

God is at work in the world. God began the creation of all that exists with His word, and now he continues that work as His Spirit works in you. This is important, because in order for all of creation to be completed and perfected, He will not work as He has in the past, but instead will work through you. God has promised to complete His work in us, so let's get started.

## Day 1

### Embrace Standards

The word has a work to do in the world, and a work to do in our lives. The two are connected, as the creation waits for the sons of God to be revealed, meaning that our transformation is essential to the completion and perfection of all of creation. Because our transformation is essential, it is important for us to recognize the common flaws and weaknesses of our character that prevent the necessary sanctification of our lives. One of these common flaws is the rejection of standards. Everywhere you look, you find standards that make demands on our lives. From driving and hygiene to table manners and term papers, we find that standards make demands on our lives. As a teenager, I remember quite clearly believing that most standards were stupid and arbitrary, and I engaged in the typical teenage rebellion against them. From wearing purposely threadbare Levi's, to longer hair and loud music, teenagers often seek to push back against standards that they perceive to be pointless. As an adult, however, I see the purpose of these standards, most of which orient themselves around the dignity of ourselves and others. Standards pre-suppose a glory that can be lived out in almost every aspect of our lives. Many of these standards have cultural components to them, but they aim at similar things. When I was in Japan for a few days many years ago, I remember our tour guide telling us that it was not polite to walk while eating, and that when at a stop light polite drivers turned off their headlights so as not to be rude to those in the cars in front of them. The purpose of these standards was the dignity of self, because you are not an animal that eats while walking around, and the dignity of others, avoiding shining bright lights into their cars and making them uncomfortable. We often find ourselves in rebellion to standards, because in our laziness we wish ourselves and our behavior to be the standard without effort, but the sacrifice of effort is important to the goal of standards. We, and others, are worth the effort put into the standards. Seek to live up to the dignity of the calling given to you.

Verses: 2 Timothy 3:16, John 4:24, Romans 12:2, Proverbs 19:20

Prayer Topics: Expectations, Attitude, Submission

## Day 2

### Assume Blind spots

As the Holy Spirit does his work of transformation in our lives, we will find ourselves called to do things that we don't understand. I remember attending a youth camp as a child where we were told to always close the gate on the property. We found out the reason for this often-overlooked task, when a very large and very angry bull began to chase campers around the cabins after the latest failure to heed the command to close the gate. It was not the afternoon recreation the campers had wished for or expected. Rather than thinking we know everything, we must assume ourselves to be very ignorant and very foolish. Ignorant, because there are a lot of unknowns that we face. The wisdom of God and the generations that have gone before us given in scripture are useful tools, and should not be dispensed with lightly. Secondly, even when we know what we should be doing, we are foolish and deceive ourselves about our level of obedience to the spirit's work in our lives. Rather than thinking we have it all under control, it is wise to assume that at this present moment there are a number of blind spots preventing us from seeing our true condition clearly, and preventing us from following the path of

obedience that would bring the transformation God desires for us. If we assume these blind spots, we will be on the lookout for clues to their existence, and avoid the trap of brushing all hints that they exist under the rug. Our wisdom is like foolishness compared to God's wisdom, so we should always be looking for places in our lives where our blindness to the truth can be healed by the great physician.

Verses: Proverbs 1:7, James 3:17, Proverbs 18:15

Prayer Topics: Big-Picture Vision, Wisdom, Humility

Day 3

Seek Criticism

It is natural for us to seek praise. One of the primary things we do for one another is to praise one another, because other human beings act like mirrors to us, reflecting to us an image of either worth or worthlessness. When we make a joke, we look to see if others laugh. If we play a song, we seek to understand if they are moved. The problem comes for us when we look only for praise and validation. We can become blind to all the signals we are getting that run contrary to the praise and validation we seek, and miss the helpful, but painful, signals that something we have done has not been up to the standards that we desire. While praise validates us, criticism transforms us. If taken as a helpful tool no matter what spirit it is offered in, we can come to profit by criticism in a way that we could not by praise alone. Do you see criticism as a way to be transformed into glory? Can God use the criticism of those around you, even your enemies, as a tool to sanctify you and help you become more like Christ? If you are sensitive to criticism, how do you change your attitude towards it? Put yourself in positions where you are sure to receive it. Join a group like toastmasters, where you can speak publicly and hear criticism that will enhance your skills, or join a gym and employ a personal trainer. Becoming good at hearing criticism and putting it into practice is a skill that will reap a reward that is worth its weight in gold. If you have children, teach them how to not only receive criticism, but to seek it out. It is far better to be glorious than to merely think of yourself as glorious.

Verses: Proverbs 15:31, Proverbs 27:6, Proverbs 27:17

Prayer Topics: Improvements, Progress, Greatness

Day 4

Follow Leaders

Humbling ourselves to follow leaders is very difficult because we want to be the leader, or at least be free from them and left alone. Leaders drive us to do things we don't want to do, whether at work or in the world. Leaders hold us to standards, point out our faults and flaws, evaluate and correct us. Leaders look at the big picture, and force us to fit our actions into helping an organization make progress. They pull us out of our little worlds, make us think about more than ourselves, and often make us uncomfortable. We often feel like leaders don't understand, they fail to see that we have the real and true answers. Leaders often make us feel small, and sometimes make us feel unimportant. And most of the time, all of this is good for us. While we are all the stars of our own personal lives, we also fit into communities and worlds that are far bigger than all of us. We have the tendency to see only ourselves, our own concerns, and our own small piece of the puzzle, while leaders have to look at how we fit into the bigger picture. Leaders have to see how our own idiosyncrasies and weaknesses affect the work of others, and have to call us to transformation when we would rather stay the same. Not all leaders are good leaders, but the position of leader is extremely helpful to us. Most of us fail to recognize that our leaders all have leaders, and they are responsible to those leaders just as we are to them. It may be hard

to have one boss, but it is much harder to have ten employees. Follow your leaders, and you will find yourself being transformed by the Leader of leaders.

Verses: Hebrews 13:7, Hebrews 13:17, Galatians 6:9

Prayer Topics: Surrender, Hierarchy, Endurance

Day 5

Persist

Do not become weary in doing good. That is easier said than done. All of us become weary at some point. We have good days when we are totally on board with God's goal of completing His work in us, and we have other days when we just lack the energy to be involved. To make any kind of progress, we must work when we don't feel like it, engage in the process when we are tired, and persist in God's work in us. Today is Friday (probably) and you have been at work all week. Even if you are tired, do not give up. Persist in God's work in your life, continue to seek transformation, and cooperate with His Spirit as he seeks to sanctify you, because He has a creation for you to perfect, and that cannot be accomplished without your own perfection.

Verses: Matthew 5:48, Philippians 3:12-15, James 3:2

Prayer Topics: Perseverance, Commitment, Perfection