



# God's Power To Change Your Life

## PART I

**READ:** Mark 7:31-37

In the gospel we hear the story of Jesus healing the man who is deaf and dumb. This story chronicles the continuing evolution in the mindset of those who encounter Jesus. Their hearts are changed as they begin to see him in a messianic light.

Change is part of everybody's life. It simply can't be avoided. Over the summer I was talking to a young man who was lamenting that he wanted to change the course of his life but did not know how. I think today's gospel gives us a clue on how God can be a part of a positive change in our lives.

First, we need to encounter Jesus and believe in the power he has to transform our lives. The bystanders were amazed at Jesus' power. The most important thing in life is *knowing* Christ and experiencing the *power* of his resurrection in our own lives. The Bible teaches us that this power can cancel out our past, conquer our problems and change our circumstances. That same power is available to us today *if* we desire it.

Second, we must be open to the power of the resurrection in our own lives. Much like the man in the gospel, we have to accept Christ's power. The deaf man could have turned his back on Jesus and refuse to be healed. It is a two way street. Christ has the power to transform our lives, the question is, do we want it?

When we accept Christ, he wipes the slate clean and gives us a fresh start. We can put aside our past and start over. Each day we have to accept this challenge to start a new by following Christ's example and letting him transform us. It can be a slow process at times. But when we trust God and put our lives in his healing hands he gives us the power to conquer our problems. It doesn't necessarily mean we will receive miraculous healing, like the man in the gospel, but it does mean that when we rely on Christ's resurrection promise, nothing can overcome us. Over time we will begin to witness the power of Christ positively changing our circumstances. This transition can be a difficult journey, but well worth the struggle. Christ offers us the power to change our lives if we are willing to "be opened".

**Reflection:** What part of my past do I need Jesus to cancel out? What type of problems do I have that need to be conquered? What circumstances do I need to change? How can I let Jesus' power transform these areas of my life?

## PART II

**READ:** Mark 8:27-38

In the gospel we hear the story of Peter's confession of faith whereby he declares Jesus to be the Son of God. This is Peter's personal and powerful testimony of Christ's divinity.

We have seen how encountering Jesus and being open to his saving power are the key principles in transforming our lives. It is our profession of faith in Christ which allows Jesus to change our lives. He asks each of us the same question, "who do you say that I am?" Jesus has no power to make us into the best versions of ourselves if he remains a spiritual teacher, a prophet, a politician or a nice guy. Rather, it is our belief in Jesus, which opens up his transforming power in our lives.

God uses a two-step process to change us. The first part is our initial profession of faith. This is the turning point when we fully commit our lives to Christ, just like Peter did. We are not the same anymore. It is a new beginning with a big difference.

The second part is being open to the power of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew's account of this story Jesus tells Peter that it is the Spirit of God, which has revealed this truth to him. That same Spirit is offered each of us. When we accept Christ we are filled with God's power. It's like a new set of batteries. We now have a new nature, which includes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit controls your life, he will produce nine positive characteristics in you: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

So what prevents us from changing? It's procrastination. Peter makes this bold proclamation and then immediately gets rebuked. He learns about Jesus' plan to redeem humanity and instantly puts on the breaks. It's one thing to know Jesus can make your life better, it's another thing to let him begin that redemptive process. But Jesus will give you the power to get started and the power to keep going. He will give you the strength to overcome your fears. He has the power to make changes in your life now. We must be bold enough to take that step of faith and proclaim that Jesus "is the Messiah".

**Reflection:** In what ways am I procrastinating when it comes to following Jesus? How can I overcome this temptation?

“Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Above all, clothe yourselves with LOVE, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”  
~ Colossian 3:12,14 ~

### PART III

**READ:** Mark 9:30-37

In the gospel we continue to see Jesus’ challenge of personal renewal unfold. By drawing a young child to himself, Jesus teaches his disciples a pivotal lesson. When we welcome a child, we welcome not only Jesus, but also the fullness of God into our lives. But, like the disciples, we get distracted and fail to see God’s presence in our daily activities. We don’t recognize the opportunities to be more like Jesus.

Recognizing Jesus is not easy. It takes work. God has a part in our spiritual growth, and we also have a part. God does his part by providing the power; we must do ours by flipping the switch to turn on the power. We flip the switch by recognizing Jesus and committing our lives to becoming his followers. When we encounter Jesus in this way, the Holy Spirit comes into our lives to empower us and direct us (Rom 8:9-11).

The Spirit of God uses the Bible and the Church to make the child of God (you) more like the Son of God (Jesus). If you are serious about changing your life you are going to have to start reading the Bible and becoming part of a parish community. Although we can recognize Jesus in many places, there is no greater opportunity to discover what Jesus is like than reading the Bible. The Bible tells us that Jesus’ life on earth embodied the nine fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. As disciples, we allow Jesus to form these fruits within us. In this way we become more like Christ.

God’s number one purpose for your life is to make you like Jesus. This means that God uses every day circumstances to transform us. Each moment is an opportunity to become more like Jesus, a chance to let God’s power change your life. But the questions remain: will we be able to recognize these occasions? And will we have the courage in that moment to seize them? God can use every situation in our lives for personal growth. That’s his part. Our part is being open to his power. The power to change your life is there for the taking, and it starts when we “welcome” Jesus.

**Reflection:** Which fruit of the spirit am I most in need of? What daily activities challenge me to grow? What is my biggest spiritual challenge? How can I become more like Jesus in my daily life?

### PART IV

**READ:** Mark 10:17-30

In the gospel we hear the story of the man who questioned Jesus about eternal life. Impressed with the man’s religious conviction, Jesus challenges him to make a deeper commitment. Christ presents him with a choice; sadly, one he walks away from.

Spiritual growth is not automatic. Change is a matter of choice. When we talk about God’s power to change our lives we are talking about making a choice for Jesus. The man in the gospel is presented with a choice and so are we. What we choose determines whether we walk away or go deeper. So what should we choose?

First, we must choose carefully what we think about. The man in the gospel was worried about his possession and not what God was asking of him. Proverbs 4:23 warns us, “Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.” Change begins with a new way of thinking. It requires a conversion of heart accompanied by an act of repentance. In Greek the word repent is *metanoia*, and it means to change your mind or perspective. Jesus’ challenges the man to change his thinking. The challenge is to stop thinking thoughts that are getting us nowhere and start thinking thoughts that get us where we want to go. That place is heaven.

Second, we must choose to meditate on the word of God and put it into practice. Although the man knew the law he did not practice it. When Jesus challenged him to do so, he walked away. Psalm 1 says that those who “meditate” on God’s word will “yield fruit.” Reading the Bible will make us fruitful and productive people – people of love, joy, peace, patience and the rest of the fruits of the Spirit. We will become more like Jesus. But meditation is not just reading, it is digesting, being formed and letting “the word of Christ dwell richly in you” (Col. 3:16). In order to do this we must spend five to ten minutes every day praying and reading scripture. As you do this, you will start to see the fruits of the spirit develop in your daily activities, releasing God’s power into your life.

Like the man in the gospel, the choice to change our lives is in our own hands. God provides the opportunities but we must seize them. If we want God’s power to change our lives, we must positively respond to Jesus’ invitation to “come, follow me.”

**Reflection:** How can I follow Jesus more closely?