

What is TRANSFORMATION?

Romans 12:1-2 (NIV) Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 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.

Think of our bodies as the tool of life. My body is the instrument of my soul, my life. What I do with my body is a reflection of my soul. In this verse we are to offer our bodies, the instrument of life, as a living sacrifice. This sacrifice is to be holy, set apart, different from the world we live in. This pleases God. Verse 2 tells us that this is a process of transformation. Like clay in the potter's hands, we are continually being pressured to be conformed and molded by the world into the image the world desires. Instead, we are to be changed from within (metamorphosis), transformed as God changes the way we think. As God works from within changing the way we think, it will change the way we perceive the world, which changes the way we feel, which, in turn, will change the way we act in our bodies.

The greatest measurement of a church is not how big we are but how many people are being transformed, not how many people come on Sunday but how many transformed people are launching out on Monday. Transformation means that we know, see, feel, act, and are more like Christ. I have chosen to use the word “transformative” in Transformative Church Planting because I believe it is the adjective that should describe everything we do. In the Great Commission we should go to transform, we should baptize to transform, and we should teach to transform. This is the making of a disciple.

Transformative Biblical Model:

Matthew 13: *Parable of the Sower*

In the Bible, transformation is of the greatest importance. Since the fall of humanity, God has desired for man and man has greatly needed to be transformed. As a result of sin, we are separated from a Holy God, and in order to hang out with Him, we must be more than good; we must become something different, a new creation. Think of passages such as Ephesians 2 and Romans 12. Think of all the phrases that imply transformation, such as *new birth, new creation, enemy of God to friend of God, darkness to light, lost to save.*

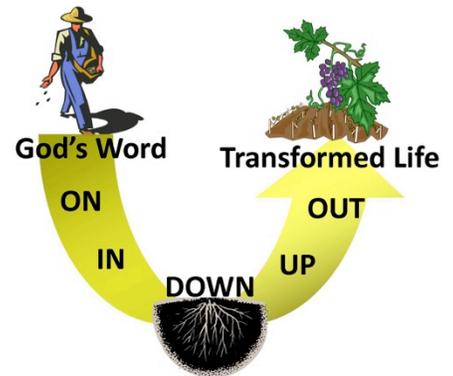
Throughout the Bible we see examples of people who were transformed. Many times with transformation came a new name: Abram became Abraham, Jacob became Israel, and Saul the “Persecutor” became Paul the “Proclaimer to the Gentiles.” At other times there was not a name change, but there was a defined transformation: David the little shepherd boy became David the King, Gideon the “Coward” became Gideon the “Conqueror,” Peter the “Denier” became Peter the “Proclaimer,” and fishermen became “Fishers of Men.” In addition, the lives of Joseph, Moses, and Nicodemus reflect significant transformations. Hebrews 11 is all about faith exhibited in the actions of transformed men and women. The truth is we cannot have a relationship or fellowship with God without transformation from God.

In Matthew 13, the parable of the sower is all about this issue of transformation and how God does it through His Word. Let me remind you that we are commanded to teach followers to obey all the commandments of God. A disciple cannot be made without the teaching of the Word of God that produces obedience which leads to transformation. Read below Jesus' commentary on the parable of the sower.

Matthew 13:18-23 NIV ¹⁸“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was

sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. ²²The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. ²³But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Jesus defines the characters of this story: the farmer, planter, or sower is God, the seed is the Word of God, and the soil is the heart of man. Just like a farmer's expectations of a seed, God expects HIS Word to go on, in, down, up, and out. In other words, when God speaks, His Word is designed to produce—the product is a transformed life. Or I could say that transformation is the natural outcome of God's Word in a prepared (good soil or well-cultivated) heart. When unencumbered by the rocks that prevent roots and the weeds that prevent fruit, God's Word WILL by nature transform a person.



At this point we must ask two pivotal questions:

- While the people of the church are regularly exposed to God's transforming Word, why is the church not transformed nor is it a transforming force in our world?
- Why, in a day of unprecedented resources, abundant tools, and tremendous freedom, is the church in America losing ground?

The answer is found in the individual heart of the believer and then the corporate heart of the church. Jesus says that hearts are suffering from **hardness** or solidification preventing receptivity, **shallowness** or rocks below the surface preventing roots, or competing **distractions** or weeds preventing fruit.

The Transformative Church Planting Movement addresses this issue by getting dirty in the hearts of humanity. Making a disciple requires exposing others to the Word of God and then getting busy in the hearts of others cultivating, digging rocks, and pulling weeds. We must be prepared to address the hardness that comes from ignorance, misconceptions, or at times vain rituals and traditions. We must be willing to go deeper, addressing the issues illuminated by the Spirit of God through the Word of God. We must be willing to confront wrong priorities and misplaced values that distract people from bearing the fruit of the transformed life. Transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit, working in concert with a willing heart in community of believers.

