

Understanding the Predispositions of my Human Nature (*Identifying the enemy, will help me to increasingly depend less on self.*)

New believers often say, "I thought when I became a Christian I wasn't going to be tempted anymore", or "Some of the things I used to do as an unbeliever I thought would disappear, but instead I find I'm still capable of doing them!"

I will always have temptation and will need to deny my fleshly nature. I must understand that my old sinful human nature has not been improved. But there is good news! So let's study this together.

Do you look around in church services thinking that the Christian life is a breeze for everyone else, but not for you? Everyone else is clapping and smiling as they sing in church, making it easy to conclude that *those* Christians do not have the struggles with sin that I have.

Maybe you think the apostle Paul didn't have to struggle with sin the way you do. After all, he was "super spiritual". It's easy to conclude that my sinful nature is different than other believers', or their sinful nature is less wicked than my sinful nature. But the truth is **we all have the same sinful nature**, inherited from Adam.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.

Doesn't this verse mean my sinful nature is gone; it is dead? No. My old sinful human nature does not cease to exist. It is not annihilated or overhauled, nor does God make it new. God's provision for victory over my sinful nature was to implant in me His divine nature in the Person of the Holy Spirit. By giving me His new nature, He freed me so I can walk in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is called "**abiding**".

Galatians 5:16 I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Ok, if all this is true, why do I still have this predisposition to listen to and follow my sinful human nature? Think about how during my entire life I have focused on behaving properly, from my earliest childhood until I became a Christian. God now wants to change my focus **from outward behavior to inward transformation**, because **as I allow Him to transform my inward convictions and values, my behavior will always follow**.

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this age, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

For inward transformation to take place, I must understand the two dynamics of **Outward Behavior** and **Inward Transformation**. Otherwise, I will be dismayed by temptations and feelings and desires that I thought I would no longer have, and I won't understand what is happening. That is why so many new believers think "I will no longer be tempted to sin, because God is going to make my life a joy and I'll always be at peace and **God is going to do it all**."

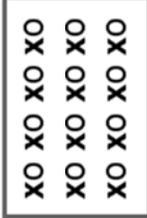
Worse yet, Christians may say, "I'm so bad that I'm beyond repair", or "I tried the Christian life and I thought I was going to have a joyful life with God, but instead I see these same desires welling up in me, so I must not be saved."

At birth my mind was like an empty whiteboard



My learning process (from family, friends, TV, internet, social media, the world's culture, teachers, Satan, etc.)

Acquired understanding about this life, values, etc.



My worldview does not disappear at salvation

God never forces me, but as I choose to be teachable, He will use His Word and other means to gradually illuminate areas of my understanding that He wants to alter. (Sanctification)

Spiritual Growth (Sanctification) results in increasingly more Spiritual fruit. Because of the change in my worldview, my choices begin to be motivated by love and truth and not selfishness. Through it I am blessed.

P H Y S I C A L D E A T H



child

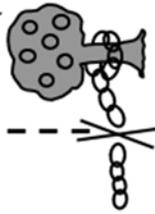
My Predispositions Toward Self-Dependence

3 Areas of Independence from God

- 1) **Strength** (My body & its appetites, including works & behavior)
- 2) **Wisdom** (My understanding & knowledge)
- 3) **Wealth** (My possessions)

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Slave of the sinful human nature
(spiritually dead in relation to God)



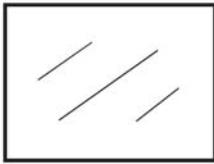
If I do not understand the unchanged tendencies of my old sinful human nature, I will most likely have the same problem that the Galatians had – trusting in their own goodness and works, even as believers.

Galatians 3:1-3 ...Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh?

I am freed from the power of the sinful nature and ALIVE TO GOD!
(dead = in relation to the sinful human nature)

Now the sinful human nature is like a "deposed dictator" (powerless, yet continually claiming to have authority).

Let's analyze this diagram ("Understanding the Predispositions of my Sinful Human Nature"), because identifying the enemy and its tactics will help me to increasingly depend less on myself and more on God.



1. At birth my mind was like an empty whiteboard. There's nothing on the "whiteboard" when I am born. I have not yet acquired any values or convictions.

2. As I grow, I acquire my convictions, values and perspective of life from my parents, friends, school, TV, internet, social media, etc. (This is true for whatever culture we are raised in). We call this our **worldview**. All these external influences shape my understanding of life. These values or convictions (or lack thereof) are processed in my mind.



I take this worldview / value system (good and bad) into my Christian life. This worldview does not disappear at the Cross.

(NOTE: Some of my worldview and understanding is contrary to God; some is not. In the diagram, the X's represent "understanding that is contrary to God", and the O's represent "understanding that is not necessarily contrary to God".

3. When I became a Christian, the Holy Spirit came into my life and He wants me to follow His Truth, and not be conformed to what the world says. He wants to transform (modify) my worldview to conform to His Truth.

John 16:13-15 When the Spirit of truth comes, **He will guide you** into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also **declare to you** what is to come. **He will glorify Me**, because He will take from what is Mine and **declare it to you**....,

4. God never forces me, but as I choose to be teachable, He will use His Word and other means to gradually illuminate areas of my understanding that He wants to alter.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth;
Ephesians 4:22-24 You took off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires; you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; you put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.

But I have to cooperate with Him by allowing Him to make those changes. Psalms 63:1 (David wrote) *God, ... I **eagerly** seek You. I **thirst** for You....*

This process of transformation and spiritual growth is called "**sanctification**" and results in increasingly more spiritual fruit. As my worldview is changed, my choices begin to be motivated by love and truth and not selfishness. Through it I am blessed.

XO XO XO XO XO
XO XO XO XO XO
XO XO XO XO XO
XO XO XO XO XO

5. The next challenge: Who is in charge of deciding what needs to be changed, how to make the changes and in what order?

Left on my own, I can easily conclude that God leaves it up to me to make these decisions.

John 14:26 Jesus said, “But the Counselor, **the Holy Spirit**—the Father will send Him in My name—**will teach you all things** and remind you of everything I have told you.”

John 16:13 Jesus said “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.”

One huge temptation to avoid is the assumption that imitating the behavior of other believers will certainly lead to a life that is pleasing to God.

I can conclude that these people have already read the Bible and therefore know what needs to be changed. I can assume that they have allowed God to use His Word to change their worldview, so then I can take a shortcut and model my behavior after them rather than relying on the Bible.

Theoretically, that should be true *if* the other believers are faithfully following God's Word. After all, the Apostle Paul said, “*Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11:1). If I imitate Paul then I theoretically should be following Christ because Paul is following Christ and I'm following Paul.

Why is this such a risky assumption? Because many older believers have probably made the same error - following their peers who had followed their peers. And so the process is duplicated again and again, resulting in many churches being filled with believers who may or may not be following God's Word.

Think of this example: Have you ever made a photocopy of a document? And then duplicated the copy? And then another copy of the last copy? After 5 or 6 such duplications, how clear is the last copy as compared to the original?

Spiritual mentoring can help me understand how to rely on the Holy Spirit's inward transformation rather than copying the behavior of others.

XO GO XO XO XO
XO GO XO GO XO
XO GO XO GO XO
XO GO GO XO GO

How shall I grow?: The Holy Spirit is the One in charge of making the changes in my value system, because I don't really know on my own what is pleasing to God and what is not pleasing to God. In this graphic, the G's represent areas of my understanding (worldview) that God has changed to His perspective.

“As a Christian is transformed in his mind and is made more like Christ, he comes to approve and desire God's will, not his own will for his life. Then he discovers that God's will is what is good for him, and that it pleases God, and is complete in every way. It is all he needs. But only by being renewed spiritually can a believer ascertain, do, and enjoy the will of God.” (Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.



6. From the moment I became a believer, until the day I die, God is at work in me, changing my perspective of life. This process will never stop while I am living here on earth. This means that I am never going to get to the place in my Christian life where God doesn't want to make changes in me -- so that I can become all He wants me to be. He always wants me to continue to grow.

In battle it helps to identify the enemy and his tactics. In our spiritual battle, understanding my predispositions toward self-dependence will help me to increasingly depend less on myself and learn to depend more on God, with the Holy Spirit guiding me.



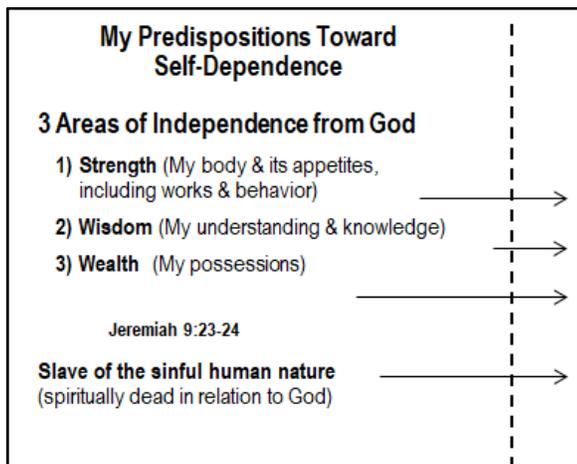
7. My sinful human nature has a propensity towards self-dependence in three major areas, and God wants to illuminate these areas.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his **wisdom** or the strong man boast of his **strength** or the rich man boast of his **riches**, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD,... (NIV)

The world system (enemy) promotes independence from God, and Satan looks for ways to deceive me into believing that I can live independently of God and be satisfied.

In the Garden of Eden Satan deceived Adam and Eve, in essence, persuading them, “God made you, but God doesn't have your best interest at heart, and here are some things that will truly satisfy you, independent of God”. **Adam and Eve chose to seek happiness independent of God.**

The three areas of independence are:



1. **STRENGTH: My body and its appetites, including works and behavior.**

- Concerning the body, take notice of how the world promotes beauty and physical strength as being a source of happiness.

2. **WISDOM: My understanding and knowledge.**

- In the realm of understanding the world promotes the idea that having more knowledge will make me happier. If I get more degrees and more knowledge I will be more satisfied.

3. **WEALTH: My possessions.**

- “The more possessions I have the happier I will be.” Unfortunately, no matter how much “stuff” I have, I will not find true happiness, because Jesus says my happiness does not consist of the things I possess. (Matthew 6:19-24)

People go after these different things, attempting to fill the void in their soul, when God is the only One that can truly satisfy us.

Verse 24 of Jeremiah 9 says we should “*understand and know God*”. That “knowing” means that I know God’s heart and I know Him personally, which speaks of more than just salvation.

Just like in a healthy husband-wife relationship, the more time they spend together throughout the years, the better they know each other, learning the likes and dislikes of each other. Their relationship flourishes and becomes more intimate. That's how it should be between God and me.

Some might ask, "Should I not strive towards a healthy body, or is it wrong to acquire possessions, or gather more knowledge?" These things are not bad in themselves, but they become a problem when I give them a higher priority than God intends. Having knowledge, a healthy body and possessions can become sinful if they **replace** God's priorities.

God wants to be the most important thing in my life, and He wants to determine to what degree I should pursue any of these three areas. **God wants to be #1 in my life with everything else falling into place under His authority.**

If I want to possess something regardless of what God wants for me, it can become sin. But it pleases God when I ask Him, "God, I want 'this' and if it's acceptable to You, and if You determine that this would be good for me, then I would like to have it."

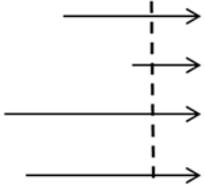
God wants me to let Him do the choosing of what things are best for me because God alone knows what is best for me and what He wants to do with my life.



8. The Good News of Salvation: Before the cross I was a slave of the sinful nature. I was dead in relation to God (separated from Him). At the moment of the cross I received the Holy Spirit.



9. The arrows in the graphic (beneath the cross) represent the tendencies I had before salvation, which continue after I become a believer. (the predisposition toward sin)



The great news is that while these tendencies and predispositions of the sinful nature don't change, I am no longer bound or a slave to the sinful nature. I am freed from the sinful nature's power. **God's provision for me to walk in victory is the Holy Spirit.**

Galatians 3:1-3 ... Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? (NIV)

If I do not understand the unchanged tendencies of my old sinful human nature, I will most likely have the same problem that the Galatians had – trusting in their own goodness and works, even as believers. Galatians 3:1-3 also helps me to understand this predisposition towards self-independence from God.

Paul is asking the Galatians if when they received Christ as their Savior was it because they were doing the right things (behavior) or did their salvation come through faith? He knew they would know the answer was by faith.

We all have the same tendency -- to expect our behavior to go from bad to good now that we are believers, and to think that my correct behavior is all that God cares about. Yes, God does want the right behavior, BUT not because I'm focused on the right behavior, but because **the right behavior is a product of my inward transformation.**

Paul says to the Galatian believers and to me, “Just as you were unable to produce acceptable behavior as an unbeliever, so as a believer you are still incapable of producing acceptable behavior in your own strength.”

The secret is to stop focusing on good behavior. This sounds counter-intuitive! God wants to be the focus. As we desire to get to know God, He changes our inward perspective of life and that is what is going to produce the behavior that is acceptable to Him.

Caution: The (same) sinful nature is like a deposed dictator, powerless, yet continually claiming to have authority. It is never going to change until the day I die. The sinful nature is always going to be trying to persuade me that IT is what is in control of my life. But it is not – unless I allow it.

10. In order to not allow the sin nature to dominate my life, I have to walk in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, which is called “abiding”. As I am abiding and walking in the Spirit I will not fulfill the desire of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16) *“I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”*

Condition of “Abiding”
The normal Christian Life
“walking in the Spirit”



I am either submitted to the Holy Spirit or submitted to the sinful nature. There is no grey area in this matter. I am submitted to someone or something.

When I am out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit I am automatically submitted to the sinful nature.

When I am walking in the Spirit (abiding), the sinful nature is not reigning in my life. But at any given moment I can allow myself to become out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit, at which time I will find myself under the power of the sinful nature.

While on this earth I am never going to get to the place in my Christian life where God doesn't want to continue transforming my understanding in some area so that I see things from His perspective. Jesus always saw life from God's perspective and God is molding me into the image of His Son!

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female.

2 Corinthians. 3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (NIV)

11. So how do I allow God to continue to transform me? By getting to know Him more intimately every day. (see Lesson 1-2)

- a) Listening to God through reading **His Word**
- b) Conversing with God in **prayer**
- c) **Meeting regularly** with other believers for teaching, prayer, Bible study, accountability and encouragement
- d) **Being continually aware that He is present**