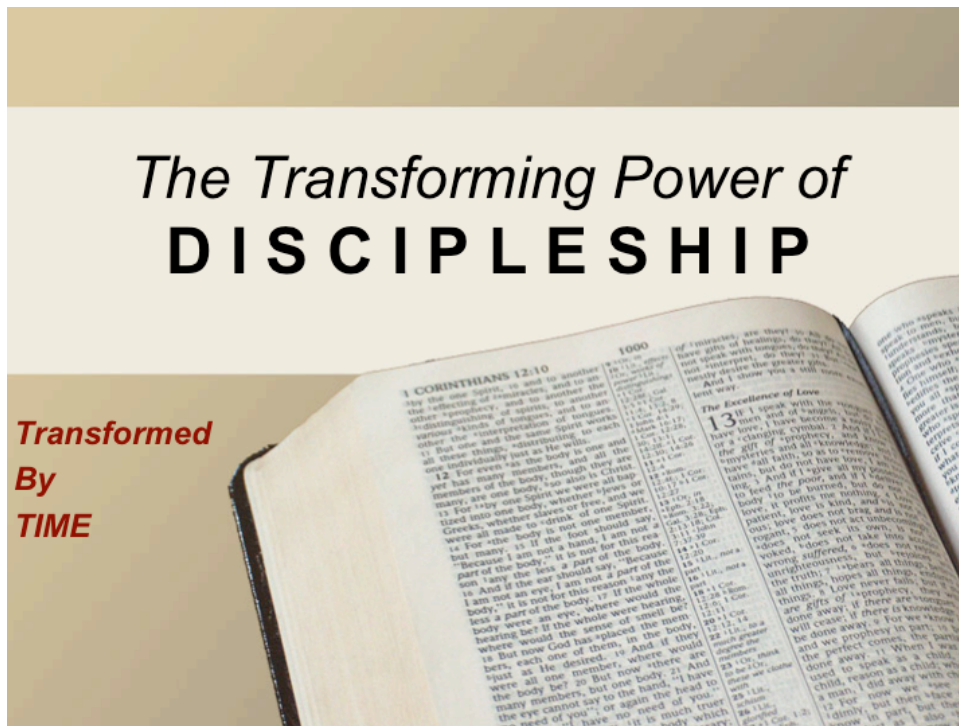


The Transforming Power of DISCIPLESHIP

Transformed
By
TIME



- There are no shortcuts to maturity...
- Discipleship is the process of conforming to the character of Christ
- This process takes time
- We continue at this process until, as Paul says,
- Ephesians 4:13 (KJV)
 - 13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, **unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ**
- This process takes a lifetime
- That's not something that we are used to...
- Everything in our life can be fixed immediately
 - Put enough money into it, enough men on the job, use the right tools, and you can fix almost anything immediately

- Too often we look for the same thing in our lives
 - One single experience that will finally make us what we want to be
 - The perfect exhortation, the right class, the ideal book
- But, that is not the way that God planned it
- Although God **COULD** instantly transform us, he has chosen to develop us slowly
- God does so, because He knows what kind of people we are
 - He knows that the quick fix wouldn't stick
- He knows that we are slow learners
- One of the most overpowering feelings you get from reading the Old Testament stories is... ***"Where is the Learning Curve with these people!"***
- It's sad to admit that the same will be said of us 2,000 years from now
- Why do you have the same problems and temptations coming up in your life over and over again?
- Because you haven't learned the lesson that God wants you to learn yet
 - God doesn't bring Troubles and Temptations into our lives because He likes to see us hurt, or see us fail
 - God does it because He wants us to Grow, to Change, to be Transformed by the experience
- If the same things keep coming up over and over, then maybe it's time to take a good hard look at them, and try to figure out what it is that God wants you to learn
 - We all have a **LOT** to learn
- And we also have a lot to **UNLEARN**
- We took years to develop our bad habits, and it's unrealistic to think that they will go away quickly
- We are hobbled in that task by our own inability sometimes to humbly face the truth about ourselves

- One of the hardest commands that we have is the one that Paul repeats during the first Memorial Service:
 - ***“But let a man examine himself”***
 - It is extremely hard for many of us to even give ourselves an honest examination of our motives and actions
 - Many of us live in denial on so many issues, simply because we are terrified of actually bringing them out in the light and facing them
 - Unless you develop a humble attitude, then you will never correct those issues
- What scares us most about the concept of Transformation?
 - There is no **Growth** without **Change**
 - There is no **Change** without **Loss**
 - There is no **Loss** without **Pain**
- This fear of Pain is what scares us away from the Transformation that God desires
- We are afraid to lose our old ways
 - Even though we admit that they are self-defeating, we still feel comfortable with them
- People often build their identity around their defects, and worry that if they let them go, they won't know who they are...
- You are free to step away from the **Old Man**
 - God doesn't care who you were, or even who you are
 - God is only concerned with who you can be
- You can help out in the process by following some simple steps
 - 1) **Believe God is working in your life even when you don't feel it**
 - ***God is real, no matter what you feel***
 - You may not feel God present in your life, but you must believe that He is there
 - We are all looking for the miraculous lightning bolt from heaven to come striking down

- But, God works in small steps
 - A tiny acorn takes 350 years to grow into a great oak tree
 - A small stream of water takes hundreds of years to carve out a canyon
- You can pray for miracles, but don't be disappointed by slow, gradual change

2) Keep a journal of the lessons you learn

- This isn't a daily diary
- This is a journal of what you are learning about yourself
 - A record of the changes that you have noticed in yourself over the years
- The reason God makes us relearn lessons over and over is that we forget about them
 - You can improve that process by recording the lessons, and familiarizing yourself with them
- Feeling down?
- Feeling depressed?
- Feeling like God is not working with you?
- Open your journal and refresh your mind with what He has done for you in the past

3) Be patient with God and with yourself

- God's timetable simply isn't the same as ours
- The Bible is full of examples of how God uses a long process to develop character
- Consider Moses, whom God took 80 years to prepare...
- We are often in a hurry, but God never is
 - But, God is never late, either
- He always completes his goal
- God wants us to be patient throughout this process
- Look at James' advice in Chapter 1

- James 1:2-4 (KJV)

- 2) My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
- 3) Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.
- 4) But **let patience have her perfect work**, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

- What amazing advice...

- *Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

- A modern translation says,

- *“So don’t try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.”*

- it simply takes a long time...

- It takes a lifetime

- If God is going to make a mushroom, He can do it over night

- But, if He is going to make a diamond, it takes a thousand years

- Which do you really want to be?

- Habakkuk got depressed because he didn’t think that God was acting quickly enough

- God tried to reassure him, and we would do well to heed the same message:

- Habakkuk 2:3 (KJV)

- 3) For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, **wait for it**; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

- Any good recipe or formula always involves an element of **Time**...

- Time is necessary to complete God’s Transformation of us

- God uses **TIME** to **TRANSFORM** Us

- We turn our attention now to the Emblems before us

- Christ’s time on earth was short by many standards...

- He only lived 33 years
- His ministry was only 3 years long
- But, those years must have felt incredibly long, when you come to realize that from the age of 12 we know that he understood what God's mission was for him
- He knew what lay ahead of him, and yet he remained faithful to the calling
- Christ was motivated by what was promised to him after this life
- Hebrews 12:1-2 (KJV)
 - 1) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
 - 2) Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; **who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- **The same joy is set before our eyes...**

- The same promise of Eternal Life is to both Jesus **AND** to his friends...
- We become a friend of Jesus through the **Transforming Power of Discipleship**
- God's purpose with our life is to Transform us into friends of Jesus
- To do so, God uses the power of His Word
- The Truth is the single **GREATEST** influence that God has on our lives
 - Our time spent reading God's word is unlike anything else we do
 - God's Word is unlike **ANYTHING** else

- Hebrews 4:12 (KJV)

- 12) For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a **discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**
- God also Transforms us by the Troubles that He brings into our lives
 - God wants to **STRETCH** us beyond our normal limits

- Because He has a **HIGHER GOAL** for us
- 2nd Corinthians 4:17 (KJV)
 - 17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a **far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory**
- One of the most common ways that God Transforms us is by allowing Temptations into our lives
 - Temptations are not just invitations to do **EVIL**
 - Temptations are also opportunities to do **GOOD**
- James 1:12 (KJV)
 - 12) Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: **for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life**, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.
- Thankfully, God uses our Ecclesia to Transform us also
 - God has purposely designed us to stay together in **GROUPS**
 - For the Good **AND** for the Bad, God wants us in Ecclesias
- 1st Corinthians 12:25-26 (KJV)
 - 25) That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* **the members should have the same care one for another.**
 - 26) And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.
- But all of these Transformations take **TIME**
 - Allow God the Time He needs to complete the work He has begun in you
 - Do whatever you can to help out in the process (rather than hinder)
 - **And be patient**
- ***Because the Joy that is set before you, is greater than whatever lays in front of you***