

TRANSFORMED

How God Changes Us

Rick Warren

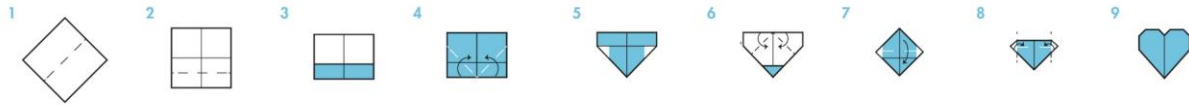
Group Study 1

Spiritual Health

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Series Overview – For the next 7 sessions, we are going to look at God’s plan and purposes for the 7 Key Areas of our lives. We’ll look at His promises for our:

- Spiritual health
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Emotional health
- Relational health
- Financial health
- Vocational health

God cares about every area of our lives and wants to bless you in every area of your life. He wants us to be healthy in body, soul, and in spirit. And He has given us the steps and principles in His Word that we can take to live healthy, fulfilling lives.

Throughout the Scriptures there are many promises from God to bless all areas of our lives. But with every *promise* there is a *premise*. With every PROMISE there is a PREMISE.

God says, “If you do this,” (that’s the premise), “then I will do this,” (that’s the promise).

For example, the Bible says, “If we confess our sins,” that’s the premise, “He will forgive our sins,” that’s the promise.

“In all your ways acknowledge Him,” that’s the premise, “and He will direct your paths,” that’s the promise.

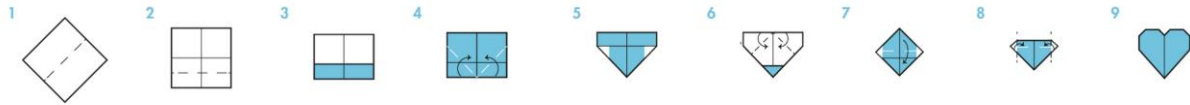
Every PROMISE has a PREMISE.

Over the next 7 sessions we will look at God’s promises for each of these key areas of life, and we’ll discuss the premises or conditions or the steps that we can take in order to live in God’s blessing.

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How God Changes Us

Rick Warren



In this session, we're gonna look at **7 habits** that will improve our **spiritual health**. God has promised that if we'll practice these 7 habits, all from Scripture, He will bless us with strong, spiritual health. So let's start with habit number one.

HABIT #1

If I want to be spiritually healthy,

1. I must LOVE JESUS supremely.

That's a habit. In Luke 14, Jesus said this:

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple." **Luke 14:26**

Now this sounds pretty radical, but He says, "Otherwise than that, you cannot be my disciple. What is Jesus saying here? That we must choose to love Him more than anything else.

Now, right this down:

Spiritual health is measured by LOVE.

Spiritual health is measured by how much we love, not by how much we know. It's not measured by our Bible knowledge, or by our skills. It's not measured by the words that we say. It's not measured by how much we attend church. My spiritual health, your spiritual health is measured by how much we love.

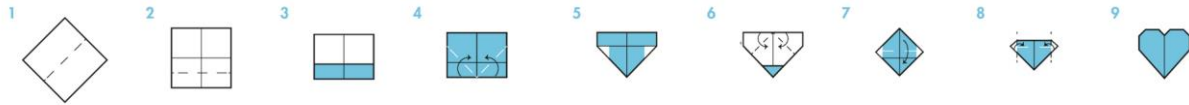
Our spiritual health is measured by how much we love God and how much we love others. That's what Jesus said. In Mark 12 when asked which commandment mattered most, Jesus said this:

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'" **Mark 12:29-30**

This kind of love for God is called **WORSHIP**. Whatever we love most in life is what we worship.

T R A N S F O R M E D

How God Changes Us
Rick Warren



If you love your boat the most, you worship your boat. If you love your job the most, then you worship your job. If you love your body the most, then you worship yourself. Whatever you give your best love to is what you worship.

But God says this, if you want to be spiritually healthy, then you gotta love Me the most. Worship me supremely. That's the first habit for spiritual health.

Group Questions

1. From Luke 14:26, do you think someone who claims to be a believer in Jesus but is not loving Him supremely is saved? Explain.
2. What do you think is the difference between a believer in Jesus and a disciple of Jesus?
3. What are some things that cause us not to love God supremely?
4. What do our feelings have to do with our love of God?

HABIT #2

If I want to be spiritually healthy,

2. I must MEET WITH GOD DAILY.

It might just be 5 minutes a day, or 10 or 15 minutes a day or whatever, but you **make a date with God**. You get alone with God and sit there quietly and say, "God, is there anything You want to say to me?"

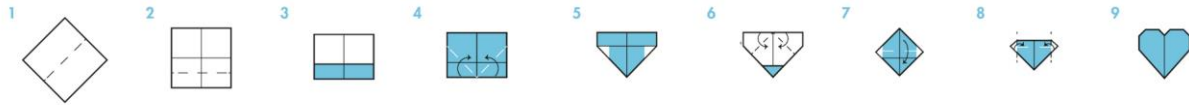
And as we talk to God in prayer about the things that are on our minds, and then you let God talk to us through His Word and His Spirit living in us, we experience communion – and that quiet date time with God is a worship experience.

The Bible says this in Proverbs:

"Blessed is the man who listens to Me, watching daily at My doors, waiting at My doorway."
Proverbs 8:34

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How God Changes Us
Rick Warren



Did you notice the word “daily”? What is God saying there? He wants us to have a **daily** appointment, a **daily habit of meeting** with Him.

Now think about this: Why would God tell you to spend time with Him every day, if He didn’t want to spend time with *you* every day? Do you realize that? The God of the universe wants to spend time with *you*! This is important to God. And He always shows up for His appointment. Do I? Do you? As a community of Jesus followers, do we?

If you study church history, you find that every great believer, everybody who’s ever been super blessed, super used of God has had this habit of meeting with God on a daily basis. Again, it doesn’t have to be long, but it does have to become habitual.

Group Questions

1. How do you have daily time with God? What does your routine look like?
2. What typically interferes with your time with God?

HABIT #3

If I want to be spiritually healthy,

3. I must STUDY and DO God’s Word.

It might just be 5 minutes a day, or 10 or 15 minutes a day or whatever, but you **make a date with God**. You get alone with God and sit there quietly and say, “God, is there anything You want to say to me?”

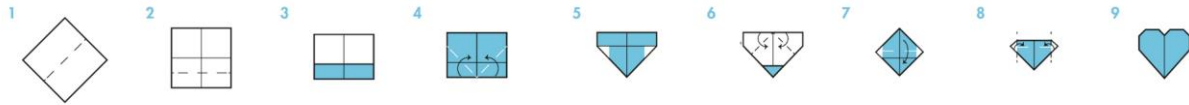
There are so many promises in the Bible where God says, “If you get this book, the Bible, into your heart and into your mind, I will bless your business, I will bless your family, I will bless your health, I will bless your finances, if you get this book into you and into every area of your life.”

Whatever area of our lives we want God to bless we’ve got to do what God advises on that area of life. **Psalm 1:1-3** says this:

“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.”

T R A N S F O R M E D

How God Changes Us
Rick Warren



The **premise** is that if we'll meditate on God's ways of doing life – really think on it, value it, and put it into practice – even the parts that don't come naturally, He **promises** to make our lives fruitful – lives that produce things of value – things that fulfill us while blessing others.

And if this habit of studying and doing God's Word is currently interrupted by other habits, it's time to swap out unhealthy habits for ones that will help us to be spiritually healthy.

Jesus said this in John 15:

“You are my friends if you do what I command.” **John 15:14**

James taught the same principle in his letter:

“But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.” **James 1:25**

Notice, the believer who **INTENTLY** – there's the *study* part; and **CONTINUES** in it – there's the *habit* part; and doesn't forget but **DOES** what it says – there's the *doing* part; that person will be blessed in what they do.

Spiritual health that will bring God's blessing depends on not only knowing God's Word by **studying** it but experiencing God's principles by **doing** them.

HABIT #4

This habitual practice is a physical world habit that affects spiritual things in an unexplainable, yet supernatural way.

If I want to be spiritually healthy,

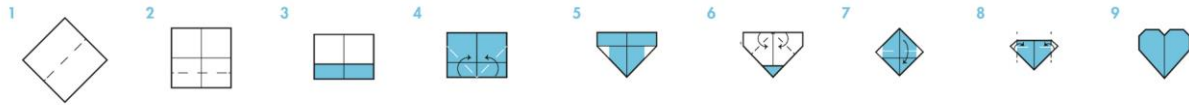
4. I must TITHE my income.

What in the world does “tithe my income” mean? Well, it is similar to how I spend the first part of my day's time with God, He asks me to spend the first part of my income with Him.

T R A N S F O R M E D

How God Changes Us

Rick Warren



The word “tithe” means “a tenth” so I choose to give a tenth of my income back to God. And notice it’s “income”, if you don’t have income you can’t give a tenth of your income. But why does God ask us to give back a tenth of our income? Can He not accomplish His purposes in His creation without our meager contribution? Of course He can.

Group Question

1. Why does God ask us to give part of our income back? Is it so that He can see something about us?
2. Why does He ask specifically for our income, why not something else?

God communicates an incredible promise to believers in Malachi chapter 3:

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.” **Malachi 3:10**

The “storehouse” refers to the body of believers you hang with. It’s your local gathering of believers – the place you call your church. So it makes sense to give back to God through the place you are benefitting spiritually from.

Ask anyone who has lived life both ways – tithing and not-tithing. Somehow it always works out that the tithers have more than enough and the not-tithing believers are struggling to make ends meet. The simple truth is, you can’t out-give God.

HABIT #5

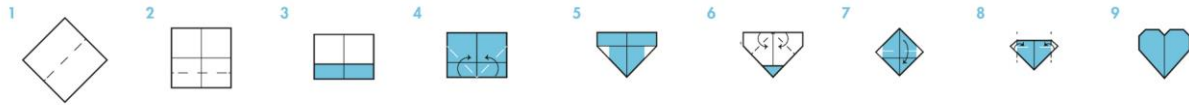
If I want to be spiritually healthy,

5. I must learn to LOVE OTHER BELIEVERS.

God doesn’t only want us to love Him, He wants us to love other believers. Jesus said it like this, “If you’re going to be my disciple, you can’t just love Me, you’ve gotta love everybody in my family.”

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How God Changes Us
Rick Warren



In John 13 He said this,

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
John 13:35

The mark of being a disciple of Jesus, an authentic Jesus follower, is not just that you love God but that you love everybody else. This is the hallmark of being a follower of Jesus Christ. It's not people will know you're a Christian by your bumper stickers, or people will know you're a Christian by your little lapel pin, or know you're a Christian because of a T-shirt.

No. God says the proof that you are my disciple is that you practice the habit of loving all the other members of God's Family. And you know where they are? They gather together in big and small churches all over the world. You can't say you love God and then avoid being around other Christians. You can't do the Jesus thing alone. It's not a solo life we're reborn into. If you don't like being around other Christians, you're not gonna like heaven too well. So you better figure out how to learn to love other disciples of Jesus.

Look how the Apostle John put it in 1 John 4.

“Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.” **1 John 4:20**

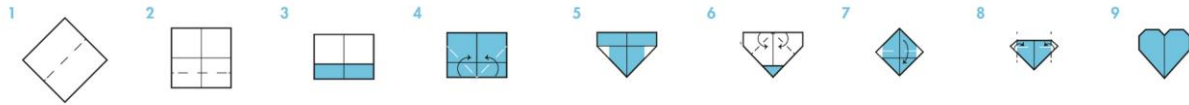
That's pretty clear. God says I'm a liar if I claim to love God but I don't love other Christians. Because if we can't love Christians who we can see, how can we love God who we can't see? We cannot genuinely love God while isolating from other Christians. And here's why.

Spiritual growth happens in COMMUNITY.

Spiritual growth happens through my connections with other believers on the same journey. It doesn't happen by myself – not by lonely me. You cannot be a disciple by yourself. Did you hear that? You cannot be a disciple in isolation. You cannot be a follower of Christ without being in community, because it's all about love. You'll never grow to spiritual maturity without a church family.

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We were put on this planet to love. First to love God supremely and then to learn to love each other practically. You have to have a church family, relationships with other Christians to learn to love. You're not gonna learn it sitting in cave up in the mountains. Learning to love God and learning to love your neighbor as yourself are the 2 greatest commandments in the Bible.

This is why being in a small group like you are in right now is absolutely essential to your spiritual health. Why? Because you can't love a crowd. You can worship with a crowd, but you can't love a crowd. You can't fellowship with a crowd. You can't connect in a meaningful way with a crowd.

You need to be committed to being connected to a group of believers where you can not only receive love, encouragement, and support but learn to offer those things to benefit the spiritual growth of others in that group.

Group Questions

1. Why is being in a small group and serving others so important to your spiritual growth?
2. What can you learn through relationships that you can't learn on your own?

HABIT #6

If I want to be spiritually healthy,

6. I need to learn to SERVE OTHERS UNSELFISHLY.

Service is an important part of your spiritual health and development. God says to grow it's not all about "taking in", you gotta be giving back. You gotta use those "muscles" God has given you gotta develop your strength.

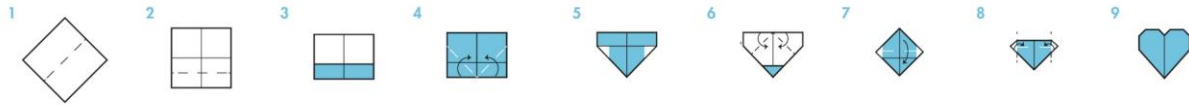
God says if you want to be the most important person in the room you need to take the last place in the room and be the servant of everybody. The way to be great is by serving. You have to give your life away.

Jesus said it like this:

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Rick Warren



“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” **Mark 10:45**

Notice the words, “serve” and “give”, in these two words, Jesus gives us our two primary purposes after our worship of God. He came to serve and to give. That’s what defines the Christian life. The more you learn to serve and the more you learn to give the more you’re gonna be like Jesus, and the happier you’re gonna be, and the more fulfilled you’re gonna be, and the healthier you’re gonna be, and the more blessed you’re gonna be.

But why is serving so important to spiritual growth and spiritual health?

Here’s why. If all we do is come to church and come to group and hear great studies and teaching and all we’re doing is taking in and taking in but we never actually do anything with what we’re consuming, it’s like eating and eating and eating and eating and never burning any calories. You’re just gonna get bigger and bigger and you get spiritually fat and lethargic.

If you don’t get some spiritual exercise by serving others there’s no way you’re going to reach any kind of spiritual maturity.

Group Questions

1. Why can’t we grow spiritually if we choose not to serve others?
2. What are some of the reasons I don’t like to serve others?
3. Does God only want me to serve other Christians? Explain.
4. If I want to change the selfishness I see in myself, what are some ways I could serve others which would help make me “less about me”?

HABIT #7

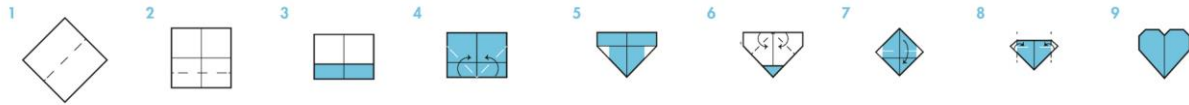
If I want to be spiritually healthy,

7. I must pass on the GOOD NEWS.

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Rick Warren



What I've been given I've got to pass on to others and not keep it all for myself. I've gotta tell others the good news about Jesus Christ. I've gotta tell others there's a purpose for their lives. They need to know they can be forgiven, their pasts can be forgiven and they can have a purpose for living and they can have a home in heaven.

Just as we've been accepted back into a restored and reconciled relationship with our Creator through our faith in Jesus Christ's work 2,000 years ago, they can, too. They can also enjoy the relationship we are enjoying with our Creator, whom we call Father since trusting in Christ.

The Apostle Paul taught a young man named Timothy to pass on what he had learned about being a Jesus follower.

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”

2 Timothy 2:2

There are 4 generations in that verse. Paul says God gave me the good news, and then Timothy I pass it on to you, that's the second generation. Then Timothy is encouraged to pass it on, so there's a third generation, and Timothy was to pass it on to those who would also pass it on, and that's a fourth generation.

You're going to heaven because somebody told you. And somebody told the somebody that told you. And somebody told the somebody that told the somebody that told you. So here's an important question. *Is the chain gonna break with you?*

Will anybody be in heaven because of you? Have you told anybody?

This is the 7th habit for spiritual health. The passing on of our faith. Christianity is only one generation away from dying. If you don't tell any of the people in your circles of contact, who will? If you haven't told anyone about Jesus, you're “spiritually sterile”.

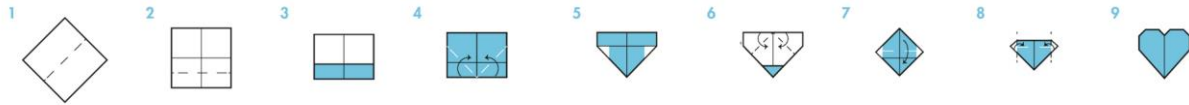
Jesus said this in Matthew 28:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” **Matthew 28:19-20**

T R A N S F O R M E D

How God Changes Us

Rick Warren



So Jesus' marching orders were to go pass on the faith, teach the new Jesus followers to put into practice all of the things I taught you guys. That's the premise, and what was the promise? I am with you always – all the way to the end.

Jesus said to be truly His disciple you gotta be a disciple maker. You gotta tell somebody else. You gotta be living the Jesus lifestyle in front of somebody else who can see it so they can see how real it is to you and how real it can be for them.

You've got to be willing to share your hope, share your faith, share your story with others. Let me challenge you with this. Pray and ask God, "Lord help me to be used of You to bring one person to faith in Christ this year."

If you will start praying for your friends that aren't in God's Family yet He will help you find the words and the times to share your faith. And you'll be surprised when some will come to faith in Christ because you started praying for them and asking God to help you share your faith. But He wasn't surprised, He knew all along what He could and would do through you once you leaned on Him for help. "Ask and it shall be given." There's a premise and a promise.

They'll come to Christ but you've got to be willing to share your faith and let Him empower you to do so. You just plant the seed and God will make it grow.

Group Questions

1. What are the biggest obstacles to you sharing your faith?
2. How can we get others to initiate conversations with us about our faith?

So sharing our faith is the 7th habit for being spiritually healthy and for growing spiritually.

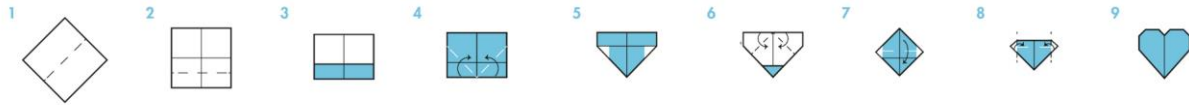
Session 1 – Spiritual Health Conclusion

If you want to grow spiritually, if you want to be healthy spiritually, you're going to have to CHOOSE it for yourself. You're going to have to make some CHOICES for yourself to work *with* God as He pursues spiritual maturity in you.

T R A N S F O R M E D

How God Changes Us

Rick Warren



Because spiritual growth is not automatic, we have to choose it, we have to be intentional about it. And it has to be a daily choice. But it will have eternal rewards. What is something that you choose to do every day? You call it a habit.

You have to say, "I'm going to quit being a half-hearted, half-baked, semi-pro, casual Christian. I'm gonna get serious about this. I'm gonna grow up as a Jesus follower. And I want to be healthy in every area of my life. But it starts with my spirit.

Do you intend to be a godly man? Do you intend to be a godly woman? Do you intend to be a godly student? Do you intend to be as spiritually healthy as you can? It will not happen unless you CHOOSE to develop these habits.

You need to commit to this:

1. I'm gonna choose to love Jesus supremely.
2. I'm gonna choose to spend time with Him daily.
3. I'm gonna read the Word of God and do what it says, every day.
4. I'm gonna tithe faithfully.
5. I'm gonna love other believers and be committed to my church and small group.
6. I'm gonna serve others with whatever gifts and abilities I have been given – I'm not gonna live for me, I'm gonna live for others.
7. I'm gonna pass on to others whatever I've learned about being a Jesus follower – I'm gonna share the Good News."

Group Questions

1. In what ways have you chosen to grow spiritually?
2. What has been most effective in helping you grow?

For the Upcoming Week

- Putting It Into Practice
- Daily Devotional / Journal

Closing Prayer

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