

40 Weeks of Purpose

Week 23

How We Grow

POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT FROM LAST WEEK:

I was created to become like Christ

Discipleship is the wonderful, miraculous process that God uses to TRANSFORM us into people that are like His son.

The FIVE steps God uses to Transform us are:

- 1) We are Transformed by The **TRUTH**
- 2) We are Transformed by **TROUBLE**
- 3) We are Transformed by **TEMPTATION**
- 4) We are Transformed by The **ECCLESIA**
- 5) We are Transformed by **TIME**

VERSE TO MEMORIZE FROM LAST WEEK:

• 2nd Corinthians 3:18 (LB)

18) *As the spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him*

God's Spirit is the active force that Transforms us during Discipleship

QUESTION TO CONSIDER FROM LAST WEEK:

How have I seen God working in my life recently?

- God wants you to GROW UP
- God's goal for you is to mature and develop the characteristics of Christ
- Too often people grow older, but they never grow up
 - They are stuck in perpetual spiritual infancy
- Spiritual Growth is not Automatic

- You have to WANT to Grow
 - Make an EFFORT to Grow
 - Be PERSISTENT in Growing
- Discipleship then, always begins with a Commitment
- Nothing shapes your life more than the Commitments that you make
 - Your Commitments can develop you, or they can destroy you
 - But, either way, your Commitments define you
- Tell me what you are Committed to, and I'll tell you what you will be in 20 years
 - We become what we are Committed to
- Most people are afraid to Commit to anything, and just drift through life
 - Some make half-hearted Commitments to competing interests, and end up frustrated and living in mediocrity
 - Some actually Commit themselves to worldly goals, like becoming wealthy or famous, and end up disappointed and bitter
- Your choices have eternal consequences, so chose wisely
- Before you Commit yourself, it's important to realize that you are NOT on your own during this process
- Discipleship is the result of making Christ-like choices, and then depending on the Spirit to help you fulfill those choices
- Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV)
 - 12) Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,
 - 13) for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.
- This verse shows clearly that there are TWO PARTS to Discipleship
 - 1) YOU Work Out your salvation with fear and trembling
 - 2) GOD Works In you
- Spiritual Growth is a collaborative effort between you and God's Spirit

- If you have never been successful at this, it could be because you've been trying to do it all on your own
- You have to accept the help of God during the process
- "Work Out" is a good phrase to use...
 - He doesn't say, "Work FOR" your salvation, because that has already been given to you, and nothing you can do is going to add anything to it
- Instead, you are told to exercise to develop the body that you have already been given
- Farmers work the land to develop the land, not to get the land
- God has given you a new life, now you are responsible to develop it
- The process is simple...
 - You Commit yourself to things that you are not able to complete on your own
 - You have faith that God is going to help
 - This is a "Leap of Faith"
- To make a change in your life like this, you have to change the way you think
- Behind every action is a thought
 - Every behavior is motivated by a belief
- Imagine that you are in a boat with an AutoPilot set to go East
 - If you decide you want to go West, you CAN grab the wheel and force it to go East
 - You will feel much resistance, and you will eventually get tired, and the boat will eventually turn back around and go East again
- OR...
 - You can change the AutoPilot!
- This is what happens when you try to force changes in your life with Willpower
- Willpower CAN produce short-term change, but it creates constant internal stress because you haven't dealt with the root cause
- The change you made doesn't feel natural, so eventually you give up

- There is a better way:
- Romans 12:2 (NLT)
 - 2) Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.
- Your first step in Spiritual Growth starts in changing the way you think
 - Change always begins in the mind
- The way you THINK determines the way you FEEL
 - The way you FEEL determines the way you ACT
- Ephesians 4:23 (NLT)
 - 23) Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes.
- To be like Christ you have to develop the Mind of Christ
 - You do this whenever you change the way you normally would think about something, and adopt how God thinks
- Philippians 2:5 (CEV)
 - 5) and think the same way that Christ Jesus thought
- It's a TWO-STEP Process
- STOP thinking Immature thoughts – Self-Centered Thoughts
- 1st Corinthians 14:20 (NIV)
 - 20) Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.
- Babies are completely selfish
 - They think only of themselves and their needs
- The idea is to grow up past that point...
- The Second step is to start thinking Maturely – Focusing on Others, not yourself
- Look at what Paul says at the end of 1st Corinthians 13:

- 1st Corinthians 13:11 (NLT)

11) It's like this: When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.

- Love is all about thinking of others
- Spiritual Maturity is not measured by the amount of Bible Knowledge that you know
 - Knowledge is ONE measurement of Maturity, but it isn't the whole picture
- The life of a Christian is more than Doctrine, it is also Character
- Christianity is not a religion, but more of a lifestyle
 - The core of that lifestyle is thinking of others instead of ourselves
- Thinking of others is the best measure of Spiritual Growth
 - This kind of thinking is unnatural, rare and difficult
- But, we do have help!
- 1st Corinthians 2:12 (CEV)

12) But God has given us his Spirit. That's why we don't think the same way that the people of this world think. That's also why we can recognize the blessings that God has given us.

POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT THIS WEEK:

It's never too late to start growing

VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK:

- Romans 12:2 (NLT)

2) Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.

QUESTION TO CONSIDER THIS WEEK:

What one area do I need to stop thinking my way and start thinking God's way?