

Discipleship Series for New Believers

Lesson 3: How God Transforms Us

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How God Transforms Us-Why

It is important for new believers to know the way the Lord makes us more like Him. He does not tell us we are to love, have joy, be patient, be kind and abstain from sin in our own power. In fact, if we accomplish this in our own power, it is a stench to God because we are not relying on Him. Instead, we are creating our own righteousness and holiness apart from Him. No, He gives us the power to do the good works He has called us to do and abstain from the wrong things by the power of His Holy Spirit. He does not desire us to change ourselves apart from the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. The Lord desires us to come into His presence just as we are, and as we spend time with Him, He changes us. He softens our hearts and makes our hearts more like His heart. He teaches us to hate sin, He reveals the sin in our lives, and He also gives us the power to overcome it by the Spirit.

By teaching a new believer the principle found in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that we are changed as we behold Him, they can learn to rest in God's presence and just enjoy their relationship with God. This will help to avoid striving and frustration in the new believer's life. The earlier in the Christian walk someone can learn to rely on God's Holy Spirit to change them and not on their own will and flesh to perfect them, the faster they will have victory over the besetting sins in their life and be filled with the fruits of the Spirit.

How God Transforms Us-How

As Christians, we cannot live a victorious life without relying on the Spirit of God to change us. If we strive in ourselves to change our behavior, we will fail because God wants us to need and rely on Him. If we could change ourselves, then we would not have a need for God. It is not perfection God is wanting in our lives, but rather, a relationship with Him is His utmost desire. God has ordained a particular way in our lives in which we are changed. This is evidenced by 2 Corinthians 3:18 that says, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." When we come into God's presence, He changes us. Many times the changes will be little by little so you cannot even perceive them, nevertheless, when you come into God's presence you will come out changed.

If we try to change ourselves without coming into God's presence, we are missing the truth. Sometimes we get caught in a trap of believing we have to change our behavior or be good enough to come into God's presence, but that is a lie. We will never be good enough for God apart from Him. He is the one that gives us the desire and strength to change, and He will not

give it to us if we do not come into His presence. Galatians 2:1-3 exposes the error of this way of thinking by stating, “Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you; Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” God does not want us to try to change ourselves. He does not want us to fix ourselves so we will be good enough to come to Him. Our relationship with Him started by faith and the working of the Holy Spirit, and He desires it would end that way.

Even in the Old Testament it can be seen that God changed people through spending time with Him. This was before the New Testament was written and before the Spirit of God lived inside of people. Jeremiah 29:13-14 says, “And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.” God promised a mighty deliverance in Israel after they sought Him with all their heart. It is in God’s presence He breaks the bondages and chains which have been upon our lives. It is in God’s presence He gives us the strength to overcome the sins which beset us. Then they can no longer hold us because we are stronger in the Spirit than our sin is in the flesh.

God really made this real in my life in a time where I was struggling really badly with something God did not want me to do. For me it seemed like such a small, insignificant thing, but it must not have been because I could feel a war raging around me in the Spirit. I kept trying to justify to myself that it was such a small thing and I did not need to listen. But I knew it was wrong to disobey God no matter how small something seems in my understanding. I cried out to God to change my heart so I would not justify disobedience and that He would help me to obey. Immediately there was grace and strength in the battle which had been waging around me and inside me, and something that had been so hard a moment before suddenly had no power. This was the first time I had ever come to God when I struggled and relied on His strength to get me through instead of my own. When God does the work it lasts, whereas what I would accomplish in my own strength always eventually toppled. I learned a very important lesson that day. I am truly changed by the Spirit of God and not my flesh. It is so much better to rely on Him than to try and change myself without Him. And this is a knowledge that scares hell because once I learn to rely on God when I am struggling and let Him do the work, Satan loses His power in my life.