

“God is graciously condescending to use this book to change lives all around Latin America and the Arab world. It addresses the core matter of spirituality—the quality, source, and vitality of your life under God which overflows into all your relationships and responsibilities. I encourage you to read it in order to ‘change the way you change.’”

**Dr. Ramesh Richard**

Director of REACH International and professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, USA

“We have used this book at Dallas Theological Seminary and SETECA, and I can bear witness to its profound impact on the students. If you want to see deep changes in your life and in the life of your church, I highly recommend it!”

**Dr. James Adams**

Adjunct professor for Doctor of Ministry Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary, and professor at SETECA, in the USA and Guatemala

“Writing from the reality of his own personal spiritual struggle, Nicolás helps us turn from mere superficial change to join the work of the Holy Spirit in search of true transformation and humility.”

**Henry Clay**

The Navigators

“Nicolás Tranchini is a man who loves the Word of God and who’s deeply committed to communicating it in a clear, simple, and relevant way. Get ready to be challenged by this book!”

**Greg Travis**

Board member of Ante Su Palabra, Soldados de Jesucristo and  
The Gospel Coalition in Spanish

“Deep Changes is a book about genuine spiritual transformation. It’s a practical and personal read that will give you a healthy sense of discomfort.”

**Dr. Daniel Wicher**

Former President of Camino Global

“Nicolás Tranchini’s book takes us on a journey to the world inside the human soul, its nature, its identity, its motives and its failings. At the end of each chapter, the reader will find a section on the addressed topics for personal reflection or discussion in small groups. Therefore, it’s quite a practical tool both for ‘ruminating’ on the values set forth and to start a discussion group. I recommend the calm and peaceful reading of this book to all believers, whether they are church leaders or not.”

**Dr. Pedro Sanjaime**

President of IBSTE Bible College in Barcelona, Spain

NICOLÁS EMILIO  
TRANCHINI

**DEEP**  
CHANGES

When the gospel  
***transforms***  
what the heart desires

## **DR. NICOLÁS EMILIO TRANCHINI**

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Nicolás is the founder and director of *Cambios Profundos* (Deep changes), a global ministry that provides resources on Christian growth. He's also the Director of SERVE International in Spain. Nicolás earned a Bachelor's in Theology and Biblical Studies from the Baptist International Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he later obtained his Doctorate in Ministry. He also holds a Master of Arts in Cross-Cultural Ministry from Dallas Theological Seminary, and he's a TESOL graduate from the same institution.

Nicolás had a personal encounter with the Lord through The Navigators when he was thirteen. In 2003, he was ordained as pastor by Denton Bible Church in Denton, Texas. Since then, he's been a teacher of subjects such as Christian Life, Leadership, Discipleship, Hermeneutics, New Testament Studies around the world.

Nicolás is happily married to Annie, and they have three children: Micaela, Tomás, and Manuel.

To my beloved wife,  
for being a reflection of God's steadfast love,  
despite my immense need for change.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are six people who've made for you to read this book. The first of these is my wife, Annie. Her patience, support, and help were the three great pillars that sustained me during all these months. My love, I will never forget what you've done. I have no words. Thank you.

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Finally, there's "Someone" who deserves a paragraph of his own. It's "Someone" who, in his grace, has decided to use me, who's strengthened me when I didn't deserve it, and who's given me words and creativity that are rare in me. This "Someone" was faithful in my unfaithfulness, loved me when I went astray, and filled me with his Spirit when I deserved to be empty. To him and only him, "*to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.*"

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**IMPORTANT:** It's possible that you don't usually pay much attention to the Table of Contents of a book, but I encourage you to make an exception here. It's your travel guide to change. It provides an overview of where we're going, and it will also help you keep track of key concepts as you complete each chapter. Finally, when you finish the book, and you have had a more in-depth look into each of the truths it captures, I challenge you to read it yet again. Your appreciation and interaction with this travel guide will be entirely different.

**Introduction:** Changing the Way You Change..... 15

## **Part I: What Is Superficial Change?**

Chapter 1: How Does Superficial Obedience Work? ..... 19

Chapter 2: How Does the Heart Work?..... 31

Chapter 3: How Does Love Work? ..... 49

Chapter 4: How Does Temptation Work?..... 65

Chapter 5: What Is the Wrong Way to Change? ..... 81

## **Part II: What Is Deep Change?**

Chapter 6: Discovering the True Desires of My Heart ..... 107

Chapter 7: Discovering the Beauty of the Cross of Christ ..... 129

## **Part III: What Are the Outcomes of a Deep Change?**

Chapter 8: A New Identity..... 149

Chapter 9: A New Life Purpose..... 173

Chapter 10: A New Ability to Obey ..... 197  
Chapter 11: A New Love to Serve ..... 223  
Chapter 12: A New Motivation to Seek God ..... 249  
Chapter 13: A New Attitude to Face Conflict ..... 281  
**Conclusion:** Has your Way of Changing Changed?..... 309

**Appendices**

Appendix 1: What Should I Do When I Don't Desire to Obey?..... 315  
Appendix 2: Practical Help for Reading Biblical Commandments ..... 323  
Appendix 3: Recommended Books ..... 333

SAMPLE

## BIBLE VERSIONS USED IN THIS BOOK

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# INTRODUCTION

## Changing the Way You Change

What does it mean to change? If you had to answer this question, what would you say? What would it look like for you to experience real and deep change? Let me share with you some of the most common responses I've heard:

“Change for me would mean not watching online porn anymore. I honestly think I'm an addict.”

“For me, change would mean not compulsively shopping for clothes. I'm constantly checking my weight against other girls' weights, and the only thing that helps is hiding behind baggy clothes.”

“In my case, change would mean not yelling when I'm angry. It'd be not arguing with my spouse. We really hurt each other when we don't see eye to eye.”

“For me, change would mean sharing my faith with others. I want to do it, but I'm scared.”

“Change, in my case, would be watching less TV and getting up early to read the Bible and to pray.”

“What would it look like for me to change? To begin tithing. That would seriously mean I've changed!”

Have you noticed that all these responses have something in common? They all view change as transformed behavior. All these people see change as no longer doing something bad and starting to do something good. Change for them means “ceasing to fail.” But what if real and deep change is more than that?

What if what I actually need to change is how I understand change? What if what needs to change is my way of changing?

You may be thinking, “You don’t get it. The thing I’m struggling with is wrecking my spiritual life. Every time I fail, it tears me apart; I feel empty, separated from God, and defeated.” I understand these emotions all too well. I’ve had them myself, and I still have them every so often. But what if that isn’t the issue? What if the underlying problem isn’t sex, money, anger, or reaching your ideal weight? Think about this for a minute: Does it take being a Christian in order to change any of the things mentioned above? Think it through. Can a Jehovah’s Witness, a Muslim, or even an atheist undergo the changes I’ve pointed out so far? The obvious answer is: “Of course they can!” You don’t need the Holy Spirit to experience that kind of change. Many non-believers treat their spouses with kindness and refrain from yelling at them. Mormons are experts at sharing their faith; in fact, they send more missionaries out into the world than Christians do! Jehovah’s Witnesses regularly read the Bible, and it’s entirely possible that, when it comes to sexual struggles, they may live amazingly pure lives. Muslims pray five times a day. Agnostics give money to a number of charities. If each one of them can make these kinds of “changes” without Jesus, could it be that my understanding of change is wrong? Could it be that what needs to change is my way of changing?

What is real change? How does it happen? What role does the Holy Spirit play? And what’s my part? Walk with me through the upcoming pages, and we’ll work together to answer these and many other questions.

# PART I

What Is Superficial Change?

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## CHAPTER 1

### **How Does Superficial Obedience Work?**

#### *What Are my Deepest Desires?*

“Why?” This is possibly the most important question every human being needs to ask themselves to advance their spiritual life. Why do I read the Bible? Why don’t I read it? Why do I try to talk to my friends about Jesus? Why don’t I try? Why do I serve others? Why do I find it hard to serve?

I would like you to take a moment to think about a woman who is driving her car to church. Imagine that, for whatever reason, she has decided that she won’t contribute anything when they collect the offering that Sunday. The woman arrives at church, the service begins, and she delights in taking part in the gathering. However, when the offering plate starts going around, someone announces that they’re having a special fundraiser for the needy and that, on this particular occasion, church leaders will be collecting the offering. She quickly dismisses the announcement. She’s already thought this through, and she’s decided that she has good reasons to pass on the opportunity to give. Nonetheless, she suddenly realizes that the person passing the offering plate is one of the leaders she greatly respects and admires. In fact, this man leads the small group she regularly attends. To make matters worse, the topic they were discussing that week was “generosity.” Therefore, she desperately gets some loose change out of her purse and places it on the plate with great relief.

The woman in our story is doing something good, right? After all, giving money for the needy is a good action. However, why is she doing it?

*What does she love* deep in her heart? Her group leader's opinion! In other words, she loves herself! She doesn't want to look bad in front of her leader, and for that reason, she gives money.

Taking a close look at our motives, our deepest desires, helps us realize that sometimes what seems good often isn't, and what appears terrible may not be, either! Take a moment to think about what it would look like for this woman to love God, and not herself, in a situation like this. The answer sounds unchristian. Maybe it would have been best for her to not have given any money for the needy! Not giving might place her in a position where her leader or other people might think she lacked generosity, commitment to the needy, or love of God. However, for her, in this particular situation, *that* would be loving God with all her heart, with all her soul, and with all her strength. Why? Because she'd be willing to "look bad" out of love for God. Because, in her heart, she'd be saying, "God, you love me, and your love is enough for me. If others think I'm not generous, their opinion is less valuable to me than yours is. I rest in the fact that you fill my heart and not in the opinion of my leader."

Let me give you another example. Picture a young man, a collegiate who parties on weekends, whose goal is to "conquer" a new girl each night. What's his motivation? For him, it goes beyond lust. He does it because he wants to be the most popular and successful guy in his group, and that's the way he thinks he'll get there. He wants to have a "collection" of romantic conquests under his belt so that he can boast about how well he's doing.

Now imagine that this young man gets to know Jesus and becomes a Christian. Little by little, his life undergoes significant "changes." He forsakes his promiscuous adventures, begins attending church, volunteers for several ministries, and begins serving with enthusiasm. A few years later, that same young man becomes a devoted and successful missionary. Many people come to Jesus through him. He's even invited to speak at conferences, and he travels around the world sharing the testimony of how God has used him. No one doubts his change. Everyone believes that he's a different person.

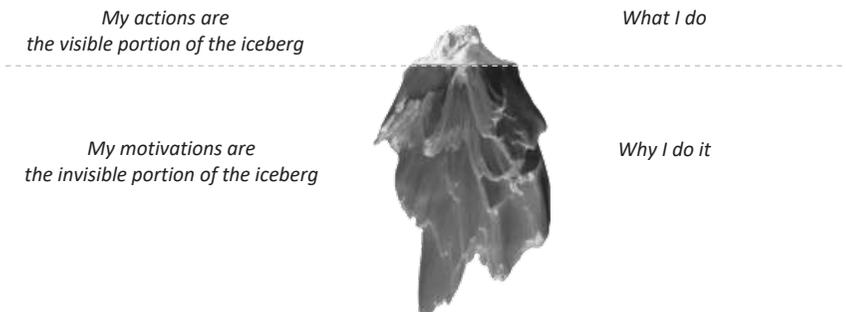
But has he changed? The most typical response seems obvious. Of course he's changed! However, the only way to know if he's really changed where it matters is to ask "why?" Why has this young man given it all up (including sex and his weekly adventures) to serve God?

As we will see over the course of this book, the Bible challenges us to go beyond superficial, perceived changes and to focus on changes of the heart.

*“God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”* (1 Samuel 16:7; Luke 16:15). A simple way to “look” at our hearts is to ask ourselves, “why?” Why did this young man want to be a missionary? There are, of course, countless possible answers to this question, but let us consider one of them. Before turning to Jesus, this young man’s goal was to “conquer” girls. Why?

As we said earlier, he wanted to be *popular*; he wanted to be *successful* among his friends. After this young man came to Christ, his goal became telling the whole world about Jesus. He wanted to become a *popular* and *successful* missionary. Can you see it? In the past, this young man wanted to be popular by “conquering” girls; now, he wants to be popular by “conquering” souls and converting people. His behavior changed, but did his desires change? Did his heart change?

An illustration I like using to explain this dynamic of change is that of an iceberg. An iceberg has two parts: a visible, external one, representing our actions, and an internal one, which is below the surface and out of sight, representing our motives, our deepest desires. As the passage in 1 Samuel shows us, when God looks at human beings, he doesn’t focus so much on what they do, but rather on *why* they do it.



“Why?” That’s the key question. Why do I give money? Why do I read the Bible? Why do I serve in the church? Why do I get mad at my spouse? Why do I want to have a better job? Why do I want to change? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenges his disciples—or rather commands them—to contemplate this reality.

If you take a close look at Matthew 6:1-18, which we’ll do together at the end of this chapter, you’ll conclude that the main focus of this section of the Bible is neither giving (as 6:2-4 seems to indicate) nor praying (as 6:5-15

seems to show) nor fasting (as 6:15-18 seems to point at). The main focus of this passage is defined and summed up in the first verse of the chapter: “*Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.*”

In this passage, Jesus isn't talking about the need to give. Jesus is calling his listeners to *reflect on what motivates them to give*. Jesus isn't focused on challenging them to pray. Jesus is focused on whether his followers *seek to uncover what motivates them to pray*. Jesus isn't concerned here with whether or not people fast. Jesus is trying to lead his disciples to ask themselves, “*Why do I fast?*” If you carefully read the passage, you'll see that this is the case.<sup>a</sup>

“Why?” is the great question that leads us to unmask our inner reality, and it's precisely the main theme Jesus develops in this section of Matthew. Through this passage, we discover that a person may be doing “spiritual” things without actually being spiritual—just like the woman giving the offering or the successful missionary in the examples above. According to our Lord, the Father doesn't so much see and evaluate what we do on the outside, but rather *why* we do it—that is to say, what on the inside is motivating us to do the good things. As Martyn Lloyd Jones once wrote:

Nothing is quite so fallacious as to think of sin only in terms of actions; and as long as we think of sin only in terms of things ally done, we fail to understand it. The essence of the biblical teaching on sin is that it is essentially a disposition of the heart....

We tend to think of sin as we see it in its rags and in the gutters of life. We look at a drunkard, and we say: There is sin; that is sin. But that is not the essence of sin....

In order to get an accurate image of its essence and to really understand it, we must picture a great saint, an unusually devout and devoted person, and we must look at them there on their knees, in the very presence of God. [As Jesus puts it in Matthew 6:5] Even there, the “self” is already laying siege to the saint, and the temptation is for them to think pleasantries and pleasurable about themselves and to worship themselves rather than Go.

This, and not the other, is the true picture of sin...<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> At the end of this chapter, you'll find a chart that will help you do an in-depth study of the passage in Matthew 6:1-18.

Examining our motivations is essential because, in doing so, we'll uncover that which our inner self *really loves*. If you think about it for a minute, in this passage in Matthew, we learn that we can obey the commandments (such as giving, praying, and fasting) without actually following the Great Commandment (to love God with all your heart). If we fast so that others may see us, what we really love is the glory of men and, thereby, we love ourselves, for we're the beneficiaries of such action. On the other hand, if we fast in order to set aside a special and unique time to be alone with God, what we really love is God and the joy of his presence. Thus, an alternative or additional question we could ask besides "why?" would be: *Who or what am I loving with what I'm doing?*

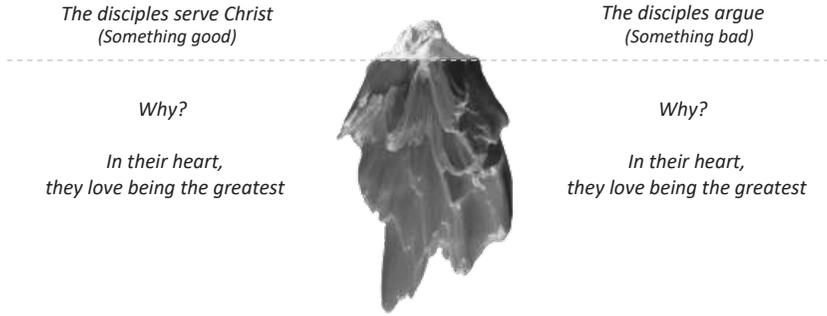
It's very interesting, as we'll see further on, that, in the context of Matthew 6, to do something in a truly spiritual way is to do it *by enjoying* the Father. By contrast, to do it in an improper or sinful way is to do it *by enjoying being seen by others*. In this way, through this passage, Jesus allows us to venture into one of the greatest predicaments of the human condition: the search of identity through the approval of others. In Paul Tripp's words:

Human beings are always assigning to themselves some kind of identity. There are only two places to look. Either you will be getting your identity vertically, from who you are in Christ, or you will be shopping for it horizontally in the situations, experiences, and relationships of your daily life. This is true of everyone, but I am convinced that getting one's identity horizontally is a particular temptation for those in ministry.<sup>2</sup>

Remember the young missionary at the beginning of the chapter? Do you think that I'm exaggerating or that he's just an illustration? Consider, then, eleven of the most dedicated people who have ever set foot on this planet: Jesus' disciples. They must be different! There must be something different about them! But, is this how the gospels portray them? From the moment of their calling until the final hours of Jesus' life, the Bible shows us that even the apostles themselves weren't exempt from this tendency.

On the contrary! After Jesus announces to them his imminent death, they begin to fight over who is the greatest (Luke 22:24-27; Mark 10:35-45). Take a moment to meditate on what this incident shows. Their argument (something external), reveals what *their hearts actually love and desire* (something internal); namely, recognition, power, glory, status, and thus finding in those

things their meaning, worth, or identity. “I have value because I’ve managed to come out on top.” This is their underlying reasoning.



When I examine my heart, I can see that I am not that different from the disciples. Since my “job” is ministry, I can identify with their struggle. As Tim Keller so fittingly wrote:

Why do people go into a life of ministry? Noble motivations, right? Some years ago, I read this line in a book for ministry students by Charles Spurgeon: “Don’t preach the gospel in order to save your soul.” I was in my twenties at the time, and I remember thinking, “What kind of idiot would try to save his soul by preaching the gospel?” But after a few years in the ministry, you start to realize that if your church does well and grows and people like you, you feel disproportionately good — and if your church doesn’t do well and people don’t really like you, you feel disproportionately devastated. You’re working outside in. You had assumed: “If people like me and say, ‘Oh, how much you help me,’ then God will like me and I will like myself, and then that sense of inconsequentiality, that sense of uncleanness, will go away.” But it doesn’t...<sup>3</sup>

## In Need of the Light

Blindness. Perhaps that’s a fitting word to describe how well we know ourselves (Matthew 15:14; Ephesians 4:18). We believe that it isn’t so. Like the disciples, we think that we understand ourselves, that we know why we behave the way we do, that we know our own heart, and that we do what we do out of love, but the Bible constantly confronts us with just the opposite. ***Living in a deceived state is the norm*** (see Jeremiah 17:9; 1 John 1:8-10). That’s why

the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit is to bring light into our lives! (John 16:7-14; Ephesians 1:18-19)

No one, not even the most dedicated man or woman, is exempt from this. Consider, for instance, the Prophet Isaiah. The most terrifying moment in the prophet's life came when he was able to internalize the distance between the reality of his broken inner self and the amazing holiness of the person of God. That's when he pronounced his famous words: "*Woe is me, for I am ruined!*" (Isaiah 6:5).

In Luke 5:8, the same thing happens to Peter *when he declares*, "*Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!*" Or with Paul in Romans 7:24 when he says, "*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*" The experience they all have is like that of the person Jesus calls "*poor in spirit*" (Matthew 5:3). This is a person who can see themselves for what they are. This is someone who, upon examining themselves, succeeds in seeing deep within, and finds nothing that could hold any moral or spiritual value before God. Not even their good works! Paraphrasing Matthew 6, this is someone who realizes that not even in their moments of greatest dedication (fasting), of greatest closeness to God (praying), or of greatest generosity (giving), are they exempt from that inner inclination to live for themselves.

Examining our deepest motivations and desires is essential because it allows us to gradually overturn an idea that, either consciously or unconsciously, many of us Christians hold: "We're good, and people who aren't Christians are bad. They sin greatly, such as by committing adultery or stealing, but we don't. They need the gospel; not us." Taking a close look at our motivations allows us to see that outward behavior may vary, but the essence, the inner motivation that leads us to steal (a "great" sin) or to exaggerate (a "lesser" sin), is the same: *self-love*.

What, then, is superficial change? Simply put, *superficial change is where my external behavior changes without a change in the deepest desires of my heart*. It's a type of change where I stop doing bad things, and I start doing good things; however, either consciously or unconsciously, I'm still loving myself. Just like the woman who gives money, or the young missionary who tells others about Jesus, or even like the disciples, who leave everything to follow him.

Paul brilliantly sums it up in Ephesians 2:3: "*Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest...*" Can you see it? For

the apostle, true conversion is *a change of desires*. It's a matter of evaluating whether or not the deepest passions and affections of our hearts have changed.

### ***Why Looking “Below the Surface” Matters***

Before ending this chapter, I would like to give you two reasons why it is absolutely essential that we examine our hearts. First, *there's the genuine possibility that we have not experienced a true conversion*. Towards the end of his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul exhorts believers, saying, “*Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves*” (2 Corinthians 13:5, NLT). I'm aware that it's neither a commonly taught truth nor a popular one, but if our eternity with Christ is at stake, it's worth pausing and reflecting on it.

Prophesying about the End of the Age, Jesus highlights a very sad reality. Matthew 7:22-23 says: “*Many [notice that he doesn't say a few, but many] will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness [emphasis added].'*”

It's important to note that the context of this passage is Jesus talking about itinerant prophets, i.e., the equivalent of modern-day, well-known leaders, renowned pastors, or celebrated keynote speakers that we often hear at large conferences. In this imaginary dialogue, Jesus tells these men that only those who do the will of the Father will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It's striking to see that these leaders respond exactly the way we predicted. *They claim to have done the Father's will citing the ministry they carried out in his name*. They say that they have prophesied, cast out demons, etc. However, Jesus' answer is categorical: “*I never knew you.*” In fact, that isn't the only thing he tells them. Instead, he further calls these deeds done in his name “*lawlessness.*”

Read the passage again because what you're about to read may shock you. Jesus says that they were practicing lawlessness by serving God! He doesn't say that they were doing something wrong on the side, rather that they were practicing lawlessness by performing their ministry! There was something, *not in what they did*, but in the *way* they did it (in their hearts) that made Jesus dismiss them and label them as non-Christians. Something like what happened to the young missionary at the beginning of the chapter happened to them, too. What was that something? The passage is clear: they didn't know Jesus! They had convinced themselves that they were believers, but in reality, they weren't.

Jesus clearly said that “*many*” will have this problem. This word “*many*” breaks my heart, and it lays a tremendous burden on me—especially since he isn’t talking about atheists or followers of a different religion. Jesus is referring here to people who claim to be Christians and who are convinced they’re true believers, but that, in reality, are not. These are people dedicated to full-time ministry! We must heed the weight of the warning: ***Even I could be one of those people!*** If you examine the atmosphere that surrounds the passage, you’ll notice that there’s a sense of *great surprise*. The response of these men is something like this: “Lord, we thought we were doing your will. How come you’re leaving us out now?” Who are these “*many*”?

In the Lord’s own words, they are people who are “*in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*” (Matthew 7:15) Let’s remember the context of the passage. Jesus isn’t talking about false prophets whose main problem is with their doctrine (as is the case, for instance, when Paul writes in Galatians 1:6-9). Jesus is talking here about false prophets in the sense that, *on the outside*, they appear to be very good and have a highly respected ministry, but *on the inside* they aren’t living out the Sermon on the Mount—that is, they’re not aware of their spiritual poverty and their need of Christ in order to be able to live out the Sermon. The “*many*” Jesus is referring to are respected Christian leaders, successful in their ministry, yet ***oblivious*** to the fact that they have no real knowledge of Jesus. Naturally, they know who he is, they’re well-versed in theology, they’ve taught others, and they’ve worked miracles in his name. It isn’t a matter of doctrine. They don’t know him in the deepest sense of the word. They do not ***delight*** in him, if you will; their delight is in the benefits of the ministry. There’s no living, true and close communion between them and Christ. That’s why he says: “*I never knew you.*”<sup>b</sup> As Henri Nouwen puts it: “The basis of all ministry rests not in the moral life but in the mystical life.

<sup>b</sup> In John 2:23-25, we find an enlightening example that emphasizes the truth we’ve just examined. As you read the passage, I encourage you to pay attention to one significant detail. For John, “believing” isn’t synonymous with being “regenerated.” In other words, just because a person claims to “believe” in Jesus, it doesn’t mean that this person has experienced a true conversion. The passage reads, “*Now when He [Jesus] was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man* [emphasis added].” Can you see it? Many claim to believe in him; many even begin to follow him. However, John brings a truth to our attention that’s “hidden” from all the people who’re witnessing this event. Jesus isn’t looking at what they *say*, nor focusing on what they *do*; Jesus is looking at the *heart!* The passage clearly tells us that “*he knew what was in man*”; that is, he knew their hearts; he looked at the invisible portion of the iceberg and was able to recognize their true motivations in following him. (In this context, they followed him because of the signs and miracles he performed. You could say they followed him “for the loaves and fishes.” Here there is no real love for Jesus; there’s a fascination with what he does and, most certainly, a self-centered interest in how those miracles might yield some sort of personal benefit.)

The issue is not to live as well as we can, but to let *our life be one that finds its source in the Divine Life* [namely, in the person of Christ; emphasis added].”<sup>4</sup>

As we’ll see over the course of this book, a true believer isn’t someone who stops sinning and strives to obey (although a true believer does obey); in fact, we could almost say that it’s precisely the opposite! A true believer is someone who’s increasingly aware of the depth of their sin, but who’s also more and more aware of the incredible goodness of Jesus Christ, who loves them *despite* their sin. A true believer is someone who looks at the desires of their heart and feels like the disciples did: filled with mixed motives, but at the same time fascinated with the fact that Jesus was willing to die for them. A true believer is someone who, in contrast with the lack of self-knowledge shown by the false prophets in Matthew 7, is well aware of their own hidden desires, but who’s also aware that when “*sin abounds, grace abounds,*” too. A true believer is a person who doesn’t lean on their works (or their ministry) to be accepted by God; instead, they lean on the incredible love of Christ, who accepts them in spite of their wrongdoings (and poor ministry). This two-fold reality, on the one hand, makes the true believer a humble person; on the other hand, it enables them to appreciate and treasure Jesus Christ and his work with ever greater intensity.

Finally, the motivations or desires of the heart are extremely important because the Bible says that *all Christians will be judged according to them!* In 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Paul states that each of us must be careful as to *how* we build the church; that is, how we serve God. Notice here, too, that he isn’t referring to the service itself, but rather to *how* we perform the service. In verse 13, the apostle points out that what determines whether a deed will be approved on the Day of Judgment is “*the quality of the deed,*” not the deed in and of itself. (Naturally, in the context of the passage, he’s talking about the final judgment to determine a person’s *reward*, not their salvation, which he states in the same passage is only through Christ). That is, God won’t judge our deeds, but rather our *motivation* for doing them. The passage reads, “*each man’s work will become evident.*” That’s to say, *the nature of their work will be revealed.* Whether it belongs with deeds made of “*gold, silver, and precious stones*” (that is, if they were performed with the right motivation at heart); or if it belongs with those made of “*wood, hay, and straw,*” which, upon being put through the fire, vanish and become evident as having no real consistency (in other words, their motivation was self-centered, much like the young missionary in our example).

Why do I read the passage this way? Because that's what Paul himself does! A few verses down in 1 Corinthians 4:5, the apostle himself clarifies the meaning for us, "*Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose **the motives of men's hearts**, and then each man's praise will come to him from God.*" Can you see it? At the End of the Age, the Lord will do the same thing that he's been doing since the beginning of time; he won't look at the outward appearances but at the deep changes of the heart. "*For God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but **the Lord looks at the heart***" (1 Samuel 16:7).

### BRIEF SUMMARY

***The key to change:*** *In order to avoid superficial change, I need to consider: What are the deepest desires of my heart? (Matthew 6:1).*

- *One question that might help me: Why do I do what I do?*
- *Another question that might help me: What is it that I really love in doing this?*

***Superficial Obedience:*** *Superficial change takes place when I, consciously or unconsciously, change my behavior as an act of self-love; that is, my actions change, but the deepest desires of my heart remain unchanged (Matthew 15:8).*

***Genuine conversion:*** *A true believer is someone who recognizes the depth of their sin, but who also recognizes the incredible goodness of Jesus Christ, who loves and forgives them in spite of their sin. For them, this truth (the gospel) isn't just mere belief but a reality that captivates them and gradually transforms them (1 John 4:10).*

### FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION IN SMALL GROUPS

*It's very tempting to skip over this last section of the chapter. Don't do it; stop. Don't ignore what the Holy Spirit may be teaching you through this chapter; don't rush. Take time to meditate on these questions and/or discuss them with others.*

1. *In what way has this chapter either changed or confirmed your understanding of how changes take place?*

2. *Sum up in one or two sentences the concepts that had the greatest impact on you in this chapter.*
3. *Carefully read Matthew 6:1–18. In doing so, you'll notice that verse 1 is a summary of the entire section and that the passage develops in a clear pattern that we could summarize as follows:*

<b>Behavior</b>	“When you [fast, pray, or give]...”	verses 2,5,16
<b>Illustration</b>	“Don’t [do]... as the hypocrites who...”	verses 2,5,16
<b>Motivation</b>	“In order to be seen...”	verses 2,5,16
<b>Reward</b>	“They already have their reward...”	verses 2,5,16
<b>Contrast</b>	“But you...”	verses 3,5,17
<b>Behavior</b>	“When you [fast, pray, or give]...”	verses 3,7,17
<b>Illustration</b>	“Do this...”	verses 3,7,17
<b>Motivation</b>	“The Father who sees what is done in secret...”	verses 4,6,18
<b>Reward</b>	“The Father will reward you...”	verses 4,6,18

*After reading Matthew 6:1–18 in detail, answer the following questions: What is important for God according to this passage? Why?*

4. *In your own words, how would you explain a superficial change? And a deep change?*
5. *In studying Matthew 7, we saw that there are people who think they’re believers but, in reality, are not. Why does this happen? What does being a true believer mean to you?*