



God's Word

Transformation Dynamic #1 (Part 2 of 6)

In the last issue we discussed the depth to which God is at work to develop our character.

God wants to transform us into someone else, a different person, more like Him. To effect this, the Scripture describes five dynamics that come into play.

The first dynamic is God's Word. We are talking, here, about more than just the Bible. We mean God's word, what He says, in a more subjective sense. One can read the Bible and miss God's Word, what He is saying at the moment. To hear Him, dynamics two and three, the Holy Spirit and faith

must also be at work. These first three dynamics form a triangle, with each one as an indispensable leg. It all begins, however, with what God says.

Our transformation begins with the word of God, just as the universe itself came into existence when God spoke. It is difficult to think of a more powerful force. What God says, He does, "He spoke and it was done."¹ His mighty word also "performs its work in you who believe,"² transforming us "by the renewing of our mind."³

How does this transformation happen? 2 Corinthians 3:18 has an interesting picture

of the process. When we see Jesus, "as in a mirror", we are "transformed into the same image." The source of this is "from...the Spirit." As Jesus, the Word of John 1:1-4 and 14, is revealed in the Scripture, we see Him like in a mirror, our true identity in Christ. "As He is, so also are we in this world." We see more of what God has made us to be, as we get to know Christ, and this changes the way we think of ourselves, transforming us "by the renewing of your mind." Again, the Spirit and faith are integral to this.

The episode of Mary and Martha⁴ proves there is nothing



"they will be called oaks of righteousness" Isa. 61:3

more important than listening to God's word - nothing. We must not only read and meditate but we must listen with faith, intending to do it.

These things give our disciplines in the Scripture real meaning. **"Listen** that you may live."⁵ SFC

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Why wait? "Listen, that you may live" Isaiah 55:3

We have seen that Adam's sin left all humanity in a state of spiritual death. We have also seen that those who are thus alienated from God will not produce works of righteousness on their own, for they follow the desires of their sinful hearts and continually rebel against God. That self-centered orientation is overcome by the Spirit of God, who brings enlightenment to those who had been blinded in unbelief, life to those

who were spiritually dead, and the love of God to those who had been His enemies. His presence enables believers to obey as they "put to death the deeds of the body"⁶ and are conformed to the image of Christ.⁷

However, all these operations are progressive. The elect are enlightened enough through the Spirit's effectual calling that they embrace the gospel,⁸ but He continues to provide insight into the love of Christ, enabling us to grow in our devotion to Him.⁹ When we finally see Him, we will know as we are known.¹⁰ In the same way, we have been made alive in Christ,¹¹ but we still look forward to the resurrection.¹² While we wait, we find that suffering and obedience progressively manifest His life in

The Christian's Struggle With Indwelling Sin

us.¹³ Paul's references to putting to death the deeds of the body,¹⁴ being led by the Spirit of God,¹⁵ and becoming conformed to Christ's image¹⁶ are all in the present tense, describing ongoing action. We are being changed, and the Spirit's presence in us constitutes the first fruits, not the fullness, of the life to come.¹⁷

... God promised a "new heart" as part of the New Covenant,¹⁸ and some Christians think they have already received it in its fullness. Believing that to be the case, they attribute a believer's sinful actions to something other than his true self – old habits, poor instruction, or even demonic oppression. However, we have already seen that there is no "real me" other than the one

that thinks and acts day after day. I am being changed by the presence of the Spirit, but I am not becoming the real me, nor is the real me revealing his true colors. Instead, the real me has an inconsistent heart, and my choices evidence both a God-given love for the Savior and a continuing love for myself. We as Christians must continually "put on a heart of compassion, humility, gentleness, and patience"¹⁹ and be transformed by the renewing of our minds.²⁰ The re-creation work of the Spirit has begun, but it is not yet complete.²¹ RAP

Robert A. Pyne, *Humanity and Sin* (Word Publishing: Nashville, 1999), 184-5.

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¹ Psalm 33:9 (Notes 1-5 are NASB95) ² 1 Thess 2:13 ³ Romans 12:2 ⁴ Luke 10:38-42 ⁵ Isaiah 55:3 ⁶ Romans 8:33 (Notes 6-20 are NASB) ⁷ 2 Corinthians 3:18 ⁸ Acts 16:14 ⁹ Ephesians 3:14-19 ¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 13:12 ¹¹ Ephesians 2:5 ¹² Romans 8:11 ¹³ 2 Corinthians 3:11-12 ¹⁴ Romans 8:13 ¹⁵ Romans 8:14 ¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:18 ¹⁷ Romans 8:23 ¹⁸ Ezekiel 36:26 ¹⁹ Colossians 3:12 ²⁰ Romans 12:2

Christian Leadership

Jesus said, “Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.”¹ This statement alerts us to the fact that there are unique features to leading others as we follow Christ. This is not leadership as the world encourages. As Christian leaders we must first recognize that we are all followers. That is where we start. The thrust of the above passage in Matthew is to not

take or seek preeminence with those people of God we are seeking to lead. That position belongs only to our Lord.

The passage places leaders on equal footing with those that follow, since “One is your Leader,” and “you are all brothers.”² The leader is even to lower himself into the position of servant and make the welfare of others his mission. This is the next statement Jesus makes, “the greatest among you shall be your servant.”³ This is not unlike the way we should all live, though. According to Philipians, we should, “regard one another as more important than yourselves,”⁴ and Paul writes, “through love serve one another.”⁵ The point is that being a leader does not exempt one from the normal expectations of the Christian life. Humility is a primary virtue of our way of life, no matter how we serve. We all serve one

another and we all lead, in some fashion or other. As someone has said, **“Leadership is taking initiative where you are.”**

Someone is always watching us and being influenced by us. This is especially true at home in family relationships but holds true in the public workplace, at school, etc. In the church, leaders must be an example of this life of service for all to follow. That is the first principle given by our Lord in the passage we are considering. “The greatest among you shall be your servant.”

The second principle in this passage, Matthew 23:8-12, is that humility is a required trait for exaltation as a leader. This second principle is listed as support for the first principle of servanthood. Jesus says, “Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.” One will be humbled one way or the other, either by choice or

by consequence, better by the former. To humble oneself by choice brings the promise of exaltation. That would certainly be preferred to the promise of being humbled, which carries a negative implication.

The full context of 23:1-12 makes a contrast to what we have discussed here and

“Leadership is taking initiative where you are.”

makes it more powerful. Let us not be like the proud, self-exalted religious leaders Jesus has been discussing, but with humility let us seek the last place as servants. Then we will have a great and godly effect.

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Evangelism, as an act of obedience, is not a dead act that is an end in itself. Obedience is necessary to make progress in the Christian life. Our own personal progress depends on it. Paul did everything possible to win people to Christ but his purpose was to become more like Christ himself through the same gospel he

preached, “so that I may become a fellow- partaker of it” 1 Cor. 9:23.

The following section (part 2 of 3) is from “Common Ground,” a monthly bulletin insert published by Search Ministries,

www.searchmin.org

We need to take an interest in our network: In the New Testament the word for our network or sphere of influence is the term “*household*.” It’s used frequently in the

Evangelism

Gospels and the book of Acts to describe the close relationships that exist between family, friends, neighbors and coworkers.

In the New Testament it was taken for granted when a person came to Christ that his conversion would have an impact on everyone in his sphere of influence. Cornelius in Acts 10 is a good example. He was a battle-hardened soldier who had a tender heart toward God. When Peter came to his house, he found a

roomful of relatives and close friends. That entire group is called his *household*; and when they heard the message of Christ, they all responded and received Christ.

From a biblical standpoint, the most basic place for us to begin to share the good news of eternal life is to go to the natural webs of relationships that exist within our sphere of influence.

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¹ Matthew 23:10 (All references to NASB95), ² Matthew 23:8, ³ Matthew 23:11a, ⁴ Philipians 2:3, ⁵ Galatians 5:13c

Parenting in the Middle Years

(1st through 6th grade)

Character and Moral Reasoning

In the early years, parenting focuses on training children in obedience using moral instruction and setting boundaries. The focus is on learning God's law: what is right and what is wrong. In the middle years, the emphasis moves on to character development using moral reasoning. The focus is on God's principles: learning how to apply God's truth to daily life.

Romans 13:1-5 gives a step-by-step process for laying out the moral reasons for a particular behavior. These steps can be used for any of God's laws or principles. The Bible often provides specific verses for steps two through four below.

1. State the law or principle. *"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God"* (v. 1).

2. State the negative consequences. *"Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God*

has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves" (v. 2).

3. State the positive consequences. *"For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you"* (v. 3).

4. Show God's perspective. *"For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer"* (v. 4).

5. Sum it up. *"Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience"* (v. 5)

In this example, the overriding reason to obey authority is that authorities are God's servants and disobedience will not punish the authority but will punish the child. Children who understand the ramifications of their actions in terms of God, others, and harm to themselves are more likely to

obey and are better equipped to apply this understanding in a wide range of situations. They begin

to apply the principle of obedience to authority in general rather than simply follow the rule of obeying particular authorities, such as parents, teachers, police officers, and so on.

Respect for authority is basic to everything a person does. Invest whatever time and effort it takes to teach your children to obey authority. If they do not have respect for authority, they will constantly be out of God's will and will create trouble for themselves.

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Internet: Unknown Artist

Contact us for a free set of these

- **Learn to love Jesus Christ all over again.**
- **Seek His forgiveness.**
- **Talk to Him about the needs of others.**
- **Tell Him of all your hurts and sorrows.**
- **Pray for His guidance every day.**

If it is difficult for you to talk with the Lord Jesus and if you only pray when you want something, then your prayer life is not so effective as it should be. The following steps can help you develop a more effective prayer life.

- **Learn to love Jesus Christ all over again.** Go back to Calvary! See Jesus on the cross

loving you enough to pay the price for your sin. Remember, when you pray you are talking to your closest Friend and One who loves you more than any other person could. Tell Him how much you love Him. Thank Him and praise His wonderful name.

- **Seek His forgiveness.** Because we are human, we do things that grieve the Savior's heart. There will be many times that we need to say, "I'm sorry."
- **Talk to Him about the needs of others.** If you love Christ, you will share His concern for others. Jesus reached out to people in need. Pray for others. A daily or weekly prayer

An Effective Prayer Life

list is a great help.

- **Tell Him of all your hurts and sorrows.** Tell the Lord Jesus your inmost thoughts, recognizing that He knows all your hopes, fears, problems, heartaches and sorrows, and He cares.
- **Pray for His guidance every day.** Since God knows the solutions to our problems and the decisions we need to make, it only makes sense to seek His guidance.

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One of the Lord's Prayers

"Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You. Now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word that they may all be one so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

John 17:1, 13, 20-22, 26 NASB95

Reader's Forum

This column is reserved for you, the reader, and the content you contribute. Submit anything you think will benefit others (email, articles, graphics, poetry).

Holy God would be reduced to a pathetic shadow of what they were intended to be.

However, God's grace is magnificent, eternal and pervasive. The magnificence is in its availability. God floods our lives with it (Eph. 1:6-8). Eph. 2:7 speaks to the eternal nature of God's grace toward us. We will be used in the "ages to come," as God demonstrates His grace to the whole universe. Astounding. Finally, God's grace is pervasive in that we cannot as His children be separated from it.

But we forget all this, or at least I speak for myself, because I forget it. I guess I am a slow learner, the slowest of learners. I am also aware that I am not at all alone in this experience. Even Paul with his amazing spiritual depth and insight had this same experience (Romans 7). J.I. Packer interprets this chapter as Paul's personal experience in life with Christ.¹ Paul had somehow re-

Could you imagine the Christian life without His grace? Christians attempting to approach their

Law and Grace

moved himself from God's grace and was by default under God's Law. Anytime we remove ourselves from God's grace we will have the same frustrating experience. Our spiritual life will dry up, also our personal life, as the spiritual is not separate from our person. We might go through the motions awhile, but inside we will be depressed, isolated and fearful, looking to addictive comforts separate from God. Our solution lies in...

Romans 8 is a great passage about the incredible, almost unexplainable love that our God has for us. At any moment we can move from an experience in Romans 7 to the experience of Romans 8. God receives us in the condition we are in, cold, depressed, addicted, fearful, and moves us, for as long as it takes, to a love relationship, first with Him and then with others. He is committed, through His grace, to having us become loving, victorious people both now and throughout eternity. There is no other possible basis for this than His Grace. JA

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Grace in Romans

Romans 5:1-2; 7:4,6; 6:14
NASB95

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

⁴Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. ⁶Now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

¹⁴For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.



One

Acrylic on stretched canvas; 2001

The ship, the church, weathers the storms and proceeds in faith. Christ, the masthead of the body, calls us to travel the troubled waters together, secure in Him and His church.

"Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name . . . so that they may be one as we are one."

John 17:11

Mediflection

To meditate, or reflect on this, read 5 times, slowly, and listen for God to speak to you.

"do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"

Romans 12:2

More About Metamorphosis

This free ministry letter is a project of Metamorphosis Ministries, formed to promote deep character growth in God's people. Future projects are being planned. If "the kingdom of God" consists in "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17 NASB), then there is nothing of the kingdom that is not touched by the experience of producing Christ-likeness in the individual believer. All that we do and say is given substance as we exhibit the "divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4 NASB).

"that the life of Jesus also may be manifested" 2 Corinthians 4:10-11

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Let's Pray Together

Father, we thank you for the cross that purchased our freedom with the life of Your dear Son. Be our strength as You transform us into His image over time and increase our capacity to receive from You. Let faith and freedom sustain us until we see your face and the transformation is finally complete. We thank and praise You through Jesus Christ. Amen.