

# The Transforming Power of **DISCIPLESHIP**

**Transformed  
By The  
TRUTH**



- Brother Dennis Gillette defines Discipleship as,
- **SLIDE**
  - “The process which **TRANSFORMS** the disciple into the friend, the witness and the servant of the Master.”
- I believe that this process is wonderful, remarkable, and actually *supernatural*...
  - I’m excited to be able to share this information with you today
- I don’t think that Discipleship is a matter of Academics
  - Although I believe it cannot be achieved unless one spends time with the Word
- I don’t think that Discipleship is a matter of Discipline
  - Although it requires a lifelong, consistent commitment
- I don’t think that Discipleship is something that **YOU** can actually do at all
  - Although it is clearly **YOU** that is involved

- Discipleship is, at it's core, all about transformation
  - The process of being changed into someone who is more like Christ
- God designed us for this purpose
  - God intends for us to go through this process and be changed
- What we experience in this life is **NOT** what God intends for us
- This often confuses people
- It's a false belief that you can somehow be satisfied with this life
  - To think that somehow we should learn to ignore the aches in our soul
- It's simply an incorrect understanding of God's message to think that if you somehow live correctly; pray frequently enough; read often enough; attend enough classes; you will be spared the pressures, the worries, and the pains of this life
- This type of thinking doesn't face the painful reality of what's it's like to be an imperfect and sometimes sinful, human being
- This can be depressing if you start asking yourself,
  - *"Why don't I feel as happy and together as everyone else?"*
  - *"What's wrong with MY spiritual life?"*
- Don't be afraid of Sadness
  - Allow yourself to feel the deep longings in your soul that will never be fully satisfied until the Kingdom
- Don't be afraid of Brokenness.
  - Face the hidden sins in your heart that make it clear how thoroughly unlike Christ you often are
- Let the pain of disappointed longings and the guilt of terrible sins drive you to consider the gospel of God's grace in a new way
- Only then will Christ be able to enter your life deeply and change you from the inside out
- Only then will you begin to experience the ***Transforming Power of Discipleship***

- To begin, we have to understand something fundamental about our relationship with God:

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- God **DOESN'T** want you to be satisfied with who you are

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- God wants you to **CHANGE!**

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- God wants you to become like His **SON**, the perfect model of what He is looking for
- Life doesn't ever really make sense to us until we start to understand this one simple fact:

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- You were created **BY** God

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- And you were created **FOR** God
- There is no other way to look at it
  - It is that simple
  - God didn't create you for your own enjoyment
- We shouldn't find ourselves wondering:
  - ***“What's in this for me?”***
- But, more appropriately, we should be thinking:
  - ***“What's in this for God?”***

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- The **Purpose of Discipleship** is **NOT** to somehow transform ourselves into “worthy” people...
- We are not concerned with somehow proving that we are acceptable in God's sight

- The goal of our life is to fulfill God's Purpose for us

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- The **Purpose of Discipleship** is to transform ourselves into better servants of God!

- **SLIDE**

- The **Purpose of Discipleship** is to fulfill God's Purpose for you

- **SLIDE**

- The single most important thing to remember about **DISCIPLESHIP** is that the **TRUTH TRANSFORMS US**

- There are a lot of factors in our life that change our characters

- Only one comes deep into our hearts and makes us into what God wants

- The Word of God is alive, active and working

- Our time spent with the Word changes us more than anything else

- Our lives are full of lies

- Many of these lies are what others tell us

- Many of these lies are what we tell ourselves

- And sadly, even our trusted friends and family don't always tell us the truth

- Polite, surface-level friendships require skin deep comments and messages often intended solely to boost a positive self-image

- Your loved ones often don't want to force you to face the ugly truths about yourself, for fear that might expose their own weaknesses also

- Too often our conversations are polite, but not really honest...

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- Spiritual Growth is the process of replacing **LIES** with **TRUTH**

- Truth is not relative...

- Truth is not subject to someone's opinion
- There is only one source of Truth

- **God's Word**

- In this world of lies that surrounds us, there's often only **ONE** place that we find the Truth spoken to us
- Jesus said,

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- John 17:17 (NIV)

17) Sanctify them by the truth; **your word is truth.**

- We all desire to be Sanctified
  - To be made holy
  - Purified
- Sanctification requires Revelation
- God uses the Bible to transform us into people like His Son

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- Acts 20:32 (MESSAGE)

32) "Now I'm turning you over to God, our marvelous God whose **gracious Word can make you into what he wants** you to be..."

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- To become like Christ, you must fill your life with **God's Word**
  - The entire Bible has been given to us for that sole purpose

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- 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17 (CEV)

16) Everything in the Scriptures is God's Word. All of it is useful for teaching and helping people and for correcting them and showing them how to live.

17) The **Scriptures train God's servants to do all kinds of good deeds.**

- This book is different...

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- God's Word is unlike any other word

- **IT IS ALIVE!**

- Not in the sense of an analogy, a simile, or a metaphor...
- The Bible is a living, intelligent, organism
  - It's words enter into our heart and change us

- **SLIDE**

- Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

12) For the word of God is **living** and **active, sharper** than any two-edged **sword, piercing** to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and **discerning** the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- These are NOT just wonderful stories that simply inspire and motivate you...
- Listen to the Strength, the Power, and frankly, the VIOLENCE of these words!
  - Living
  - Active
  - Sharp
  - Sword
  - Piercing
  - Dividing
- Only in the Word of God will you find the one source that **"cuts straight to the bone"** in your life
  - One source of Truth that forces you to be honest with yourself
- It is sharp, piercing and dividing...

- These aren't nice, simple words to describe a book
  - These are strong, powerful words speaking about something totally unique
- The Word of God is unique!

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- When God speaks, things **CHANGE!**
  - God spoke and **ALL** of Creation came into being
- Everything around us is here because God spoke it into existence
- Without the Word of God you wouldn't even be alive...
  - Without God's Word none of us would be here today

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- James 1:18 (NCV)

18) God decided to **give us life through the word of truth** so we might be the most important of all the things he made.

- The Bible isn't intended to be a source of academic study
  - The Bible isn't intended to be a curriculum for Doctrines and debates

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- God's Word **CREATES!**
  - It Generates Life
  - It Forms Faith
  - It Produces Change
  - It Causes Miracles
  - It Heals Hurts
  - It Builds Character
  - It Imparts Joy

- It Overcomes Adversity
- It Defeats Temptation
- It Infuses Hope
- It Cleanses Minds

• **SLIDE**

- It **TRANSFORMS** us from the Sinful, Mortal, Earthly Creatures that we are ...
  - Into the Holy, Immortal, Heavenly Creatures that God wants us to be!
- And yet too often....
  - It spends most of it's time riding back and forth to meeting in the nice, leather case that we bought to carry it in
- If we truly wish to be transformed
  - If we really want to be better people than we are today
- We need to make spending time with God's Word a priority in our life
  - When we make the Word of God a priority in our life, this includes **THREE** parts

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1) **You have to accept the Bible's **AUTHORITY****

- This might sound simple to you...
  - Academically, we all accept the Authority of the Bible
  - If it is God's Word, then it follows that we would accept God's Authority in our lives
- But, this is not an Academic exercise
  - We are not looking for the answer that your mind gives
  - But, the commitment that your heart shows



- To accept the Bible as the Authority in your life means allowing it to become the standard in your life
  - That which all things are judged on
  - The Compass that you rely on for direction
  - The Counsel that you turn to when making decisions
  - The Benchmark that you use for evaluating everything in your life
- The Bible must have the First and Last Word in your life...
- Does it?
- Or do we really have several authorities that rule our lives?
- Many of our troubles occur because we base our choices on unreliable authorities:

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- **CULTURE**

- **SLIDE**

- “Everyone else is doing it”

- **SLIDE**

- **TRADITION**

- **SLIDE**

- “We’ve always done it that way”

- **SLIDE**

- **REASON**

- **SLIDE**

- “It’s seems logical”

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- **EMOTION**

- **SLIDE**

- “This just feels right”
- I’m not trying to say that every time you act based on what’s logical, or feels right, or is the traditional way to do it, or others are doing it that way...
  - That it’s wrong
- While these Authorities are not always wrong, they **ARE** all flawed by the sinfulness of Man’s Heart
- We need a perfect standard that will never lead us in the wrong direction
  - We need to make sure that we are following that standard and nothing else
- The first decision you make as a Disciple is to decide that you are going to have the Bible as the ultimate authority in your life
- Make one **BIG** decision in your life and you won’t have to make thousands of small ones
  - Dedicate your life to a strict obedience to what the Bible says, and you don’t have to decide what to do when different circumstances arise
    - You’ll have already decided!
- No matter if things make sense to you...
  - Or they don’t feel right...
    - Or if you’ve never done it that way before in the past...
      - Or even if no one else is doing it...
  - Determine that you will always ask, **“What does the Bible say?”**
- Look to God’s Word first, and resolve that you will do what it says

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## 2) You must **ASSIMILATE** the Truth

- Now comes the hard part...
  - I'm not just talking about "reading" the Bible
- I'm talking about **ASSIMILATING** it into your life
  - When something is assimilated, it become "second nature"
  - You allow it to take control of your life
- The Bible isn't some sort of magic talisman or mystical mantra that can have miraculous effects on you simply by squeezing 15 minutes of Bible reading into your day
- You have to bring it into your **HEART**
  - You have to **FILL YOUR MIND** with the Word of God
- Here are some suggestions to help you bring God's Word into your mind

- **SLIDE**

- a) **You Receive It**

- Receiving the Word of God is more than just hearing it...
- Receiving the Word is listening with an open, receptive attitude
- Whether or not you are even receptive to the transforming, changing effects of God's Word is a big factor in whether or not it is going to be able to influence you at all
- Meditate and pray to make yourself open to God's teaching...
- The Parable of the Sower is a good illustration of how receptiveness determines whether or not God's Word is going to be able to take root in your life
  - The Hard Soil was clearly a Closed Mind
    - Someone not interested at all in opening themselves up to the inevitable changes that come with deep personal introspection
  - The Rocky Soil was Shallow and a Superficial Mind
    - Someone not interested in growing past the immature, irresponsible state that they currently are in

- The Thorny Soil was Weedy and a Distracted Mind

- Someone who probably would say that they are interested, but is so consumed with other things going on in their lives that they simply do not make the time needed to spend with the Word

- Jesus concludes the Parable with a good warning about being receptive:

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- Luke 8:18 (NLT)

- 18) So **be sure to pay attention** to what you hear. To those who are open to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But to those who are not listening, even what they think they have will be taken away from them.”

- Whenever you feel you aren't learning anything from an exhortation, a class, or a Study Day, you should check your own attitude first
  - God can speak through the most boring teacher if the listeners are open, humble and receptive

- **SLIDE**

- James 1:21 (AMP)

- 21) So get rid of all uncleanness and the rampant outgrowth of wickedness, and in a humble, gentle, modest spirit **receive and welcome** the Word which implanted *and* rooted in your hearts contains the power to save your souls.

- **SLIDE**

- b) **You READ it**

- Firstly, you have to be open and receptive to hearing the Word of God speak...
      - Then, you have to let it speak!
      - You have to take the time to actually crack it open and read what's inside it
      - An average person with an eighth grade education can read the entire Bible, from cover to cover, in 90 hours
      - That's only 15 minutes a day to read the entire Bible

- One rerun of a sitcom takes as much time as reading through the entire Bible **TWICE** a year!
- Dentists say that you only have to brush the teeth that you want to keep...
  - God says that you only have to read His Word on the days that you want to live!
- The Commandment to a King was quite clear...

• **SLIDE**

- Deuteronomy 17:19 (NLT)

19) He must always keep this copy of the law with him and **read it daily** as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the LORD his God by obeying all the terms of this law.

• **SLIDE**

c) **You Research It**

- Studying God's Word is another great way to abide in it...
- Reading the Bible and Studying the Bible **ARE** different
  - Reading needs to happen every day, but Study clearly will not
- There are **TWO** simple differences between reading the Bible and Studying the Bible
  - **Asking Questions**
  - **Writing Down your Thoughts**
- Brother L.G. Sargent said,
 

*"There are almost as many ways of Bible Study as there are students."*  
- Exploring the Bible, Page 5
- What works for me may not work for you...
  - What worked for L.G. Sargent, definitely does not work for me.
- If you look at my Bible you will see **VERY** few notes...

- I do **ALL** of my study on a very wide screen, with a Word Processor, a Dictionary, a Thesaurus, a Concordance, and at least **FIVE** Bible Versions open all at the same time!
- And I'm jealous of the guy who simply has a few notes in the margin of his Bible
- Each person, Male or Female, Young or Old, has to find their own way of Studying
- Because Bible Study is essential...
  - You need MORE than just the daily readings
- Robert Roberts said,
 

*"If the Bible is God's voice to every man that has ears to hear, then it is for every man by himself, and for himself, to seek to understand it."*

- Exploring the Bible, Page 7
- In *Exploring the Bible*, Brother Harry Whittaker said,
 

*"No one can expect to go far in Bible study unless he has developed a well-sharpened faculty for asking questions."*

- Exploring the Bible, Page 36
- Notice, that we are not talking about the ability to **ANSWER** questions
  - Simply learn to ask questions...
    - The right questions...
- Many questions that come to mind won't have any definitive answers
  - But write them down anyway
    - It doesn't matter if you think the question is unanswerable or not, write it down
  - Over the years, you will find answers to the ones that can, and that is where all the joy, revelation, and often transformation lies
  - I remember my first ever, independent Bible Study, like it was yesterday
  - I was 15 years old, and it was 11:30 at night, and I buried myself in concordances, lexicons, Bible Dictionaries and versions of the Bible

- Yes, that WAS the days before computers!
- My parents were long asleep, but I was determined to figure this out:
  - What are “*Emerods?*”
  - Well, I won’t share with you my not-so-fascinating results, but I can tell you of the incredible sense of excitement, accomplishment and fulfillment I received from the process
- So learn to ask questions...
  - The right questions...
- Different methods of Study use different questions, but you will discover far more if you simply pause, try to put yourself in the situation you are reading, and ask,
  - **“Why?”**
  - **“Who?”**
  - **“Where?”**
  - **“What?”** and
  - **“When?”**
- \* Envision yourself standing there, saying that
  - Like a Method Actor playing a role, place yourself into that position
  - If it doesn’t flow, if it doesn’t make sense to you, then question it
- And write down your thoughts!
  - Write them in your Margins
  - Write them on the blank pages in the back of your Bible
  - Keep a Notebook in your Bible Case
  - Write them on your Word Processor
  - Jot them down on your Palm Pilot

- But, write them down!
  - it's amazing to see how your thinking changes over the years as you look back to what you wrote in the past, and realize how much you have grown

- **SLIDE**

- d) **You Remember It**

- Your Memory is a gift from God
  - You may be chuckling right now, thinking it's not much of a gift...
  - You may think that you have a poor memory...
  - But, the truth is that you have millions of facts, ideas, truths and figures all memorized
- In 1985 I managed a clothing store for two years...
  - I remember that the part number for Levi's Jeans was 5050217, and they cost us \$15.65 a pair
  - I remember that we bought our Adidas shoes from the Ralph Libonati company and that our customer number was 1235
  - I remember that next to the store was a little place called, Sticky Fingers Bakery, and there began my lifelong love affair with baked goods
- You remember what is important to you!
  - If God's Word is important to you, you will take the time to remember it
- There are enormous benefits to memorizing Bible verses
  - It will help you resist temptation
  - It will help you make wise decisions
  - It will help you reduce stress
  - It will help you build confidence
  - It will help you offer good advice



- It will help you share your faith with others
- Memory is like a muscle
  - The more you use it, the stronger it gets
- Memorizing Scriptures becomes easier as you do more
  - Start by selecting a few verses, writing them down and carrying them with you
  - Say them **ALoud** to yourself during the day
  - Do it over and over and over
- Then do more!
  - The more you do, the **better** you get

• **SLIDE**

e) **You Reflect On It**

- This is called Meditation...
- Eastern Religions have done us a great disservice on the topic of Meditating
- For many the word, "Meditation" conjures up images of crossing your legs, touching your fingers together, saying "Ohm", and **CLEARING** your mind
- This is actually the exact **opposite** of Biblical Meditation
- Meditation isn't about clearing your mind, it's about **FOCUSING** your mind
- Meditation is selecting a verse, and reflecting on that verse over and over
- When you focus on a problem and think about it over and over, that is called **"Worrying"**
- When you focus on the Word of God, and think about it over and over, that is called **"Meditating"**
- No other habit can do more to transform your life and make you more like Jesus than daily reflection on the Scripture

- Filling your mind with the Word of God has multiple benefits in your life and it is always better than what you were going to put in there
- One of the reasons that David was considered a “Man after God’s own heart”, was because he loved to reflect on God’s Word:

- **SLIDE**

- Psalm 119:97 (ESV)

97) Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

- Serious reflection on God’s Word is essential to transformation

- **SLIDE**

### 3) You must **APPLY** the Bible’s Principles

- Receiving, Reading, Researching, Remembering and Reflecting are all **USELESS** if we fail to put them into practice
- Discipleship is **NOT** about “*Doing the Readings*”...
  - It’s about **DOING** what the Readings **SAY!**
- This is the hardest part...
  - Your lazy, sinful, deceitful heart doesn’t mind you going to Bible Classes...
  - But it will fight you tooth and nail if you try to do something with what you have learned
- Don’t let your Old Man trick you into inaction
- We fool ourselves into assuming that just because we have studied the Truth, that we have internalized it
- We can actually make ourselves so busy going to the next class, or Study Day, or Bible School that we don’t have any time left to implement what we have learned
- Many people will fall 12 inches short of the Kingdom...
  - The distance from their **HEAD** to their **HEART!**
- Your Heart is deceitful, and it doesn’t want to change, it doesn’t want to be transformed into something better

- It's happy to have your Head soak in a bunch of nice sayings and helpful theories
- ***Just don't try to change the way we've been doing things here for years!***
- ***Gee... Maybe you don't quite have enough information...***

***Why don't you go to another series of classes on the topic...***

***Then maybe we can talk about it...***

- Force yourself to get out of that cycle, and take action with what you already have
- Without implementation, all of our Bible Studies are useless
- That is one of the reasons I actually enjoy being an Arranging Brother
  - On the Arranging Board the ***"Rubber meets the Road"***
  - On the Arranging Board you are forced to face real-life issues and situations and apply the Biblical Teaching that you have learned
- One of the reasons why we avoid personal application of God's Word in our lives is that it is often difficult and sometimes even painful

• **SLIDE**

- ***The Truth will set you FREE! But, first it might just make you miserable!***
- God's Word is alive!
  - It exposes your motives
  - It points out your faults
  - It rebukes your sins
    - But, worse of all...

• **SLIDE**

- ***God's Word EXPECTS you to CHANGE!***
- It's Human Nature to resist change
  - Bob Lloyd says that no one likes change except a baby with a dirty diaper

- So, applying God's Word to your life is hard work
  - Your deceitful heart will try it's best to stop you from doing it
- That is why it is essential that you discuss your personal application of God's Word with other people
  - Open up to your Brothers and Sisters and tell them what you are facing
  - Be honest about the changes that you are attempting in your life
  - Share what your problems, your shortfalls and your weaknesses are
  - Explain how the Word of God has spoken to you, and called you to change

- **SLIDE**

- Ask them to hold you **ACCOUNTABLE** to progressing forward and making that change in your life
- Discuss the personal application of God's Word with those around you, and listen to them also
  - We always learn from others truths that we would never learn on our own
- Other people will help you see insights into yourself that you would miss and they will be able to help you apply God's Truth in a very practical way

- **SLIDE**

- Take the time to actually **WRITE DOWN** the plans for **CHANGE** that you want to attempt in your life
  - Develop a habit of writing down exactly what you want to change
  - Take time to do this frequently...
    - A weekend away with your spouse each year
    - A quiet afternoon at Bible School
    - A Saturday at home alone
- The Bible was not given to us to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives

- ***To TRANSFORM us...***