

I. PRINCIPLES

These principles explore what God says in His Word about Leaning on Him instead of on our own understanding:

A. NEW IDENTITY

- Acts 26 is the most detailed account of Saul's conversion. Here Paul is defending his faith in Jesus before King Agrippa (in keeping with God's promise in 9:15).
- Acts 26:4-23 NKJV-- "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. ⁵They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. ⁶And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. ⁷To this *promise* our twelve tribes, earnestly serving *God* night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. ⁸Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead? ⁹"Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against *them*. ¹¹And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted *them* even to foreign cities. ¹²"While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, ¹³at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. ¹⁴And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? *It is hard for you to kick against the goads.*' ¹⁵So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. ¹⁷I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' ¹⁹"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. ²¹For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill *me*. ²²Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come— ²³that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles."
- Saul, in his old life, defined himself primarily by his Judaism. He left his home in Tarsus to study in Jerusalem at an early age.
- He identified as a Pharisee of the strictest type and a member of the Sanhedrin, a council dealing with legal and spiritual matters among the Jews. (v. 10)
- Satan's use of misdirection was very effective when paired with Saul's rage. (v. 11)
- Misdirection = the deliberate release of wrong information in order to stop people from knowing the truth about a situation (oxfordlearnersdictionary.com)

- The enemy of our souls does not want us to see the truth about our true identities: 2 Cor 4:4 NLT--- Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News.
- The Lord will "make our paths straight" by confronting our misdirected leaning in order to help us see our true identities: "*Why are you persecuting Me?*"
- Let's lean into the truth that our identities have been made new and that we are no longer defined by the people we were before: 1 Cor 6:9,11-- Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? ...And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
"Lord, please highlight a place in my life where I still operate out of my old identity."

"I invite You to bring to light why I continue in this misdirected thinking."

"Spirit, I ask you to reveal any lies or unrenewed thinking that keeps me from fully embracing the truth about my identity as a child of God."

- Embracing our new identities is an essential part of leaning on God's redemption: Eph 4:23-24 MSG-- Everything—and I do mean everything—connected with that old way of life has to go. It's rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you.
- Insights:

B. NEW PURPOSE

- In Christ, Saul's identity as a religious terrorist was nailed to the Cross. He left the Damascus Road a new man with a new purpose: 2 Cor 5:17 NLT-- Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!
- Before he met Jesus, Saul was very motivated by his own opinions of right and wrong and by impressing people in his faith community.
- His way of relating to God was by keeping a performance checklist (the Law), believing that "I must do many things." (v. 9)
- LISTENING EXERCISE: *What's on your spiritual checklist?*

Why is following a list more appealing to us than having a relational connection to God Himself?

- Jesus has told us what our Father desires from us. Believing Him is essential to our new purpose: John 6:28-29 NLT-- “We want to perform God’s works, too. What should we do?” Jesus told them, “This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent.”
- Saul had to let go of the old in order to lean into the purposes of Jesus:
 - The known
 - The predictable
 - The comfortable
 - Ambitions of advancement
 - Approval of people
 - Being known & understood by man
 - Foundations of former life
 - Control
 - Other
- When misdirected purposes are exposed, realize that we have a choice to make.
- Following our new purpose involves a price. It’s painful to say “no” to our pursuits and some of the people from our past lives. (Acts 9:16)
- Leaning into your new purpose invites you to a sphere of life not attainable apart from Jesus: 1 Cor 2:9-- But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”
- Saul became Paul – an apostle, a trailblazer, and a world-changer as he yielded to the purpose of God: 2 Cor 5:9 EXB-- Our only goal [aim; ambition] is to please God
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
- *Are you willing to let go of the old in order to experience the new things Jesus has in store for you?*

If you’re not there yet, try praying the prayer of Corrie Ten Boom: “God, make me willing to be willing.”

- Insights:

C. NEW NATURE

- We all come to this planet with an inner enemy, the old fleshly nature that’s set on pleasing self. Saul of Tarsus provides us with a picture of this nature.
- Paul represents the new nature we receive at salvation: Col 3:9-10 NLT— Don’t lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.
- As we submit to God’s Spirit and His transforming work, the contrast is obvious:

OLD Rules/Law Resists Change Value My View Harsh/Angry Rejects Differences Lusts for Control	NEW Free In Spirit Open/Pliable Seeks God’s View Kind/Forgiving Tolerant/Accepting Yielded to God
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- Let’s ask God to alert us to when we are operating out of our old nature and habits.

- The new nature is the truth about you and how God sees you. You've been justified, because Jesus took your sin and gave you His righteousness instead. (2 Cor 5:21)
- The Apostle Paul instructs us on Learning to Lean into the new nature in by these practical principles:
 - Rom 6:12-13 NLT-- Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.
 - Rom 12:1-2 NLT--And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.
- Sanctification is a process that takes time and practice. Let your lapses into old behaviors take you directly to Jesus. He comforts and strengthens, never condemns!
- “Paul never says that sin is dead; what he does say is that we are dead to sin. Sin is still alive in our mortal body; and if we do not realize that and deal with it, it will soon reign in our mortal body. Sin is not eradicated out of us, and it never will be as long as we are in this mortal body. Sin is in our mortal body and it is always striving for mastery and for control in the Christian. It can never dominate over the life of Christ in him, but it is always striving to dominate his body. It may indeed dominate his body for a time, and when it does so, it is what we call “backsliding.” Sin is there . . . you always have to remember that, and not allow it to do so.” (Martin Lloyd-Jones)
- Our new nature gives us the capacity to grow more like Jesus as we lean not on our old understanding and ways, but lean on the power of His life in us: Phil 1:6 NLT-- I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.
- Insights:

II. PERSONAL APPLICATION

A. ONE THING

The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

B. PONDER THE TRUTH

- Take some time to think about the main ideas of the lesson using this outline. Which of the scriptures referenced was particularly meaningful to you? Write out the verse below and review this week to take the truth more deeply into your heart.

- As you meditate on the truths that God has highlighted, take the opportunity to lean into listening. It takes practice to be still and tune our spiritual ears. Use the handout “Listening to God” to help you understand this process more thoroughly. Be sure to write down anything that comes to mind, distractions and especially any insights!

C. PRAY IT IN

Take your One Thing and the verse you have chosen to the Lord in prayer:

“Is there a particular attitude or issue that you want to bring into the light of this truth?” Write down anything that comes to mind to keep for further exploration:

“Lord, what would it look like for me to apply this truth?”

D. SING IT

- Listen to the playlist for this week to connect more deeply with the principles and to move them from your head to your heart. Find it on the DDD YouTube channel. Record anything that you received from your personal worship time:

E. PERSONALIZE IT

Read through these questions early in the week. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see your personal reality and His pathway for growth. Write down any insights you might have during the week and come back ready to share!

1. Your true identity:

“Lord, please highlight a place in my life where I still operate out of my old identity.”

“I invite You to bring to light why I continue in this misdirected thinking.”

“Spirit, I ask you to reveal any lies or unrenewed thinking that keeps me from fully embracing the truth about my identity as a child of God.”

2. The purposes that drive you:

Are you willing to let go of the old in order to experience the new things Jesus has in store for you?

Ask the Lord to help you accurately observe your priorities and patterns of behavior this week. What do they reveal about your true goals and purposes?

In your devotional time, pray that you could get in touch with your new nature whose purpose is to please God. Tell Him that you do want to please Him and that you trust Him. It will seem more authentic the more you say it.

3. Your 2 natures:

Which traits of the old nature are still active in your life on a regular basis?

What evidence of the new nature do you see growing in you?

What part of your new nature is God currently cultivating in your life?