

## **Total Transformation: The Main Thing (1)**

Pastor Alan Robinson, September 5, 2010

### **Matthew 28:16-20 (church Bible page 706)**

<sup>16</sup>Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

### **Mark 1:16-20 (church Bible page 707)**

<sup>16</sup>As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." <sup>18</sup>At once they left their nets and followed him.

<sup>19</sup>When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. <sup>20</sup>Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

**Galatians 4:19 (Church Bible page 825)**

<sup>19</sup>My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,

**Romans 12:1-2 (Church Bible page 803)**

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

## Total Transformation: The Main Thing

Our congregational vision is to be a congregation that partners with God in the holistic transformation of individuals, families, and communities. We desire to see this transformation occur both locally and globally. Together, we are on a journey of transformation.

Our congregational mission is to help people come to a personal and growing relationship with Jesus Christ, in which they fully surrender themselves to follow Jesus Christ so that authentic and holistic transformation is experienced through the grace and power of God. **Simply put, our mission is to help people know and follow Jesus and experience God's transforming grace and power.**

The accomplishment of our congregational mission can only be achieved through the mysterious combination of both divine and human activity. Only God can transform human hearts and lives, but our part is to partner with God through intentional and strategic action. We do not believe that our actions or activities create life-transformation; rather they become ways in which God can work in us and through us.

It is important that we are clear that the transformation that God desires to accomplish in each person is that Jesus is *formed* in us (Galatians 4:19). The true nature of transformation is that our human, self-absorbed, and sinful nature is transformed through the indwelling power of God forming Jesus in us. We are to be no longer conformed to the patterns of this world, but to be transformed so that we conform to the image of Jesus (Romans 12:2 and Romans 8:29)

As we consider the intentional and strategic actions that will help us to experience the grace and power of God that bring authentic and holistic transformation, it seems that four factors are especially significant:

- **Personal prioritization and commitment, and**
- **Intentional spiritual practices and disciplines, and**
- **Significant spiritual relationships and chosen accountability, and**
- **Genuine and generous care and compassion.**

## Personal Prioritization and Commitment

John Ortberg, writing in his book, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, points out, "The Christian gospel insists that the transformation of the human personality really is possible. Never easy. Rarely quick. But possible... It begins to happen anytime people become intensely serious about learning from Jesus how to arrange their lives. Wise people across the centuries have devoted themselves to this. But the Way of Jesus needs to be restudied and reapplied to every age and social setting."

Did you catch what Ortberg said was a condition for the beginning of genuine transformation? He said that it begins "anytime people become intensely serious about learning from Jesus how to arrange their lives." In other words, authentic and holistic transformation begins when you and I make it a **personal priority** in our lives and **commit** ourselves to **arranging our lives in the ways taught by Jesus** (and, I would suggest, the ways taught in other parts of scripture), in order to experience God transforming us.

## Intentional Spiritual Practices and Disciplines

One of the helpful ways to explain a spiritual discipline is to think of the paths along which deer travel, or the parts of oceans, lakes, and rivers where fish are known to spend their time. People that want to hunt deer or catch fish know that certain places are much more likely to be productive than other places. So it is with the spiritual disciplines. These are practices or habits in our lives that have been shown over thousands of years to be "paths" along which the transforming grace and power of God moves.

Richard Foster, in his book, *Celebration of Discipline*, writes "Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people or gifted people, but for deep people... The classical disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore

the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. They urge us to be the answer to the hollow world.”

Foster cautions all of us against thinking that “disciplines” are just for spiritual giants and are therefore beyond our reach. Rather they are for ordinary human beings: people who have jobs, who care for children, who wash dishes and mow lawns and work in offices or schools. It is possible, though not easy, for ordinary people to develop practices and habits (spiritual disciplines) that will help them to experience God’s transforming grace and power.

Some spiritual practices are inward (such as reflection, meditation, prayer, fasting, study), some are outward (such as simplicity, solitude, submission, service), and some are corporate (such as confession, worship, guidance, celebration). Together these practices become paths that help us to experience authentic and holistic transformation.

### **Significant Spiritual Relationships and Chosen Accountability**

God did not intend the journey of authentic and holistic transformation to be one that we travel alone. In fact, deep transformation cannot be experienced or expressed in isolation: it is experienced in and through significant spiritual relationships and is expressed in community. People who are serious in their desire to truly experience the transforming grace and power of God *need* to be in deep relationship with others.

Deep spiritual relationships don’t just happen, they must be intentionally formed. They require effort and grace. They do not develop quickly and easily, but rather they develop over time and with persistence that battles through disappointment. Other people will disappoint us in the same way that we will disappoint other people. As we give and receive grace, journey with others who also desire authentic and holistic life transformation, and as we choose to become vulnerable and accountable to others, we will experience the deep change for which we long.

## **Genuine and Generous Care and Compassion**

Authentic and holistic life change is an inner process that has outward consequences. As we experience transformation that causes Jesus to be formed in us, we will begin to demonstrate the care, compassion, and self-sacrifice that were evidenced in his life. We will begin to demonstrate the mind, heart, and character of Jesus and this will cause us to be people marked by genuine care and compassion.

Not only are care and compassion two outcomes of authentic and holistic transformation, they are also practices and paths by which we can experience transformation. As we choose to serve others, we will find that we are changed in the process.

## **Some Steps toward Transformation**

1. Choose to make authentic and holistic transformation the number one priority in your life. Commit to being personally responsible for your spiritual life and your authentic and holistic transformation. You are the one who is responsible for you! Communicate this prioritization and commitment to other significant people in your life.
2. Choose to commit to learning and incorporating transformative practices in your life. Remember, these practices will not bring transformation by themselves, but they can become ways in which you will experience God. Buy a copy of Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* and John Ortberg's *The Life You've Always Wanted* and begin to follow the advice that you find in them.
3. Choose to become an active, regular, and engaged participant at one of our weekend worship services. Corporate worship is where the community comes together to exalt God and to be inspired and encouraged on our spiritual journey. By committing to regularly attend the same service each week you will have a better chance of getting to know others and also of allowing them to get to know you.

4. Choose to become an active, regular, and engaged participant in one of the many opportunities that are provided for discipleship in community with others.
  - a. Choose to sign-up for the new *Discovery* groups that are now forming. *Discovery* is a sequential discipleship resource that will provide a community of people who are journeying together in this two-year process. Contact Pastor Bryan for more information ([bryanhoke@carlislebic.org](mailto:bryanhoke@carlislebic.org)).
  - b. Choose to become a regular and involved member of a Sunday School class. Different groups meet during both service times on Sunday mornings. Each class follows a different study resource. Contact Pastor Bryan for Sunday School information ([bryanhoke@carlislebic.org](mailto:bryanhoke@carlislebic.org)).
  - c. Choose to become a regular and involved participant in a small group. These groups are mainly home-based and meet throughout the community on different days and times. Each group follows different study resources. Contact Pastor Jerry for small group information ([jerryclonch@carlislebic.org](mailto:jerryclonch@carlislebic.org)).
  
5. Choose to find a way to make genuine and generous care and compassion a way of life.
  - a. Get involved in serving the needs of others within the congregation. Many volunteer opportunities exist within the congregation.
  - b. Get involved in serving the needs of others in the community. Many volunteer opportunities exist in this community. Some of these are with ministries or groups with which we have a connection. Contact Pastor Bryan for more information on these.
  - c. Choose to go on a mission trip and experience life and ministry in another setting. These trips are a great opportunity to build relationships with others from the congregation and they have tremendous power to change your perspective and your life. Trips this fall include a week in Mississippi to work on the ongoing relief from Hurricane Katrina (October 31 – November 6, contact Charles Sieber at [chas1357@yahoo.com](mailto:chas1357@yahoo.com) for

more information). AwakenHaiti also has multiple trip opportunities scheduled to Haiti. ([www.awakenhaiti.org](http://www.awakenhaiti.org), a ministry of this congregation)

6. Choose to live a life of stewardship of all of your resources— financial, time, and talents. Make a commitment to get your finances under control and to begin to live a financial life that honors God. This kind of life will include choosing to live on less than what you earn, avoiding consumer debt, making appropriate financial plans for the future, and releasing a generous portion of your financial resources to the work of God in the world. We encourage and recommend that all followers of Jesus give their tithe (10% of income) through their local congregation and, in this way, they are partnering with the entire congregation in the work that it is doing. Giving beyond the tithe can also be given through the local congregation (perhaps for special projects), or for other ministries and missions through other reputable organizations.

“The primary goal of spiritual life,” John Ortberg declares, “is human transformation. It is not making sure where people are going after they die, or helping them have a richer interior life, or seeing that they have lots of information about the Bible, although these can be good things. Let’s put first things first. The first goal of spiritual life is the reclamation of the human race... Not only that, this goal can be pursued full-time. For a long time in my own life a very bad thing happened: I had reduced my “tools for spiritual growth” to a few activities such as prayer and Bible study or a few periods of the day called a quiet time. I took an embarrassingly long time to learn that every moment of my life is an opportunity to learn from God how to live like Jesus, how to live in the kingdom of God.”