

Being Transformed

Since Thanksgiving I have been hyper focus on Romans 8:28. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” This was due to personal circumstances. I experienced some relationship changes that I did not want to happen. This has been a very grievous time for me. Six months prior to this my main focus of prayer was and continues to be Psalm 51:10. “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” This is because I know I need a continued heart change. Roman 8: 29 tells us what God’s purposes for us. He chose us to become like his Son. In the verses following Psalm 51:10 David asks that the Holy Spirit not be removed from his life. He asked that God would be pleased with him. The right spirit I have been praying for is to be able to find the good in all situations, circumstances, and people.

When working families the primary focus is on the parents. This is because they are the best and most likely agents of change for the children. To do this parents must be in the process of resolving their own issues. I believe this calls for a heart change in them. Not unlike the heart change I need in myself. I tell parents that this will be very challenging for them. I give them hope through the Word of God. My personal experience with heart change helps me understand their struggles. My personal heart change helps me understand their pain. Parents have to feel good enough about themselves to be emotionally available to their children. Their window of tolerance needs to be able to handle any emotion their child brings to them. Parents need to be a secure attachment figure for their child. God calls us to be in a state of love for our children. These two sets of scripture give us a blueprint for implementing Bryan Post’s stress model.

Our purpose (Romans 8:29) is to become like Jesus. That is, be transformed into His likeness. Romans 12:2 tells us “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Psalm 51 tells us that we need the Holy Spirit in order to be transformed. That is, receive a new heart. We need to ask God to help us to do that. The molding and shaping of our heart cannot be done by willpower. Have you ever used willpower to stop diarrhea? Hopefully that’s not too graphic. We first have to become willing to be open to the Holy Spirit. We don’t have to figure out how to change ourselves. We can’t change our personalities. We can’t change our blueprints by ourselves. We are not designed to be able to do that by ourselves..

On the surface this may seem very simple. I believe it is simple but paradoxically, complex usually goes hand in hand with the simple. During this process we need to remember who we are doing this for. It is for God’s glory. It is for God’s joy. It is so He can be pleased with us. When Jesus was baptized, a white dove appeared. The windows of heaven opened up. Matthew 3:17 “And a voice from heaven said, ‘This s my Son, whom love; with him I am well

pleased.” I pray that this is what is in our hearts, to please God. Unfortunately, as humans we can get caught up in consumer Christianity. Consumer Christianity is a term I learned from Brian Zahn at Word of Life Church in St. Joseph, MO. It means that we treat God like an ATM card. I take my God card to Wal-Mart or to the ATM machine and get what I need. I firmly believe that we cannot out give God. I doubt that God blesses us if our motive for giving is to receive. To have a heart change and to serve others takes sacrifice. When we do this God is pleased. When we do this others benefit. Remember, it is not for our glory.

A word search using Bible Gateway.com (NIV) finds “one another” used 190 times and “each other” used 981 times. We are called and commanded to serve others. This cannot be done without a heart change. Other than doing random acts of kindness, service to others involves relationship. Now there are various forms and levels of relationship. It still takes relationship. The secular world identifies that joy is involved in the attachment/bonding process. Nehemiah 8:10 tell us “...This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” There is strength in relationships. Through sacrifice and heart change we develop healthy relationships. I believe that joy is the overflow of healthy relationships. Even in the best of relationships there are bumps in the road. We need to continue to expand our windows of tolerance to endure these bumps. Our capacity for love needs to accept all situations, circumstances, and people exactly where they are at. What a challenge!

I encourage and challenge you to give up using your willpower. By simply walking the walk you put yourself in the place where you can be changed. We all have tendencies to walk the walk and then try to make things happen. We are impatient, controlling, and prideful. These characteristics are all about us. A minister friend of mine calls this “meism”. They are not about God and others. Allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life. Allow the Holy Spirit to gradually transform you into the likeness of Jesus. Remember, you’re salvation is not just an event. It’s a work of transformation sustained by God’s grace. Changing behavior without being transformed by the Holy Spirit is a shallow and futile human effort.

I can guarantee that this will not be easy. You will have to face things in your past that are painful. You will need to grieve your losses. You will need to cry out for God’s mercy and grace to help you through the hard times. I am a witness and a living testimony that this works. I pray that I am becoming more pleasing to God everyday. God knows I fall short. His mercy and grace allow me to get up the next day and begin again. I challenge you to become all you can be for your children. Guide, lead, and direct them in the ways of the Lord. They are just temporary gifts for you to take care of. You will be blessed beyond measure for loving God’s children.

In Christ,

Ken Thom