

“What will it mean in practice for me to put God first? This much at least. The 101 things I have to do each day and the 101 demands on me which I know I must try to meet will all be approached as ventures of loving service to Him, and I shall do the best I can in everything for His sake.” – J.I. Packer.

A Transformed Christian is one who...

1. Has an undiluted devotion to Jesus.
2. Pursues a biblically informed view of the world.
3. Is intentional and disciplined in seeking God’s direction.
4. Worships, and with a spirit of continuous repentance.
5. Builds healthy human relationships.
6. Knows how to engage the larger world.
7. Senses a personal “call” and unique competencies.
8. Is merciful and generous to those who are weaker.
9. Appreciates that suffering is part of faithfulness to Jesus.
10. Is eager and ready to express the content of his faith.
11. Overflows with thankfulness.
12. Has a passion for reconciliation. – Gordon MacDonald

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NEW DETAILS: Family Reunion III in Mammoth, AZ will be Saturday, September 29. Time: 10 A.M. To 3 P.M. Jeff Taylor will speak and Cecil Price will lead singing. It will be held at the **Charles F. Clark Community Center**, 101 W. 5th St. #2 , Mammoth, AZ 85618. Please RSVP to 520-248-1744 or olan52@hotmail.com.

Prayer List

Healing: Charles Lawrence, Chuck Brooks, Faye Atchley, Ben Atchley, Nicolas Self, Annie Self, Douglas Gardner, Brandon (Gerry Clark’s grandson), Diane Cocke’s brother-in-law Dave Smith, Dave Morse, Richard Tuey. **Travels:** John and Sharon Cunningham.

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

9 September 2012

Sermon Topics

A.M. Jesus Teaching in Parables

Matthew 13:10ff

P.M. Wisdom is Meaningless

Ecclesiastes 1:12-16

Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-5974

Elders

Ben Atchley: 428-2246

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Services

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.

Character Solidification

by Greg Boyd

Not only is free will obviously limited in scope; it is also limited *in duration*. The New Testament depicts life in this present epoch as an ever-closing window of opportunity, in which we are either growing in Christlikeness or becoming increasingly hardened to God’s Spirit (e.g., Hebrews 3:13-15). We eventually reach a point of no return, when we are either solidified in our relationship with God or solidified in our rejection of God. This present epoch is a probationary period during which God is acquiring and preparing his bride, the purpose of which is eventually to lead to a glorious wedding and eternal marriage (e.g., John 3:29; Ephesians 5:25-26, 31-

32; Revelation 19:7).

On top of this, our own experience confirms the popular ancient maxim, repeated in various forms throughout history, that *our choices become our habits; our habits become our character; and our character becomes our destiny*. As we all know, the longer we continue down a chosen path, the harder it is for us to veer from this path, and we eventually reach a point of no return. We begin by making our choices, but in the end, our choices make us. We are gradually but inevitably becoming the decisions we make.

Greg Boyd. "God Limits His Control." in *Divine Providence: Four Views*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011. 193.

I wish to make an observation in reaction to the above excerpt. To make choices that are better than (although inconsistent with) my own current character is neither hypocritical, phony nor two-faced. It is the genuine method for improving my character. – Neil Short.

But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen; repent and **do the works** you did at first. (Revelation 2:4-5)

The Real Purpose of Parables

by Neil Short

When I did my student teaching – YEARS ago! – my cooperating teacher prepared a little computer program for the students to use for a service they were doing. The software still required the students to look something up in a separate document. I asked my cooperating teacher why he didn't just include the separate documentation within the code of the software and he quickly took me aside and said, "I don't want to make it too easy on them. They need

to feel like they are doing some of the work. This way they are doing a learning activity." At the time I thought he was just making an excuse for his inadequate programming skills; but over the years the wisdom of his reason began to become apparent to me. If your students have to work for what they learn, they will actually learn.

That's exactly why Jesus taught in Parables. He explained in Mark 4:12 that He teaches in parables in order that

they may indeed look, but not perceive,
and may indeed listen, but not understand;
so that they may not turn again and be
forgiven.

That answer seems harsh at first; but later it becomes clear that Jesus wasn't intentionally trying to hide the truth. He wanted his disciples to do a little work to understand the meaning. By teaching in parables, people reflected on them longer. They talked about them. The learners who were really interested asked Jesus to explain them. They had to *give* something to the learning process.

"Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given to you. For those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away" (Mark 4:24).

The ones who benefited from the parables were those who put forth the effort to understand them. Some expect the preacher to spoon-feed them everything they will ever learn about God. To them the meanings of the parables are lost.

"Wow. So this Galilean carpenter knows how to sow a wheat field. So Ruben, speaking of wheat – how is your field doing this year?"