

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:2

My Relationship with God— Transformation (Part 3)

Theme: A godly relationship can renew and transform your life

Review of Lesson 12

Once you trust in Christ, you have begun a personal relationship with God; you will then want that relationship to continue to grow and mature. It is love that makes a vibrant, maturing relationship with Him. It is important not to confuse true love with infatuation which is a fantasy love. True love is patient, kind, seeks the best for others, and requires good communication. Good communication means: 1) you are aware of Him in your daily life as you are of yourself, 2) you can pour your heart out to God and trust Him to help you, not to punish you, 3) He will make you aware of your true self, and 4) when you are aware of your true self, you will see the need for help to make you more like Christ. This is maturing in Christ.



Bible Truth

Introduction

A pastor held up an orange and asked some young boys and girls, "If I squeezed this orange, what will come out?" They all said, "Orange juice." "But I want apple juice," he replied. "If I pray sincerely and really believe with all my heart, then I will get apple juice. Right?" he responded. The kids laughed at such a silly thing. Finally the pastor asked, "Why won't I get apple juice if I pray sincerely, after all, nothing is impossible with God." A youngster answered, "You will get orange juice every time because that's what's in it."

The question is: When we are squeezed by the events of life, what come out of us? It seems even a child knows what you will get out is what is within. Unfortunately, too many Christians do not get this. They seem to think that salvation is all God has in mind

for the believer. The problem is that such a person is still trying to live with the same "old mind" she/he had before being saved. When hard times come in life, and they always do (i.e. when squeezed), the immature Christian may respond by cursing, blaming, denial, pouting, etc. These are characteristics of a person that needs biblical help. God's plan is to make our minds new (transform them), so what comes out when we are squeezed "is what is in us." What is in a transformed Christian's mind? The values, love, and understanding that is typical of Jesus Christ.

After we first become saved, we still think and act in ways typical of the natural, unsaved person. That is because each person's mind has been polluted from sin and messed up by this world. Thus, God's plan is to renew our minds which will transform our entire lives.

Renewal will change our minds so that our old ways of thinking are replaced by those which conform to God's expectations. Just as you mature physically you also have to mature in your mind and spirit. As a Christian, maturity of mind and spirit is brought about by transformation. This is an important topic and is part of God's overall plan for each believer.

A Personal Relationship Leads to Transformation

We are known by Him as completely as possible, but we can grow to know Him more each day, **"to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God"** (Eph. 3:19). When we begin to know the Lord for Who He is and what He is doing in our lives, our love begins to mature. This maturity helps us experience God's fullness (all that God is and has for the believer).

As we mature in Christ, we get to see ourselves for who we really are, and when we do, we understand why we need a transformed mind. When we are aware of our true self, we see the need for help to make us more like Christ. As we see our need, we will desire to have Him transform our mind because we will realize **"as we think, so we are"** (Prov. 23:7). That is what the analogy of the orange (above) teaches (i.e. what comes out is what is in us). Thus, we need to get something better in our mind. As we allow the Lord to change our minds we see how there is victory over sin and how we can walk worthy of the Lord (Eph. 4:1).

There is personal surrender as we put Him first in our lives. Personal surrender means we are willing to give up our goals and desires to follow Him. This all comes about as we present our entire being to Him and ask Him to use it for His glory. The Bible says, **"... that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service"**

(Rom. 12:1b). A living sacrifice means to give ourselves to Him (alive, holy, and willingly).

Discuss: This transformation talk may be new to you and it may sound a bit like God making us into Christian robots or zombies. It is not at all like that. If God wanted that He would have created us that way, but He did not. Transformation is a process of you and God working together (based upon your free-choice) to allow for a change for the better.

What Transformation Is

God says, **"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"** (Rom. 12:2). The English word transformation comes from the Greek word "metamorphosis" which means *a change in form*. The Lord wants each of us to be transformed, and this is accomplished by Him renewing our mind (making it new again). Our minds are polluted from sin and therefore do not work in a godly manner... no matter how smart we are. *When we think incorrectly, we act incorrectly.* So for God to ask us to walk in His ways (live our lives in a God pleasing manner), He first has to change our minds so that we can think correctly. He wants to change our minds so that our old values and beliefs are replaced by that which reflects the Lord Jesus Christ Who is in our hearts. This is all done by the work of the Holy Spirit Who changes us for the better. While salvation is something that happens instantly, transformation goes on our entire lives as the Lord continues to work to mature and make us more like Christ.

"Believers are commanded to change the expressions of the old life and nature for that of the new nature which indwells every Christian. This is done by the renewing of the mind by the Holy Spirit. 'Renewing' means 'a complete change for the better' effected by

the Holy Spirit." (Robert Brock, *The Commands of Christ for Christian Living*, Exposition Press, New York, 1997, p. 25.)

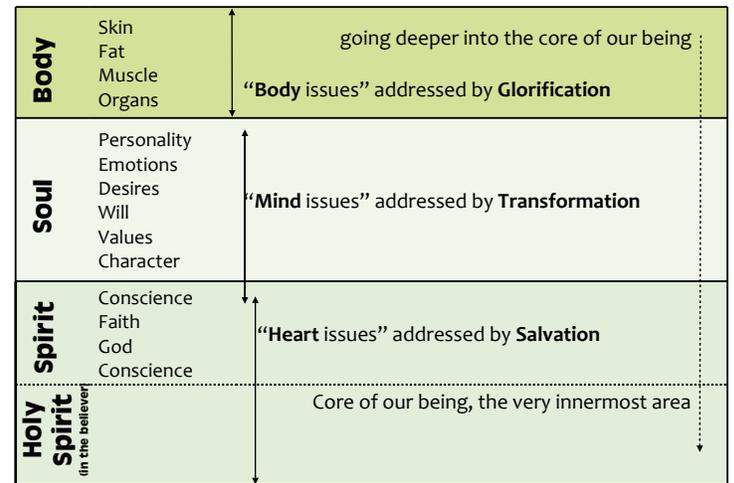
You are familiar with a chrysalis which is transformed (morphed) from a larva into a beautiful butterfly. That is a good analogy of what God does in our mind as He transforms it. Transformation takes time and may not be easy. The newly forming butterfly has to struggle to get out of the cocoon, but it is the struggle that develops and enables the butterfly to mature. If we were to try to help the struggling butterfly get out of the cocoon, it would most likely die. It is the struggle itself that helps develop and mature the wings, blood vessels, and nervous system. Our transformation may involve struggles, but they are meant to help us mature from our old self (larva) into the new person (butterfly) God intends for us.

Transformation Basics

A transformed mind leads to a transformed life. As God transforms your mind, you will do what He wishes because the motivation comes right from your own heart. Your desire will be to act and think in a godly manner from your own inner being; not because someone tells you to do it. Thus, you will conduct your life in a way that is worthy of Him, **"...walk worthy of the calling with which you were called"** (Eph. 4:1b). Transformation brings about a new life set apart unto God (sanctification). Following human rules conforms you to someone's expectations but does nothing within; a renewed mind changes you inside enabling you to truly live for Christ.

Each of us is much like an onion with its many layers. Each layer can be peeled off revealing the next layer down. In this analogy, the outer layers are things pertaining to our physical body with the skin being the

top layer, then the fat layer, and proceeding to our internal organs deeper down (see graphic below). The Lord is not as interested in these outer layers as the inner layers of our lives (He will change the outer layers in the future). After the body layers, the next deeper part is our soul. The layers of our soul are harder to identify, but as we proceed downward they include things like personality, emotions, desires...and end with our character. No one knows exactly where the soul and spirit start and stop. With the soul (mind) and spirit (heart), there can be some overlap, for example, the mind seems to be involved with the conscience which is often considered in the spirit area.



Note: In the graphic above, the intent is not to suggest the physical location of the soul and spirit but their function. They function deep within each person making the person who they are. The approximate areas in which our mind and heart operate are given for reference.

The most important part of each person is our spirit—shown near our core (most inner part). Faith in Christ (Salvation) places the Holy Spirit in our inner core. Once we are saved, the Holy Spirit works from the inside and transforms us working outwardly. As He works outward, the closest area is our soul (mind), and this is the area mentioned in Romans 12:2. It is in the areas of conscience, character, values, will, desires...that He works to transform. As you look at the graphic above, please understand no one knows exactly where the mind and heart start and stop, but the general concept is shown.

Discussion: Discuss the graphic above to help understand the various parts.

Our minds are like a computer program full of harmful "virus" that must be removed to make them work properly. The result is a renewed, transformed mind.

The transformed mind then produces the fruit (qualities) of the Holy Spirit, **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..."** (Gal. 5:22-23a). With this mind, when we are squeezed by life's trials guess what comes out? "What is in us."

Life Applications

Transformation—How it works

Transformation is not an automatic thing. We cannot transform our own minds and God does not force it on us. It is a cooperative process as we allow God to work in us all through our lives. Cooperation merely means you have to decide to:

- Study the Word so that you know what He has already revealed. It is the Word that the Holy Spirit uses to teach us about the Lord and about proper living.
- Think about the Word (meditate on it) and how it applies to your life. As you think about it, ask the Lord in prayer to help you understand and make it real in your life.
- Apply what you have learned. Do not let it go in one ear and out another, but make it part of your life and every decision. As the Lord transforms your mind, you will not have to be told what to do in an unexpected situation; the correct action will spring from within.

Discussion: When the Lord is working in your mind, generally you do not need a list of rules because correct thoughts come from your heart and mind since they are Christ-like.

Transformation—Why it is important

Transformation changes you inside—changing how and what you think. That is why Christians speak of

looking at the inner person (character, values, faith) not the outer appearance. The inner person can grow more beautiful each day. The Holy Spirit works from deep inside changing you from the very core of your being (the inner, most important parts of who you are).

Transformation—What it does

What transformation does is to change you deep within. Areas of your mind that are effected by transformation are:

1. **Your conscience**—is your belief in what is right and wrong. It can be terribly messed up (based on how you were raised and the circumstances of your life). Also, sin has a way of searing your conscience (like burning it with a hot iron so that it cannot function properly, 1 Tim. 4:2). So God has to "reset" your conscience so you are sensitive to what is right and wrong. The Apostle Paul refers to having a good conscience, **"...you may wage a good warfare, having faith and a good conscience,..."** (1 Tim.1:18b-19a; also, 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Tim. 3:9, 4:2).
2. **Your character**—is who you really are deep within (basically the biblical inner man). Your original character can be flawed and "ill," but God can change it. It has to be dealt with by the Holy Spirit and He strengthens it, **"...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man"** (Eph. 3:16b). This

strengthening enables you to have character traits that are similar to those of Christ; you become Christ-like.

3. Your value system—is your concept of what is true, correct, and honest. It has to become more like Christ's. Thus, the Bible says, **"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—mediate on these things** (Phil. 4:8). As you mediate on these things, the Holy Spirit works in your life to make them a real and part of who you are.

4. Your will and desires—are your determinations and plans for the future. As God changes you from within, your will and desires become in line with His. You will end up doing His pleasure, because that is what you want to do (not because you have become a robot). Your renewed mind will function in a way that the things you wish and desire to do will be the things that please Him. He changes each of us on an individual basis to create new minds with differing goals and purposes in life. This gives each of us different skills and purposes which conform to His plan, **"for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure"** (Phil. 2:13).

Take 2 Heart

Summary

Transformation means a complete change for the better based on a renewed mind. After you are saved, God wants to continue working in your life. The area He wants to transform (renew) is our mind, so that you have a mind more like His. This transformation occurs as you cooperate with Him by studying the Word, praying, and following what you learn. Imagine what it means to have the Almighty God renew your conscience, character, value system, and will/desires. As your mind is renewed, it becomes part of your very nature to follow Him in a pleasing manner. Transformation is the only way a person can have an "inner person" that reflects the Lord's character and values. What the Lord accomplishes in your life cannot be taken away by others, and it will give you peace and confidence during times of trial.

Gospel

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13). If you want the joy, peace, and hope that only God can provide, then all you must

believe (forget about doing something) is that you are a sinner and Christ died to pay for your sins.

Encouragement

Please remember to think about the things of the Lord all you can and open your heart to Him. Follow what you learn from the Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Transformation will go on your entire life as He renews your mind. Transformation does not mean you lose your manhood or womanhood and become a "Christian zombie." You will still have fun in life; in fact, a more joy-filled life. Remember, transformation is about your mind, not your body; and it gives you the ability to make godly decisions in life. You can be sure that as He works in your life that your future is in His hands. The Lord commands you to be transformed, so it is something you are expected to allow to occur. May you and the Lord be pleased with the progress of transformation in your life. May your life be filled with accomplishments for the Lord as you allow Him to renew your mind. Thank you for letting Christ work in your life. Your love and desire to honor Him will work wonders for you and for others in your life.