

# Being Transformed

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[ 0 : 00 ] Fantastic. Good morning, everyone. I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want. Any idea? It was the Spice Girls. That thing that I remember as my teenage children got involved in, it was that mind worm that was in my car singing to me all the way to the beach.

I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want. It's an interesting, John Mark Comer, in his recent book where he is writing of Live No Lies, says, what is it that you want? What is it? What do you really want in a Christian life?

He says, my guess is if you go deep enough, you ache for God himself, to live in his love, to yield to his gentle peace, to let your body become a place where his spirit and will is done on earth as it is in heaven. That's a gift of the Spirit in you. Is that your deepest desire?

Is that what we need? Is that what, in your heart, you are saying, I really, really want? Because his point is simply this, our deepest desires usually are to become people of goodness and love, are often sabotaged by a stronger surface level desires of our flesh. This is exacerbated by a culture where the widespread wisdom of the day is to follow our desires, not to crucify them.

But in reality, it says, be true to yourself. That is the worst advice anyone could ever give you.

[ 1 : 54 ] It's interesting, isn't it, as we get to, we move to the end of this sermon series, that there has to be a shift. There has to be a shift in us and through us, as Paul is saying to the early church, to get to that place of asking, what do we really want? What do we want? We want more of you, Lord. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Be transformed to be changed. Transform means to make a mark change in the form, in the nature of the world. And if we need to be changed, in the nature of the world, we need to be transformed.

We need to be changed, to be transformed. Professor Kenneth Paragant said, at its heart, spiritual transformation refers to a fundamental change in the place of the sacred, or the character of the sacred in the life of the individual. It has to change us deep inside, to change us so that we can live for God. So Paul continues, why do we do this? Why do we need to be transformed? Then we will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will. It's not just about us, it's all about him. I don't know whether you ever encountered the phenomenon of a child's toy called Transformers. I don't know whether you ever saw that. This isn't actually a Transformer. I didn't bring one. I think I threw all my children's way, because it sort of causes me a psychotic issue of this thing that suddenly is one thing, then becomes another. The thing is, oh by the way, read your car manual. You probably don't know what it can actually achieve. My car takes a life of its own. I know why not. This thing is, Paul is urging his early church to be transformed, to be changed, and because he knows the consequences of living in the truth or living a lie. Which one is it going to be?

The thing is here is, Paul knew what it means to make a transformational shift in his life. He knew better than most people. That's why he's writing this stuff. From one minute he's breathing hate and wanting to actually kill every Christian that he can find, to a transformational moment where he is filled afresh on the Emmaus Road, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to have a total life change, transformed in the power of the Holy Spirit. And we may know those transformational moments of what that looks like in our lives. Maybe some of us have experienced that. Some of us are asking for that.

Some of us are wanting that. Stop dragging me back to what it was before. To have these transformational changes means a life totally transformed in the power of the Spirit, which changes our aspect of living, of giving, of sharing, generosity, and sacrifice. There's part of it that has to die to self and more for the Lord. And maybe we can think this morning those things that we long to die within us. Those things that drag us back in transformation. Why is Paul saying? Because this thing has to stick.

You know, like the transformer that we saw there. Maybe you know as well as I do in my life as a Christian, how quickly we are able to change from one thing back to the other. Lord, I long to be like this.

[ 6 : 02 ] I long to be transformed in the power of your Spirit. So why do you keep dragging me back to look like this in my life? What is it that where I need to break that and to make the change? We need this transformational lifestyle that we can so easily slip back into. That's why we need the Holy Spirit.

There needs to be a continuity of a Spirit-filled, Jesus-shaped character in us that transforms us more and more into the likeness of Christ. And we need to ask for that more and more. Lord, make me more like you in all that I do and say. The character of God encourages us to do that. And Paul goes on to encourage this transformational mindset. Why? Because he calls us to be his, his church. His church, the bride of Christ. The bride of Christ. Now, I find that very interesting, that image, the bride of Christ. Because let's face it, guys, women are much better at multitasking than we are. I hear the cheer from the women. And I hear the sigh from the men. Yes. Because if it's anything like in my house,

Mandy still has this amazing way of getting the breakfast, getting children to school, reading something while she's doing it, while you're doing the hoovering as well. By the way, in between all of that, you're studying, you're studying for a degree while landscaping the garden, still having enough energy to service the car, and then advise me on all the jobs that I haven't done.

Women, you are amazing. And so it's no surprise that he has chosen this picture of the bride, beautiful, wonderful, and stunning, to be the bride of Christ, his church. And how can one body do so much?

Paul says it's because they have many gifts in one body. We all have these gifts that we bring together to make us so attractive to people to be drawn to. A bride on her wedding day is a stunning thing to see.

[ 8 : 33 ] I stand here so often, the doors open, the bridegroom turns around, bursts into tears, often, because his bride looks so stunning. Are we that picture of the church to people? That they are so drawn to us, so attracted, so passionately drawn to us, because we are so filled with these gifts.

Paul says, Paul, that we can form one body because each member belongs to all the others. We work together. As Tim said, there is one church if we all work together. And if your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith. If it is serving, then serve. If it's teaching, then teach. We need people in the children's teams. Please join up. Sign up. It's a great gift to have. If it's to encourage, then give encouragement. We all love encouraging, to be encouraged, and built up. Most people who work in a work setting will know what encouragement actually means when you are thanked and you are encouraged for what you do in the everyday. If it is giving, then give generously. Don't hold back. Just do it in so many ways. If it is to lead, then do it diligently. If it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully with a smile.

We are the bride of Christ, the church. We are the one that God wants to because we are beautiful, engaging, practical, empowering, encouraging, and awesome. The bride that God loves and cares for in his character.

I suppose really the question is, do we want to be the bride of Christ or do we want to be bridezilla? And I think it's a very interesting choice that we make as to how we want all of these things that Paul is saying to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. So Paul goes on. How do we sustain this beauty that people will be drawn to? Simple. It's character. Character, character, character.

[ 11 : 03 ] What is it in our character that draws the people? It's like the transformer. You know, when you come across somebody, you want to know that it's going to be a good, healthy, welcoming relationship, not to bite back at you when you're there. To have that wholesome character of a church that welcomes and is open to welcome people. And people will be drawn. People will say, I had a cold call this week and it was really great to have a conversation with somebody who actually wants to be engaged and think about God.

Maybe for the first time. How do we do that? Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good. That's the transformational. That is the shift. That is the shift again and again and again. To move back.

To cling to what is good. When I'm tempted, what is good in this, Lord? What is good? Do I get dragged back so easily I can? Make the shift. Honour one another above yourselves. It's not about Clive. It's not about me. It's not what I want.

It's about God and it's about the family. It's about the church. It's about the community. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour serving the Lord. Keep on serving. In serving, we receive more.

And be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer. 24-7. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Coffee is returning soon.

[12:54] Oh, it's more enthusiastic than that. Coffee is returning soon. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. As we near the end of this series, we move rapidly towards Lent, towards the four-point gospel. And as we move towards that, as we encourage people to join us, to come and join us, I hope that we will all see many, many lives transformed. Seeing lives transformed within ourselves. Things where that shift where we were drawn back, where we want to be more transformed into the likeness of Christ. And because of that, because most people really, really want to meet with the Holy Spirit. Why? Because once you've met with him, you know it's worth sharing.

It's great for sharing. You know, have you witnessed that? Then there's an opportunity. In April, we'll be starting the Alpha course. And it would be great just to bring people along. To bring people maybe to share stories like this.

I'm interested in what people were saying, and a lot of other people were asked questions that were relevant for me. And that really helped, because I'm not overly confident in speaking out. That's where I'd say I became a Christian. I gave my life to Christ, and I've never looked back.

It literally changed everything. We always had supper, and that made it less formal in a way. So that, you know, and it prompted very good discussions. It was one particular conversation I had with my group leader, and we went over so many things in life.

[15:00] But it's where I finally realised just how much Jesus means to me, and who he was, and what he'd done. And that's where I gave my life to Christ. They prayed with us, and at that point, they spoke to us, and God spoke to us through grace.

And what was said to me at that moment, it was only known to me in lieu. So at that moment, I knew I was going to be a Christian, because I couldn't deny God.

And because of that, we need to celebrate. The issue is, you see, is that we said last week that God seizes our attention, and calls us, and brings us back, and excites us, and enthuses us, and empowers us to be his church.

And we are the bride. Why? Because we are transformed more and more into his likeness. Do you want more of that? Yes?

Did I hear people say yes and amen? Then let's do that, people, and pray in the power of his Holy Spirit. Would you like to play along with us? Should we pray together?

[16:17] Holy Spirit, would you come? And would you transform us more and more into your likeness? Lord, as you chose to use that image of us, the church, as your beautiful and glorious bride, transform us more and more into that image, so that people would be drawn to us to celebrate.

And through that, Lord, would you use us more and more to show your love to a waiting world, to be your people in the places to which you call us, moment by moment, day by day.

Lord, in the power of your Holy Spirit, would you equip us and move that shift in us, if we need that, Lord, not to be drawn back, to be drawn back to old ways, old thoughts, old criticisms, old ways of thinking that has marred your image in us.

So, Holy Spirit, would you come? Would you come now? And would you fill us afresh, Lord?

And if this morning, Lord, has seized our attention in some small way, Lord, may we pray that that shift more towards you and into you and through you sticks where it is.

[17:55] Stick with us, Lord, as we stick close to you in all we do and say, thank you, Jesus.

Thank you.