

# The Life You Have Always Wanted (But Need Spiritual Discipline to Obtain) #1 Transformation

## Introduction:

“Choosing to live for Jesus Christ may mean adopting a certain style of life, or perhaps more properly, a rule of life. We take on a series of spiritual practices that will open us to God’s work in our lives...it is a work of grace (transformational) yet something is demanded from us. We need to say ‘Be it done to me according to your will.’” (*Spiritual Classics* by Foster and Griffin)

We need to learn from Jesus how to arrange our lives. It is time for some transformation (morphing). See Rom. 12:1-2

“Morph:” the inward and real formation of the essential nature of a person. God’s original design for man, pleased Him (Gen. 1:31: “God saw all He had made and it was very good.”) God’s original plan for man was the “Garden Experience in Eden.” Sin messed all that up.

And now we long for “home.” “You have made us for yourself, Lord and our heart is restless until it finds it’s rest in you.” (Augustine)

“The interior journey of the soul from the wilds of sin into the enjoyed presence of God is beautiful. Ransomed me need no long pause in fear before the Holy of Holies. God wills that we should push on into His presence and live our whole lives there.” (A. W. Tozer)

The goal for every believer is TRANSFORMATION.

## What Transformation is NOT:

- It is NOT a surface approach to Christianity. It is not a religious effort.
- It is NOT adherence to a set of “identity markers” that supposedly give our society a “visual” representation of our spiritual walk.
  - o 1st Century believers: Following certain dietary laws, keeping the Sabbath, being circumcised
  - o 20<sup>th</sup> Century believers: No smoking, drinking or dancing
  - o 21<sup>st</sup> Century believers: ???

“If you are weary of some sleepy form of devotion, probably God is as weary of it as you are.” (Frank Laubach)

### **What Transformation Is:**

- The purposeful activities that help us become more and more like His Son. See II Cor. 3:18, Romans 8:29 and I John 3:2. These activities are not a “part time,” casual endeavor. “Being transformed” is the full time, intentional pursuit of Christ.
- This pursuit is the “normal” expression of the believer. It is not limited to just a few “really spiritual” folks.
- It is an AUTHENTIC outward expression of the inward process of our spiritual transformation.
- It is generally a gradual process that is triggered and sustained by obedience. (see Acts 3:19)

### **Transformation requires TRAINING (not just TRYING)**

- Consider I Timothy 4:7: “...exercise (train) yourself unto godliness.”
- Training requires a decision. Trying is often just an excuse . It is the difference between : “I’ll try” vs. “I will start.”
- Spiritual training responds to the fresh “wind of the Spirit.” It is not rigid.
- This kind of training considers our God given gifts, abilities and opportunities
- Spiritual training produces results. We will become more loving, more patient, kinder and more generous. You (and others) can “see” (perceive) the work of God in your heart.

### **Training requires DISCIPLINE**

A disciplined person can do the right thing, at the right time, in the right way and with the right spirit.

- It is possible to arrange our lives around PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES that will enable us to live in the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5). These purposeful activities are called “Spiritual Disciplines.”
- Spiritual disciplines are not a way to gain favor (or extra credit) with God. (See Eph. 2:8-10)
- Spiritual disciplines are not necessarily a spiritual barometer of our lives. We can “perform” all manner of Godly “stuff” out of an empty heart. (Matthew 15:8)
- Spiritual disciplines are those activities that help us do what we can’t do by willpower alone. They help us gain supernatural power to live our lives the way that pleases the Lord.

“I go through life as a transient on his way to eternity, made in the image of God but with that image debased, needing to be taught how to meditate, to worship and to think.” (Donald Coggan)

### **So What?**

Richard Foster’s book, *The Celebration of Discipline* outlines spiritual disciplines in three categories:

Inward Disciplines: meditation, prayer, fasting, and study

Outward Disciplines: simplicity, solitude, submission and service

Corporate Disciplines: confession, worship, guidance, celebration.

Our study for the next 7-8 weeks will explore some of these disciplines. In the meantime, consider some these discussion / personal questions:

1. What does it mean to “become like Jesus?” (I John 2:6) Be specific.
2. What are some “spiritual boundary markers” that you might be using to evaluate your own or someone else’s spiritual life? Are they valid?
3. Are you training or just trying to be like Christ? What might be missing? What would a training regimen look like for you?

Sherry Worel  
sworel@stoneybrooke.com