showed us many things in watching this butterfly.

Are there things in your life that you feel are dead - no hope, beyond repair, finished? Do you feel like you’ll never be able to open your wings and fly? Do you feel like a work was started only to come to an immature finish? Don’t throw out the jar – God’s not finished yet.

I can still see a picture of our oldest son in my mind when he was about three years old. Like every other little boy, he wanted to be like his dad. It could be 95 in the shade, but if his dad was wearing jeans, he wanted to wear jeans. If Joe (his dad), was leaning against a fence with one leg crossed over the other, Chris would stand the same way. We would chuckle over it, but really, when you think about it, it should be that way. After all, **like father, like son.**

There is a story of a father and two sons in Luke chapter 15:11-32. Most of us know this story as “The Prodigal Son.” Over the years, *most* of the teachings I have heard on this portion of scripture have been about the wayward son, a *few* on the older son and even *less* on the father.

The emphasis on the prodigal son would always be about his foolishness, first in demanding all of his inheritance and then in squandering it on riotous living. All of this only to find himself reduced to living with the pigs! Then we see in the story that he *came to his senses!* In verse 18, he says, “I will arise and go to my father and will **say** to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’” I remember thinking, after reading this story many times, “I wonder if his repentance was real or if he just got hungry enough, he would say anything just to get some relief.” (As if that mattered! We shall soon see that it *mattered not* to the Father.)

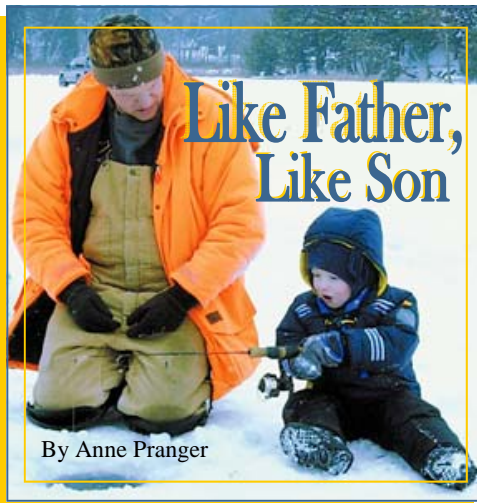
Even though I could at times relate to the prodigal son, I related more to the older son who prided himself on his faithfulness to his father. Check out his response to the return of the younger brother in verses 29 and 30: “So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat; that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’” Ah, yes, the *holier than thou* attitude! How quickly that can arise in our flesh.

There is good teaching material in viewing both of the sons. For the man who has *been away from the Lord and needs to return*, the story of the prodigal son speaks to his heart and gives him hope that God will welcome him back. Then for the one who relates to the older son, he is *convicted of his pride and looks for an altar to make things right with God*. I am not making light of either view, but these *can easily be* a picture of the flesh and John 6:63 tells us the flesh profits nothing.

There is a higher way in this story and that is of the father. The father’s heart is so very different from each son. Luke 15:20 says, “And he (son) arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and *ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.*” More of the father’s heart is revealed in verses 22-24: “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they *began* to be merry.”

You see, both sons are a picture of the law – one sits in the seat of judgment and the other sits in the seat of unworthiness. Jesus Christ delivered us from both and gave us a new law to live by, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. “When the prodigal came home, Grace met him and embraced him. Law said, stone him! – Grace said, embrace him! Law said, smite him! – Grace said, kiss him! Law went after him and bound him; Grace said, loose him and let him go! Law tells us how crooked we are; Grace comes and makes us straight.” (Dwight L. Moody)

Who are you really? Are you the prodigal son or the older son? No! You are neither; they are a picture of your flesh man. That heritage died and you were given a new heritage and a new Father, One who adopted you that you might call Him, Abba Father! It’s time for us to shake off the old and put on the new. It is time to enjoy our *new Parent* and look and walk like our Father. It is time for others to look at us and say, “**Like Father, like Son.**”



By Anne Pranger