

## Transformed Treasures Bible Study

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Transformation in the life of the believer is an ongoing process, which takes intentionality and willingness to submit one's life to the will of the Father. In the New Testament, the Greek word for transformation is *metamorphosis*. It means "a change of the form or nature of a thing or person into a completely different one, by natural or supernatural means." Spiritual formation is the process of Christ being formed in us or transforming us - for God's glory, for our benefit and for the sake of others. The gospel message drives this truth home. As children of God, we are redeemed and made new by the power of the cross, through the death and resurrection of Christ. **"The old has gone, the new has come"** (2 Corinthians 5:17). As Christians, we have a role in the ongoing process of transformation.

A beautiful story of transformation in the Bible took place in the life of Saul, who was once a radical persecutor of Christians. Read about his transformation in **Acts 9:1-19**. Christ got ahold of Saul, and he became a new and transformed creature. The man who was once a passionate and radical persecutor of Christians, became a passionate and radical defender of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This same transformation is possible in the life of anyone who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior to humankind. For Paul, who was once Saul, this transformation was immediate; yet, it took the rest of his life to wrestle with and work out his salvation.

Our lives are not that different than Paul's. We are initially saved through the grace and love of God, through His Son, Jesus, and we continue to work out our salvation as He works in us. Like sea glass being tossed in the ocean, we are constantly being refined and restored. "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Restoration requires action. I have a cabinet in my garage I intend to restore; however, if I never touch it, it will never change. If we don't nurture our spiritual well-being, we will never change. In fact, we will eventually return to the old self. Consider three biblical reminders from Paul, which help us become the transformed treasures God created us to be.

### Transformed through Prayer

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6,7).

Richard Foster, in his book, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, says, "Prayer catapults us onto the frontier of the spiritual life. Of all the Spiritual Disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father...Real prayer is life creating and life changing" (transforming). So often, prayer is put on the back burner of our lives and replaced with meaningless pursuits. Transformation is not possible without persistent and consistent prayer. Paul speaks often on the importance of a life devoted to prayer. Reflect on the following questions as you consider your personal prayer journey.

- Do I have a specific and regular time set aside to meet with and commune with God?
- Do my prayers offer sincere praise and thanksgiving?
- Do my prayers include a time of confession, creating a space for cleansing and purity?
- Do my prayers include petitions and intercession for myself and others?
- Do I stop to listen to God when I pray?
- Do my prayers draw me closer to God?
- How can I create more space in my life for communing with God?
- What does Paul mean when he says, “Pray in every situation”?

"Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference." - Max Lucado

“Pray without ceasing.” ~ Paul

### **Transformed through Scripture**

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

The word of God equips us for the mission of God. His word is a powerful source of transformation, as individuals and as a body of believers growing together. It’s one thing to know the Scripture cerebrally. It’s a completely different thing to live in the Scriptures and ponder it in our hearts. We can memorize the Bible from front to back without being transformed. Reading for information is much different than ingesting and digesting for transformation. Scripture is a place where, when approached with the right heart-set and mindset, can become a source for sacred encounters with our holy God, where transformation can be deep and rich.

Ruth Haley Barton, in her book, *Sacred Rhythms, Arranging Our lives for Spiritual Transformation*, wrote, “Many of us approach the Scriptures more like a textbook than a love letter. In Western culture in particular, we are predisposed to a certain kind of reading. We have been schooled in an information reading process that establishes the reader as the master of the text...The information-gathering mindset is very appropriate and helpful for a student in an academic or a learning environment. But when applied to Scripture, this approach does not serve the deeper longing of our heart – the longing to hear a word from God that is personal and intimate and takes us deeper into the love that our soul craves. The study of Scripture is important, but if we stop there, we will eventually hit a wall spiritually.” When we read Scripture for transformation, we engage our minds as well as our hearts. Examine the following Scripture and ruminate on the questions below:

The author of Hebrews says that “the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

- When has the word of God felt most alive to you?
- Do you have moments in each day where you ponder God’s word in your heart and consider how it is speaking to you personally?
- Can you describe a time where God’s word has changed you from the inside out?
- Consider reading a passage of Scripture and placing yourself in the narrative. Choose your own passage or try Luke 2: 1-21. Imagine yourself in this story as one of the characters. How did God meet you in this narrative? Can you relate to the shepherds, angels, Mary or Joseph?

### **Transformed through Fellowship**

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you have a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Colossians 1:26).

Christian community is isn’t just gathering on a Sunday morning for worship. It’s a continual fellowship, in which the love of Christ binds us together in unity. The early Church met together daily, opening the Scriptures, praying, serving and living their lives in common. Acts 4: 32 says, “All the believers were one in heart and mind.” This meant they loved with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. They carried each other’s burdens. What a beautiful picture of fellowship. In our hurried world, this type of fellowship is rare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Too often, we barely have time to meet our own critical needs, let alone the needs of our neighbor.

Adele Calhoun, in the *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*, writes, “We belong together, not apart. God is not a bachelor who lives alone. The Almighty One is a holy community of three. And we express this divine nature best when we are in a community committed to growing and being transformed into Christlikeness.” When we belong to Christian community, we become stronger together and part of a living organism. We need one another to be complete and to experience transformation to the fullest. Think about the following questions as you reflect on your life in community with the body of Christ.

- When has the body of Christ encouraged your walk with God?
- How have you been an encourager within the body of Christ?
- What gifts do you use to edify the body of Christ?
- Are you a part of a small group, that meets together on a regular basis for fellowship, breaking open the word of God and prayer?

- What thoughts do you have when you think about the following words? 1) dependent 2) independent 3) interdependent
- What kind of connection do you think God wants you to have with other believers that might be lacking now?

“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity” (Psalm 133:1).