

A Life-Transforming Encounter

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[0 : 00] Looking at how our lives can be transformed by an encounter with certain people.

! Well, on the Sunday the 17th of March 1963, approximately 8 o'clock, I met a young lady. We were married, had three children, lovely children, eight lovely grandchildren. You could say that my life would transform that night. But more than that, on the 28th of September 1972, I had another encounter, but this time with someone who really revolutionised my life. I was standing at work and suddenly I felt, when I say funny, you know what I mean.

I felt strange. And I'd heard about the Lord and how He loved me and how my friend had prayed for me. And so I just said, Lord, if you're there, I want to know you. 1972, and still today, I rejoice in that time. My life was transformed. And I was looking into some of the readings of where people have been at an encounter with Jesus, or rather an encounter with someone that had transformed their lives in the Bible. But John, after what you've said this morning, I just feel that maybe we should just focus upon what we see here amongst us. Because I could give you a study on Isaiah and how he saw the Lord lifted up. I could give you a Bible study on the Apostle Paul, who had an encounter on the road to Damascus and revolutionised his life. But we can't say, you know what we've heard John say this morning. But it's really true. And my prayer is that today we will somehow grasp the truth amongst ourselves. Because the last words of that time, it said that that these words have been given so that you might know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

Full stop. That's it. And today, we need to ask God, maybe where are we in this process of getting to know Jesus for ourselves? And we have to just ask ourselves that question, where do we stand?

[2 : 39] And when I was preparing this, I thought of some transformation that goes on in nature, you know, and I was thinking about the caterpillar. Yeah. And the cocoon. And what comes out of that, that beautiful, beautiful butterfly. I thought, well, there's some transformation. And then, naively, I thought, I wonder where they think that they are. Would they be a caterpillar, a cocoon, or a butterfly? Where would you stand in that thing today? And this is, the fact is, you know, it's reality, isn't it? Lives are transformed. When we meet with Jesus, they're completely revolutionised.

And we need to acknowledge that. And when we see the reality of it in our own lives, it becomes very real to us. For when he met with the disciples, when Jesus came and stood among them and said, peace be with you. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw it, when they saw Jesus. Jesus told them, as the Father has sent me, I am sending you, receive the Holy Spirit. What a thing. It's like anticipating the day of Pentecost, isn't it? You know, what's that going to happen in 50 days time? Receive the Holy Spirit. And that's what happens when we encounter God. The Holy Spirit comes upon us. It's that time of meeting with him. And the disciples were there that day. And I also have a soft spot for Thomas, I do. Do you? Because although he's, when he was saying, he said, I'm not going to believe her unless I see Jesus for myself with the hands and his feet and sides being pierced. He said, unless I say that for myself, I don't, I'm not going to really acknowledge the fact. And he gets boo, bad press, Thomas. But the response, when he sees him, my Lord and my God.

What a response. His life was completely changed. My Lord and my God. And we have to recognize, we stand in those times for ourselves. It says that these things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, in believing you that you might have life. What a transformation.

Isaiah did it. Paul the Apostle did it. And hundreds of other people in the Word of God did it. They had a transforming encounter with God. And this morning we can come and my prayer is that the Holy Spirit will somehow let us have an encounter with him today for ourselves. Paul changed from issuing murderous threats to being God's chosen vessel to the Gentiles. And you know what? He's still changing people's lives today.

[5 : 38] His writings are being read all over the world still today and revolutionizing people's life. It all came from that encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Life-changing encounters.

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, he is sending us to receive the Holy Spirit. You know, I believe that some of us don't really think we're worthy of really being included in God's plan for the church.

I came from a working-class background, always felt that there was far superior people to me, until someone said to me one day, Ken, it's not where you're from, it's where you're going that counts. And I thought, phoo, that's a bit sort of near the knuckle. But it was true. It doesn't matter that in the past, if we're alive, if we have this encounter with God for ourselves, it's where we are going that really counts.

And where we are today, whether we're a caterpillar, a cocoon or a butterfly, it doesn't matter. We're on that journey to know Jesus for ourselves. Well then, answer the question.

[6 : 55] Are you a caterpillar? Still searching for a little bit for yourself? You know it's true. You know it's there. You know that God is real.

You haven't really been affected by it at this time. Are you a cocoon? Or a chrysalis or whatever they are. Are you just waiting? Are you feeling something inside you there?

And have you ever seen a cocoon actually give birth to a butterfly? It's absolutely magical. Are you a cocoon? Or are you a butterfly?

Hasn't God really transformed you into something that is beautiful? There's a lovely verse in Ecclesiastes that says that God has made all things beautiful in his time.

And maybe this morning we need to hear from him for ourselves. The reality of knowing that our sins are forgiven, that our lives have been changed. That's why John came. His gospel was written for that account that we might know that we can have eternal life.

[8 : 06] That we can experience the reality of God's presence with us on a daily basis. Be changed in everything that we do. And God wants us to acknowledge the fact.

Answer the question. Caterpillar? Caterpillar? Cocoon? Butterfly?

Has God changed you and revolutionized your life so much that you are experiencing the reality of God's love for you in your life? It's possible.

We can turn our lives around even today. I don't know where you stand before God. but my name's Ken, my wife's name is Rita. We have three children and eight grandchildren.

That's maybe all that you know about us, but there are times when somehow things change us completely. And I just want to, I would love this morning for us to acknowledge the fact that we'd be honest with ourselves.

[9 : 12] Where do we stand before God? Where's the reality of our presence in his life? Are we really at that time of having a transformed life so that we can see the reality of God's love manifest in our hearts and in our lives?

Life-changing encounters. As a father sent me, Jesus said, he's sending us. Receive the Holy Spirit.

What a transformation happened in their lives. And John, I'm so grateful you said that about this morning. Because lives, even today, we could talk about all the Bible studies and all these things if we could borrow.

It's better, far better, if we could grasp something of the reality of what God wants to do in our lives. For people who are struggling, people who mightn't know exactly what's happening tomorrow, my prayer is that somehow God will transform our lives here today, amongst us, as we gather together in his name.

Jesus had come to this place. He said he stood amongst. How would you feel that day? He stood there. Wow.

[10 : 44] But he's here. John said it. He's here. With us today. Didn't you mean? He's with us today. For we're two or three to gather together in my name.

There I am in the midst. So Jesus is here. Unless you believe he's a liar. Is Jesus a liar? No way. So he's here today.

And I pray that somehow we will have a transforming encounter with him in our own hearts. Not just talking amongst ourselves about it, but in our own hearts. You don't have to be here for it to happen.

You can go home. You can get on your knees. You can ask God to come into your life. And he will. For you will listen, you pray. John's Gospel was written so that you might know the Lord Jesus Christ is your Saviour.

That's why it was written. And this morning we can have that change for ourselves. That we can be honest with ourselves. Exactly where we stand before God.

[11 : 47] So that we can have that transforming power that we all long to have, really. Don't we? That's why you're here today. We long for the reality of knowing and understanding God in our lives.

And that has to be worked out with you and Jesus. And I pray that somehow today you will accept that for yourselves. That you'll receive him.

I would say what Jesus said that day, peace be with you and receive the Holy Spirit. And we can do that today because he's here in this place.

He's here. Shall we just pray? Shall we just ask God to help us? That we can really have a transforming encounter with Jesus today.

That he's here in our presence. Just talk to him as you would to your mate, friend. Because he is your friend. The best friend that you will ever have.

[12 : 54] Just speak to him. Tell him what you need. Tell him what's in your heart. Tell him your heart's breaking if it's breaking. Tell him what you need if you're sick.

Ask him to heal you. Just let the Holy Spirit just minister to you at this time. And we acknowledge the reality of an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.

For he indeed is here. he's alive. He's alive.

He's alive. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Thank you for the reality of your word that speaks so clearly to us.

Father, help us to grasp that truth for ourselves. Help us to somehow change. Maybe we need to change up a notch from a caterpillar to a cocoon this morning.

[14 : 00] Or maybe God is saying to us, come on, it's time to be released and to experience his presence. Holy Spirit, come we pray.

Holy Spirit, come we pray. come on, church. Let's ring those bells and tell the people of Cleveland that Jesus is alive.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.