

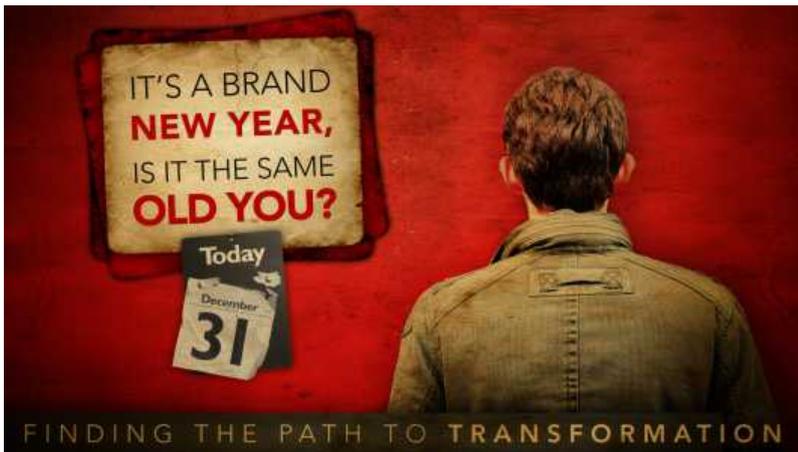
# **There Are No Shortcuts to Transformation**

*By Edward Rangel*

Choosing the easy way on earth may only lead to a dead end eternally.

*Matthew 7:13-23, along with exposition of text: two paths and the trees and fruit*

## Media



*It's a New Year, but it's the Same You. Are You Ready for a Transformation? 2022*

---

# Introduction

- There are short-cuts for almost everything in life
- In the electronic world we want an app for everything (before we had to write a program or widget for the shortcut)
- In construction, workers look for the easiest way to do their work, and if a hack can be used to make their work easier, then it is used.
- Students are eager to learn the short-cuts in math in order to skip long way.
- Gamers will scour the dark web for illegal hacks to apply patches to their video games in order to gain special powers, skip difficult levels or get unlimited lives in order to win the game or to gain unfair advantages against their opponents.
- Some athletes have used illegal drugs to enhance their performance in order to get stronger and faster without doing the hard work, thus gaining an unfair advantage (corking the baseball bat).
- When all is said and done, the only thing that has been gained is that the person with the unfair advantage, even if he/she wins, has cheated themselves.
- **There is something very similar that happens in our spiritual lives. Too many Christians want a spiritual hack, some type of earthly shortcut to heaven. But what happens in the end is that earthly shortcuts lead to a spiritual dead-end, to eternal destruction. There are no hacks, patches, or shortcuts to Christianity and heaven. (Matthew 7:22-23)**

1

## Shortcut to Personal Success - Cheating

## Explanation

- A cheater is a liar

- **Luke 16:10; “The one who is faithful in a very little thing is also faithful in much; and one who is unrighteous in a very little thing is also unrighteous in much.”** – True integrity does not need to cheat its way to success. There is no need to lie about, or falsify one’s abilities. Integrity just reveals itself on its own, it is a part of one’s character.

- The Lord will entrust a person with small things, and if he proves trustworthy then he will entrust him with more valuable things.
- The teaching is very Jewish in principle, just like David and Moses were entrusted with sheep, proved themselves trustworthy and responsible, then they were entrusted with kingdom and congregation.
- The point is that neither one of these men had to inflate their resumes, their integrity spoke for them.
- Understand that building up integrity takes a lifetime and it is hard work, it is not an overnight characteristic. (**Proverbs 19:1- “It is better to be poor but honest than to be a lying fool.”** GNB)

- To claim something you do not have is to defy the truth

- **Ephesians 4:25; “Therefore, ridding yourselves of falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, because we are parts of one another.”**

- The best way to break away from the old way of life is to stop lying to yourself and others.
- Lying is not a shortcut that helps anyone get to heaven, but it is an expressway to hell.

## Application

- How would you make application of these verses?
- Read Revelation 21:8. Why do you think Jesus includes liars in the list? Why is this topic, within Revelation 21, so important?

2

## Shortcut to Self-esteem - Slander

## Explanation

- Oftentimes we believe tearing others down will build us up, on the contrary it makes us look smaller and weaker

- ***Proverbs 22:1; “A good name is to be more desired than great wealth; Favor is better than silver and gold.”***

- When we slander we are stealing a person’s good name and reputation. This is done when we feel inferior and failures.

- In order to climb the ladder faster, without the hard work we resort to destroying other people.

- ***Proverbs 10:18; “One who conceals hatred has lying lips, And one who spreads slander is a fool.”***

- ***Proverbs 16:28; “A perverse person spreads strife, And a slanderer separates close friends.”***

## Application

- How do you think slander is used among Christians as a shortcut to advance their careers?
- How would Matthew 7:20-23 be applied to slander?

3

## Shortcut to Reasonable Persuasion - Anger

## Explanation

- Anger can be expressed:
  - quietly (pouting)
  - loudly (yelling)
  - either way it is both a bully's baby's tactic
  - It is used to get what the person wants immediately through emotional blackmail.
- The Holy God has a lot to say about anger. Anger in the wrong hands can destroy:
  - ***Proverbs 19:19; "A person of great anger will suffer the penalty, For if you rescue him you will only have to do it again."***
    - This is a person with anger issues, a person who is always angry and no one wants to be around. The Spirit says that you can help once, twice and even three times, but eventually all friends and family will leave because of the habitual anger. This shortcut will never get us too far, it will only make us lose our friendships and family.
  - ***Proverbs 22:24-25; "Do not make friends with a person given to anger, Or go with a hot-tempered person, Or you will learn his ways And find a snare for yourself."***
    - The admonition is for us not to use anger as a means to get what we want. Learn from an angry person and become, bitter, sour, and lonely like him.
  - ***Ecclesiastes 7:9; "Do not be eager in your spirit to be angry, For anger resides in the heart of fools."***

## Application

- Have you ever used a form of anger (pouting, loud) to get your way?
- How would you apply Ephesians 4:29-32 to this topic?

4

## A shortcut to God-Approved Intimacy - Fornication

## Explanation

- World believes that a shortcut to marriage is living together, trying things out
- Bulletin article asks the question about sexual purity, and while that may ruffle some people's feathers, or make others uncomfortable, understand that one of the reasons why so many Christians dabble in sin and try immorality, especially teenagers, is because we don't talk plainly about these things. It's embarrassing, it's not something polite people talk about – here is the fact – if you don't talk about it, others are talking about it to your children and grandchildren. The more uptight we are about these topics the less our children are willing to come to us and talk to us about feelings, emotions and cravings!
  - **Hebrews 13:4** *“Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.”*
  - Notice the key words in the text: “marriage,” “honor,” “bed,” “pure,” “undefiled,” “judge.” In other words, sexual intimacy is God ordained and good, but it is to be reserved for the husband and wife. Sexual intimacy outside marriage has consequences, God judges and we suffer the consequences.
- What are those consequences?
  - **Galatians 5:19, 21**; *“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, indecent behavior, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*
  - **Ephesians 5:3**; *“But sexual immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints”*
  - **1 Corinthians 6:18**; *“Flee sexual immorality. Every other sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.”*
- Some of the consequences are:
  - distrust among partners
  - sexual diseases
  - Hell, if one stays in that condition

## Application

- In your opinion, why do you think many couples forgo marriage and choose to live in fornication?
- Why is it politically incorrect to call living together “fornication?”
- Do you think that Christians have given in to the world and gone with the flow when it comes to sin, i.e., while not agreeing, but not condemning.

5

## A Shortcut to Real Spirituality - Hypocrisy

## Explanation

- Most Bible students have learned that hypocrisy means play acting.
- Hypocrites pretend to be someone they are not for the approval of others
  - Friendships are earned through trust.
  - Respect is earned.
  - Hypocrites take the shortcut
- God condemns this shortcut:
  - ***Peter with the Jews and then the Gentiles: Galatians 2:13-14; “The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”***
  - ***1 Timothy 4:1-2; “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron”***
  - ***Punishment for the hypocrites: Matthew 24:50-51; “then the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect, and at an hour that he does not know, 51 and he will cut him in two and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”***

## Application

- **Matthew 24:50-51; “then the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect, and at an hour that he does not know, 51 and he will cut him in two and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”**
- How would you explain these words and apply them our topic of shortcuts in your line of work?
- What advice would you give to teenagers who are struggling with their identity?

## Conclusion

• Living for God is not easy. Taking up your cross implies difficult times and hard work. This year has just begun (2022). I am challenging you not to take shortcuts to your spirituality. There are not apps or hacks for your prayer life, church attendance, giving, benevolence, praising, digging in the Word, and getting closer to God.

• **2 Timothy 2:15; "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."**

• **Matthew 3:8; "Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance;"**

• **Acts 26:20; "but continually proclaimed to those in Damascus first, and in Jerusalem, and then all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they are to repent and turn to God, performing deeds consistent with repentance."**

• **Joshua 1:8; "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will achieve success."**

• **Philippians 4:8; "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things."**

• The Cross

## Reference

Welch, Joshua. "Facebook." [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), 31 Dec. 2021,  
[www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10165836283760635&set=pcb.10165836287805635](http://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10165836283760635&set=pcb.10165836287805635).  
Accessed 31 Dec. 2021. Short Cuts to Dead Ends Sermon Outline.

?

