

# 40 Weeks of Purpose

Week 24

## Transformed by Truth

### POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT FROM LAST WEEK:

*It's never too late to start growing*

Spiritual Growth is a two-step process.

- 1) You stop thinking self-centered thoughts
- 2) Start thinking about others first

### VERSE TO MEMORIZE FROM LAST WEEK:

- Romans 12:2 (NLT)

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

The way you THINK determines how you FEEL

The way you FEEL determines how you ACT

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER FROM LAST WEEK:

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

- 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
- Truth is not relative...
  - Truth is not subjective to someone's opinion

- There is only one source of Truth
  - God's Word
- In this world of lies that surrounds us, it's often in only ONE place that we find the Truth spoken to us
- Jesus said,
- 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
- 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..."
- 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
- 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...
- 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

- 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 another book
  - These are strong, powerful words speaking about something totally unique
- The Word of God is unique!
- 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
- 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

- 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

- 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 cover 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

### 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:
    - **CULTURE**           • “Everyone else is doing it”
    - **TRADITION**       • “We’ve always done it that way”
    - **REASON**           • “It’s seems logical”
    - **EMOTION**         • “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
  - 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

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

- Now comes the hard part...
  - I'm not just talking about "reading" the Bible
- 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

### 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
- 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:

- 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 a teacher, you should check your own attitude first

- God can speak through the most boring teacher if the listeners are open, humble and receptive

- 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.

**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 a day to read the entire Bible

- One rerun of *Friends* equals 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...

- 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.

### 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 Version 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 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 finding the answers to the ones that do, is where all the joy, revelation, and often transformation lies
- 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?”**
- 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

#### **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**

**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:
- 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

### 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
- ***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...
    - ***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
  - 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
- 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
  - ***What part of your life are you going to change next?***

**POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT THIS WEEK:**

*The Truth transforms me*

**VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK:**

- John 8:32 (KJV)

32) *The truth shall make you free.*

**QUESTION TO CONSIDER THIS WEEK:**

*What one thing has God told me in His word that I haven't started doing yet?*