
Becoming Christlike – New Testament Application of Old Testament

NT 6 – Reflections on Reflexives

We are going to continue with our discussion of three major topics:

- Reflexives
- The Fruit of the Spirit, Self-Control
- The Parable of the Sower.

Last Session: Introduction to Reflexives

Today: Reflections on the Reflexives.

Reflexive Definition

A reflexive is simply a grammatical construction where the noun, the subject performs the action of the verb upon himself or herself.

When God says Christ humbled himself, he performed the action of humility by himself upon himself.

He humbled himself.

He gave himself.

He made himself.

He emptied himself.

Each of these is a reflexive. There are many reflexives in the epistles. These help us to understand what it means to be Christlike... how we can actually emulate him, imitate him, and do what he did.

He gave himself because he emptied himself, He made himself. He humbled himself. We can do the same.

49 years ago, I attended a weekend seminar called the “1st Century Church in the 20th.” It was 1974 so at that time we were still looking forward to the 21st Century. This was a class on the Book of Acts which records what the 1st century church did and how they lived so dynamically with such great power.

At that time, I prayed, “God, I really want to know not only what they did, but how they did it. How was the Word so dynamic? How did signs, miracles, and wonders take place? How were people’s lives transformed? Please teach me that! I really want to know how that happened so that not only can I do it, but I can share it with others.”

God has led me along. He has taught me. However, it has taken me quite a long time to fully grasp and understand it. I am excited to share the greater insight that I now have.

I normally arise at 5:00 am to feed and walk the dog. Of late, I awake at 4:30 am with my mind already churning with ideas and inspiration regarding this topic. I get up and begin writing and thinking and putting things together—that’s even half an hour before the dog finally gets up.

My heart's desire is to share this in a coherent fashion so that people can understand it and run with it. That is the source of my excitement right now. I may be repetitive on certain things, and I apologize for that. Please pray to the Lord for His spirit to work within you so that you can grasp this.

It is transformational. It is life changing.

Last spring we did a series on growth to maturity, transformation, and genuine discipleship. In that series we spent a lot of time on the predicament that we're in. We saw that we live in a corrupt world. We have our flesh to deal with (meaning our self-centered nature). On top of that, there is a devil that opposes us.

Understanding these three current topics: reflexives, self-control and the Parable of the Sower, will serve to assist in the transformation we are seeking.

Last session we talked about the fact that Christ emptied himself. We covered an introduction to the reflexives.

Philippians 2

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,^a **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,^b

He did not count equality with God, a thing to be grasped, or something to be used to his own advantage.

7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,^c being born in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So, we may think, "He was the Messiah. And yeah, he didn't use things to his own advantage, and he emptied himself and took the form of a servant." But then you ask, "What about me? How does that apply to me? What do I do? I am not the Messiah, so how does this look in application?"

Here is an example. There are many things we might think we deserve, or that we're entitled to, or that we earned, or that we are owed.

"I Have Earned It" Example of Emptying Oneself

Here is a thought process: I worked my whole life and made a lot of money. I saved it, so now I deserve to enjoy it. That would be something we might decide not to use to our advantage. That is something we could empty ourselves of and instead declare.... I am going to take the form of a servant. I'm not going to take advantage of what I have or who I am in terms of how the world views these hefty savings I have amassed. Instead, I will choose to empty myself and take the form of the servant.

Consider CT Studd who was a very prominent athlete in Great Britain and very successful. He could have had a great prosperous life with the adulation and glory of fans in Great Britain.

Instead, he gave his life to the Lord, became a missionary, and wrote that great poem: Only One Life, T'will Soon Be Passed.

Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Those lines are repeated many times in his poem. This is so true!

So indeed, Christ humbled himself. How do I humble myself?

As we come to the Word we realize, OK, God is smarter, Christ's way is better, and my way even if I think I'm wise and smarter is is not the best way. I'm going to humble myself and be obedient to the Word.

Christ learned how he was to live from the Old Testament scriptures. He applied it as a model for us. We learn from his example in the scriptures. The epistles tell us how to live like he did in this day and time.

Christ Called People to Die (...to self)

It is hard to grasp that Christ actually called people to die. We read this in John 12 during our last two sessions. We need that as a foundation for this. Truly, the epistles teach us how to die.

You might say, "I really want to live! Why are you talking about teaching us how to die?"

The answer is because the scriptures turn everything upside down! By dying to self, we are not talking about physically dying. It is a paradox but **by dying to self, we're able to live the fullness of what God has called us to.**

I went through the Epistles and made a list of the reflexives that we will cover. As we consider each one of them, it is going to paint a picture of what Christlikeness really looks like.

There are other ways to achieve Christlikeness, but I believe this is one very simple way to grasp the picture.

- Deny yourself.
- We are to clothe ourselves with the Word.
- We are to adorn ourselves.
- We are to humble ourselves.

The common word in each one of these is **self**. This is what we are to do ourselves **in response to what Christ accomplished for us.**

The tendency is for so many Christians to say, well, Christ did it all and I'm going to enjoy life and enjoy him and wait for the return of Christ.

Consider now the life of the Apostle Paul. He didn't do that! He said imitate me because I imitate Christ. He worked hard to be obedient to God and to reach out and help other people. **It is a free will decision that we make out of gratitude. Because of our appreciation we say, "I want to maximize my time here on this planet and do the best that I can for God. In order to do that I need to be obedient."**

A List of Reflexives in the Epistles

This list of reflexives is one great way to start becoming Christlike.

The Epistles say:

- we are to devote ourselves,
- we are to watch ourselves,
- we are to keep ourselves unstained from the world,
- we are to examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith,
- we are to test ourselves,
- we are to give ourselves,
- we are to cleanse ourselves from all unrighteousness,
- we are to sanctify ourselves,
- we are to immerse ourselves,
- we are to keep ourselves in the love of God,
- we are to keep ourselves pure.

These are phenomenal reflexives that will help us in our discipleship. Did you realize all of these were in the epistles?

The Foundation for Fruit From Christ's Life was His Death

Before we go into detail on each one of those, I want to reiterate a couple of things that we read in John 12. **Christ showed that the foundation for fruit from his life was going to be in his death. That was pivotal to the apostles in the 1st century church.**

Remember, they didn't have any Internet!

They didn't have a lexicon.

They didn't have a concordance.

They didn't have a Bible Dictionary.

They didn't have a Bible Atlas.

They didn't have printed devotionals.

They didn't have the Gospels written.

They didn't have the Epistles written.

They simply went on the words of Christ.

I started with John 12 as a foundation for John 13–17 which everyone needs to read to see the words of Jesus that the apostles heard. These are the words they utilized to live their lives for the first 20 years of the 1st century church. They lived by them and taught them to others. By simply doing that they turned the world upside down!

This should scream volumes to us about 2023 and 2024. There are so many ministries that focus so much on academics, on study, and translations, and producing more books. BUT how

much of the fruit of the Spirit are they manifesting? And how many of the nine manifestations are they operating?

We can be so absorbed with research and publication that we forget the true purpose of everything. We need all those things and I'm blessed by the work that everyone does. But we need to understand and remember that there's an end purpose to this.

During our "Growth to Maturity" series we talked about dying to self and our identification with Christ in his death. At the time, Watchman Nee was brought up. Once he recognized this, he ran through the streets shouting, "I'm dead! I'm dead!" He rejoiced to realize the necessity of dying to self. He did not run away from it.

You look at our culture today and everything is about *carpe diem* and living this life to the fullest. Everyone wants to extend his life as many years as possible. (Of course, I'm all for living as long as we can.) But the idea is that we want to redeem the time and fill each day as much as possible with serving God and glorifying Him as well as being holy and being examples to others. Applying these reflexives will enable us to do this. Doing so is a way to learn how to die to self and die to the world.

Galatians 5:22,23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, **self-control**; against such things there is no law. **24** And those who belong to Christ Jesus **have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

We want to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires so that we exhibit the fruit of the spirit.

A huge key in all the reflexives stated is they all talk about "self."

Think back to the time of Christ on earth with his disciples. Christ said to them, "**Deny yourself and follow me.**" In that context he said, "He who will save his life, will lose it; he who will lose his life for my sake will find it."

They ALL wanted to do that. They all said they would do that. In John 13–17 they said to Christ essentially, "Hey, look, we will die for you; we will not deny you."

Now think of the word "deny" again in respect to deny self. Christ had said, "Deny yourself, and follow me." They said in response, "We will not deny you." They meant it. Scripture records that they all said the same...not just Peter...they all said the same thing.

But at that point they only had the old self, the human nature, the body and soul person without the spirit of God born within them. When it came time for them to live it out, deny self and not deny Christ, what did they all do? Peter denied him openly, but then it says they all fled. They all did deny him. They weren't able to make good on their promise to go with him to the death. They had promised to remain with him till the death. They weren't able to follow through and do it. They weren't able to deny self, even though they wanted to and had committed to do it.

What Changed with the Day of Pentecost?

The day of Pentecost came and there was a “new self” available to all who would believe. The gift of holy spirit was poured out. They now had Christ in them, the hope of glory. They had God in Christ in them! They were now able to deny self. When you are a new man, you have a new self. With that new self working within you, you can exercise the fruit of the spirit of self-control and make the old self unemployed. You can simply live by your new self.

That is the aim here of all I will be teaching! You may be eager to get to it.

Please be patient. I am laying the foundation so that when we look at these things, we can envision ourselves actually doing this.

Notice in each one of these reflexives where it says “self,” that means each individual must make the decision by free-will to say, “God, I want this. I want to humble myself, empty myself. I want to devote myself, give myself. I want to purify myself, cleanse myself. I want to clothe myself with the Word in order to live out my new identity. I want to live in my new self by reckoning the old self dead.”

What is going to assist us with the self-control necessary to carry out all these reflexives?

Remember, they weren’t able to do it in the Gospels, regardless of their heart and their intentions, but they were able to after Pentecost. We have the same spirit of God in us as the apostles did in the 1st century church. We too can live it out by dying to self.

We need to Embrace this Death to Self

This is totally contrary to everything in the world. It seems up-side-down, but it is actually right-side-up. It is written here in the scripture.

When Peter and the apostles were really pressed, when their flesh was pressured, they responded with self-preservation. That’s the nature of our flesh. We want comfort, we want ease, we want relief, we want rest, we don’t want threats. They weren’t able to follow through regardless of what they had said they would do.

Understanding this will help us on the path to transformation and living out what is available.

99% of the Christians that we know have the spirit of God in them but they look no different from the world. So, what is missing? They have the spirit of God in them. They have the mind of Christ available to them. They have the enablement, the ability to walk as he walked. But what are they/we not doing? **We’re not reckoning the old self dead and learning how to immerse ourselves in the Word so that our our physical mind aligns with the spiritual mind of Christ that we have within.**

What Did Christ Know About Death from the Old Testament?

Consider what Christ saw concerning death when he read the Old Testament. He saw that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Abraham was willing to put him to death. His son, Isaac, was willing to die at the behest of his father. Isaac so trusted his father that he was willing to die. Hebrews 11 records that Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac because he so trusted God and believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead.

Hebrews 11:17-19

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, **18** of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” **19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead**, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Do we also so believe in the truth of the Word that by putting ourselves and our old nature to death, we can live according to that new nature which is unseen? As we do it, as we prove it, we’ll see the 9 manifestations in operation. We’ll see the fruit of the spirit in our lives. That is the newness of life that is promised. It is such an enormous opportunity.

Sounds Like A Lot of Work

Some may think this sounds like a lot of work. It is a response to the work of Christ. It’s a response to what he did out of love. This love of Christ compels us. Then we can fulfil our destiny. We can be victorious. We can live out what God has called us to do.

In Colossians 1:29 the word that Paul uses to describe his striving is “*agónizomai*” which sounds a lot like “agony.” Consider what Paul went through in order to get the gospel to people and help them grow to maturity as well.

agónizomai (from **73** /*agón*, "conflict/struggle," the root of the English term, "agonize") – properly, to *struggle*, like engaged in an intense athletic contest or warfare

We can do the same. It comes down to our believing in and living for the return of Christ. Doing this enables us to be Christlike, to be true disciples, to follow Christ. It enables us to fulfill God’s desire for us to walk worthy of the calling. We want to walk worthy of God who has called us to His glory and virtue. We want to walk worthy of the Lord. We want to walk worthy of the Word. This is how we can do that.

As we study each reflexive, we’ll look at what does it say? What does it mean? What does it look like? How can I actually do that? (So...if you have any friends who want to engage in this program on how to die, you know you can send them to these teachings.)

Glory In Death

In John 12 we saw that Christ said his **glory was going to be in his death**. This again, is totally contrary to what everybody thinks. People in the world think, OK, glory is sports and winning the Super Bowl. Sports has gotten so pervasive in our culture today. Some people declare their identity as a fan of a certain team. Our culture is all about winning and being number one in sports or in entertainment. It is about winning awards, about achievement, about accomplishment, about business, about being number one, about being on top of the music charts. All of the glory in this life is focused on me and now. Whereas the glory Christ pointed to was the glory in his death.

This glory in death is reiterated in John 17 in “The High Priestly Prayer.” If you haven’t yet, please read John 13–17 in this context.

John 17:1

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,

He had already said in John chapter 12 the glory was in his death.

glorify your Son that the Son may **glorify** you, **2** since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. **3** And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. **4** I **glorified** you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. **5** And now, Father, **glorify** me in your own presence with the **glory** that I had with you before the world existed.

Look at how much glory is in this section as Christ points to God! He glorified God. He accomplished what God gave him to do. And then after that accomplishment he prays:

Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had before the world existed.

Meaning that God knew all this was going to take place.

The same is true in our lives. We have Christ in us, the hope of glory, and that is what really should drive us and what we should be looking forward to. The Word says that we’ve gone from death to life.

So why am I talking about going from life to death? Here is why. **By death to self, we experience life to the fullness and God is explaining and laying out for us how to really do this.**

As we look at the world’s values...they say “live life to the fullest” and “enjoy life now.” But if you look at people’s experiences and the result of living that way, you know something is seriously wrong.

God tells us in the Word, He paints pictures of what the world really is, which is death in contrast to His Word which is life. We see from the Word that if you sow to your flesh, you reap corruption. If you sow to the spirit, you reap life. This refers not only to life everlasting, but life in its fullness now as we await the return.

This Is Difficult For Many

I know that this is difficult for many. It was difficult in the 1st century church. It was difficult for the disciples.

In John 6 Christ feeds the 5,000. A great many people are following him. He walks on water. He says I’m the bread of life. Hey, things are going great, and he’s got tremendous numbers of people following him. Then, I don’t know what marketing firm he was listening to, but he says this in John 6.

John 6:53

53 So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. **54** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. **55** For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. **56** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in

me, and I in him. [57](#) As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. [58](#) This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread^c the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” [59](#) Jesus^d said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

So, he goes on. Then, in verse 60:

[60](#) When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”

[66](#) After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

Why? Because it’s just too difficult to grasp or comprehend. They likely thought, “This guy is really weird. This guy’s radical. This guy’s out there!” That is what people will say about true believers as well.

Are You Crazy?

What did the the king say to Paul when he preached to him? He said, “Paul much learning has made you mad. You’re wacko.”

What did Christ’s family say to him when he was not doing what they expected him to be doing. They said essentially, “You’re crazy. We’ve got to pull you out of this.” They went to get him. This was when he said, “Who is my mother, my brother, my sister? Those who do the word of God.” So, the very family of Christ thought he was crazy.

The leadership at that time, the scribes and Pharisees say essentially, “Man, you’re possessed. You’ve got a demon. You’ve got Beelzebub.” As they listened to the leaders, the people were influenced to conclude that he was insane.

So don’t be surprised when people respond to the depth of the Word by saying, “You know, you’re crazy.” Because it’s totally contrary to the flesh and to the world. The deeper we get into the Word, the deeper we see the reality and truth of it. People are blind to it. That is why scripture says, “the God of his age has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe.” Without the spirit of God in them, they **cannot** understand it.

In 1 Corinthians 2, God tells us that they cannot understand it because these things are spiritually discerned.

I just listened to a teacher recently who talked about Hudson Taylor who was a famous missionary in India. He was struggling. And then, he finally realized that his true identity was in Christ, not in what he produced. That set him free for the rest of his life.

Reflexives to the Rescue

We get to choose which of the reflexives (commands from the Epistles) we want to focus on. Most people will say, “I want to keep myself happy. I want to keep myself prosperous.” (Notice it’s keep **myself**.) I keep myself and the works that I do are going to make me happy, prosperous, successful, whatever it is. It is really impossible to keep yourself happy in this world.

Instead, we should keep ourselves in the love of God—keep ourselves in the Word. As with everything else, it's really just a choice between two ways. We choose God's way or we choose the world's way. We choose God's way, or we choose man's way. We know the results promised by each choice.

My intent is to share God's way with these reflexives so that we can live them. If we do, folks will see dramatic transformation in in our lives. That is not only what we want for ourselves, but so that we can see the Book of Acts in reality again.

Acts Again?!

What a gift to God this would be! In the 1st century church, mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed. There were signs, miracles, and wonders. Lives were transformed. Glory to God because of everybody's death to self and the spirit of God manifested in their lives with the fruit of the spirit—signs miracles and wonders—people delivered.

Here we are at the end of the age, why not do it again as a gift to God? Why not actually live that out? Why not create bookends here? You had this in the 1st century and we have it again in the 21st century. Then the trumpet can sound, the Lord returns, and we get to enjoy eternal rewards because of all of this.

That is where I'm going with this.

Some people will say, "Well, you know, I got a pretty good life going on here. And what about grace here? And why can't I just enjoy my Christian life?"

You can!

You have a free-will choice. What I am presenting is another opportunity. I am presenting knowledge that enables us to make a choice. Life is about choices!

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 6. People have free will and they can live as they choose.

People might say to me, "Well, Michael, you're being rather hard on all of us. And are you saying I can't do this and this and this and this?" No, I'm not saying you can't. I'm saying you can, but I'm also saying you can choose. Your motivation can be something higher, something better, something bigger, something spiritual, something godly, rather than doing things for yourself." (There's that "self" word again.)

We will conclude with this section and get back to our study of reflexives next session.

What Is Lawful Is Not Always Beneficial

1 Corinthians 6:12

12 "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful (expedient). "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything.

Other translations say expedient.

I'm saved. I have eternal life. I'm justified. I'm righteous in Christ. So, all things are lawful for me. If I'm not doing anything that's harming somebody what's wrong with it?

God says that while all things are lawful, not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything. I'm not going to be dominated by my flesh and by my desires and by the "I wants."

1 John 2:16

16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life^e—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Examples: Food and Vacations

1 Corinthians 6:13

13 "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other.

He gives an example here. Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both. In other words, the purpose of food is to be put into the stomach to nourish the body, and the purpose of the stomach is for the food so that you can be healthy and whole.

Both of those things are going to go away when Christ returns and we get our new body.

So, the point is, how do we approach, for example, food? This is just one of many examples. Do we approach food as something that's going to nourish us so that we can live for Christ? Or does food become an end in itself and then we're dominated thinking about it?

There are people who consider themselves foodies. They glory in that title. But what is it really? It's looking at food as something that's going to bring me not just nourishment, but pleasure. So, when I'm eating food, it's satisfying my flesh, it's not feeding my stomach. See the difference?

Consider the things we have surrounding us in the world. Are we dominated by them or are we utilizing them in a godly fashion in order to help us live to God's glory and serve the Lord?

Food is not meant to satisfy our flesh and yet people see food and can't resist it. There are people who live from meal to meal who think, OK, I had my breakfast—that was really good. What are we having for lunch? And they're actually thinking about that. And then after lunch they're thinking about dinner. It's food, for goodness sakes.

Now We all love food, but again, does it become an idol? Does it become something that's simply satisfying our flesh rather than nourishing our bodies?

"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food."

You can replace "food" with pretty much whatever you want. Everything has a purpose.

Vacations, for example. Vacations are great. They are to nourish us, replenish us, enable us to come back and serve the Lord. They are not an end in themselves for the disciple. If I'm stepping on your toes, you just need to get some harder tipped shoes.

I am endeavoring to convey some Biblical values with respect to this and the choices that we can make. I recently heard a teaching where the teacher talked about vacations. This is a preacher that I respect. He said vacations are great, but do you take the Lord with you on your

vacation or do you leave him home? If your vacation is simply pleasure and God was left at home, it's going to be much harder to bring God back into your life when you return.

Instead, no matter where we are, no matter what we're doing, no matter where we go, it's God in Christ and us...we are in a relationship with God. Everything I am doing should be for the purpose of enabling me to serve Him. That is what a true disciple does with his or her life.

In Our Flesh... It IS Impossible!

Some respond to this material and say, "That kind of life, Michael, is impossible!" Yes! It is in our flesh and just with our body and soul. But when we have Christ in us, that enables us to live the way he did. The study and application of the reflexives will enable us to carry that out.

Our goal is to bear fruit for God; all of this will lead to that. Remember in John 12 Christ said fruit would be borne by his death. We will see in the Parable of The Sower that various people can produce fruit either 30, 60, or 100-fold.

Galatians 5 talks about the fruit of the Spirit. We want our lives to be fruitful—demonstrating the fruit of the spirit. We want our lives to look like Christ so that others can see it.