

# ***Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life***

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★Write down one new insight you received today...

★Thinking...

- In what ways am I standing weakly at the crossroads of sinful and godly lives?
- What *superpower* might I obtain if I choose to pursue The Way?
- How might letting *the peace of Christ rule* in your heart change your thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds?

★Applying...

- Reflect on any fears that are holding you back from recklessly Following Him.
- Consider one or two relationships that are hurting because these fears are holding you back.
- Commit to overcome these fears and love sacrificially with those one or two for the sake of peace with God through Christ

★Praying...

- Father, in what ways am I holding back from Following Jesus?
- Grant me the *superpower* of love, overcoming my fears and receiving the faith you offer.

**Colossians 3:12-15** – As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

**I) The Fear of Choice...**

Many fear decisions. We have been burned. We delay, wanting the right choice to become obvious. Maybe another will choose, taking responsibility. Reality is, indecision leads to impotence. When it comes to Jesus’s invitation, we face the decision whether we believe He is “The Way, The Truth, and The Life (John 14:6).” Sadly, many stand indecisively at the intersection of sinful and godly lives and wonder why they lack power. Perhaps the reason is the seeming foolishness of The Way (1 Cor 1:17-18), which stems from a fundamental pair of doubts: Is Jesus both *all loving* and *all powerful*?

◆**The need for His love:** Jesus’s invitation is a decision about control. Jesus invites us His Way if we are willing to “clothe [ourselves] (Col 3:12),” in characteristics that release all control. We cannot understand how He is serving our best interests by asking – no, commanding us to “lay down [our] lives (John 15:13),” for each other? Jesus whispers, you are “God’s chosen ones, holy and

September 18, 2022

beloved (Col 3:12).” Trust me. This is The Way we gain “the riches of the glory...Christ in [us] (1:27).”

◆**Power of love:** That alone is insufficient. Knowing Jesus loves us does little good if by declining the ways of the world we provoke it to destroy us. Jesus’s mercy is so attractive because the world *is* merciless. The question we face is who will control us once we “lay down [our] lives.” Do we believe, *really believe*, “all things have been created...for him (1:16),” that “in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (1:19),” that in Jesus “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3),” that “Christ is all and in all (3:11),” and that we can be “in the strength of His power (Eph 6:10)?” If we want to be His “chosen ones,” we *must act* on the belief in His power. We must act like we have *superpowers*.

## II) The Power of Decision...

The power of decision is the commitment to our aspiration. We declare this commitment in our outward expressions, our uniform. The uniform reinforces our belief in who we are and causes others to expect the same. Let’s examine the particulars of the uniform of Jesus.

◆**Compassion:** The choice to try to understand another and see God’s image in them, however tarnished. The term may be celebrated but the act is countercultural. It requires intentionally looking past another’s harmful words and deeds to see the wounds. It is not absolving one of responsibility, but mercifully seeking their healed and redeemed future.

◆**Kindness:** Compassion is communicated in the language of kindness. Rarely if ever do harsh words and deeds convey compassion and lead to healing. In the face of pain, sorrow, anger, and frustration, we are to say and do things expressing love for the inner being. If in doubt, seek to make the other feel worthy just as they are.

◆**Humility:** Recognition that God loves the other as much as He loves me. I have different gifts and talents, but both are made in the Image of God to uniquely express a dimension of Him. Both of us are equally dependent on Jesus as the source of Goodness and Wisdom.

◆**Meekness:** Also interpreted *gentleness*, a restrained manner using words and deeds that sooth, not bruise. Truth can be expressed in harsh, repellent ways – or it can attract and heal. The majority respond best to the latter.

◆**Patience:** Intentionally remaining with another as they wrestle with what it takes to Follow Jesus and be conformed to His Image. We naturally want others to be as mature as we are, or else perceive them as not committed. Patience is recognition how long it has taken us to stand this tall, and how much taller we have yet to stand. Jesus is still waiting for us...

## III) Live Impossibly...

The Thriving Christian uniform could be described as intentionally seeing another’s best version, saying and doing everything possible to draw it out. The Bible summarizes this as to “clothe yourselves with love (Col 3:14).” God promises that “love never fails (1 Cor 13:8, NIV).” Love heals and transforms people impossibly, and to do so it requires the impossible *from us*. It is the ultimate *superpower*, accessible if we *believe* and “let the peace of Christ rule in [our] hearts (Col 3:15).”

◆**I can’t do that:** Forgiveness. It is the ultimate form of sacrificial love. It is not forgiveness without something to forgive. Some wrong, offense. Not just those arrived at accidentally. Intentional harm. The injustice has already cost us something. Shame, money, relationship, pain. Now Jesus commands us to forgo justice and recompense? This is the pinnacle of the *superpower* of love, strengthened by the reminder that this is “just as the Lord has forgiven [us] (3:13).” The love of forgiveness is the highest healing. Forgiveness makes possible ongoing union. It “binds everything together in perfect harmony (3:14).” Without forgiveness exile is assured. God’s forgiveness is the power of our reunion with Him, and the key to the *superpower* of eternal love.

◆**Peace with God:** The decision unlocking our *superpower* is to accept the covenant of peace with *Jesus*, not with the world. The world does not offer us peace, it is ruled by one who “comes only to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10).” That covenant requires us to seek peace with one another to the extent it is up to us – to be “the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God (Mt 5:9).” We do so not for the peace with others *per se*, but to preserve our peace with Jesus as we let Him “rule in [our] hearts (Col 3:15).” We want the *superpower* that comes from choosing to Follow Him, which requires us to love sacrificially, even forgiving the sources of our worst pain, leading to peace with Him and others. Only once we put on this uniform, the cape and tights unlocking the *superpower*, do we realize Jesus is completing our healing and perfecting our wellness by these impossible sacrificial acts of love.