

40 Weeks of Purpose

Week 28

Transformed by Time

Review from Last Week:

POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT FROM LAST WEEK:

Every temptation is an opportunity to do good

- God isn't trying to torment us...
- He actually wants something GOOD to come out of our Temptations
 - He wants us to conquer temptation and GROW from the experience
- God teaches us a character of Christ by putting us in situations where we are allowed to experience the OPPOSITE of that character...

VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK:

- James 1:12 (NLT)

12) *God blesses those who patiently endure testing*

QUESTION TO CONSIDER THIS WEEK:

What Christlike character can I develop by defeating my most common temptation?

There is a reason that God is allowing you to face that same issue over and over again... What EXACTLY is He trying to get you to learn?

- It takes **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 (NLT)
 - 13) until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, **measuring up to the full stature 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
- 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
 - Many of us live in denial of 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 about 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 100's 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 minds 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 (MESSAGE)
 - 2) Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides.
 - 3) You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors.
 - 4) **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.
- What amazing advice...

• ***Don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed...***

• 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 thousands of years

• Which one 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 (NLT)

3) But these things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, **wait patiently**, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed.

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

• Time is necessary to complete God's Transformation of 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 (NIV)

1) Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

2) Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, **who for the joy set before him endured the cross**, scorning its shame, and sat 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 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 takes 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

POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT THIS WEEK:

There are no shortcuts to maturity

VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK:

- James 1:4 (Message)

4) *So don't try to get out of anything prematurely.*

QUESTION TO CONSIDER THIS WEEK:

In what area of my spiritual growth do I need more patience?