



## What is Character Growth?

One of the words for character growth in the New Testament is metamorphao (μεταμορφωω). It is common to hear that we get our English word metamorphosis from this. The caterpillar and butterfly make a nice illustration and it is a good one for this word. However, the Greeks never thought about butterflies when this word was used.

It was mostly a religious word signifying the changes a member of a mystery religion was said to go through "by magical change into divine form."<sup>1</sup> Even more pertinent was the usage in non-biblical Jewish literature of the period just before Christ, signifying "a miraculous change of form . . . which the blessed receive after the resurrection."<sup>2</sup> The word was only used four times in the New Testament, twice of Jesus' change when He was transfigured on the mountain (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2<sup>3</sup>) and twice of

the change God works in the believer by the Holy Spirit (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18).

This dramatic background sets the stage for the metamorphosis God wants to bring about in our lives, giving us portions of His actual "divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), the real thing, more like Jesus' transfiguration than either of the extra-biblical uses.

**This is what Metamorph Ministries is all about, true, personal, inward transformation to increasingly have the character of Christ as our own character.**

This is the first in a series of articles that will describe the process a Christian goes through to achieve the character of Christ. Each article will look at one of the five principles of spiritual and character growth. These five principles are not activities or disciplines but mechanisms God uses to get at the root of who we are

and that He uses to replace our character with that of the Lord Jesus Christ. These five principles are: 1) God's word - its effect upon us, 2) the Holy Spirit - He gives the power or ability to be different, 3) faith - connects us to the source of power (the Holy Spirit), 4) obedience - keeps the process moving forward and 5) suffering - creates need and protects us from wandering.

Other issues fall under one of the above principles. These five principles give us an overarching framework to better understand what is going on in our lives. May our faith be encouraged to be more receptive to God's master program for our lives.

SFC

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## Metamorph Ministries

is an evangelical Christian ministry devoted to the development of character in God's people. Since a Christian is destined to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom 8:29), we find in ourselves a longing for this destiny to become more a part of our daily experience. How does this happen? How are we transformed into the person we and God would like us to be?

Plans are for this personal growth bulletin to instruct and edify with an emphasis on developing character and the personal life of those with faith in Jesus Christ. With God's help, it will be honest, relevant and Christ-centered.



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

In This Issue		Encouragement	"Open His Eyes"
Character Growth	1	<p><b>by Herschel Martindale</b></p> <p>Israel was at war with Aram (2 Kings 6:8-23). The King of Aram would make a battle plan, and the King of Israel would find out about it. The King of Aram cried, "Spies!" "Who is the traitor?" Someone said, "It's the prophet in Israel." The King sent his army to capture the prophet.</p> <p><b><i>The servant of the prophet woke up one morning, went outside, and almost lost it.</i></b></p> <p>The city was surrounded by the Aramean army. He ran back inside, "What are we going to do?" Elisha</p>	<p>see." He looked outside and saw that the mountains were filled with the chariots of God.</p> <p>There is a spiritual dimension that we are unable to see with our physical eyes. Apparently there is much activity in the spirit world. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6, that we struggle not with flesh and blood, but with a whole array of spirit forces of evil, and they are intent upon keeping us from accomplishing the will of God and rescuing people from the deceptions of Satan. There is also an army of angels who are committed to helping God's people, as we seek to serve God and carry on His work in this world (Hebrews</p>
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said, "Don't be afraid. There are more with us than with them.

Now, we can only imagine what went on in that young man's mind, but I'm sure that he thought that Elisha had lost it. Then he heard Elisha pray, "Lord, open his eyes that he may

1:14; Psalm 91:11-12). We need to know that "those who are with us are more than those who are with them". We are on the winning team. "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:58-59).

There is another blindness that affects all of us at times. We don't see God's grace, power and adequacy because we just don't believe His promises. The disciples said to Jesus "Why could we not cast it out?" (Matthew 17:19-20) He said to them, "because of the littleness of your faith." He could do no miracles in His

*(Continued on page 4)*

<sup>1</sup> J. Behm, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), IV:757. <sup>2</sup>Ibid. <sup>3</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 Edition.

## Parenting in the Early Years (Birth to School Age)

### Authority and Obedience

**1 John 5:3** This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.

Training children to obey biblically is a lot harder for the parents than it is for the children. Small children are willing learners, albeit feisty ones, at times. Sooner or later, though, the command to obey will be met with resistance, whining, dragging feet, or a defiant “No!” ***The parents’ response will teach them what level of obedience is really expected***—to really obey, to wait for warnings, or to ignore commands until somebody yells. In one sense, it doesn’t really matter to the children, they just take their cues from the parents. It is much harder for the parents to follow through with the appropriate discipline when they meet defiance than it is for the children to accept the consequences.

My husband and I train our children to obey the first time we give a command because that is what God expects of us all. He doesn’t tell us not to steal, then give us three chances before he calls it sin. The first time we steal, we are in trouble. Small children can’t always grasp the idea of obeying the first time, so it is helpful to break it down for them. They should obey:

**Quickly** – the first time he or she is asked. Sometimes, there is a pause while they decide whether or not to obey. Give them time to do the right thing, until it is clear what they will do.

**Quietly** – without complaining, talking back, or negotiating. Watch for any kind of verbal response that indicates rebellion or stalling.

**Cheerfully** – with a good attitude. Pay close attention to their attitudes, especially through body language. Outward obedience with inward rebellion is not acceptable.

**Completely** – exactly as instructed. Altering the instructions means they are trying to maintain an element of control, which is a form of rebellion. For example, if a child is told to put his cup on the coffee table, but he puts it on the end table instead, he has not obeyed completely.

This is a great checklist to use because children usually have the capacity to understand each of these components of first-time obedience. It helps them determine for themselves if they have obeyed appropriately. If all four of these criteria have not been met, then the child has not obeyed properly.

One of the most important things to review is their attitude. “*The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart*” (1 Samuel 16:7). The heart shows itself in the attitude. The whole process of child training requires that parents reach the hearts of their children.

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**Praying Man**

Mechelle Larson  
2002

*Original sketch done for Metamorph*

### **Prayer**

#### **Faithfulness in Prayer**

To have access to an important person, such as the pastor, a local political leader or even the President of the United States would be considered a great advantage by most of us. How much more to have access to the One who is in charge of all things in the Universe, who knows us personally and, not only cares about us but loves us and has made us part of



His own family. All of this on top of the fact that He has plenty of time to spend with us and wants to do so. We have such an omnipotent friend in God the Father, because of Jesus Christ.

**Why** don’t we take more advantage of this relationship? **Why** are we so seldom in prayer, so negligent of the access we have to God?

***May God help us to pray more often and more sincerely.*** Your heavenly Father, will listen and you will find comfort and a place to hide and to heal. Then you will be able to wage decisive war and experience victory and glory. For healing finds its purpose in making us more like the Savior, better equipped to “fight the good fight” and show His goodness and love to others. No victims, only victors!

SFC

***Father, thank You for Your comfort and unyielding victory and for Your purpose to conform our character to that of Jesus Christ. Make pursuit of His character the top priority in our lives and grant us the ultimate intimacy with you that pursuit brings. In Your light alone do we see light. We praise You.***

*In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.*

## Networking

**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).

Besides obedience and accompanying faith, another advantage to your own growth is the crisis it presents to your own values. You cannot be neutral to the world and its values if you intend to speak the name of Jesus Christ to people immersed in the world. The world system and its spiritual atmosphere will revolt and separate you. This will be good for you. It will solidify your faith and draw you to Christ and His people.

**Identify our Network.** This is a good first step. A network is a social system with four elements: our family, our friends, our neighbors and our coworkers. All of us have a number of non-Christians in this sphere of influence. For some, the list may be short because they haven't kept up with their non-Christian friends since they came to Christ. But for others, the list may be extensive because they've developed close relationships through work or other activities, or because they're relatively new believers who still have a number of non-Christian friends.

Most of us, however, have never taken the time to write down the names of the people in our network. This can be a helpful exercise. Draw four columns on a piece of paper for each of the elements above. Try to write as many names as you can in each of those columns. Once you've identified all the unbelievers in your network, you can move on to the next step.

Pray for them. Pray in these ways: **generally**-in your normal prayer life for them to be open to the Lord; **reflectively** - look for Spirit led ideas to speak to and/or serve them; **obediently** - plan, prayerfully for ways to act on these ideas; **confidently** - ask for and expect opportunities and wisdom; **graciously** - speak or serve, depending on the Lord and asking for His strength and love.



*Southwest Cercelee*

Paul Myhill 2001

The Cercelee cross (open-budded cross) represents maturity in the faith. Here the ladder-like steps imbedded in the design pronounce the path of sanctification as we mature and seek a closer relationship to God.

Used by permission; go to <https://www.facebook.com/paulmyhillart>.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 15:3 <sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 15:11 <sup>3</sup> 1 Samuel 15:26

## David, the Anointing

### Seeing as God Sees

We first meet King David in chapter 16 of 1 Samuel. The context is the beginning of the end for King Saul, the first king of Israel. He had obeyed the people instead of the Lord by taking captive spoil from the campaign against the Amalekites. God had said, "Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."<sup>1</sup> However Saul and the people spared the king and the best of the livestock. The Lord's assessment of the situation was, "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands."<sup>2</sup> Samuel said to Saul, "the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."<sup>3</sup>

That brings us to chapter 16. In verses 1-13 we learn an important lesson about the Lord and how He works with mankind as a new king over Israel is anointed. We learn that God is

*(Continued on page 4)*

### Poetry

## CREATION'S BREATH

*Stale fallen snow lies hidden under ice.  
Clouds cover the earth like a solid silver canopy  
Their depth and dimension appear lost, hanging  
heavy with ripening snowflakes.  
Winter's mask remains steadfast, as creation's breath  
lies submerged and unconscious.  
Weeks integrate into months.  
Then  
Overnight a cluster of purple-yellow crocuses splash  
the pale canvas.  
Creation's breath bursts, panting for new life.  
The end of the age lies hidden from mankind.  
The perpetual cycle of the human race freezes time.  
Satan's mask covers the world like dense fog,  
remaining steadfast  
As creation groans for a heavenly tent.  
Years integrate into centuries.  
Then  
In the twinkling of an eye, He descends upon the  
clouds and gathers His elect.  
Creation's breath bursts, clothed in new life.*

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### Mediflection

To meditate and reflect on this, read 5 times, slowly, out loud and let God speak to you.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Galatians 2:20



## "Open His Eyes" (continued from page 1)

hometown because of their unbelief (Matthew 13:58). He had all the power they needed, but they didn't put their faith in Him.

Someone asked Helen Keller, the blind writer, "Is there anything worse than being blind?" She answered, "yes, to have eyes but have no vision."

Through the Word of God, we have all the provision and resources of God at our disposal. Faith is a choice. We must learn to open our eyes to the unlimited grace and power of God and choose to believe and trust God. "Lord, open his eyes!"

HM

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## David (Continued from page 3)

not concerned with the same things we are when it comes to what is important in a person He approves and blesses.

The chapter begins with the Lord coming to Samuel, the last of the judges that have ruled Israel for the last 350 years since their occupation of the Promised Land. He says, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him?"<sup>4</sup> God is ready to move on, unlike most of us after what appears to be a setback in the divine program. The Lord has already taken events and people into consideration and is ready to move forward with plans developed since the foundation of the world, actually before that.<sup>5</sup> He has a specific mission for Samuel. "I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons."<sup>6</sup> Let us learn to rebound quickly and move on, "Press on." Great football players do this. I saw Ray Nitschke, the Green Bay Packer legend, do this in a televised game. He was cleanly blocked, knocked on his back side. But it was as though he was made of rubber. He scarcely hit the ground and he was back on his feet, pursuing the play to make the tackle of the ball carrier across the field. Our Lord is immediately ready to move on, when we fall. As soldiers of the cross, there is no good reason to do otherwise than follow Him.

The chapter goes on to describe Samuel's visit to Bethlehem to anoint the next king of Israel. He used the pretext of

(Continued at: [www.metamorphmin.org/resources](http://www.metamorphmin.org/resources))



[Unción de David por Samuel](#)

Antonio González Velázquez, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

<sup>4</sup> 1 Sa 16:1

<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet 1:20

<sup>6</sup> 1 Sa 16:1.



Trusting God is difficult, isn't it?

## Notes

If you have an article, poetry, artwork, etc. that you'd like to contribute, please contact us. **Extra copies** of Metamorph may be obtained for **free** to give to friends, family members and church leaders. We'd especially like to increase **bulk church circulation**. Volunteer labor is welcomed!

## More about Metamorph

This discipleship/training publication is a project of Metamorph Ministries, to promote real character growth. Videos of the articles may be viewed at [www.metamorphmin.org/resources](http://www.metamorphmin.org/resources). If "the kingdom of God" consists in "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17), then there is nothing of the kingdom that is not touched by the experience of producing Christ-likeness in the individual believer. All our functions and behavior are given substance as we exhibit the "divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4).

We ask for your prayers for this ministry and its long-term effect on those it touches. We are just at the beginning of a long road of service, and desperately need the grace of God.

Please, consider becoming a partner to support this work financially. The rewards are great both now and in eternity. "... you will be enriched in everything for all liberality" (2 Cor 9:11).

May God bless you through His word and the freedom He has given us in Christ. SFC

## All Purpose Response Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I would like more info about Metamorph.

\_\_\_\_ I will support Metamorph in prayer.

\_\_\_\_ I will support Metamorph financially.

\_\_\_\_ One time \_\_\_\_ Monthly \_\_\_\_ Quarterly

Comments, prayer requests: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_