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[Becoming More Christ-like By Removing UnChrist-likeness](#)

Certain "tools" for spiritual self-examination are worth revisiting. We first introduced the *Johari Window* in Lifebyte 1, *To Love and Be Loved*. Click on the blue link above to download a more useful version of the Window. We offer you these various tools so that you and those close to you in the faith can discern any hindrances (some of which you may not even be aware) that may be keeping you from personally experiencing and then extending to others the love of Jesus. You can't share what you haven't experienced, and *love for Christ* and *His love for others through you* is the foundation to walking in His Spirit. Talk with Him about this!

Please, prayerfully and diligently go through the attached two pages and identify where you are in developing Christ-like character traits. We encourage you to print out several copies of the attachment so you can give the Window to others you know well in Jesus. After they've gone through it, you can discuss each other's response and discern areas in which you can help each other as extended spiritual family. (If you prefer, you can also forward the attachment to others by e-mail.)

Over the years we've found that many in Christendom remain trapped in unChrist-like attitudes and motives because they lack the in-depth, interpersonal interaction with others that's needed for meaningful **feedback** and **disclosure**. Mutual feedback and disclosure by those who love and serve their Lord help a relationship grow stronger and mature into more of Christ's likeness in character.

Christians who evade feedback and disclosure that could help them grow in Christ's character instead often *increase their Bible knowledge* but stay *unchanged within*. Sadly, knowing the Bible but lacking Christ-like character produces pride and self-righteousness. This makes it all too easy to point out what's wrong with everyone else, especially behind their back. How does this worthless pattern keep getting repeated? The emphasis on **conveying content** within the framework of Bible studies, Sunday schools, and pulpit preaching actually hinders people from learning how to *mutually cooperate* as extended spiritual family in developing Christ-like character qualities.

Those whose Bible knowledge far exceeds any Christ-like character traits can be recognized by the absence of *give and take* in conversations — a necessary parameter for feedback and disclosure to take place with one another. When someone spouts more Bible verses than they do grateful testimonies as to how Jesus has changed them, they haven't developed either the love or mutual cooperation that's essential for "one-anothering."

As we've mentioned many times before, almost all the commands in the Newer Testament are *collective*: they're written in the plural, not the singular. In other words,

Paul is telling Jesus followers in Philippi, "Ya'll continue to work out ya'lls' salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). *Mutual cooperation* is the unwritten expectation behind the commands in the Newer Testament; body life is a plurality, not a singularity (see Romans 1:12). To return to our initial premise, *knowledge* has to do with **me**; *character development* focuses on **us**.

Perhaps you've requested your free copy of **Tortured For Christ** by Richard Wurmbrand but it hasn't arrived yet. We encourage you that as you read the book and encounter those who suffer because of their love for Jesus and trust in Him, put yourself in their place. If you find you have an aversion to their suffering and are relieved it hasn't happened to you, you may be responding from your flesh rather than from your spirit. It's because of their love for Jesus and their steadfast unwillingness to deny Him that they've been imprisoned and persecuted.

Only your grateful love *for* Jesus and the love *of* Jesus emanating from you can carry you through trials and persecution. If that responsive "first love" Jesus warns us to cling to has departed you, or if you're busy with religious activities as well as discretionary activities that are stifling that love for Him, please pause now to reconsider how you're using your daily 24-hour allotment. Make sure that filling up with His love and then seeking His Spirit to know when and where to pour it out on others is a priority. And do ask yourself if you're mutually developing His love with those close to you in Him. Evading the feedback and disclosure you need for Christ-like character development will deplete the authenticity of your life in Jesus, leaving behind a shallow, hollow religious shell. Cry out to Abba if you find yourself treading this slippery, egocentric path!

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance"
(James 1:2,3).

Over the years we've come to recognize a key difference between people who are inspired by books like **Tortured For Christ** and similar materials that update us about our persecuted family around the world, and those who avoid testimonies of the persecuted. It has to do with the distinction between the pursuit of happiness and the contentment that's brought about by inner joy.

Watchman Nee, a Chinese follower of Jesus in the previous century, had been imprisoned in a 6' by 6' cell for twenty years for his faith. When he was finally released, his declaration of his Lord's faithfulness rang as heavenly music: "*Inner joy surpasses all.*" Joy, the abiding and sustaining joy the Bible speaks of, rejoices with gladness of heart. It springs up deep within you and is built around a love for Jesus that's solidly grounded in *His sovereignty*: He has dominion over every event and situation that's going on in your life. Your ongoing, ever-increasing love for Him produces a persistent confidence in His absolute authority over everything. And, that confident stance in His faithfulness produces an inner peace that's reflected in joy.

Happiness, on the other hand, is dependent on a desired or perceived outcome that you think will bring you delight. A preferred or longed-for circumstance must happen in order for happiness to occur. By contrast, the joy of which the Bible speaks is totally independent of circumstances; often the word "blessed" parallels the meaning in many passages. Blessings emanate from God; they're by His grace. The happiness that is situational and dependent on circumstances is self-generated; it's doomed to fade.

Sometimes events can knock you down and the trials of daily life can chew away at your inner joy. Certainly King David understood this struggle when he cried out, *"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me"* (Psalms 51:12). At times each of us needs mutual encouragement, especially that sure word of which Paul reminds us: *"We will be with the Lord forever"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Please, if you find yourself duped into an ongoing "pursuit of happiness," you're going to become disillusioned, because happiness *is* an illusion. Rather, pursue the path of lasting joy. Seek to love our Lord Jesus and walk in His steps filled with His Spirit. Then you can grow in the peace that produces a joy no one can take from you. This is what Much-Afraid experienced when the Shepherd's love transformed her into Grace and Glory.

Mike & Sue