

Marks Of A Transformed Life #1

Introduction. Good congregations are constantly looking for ways to encourage transformation in their member's lives. But at times the very nature of a transformed life seems to elude us. Even with a solid scriptural basis for stating how God transforms our life through redemption (Colossians 1:13), we can feel at a loss as to what a transformed life looks like.

Transformation is not about possessing a nebulous "spirituality." A righteous standard is given to us by God in His holy word, and I have to put that standard to work in my life. We are not trying to conjure up transformation. It is in the word, and we are to live toward it. But in doing so, it helps to know what the transformed life looks like.

My mind turns to Romans 12 to find a picture of a life transformed by God. Paul wrote 11 chapters of deep doctrine outlining the mystery of the gospel, and then, with Romans 12:1, he launches the early Christians into a rapid-fire understanding of living out their spiritual transformation. This chapter displays eight marks that can serve as guideposts in directing Christians toward a transformed life.

I. ***Surrender***

- A. The first verse of Romans 12 tells us to be "a living sacrifice." The problem with living sacrifices is that they squirm on the altar. We need reminding to utterly surrender to God's plans, not strike a treaty for trading favors (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). In the Septuagint, "present" was often used as a technical term for a priest's placing an offering on the altar. It therefore carried the general idea of surrendering or yielding up.
- B. The lesson of surrender often begins with elders. Whether as an elder or in a role in front of people, your life must be an example of living for God's will first, allowing personal desires to fall away (Philippians 2:30). The example of worship as a living sacrifice is where much of our transformation begins. Be the first to climb on the altar each week.

II. ***Renewal***

- A. In 12:2, transformation is an exercise of the mind. Jesus taught that murder and adultery are committed internally long before acted upon externally (Matthew 5:21-32). For Christians to live out the change brought about by redemption, a spiritual mind is required (Colossians 3:10). Thinking has to be renewed.
- B. The Christian is solely responsible for this renewal, and it can be brought about only by renewing the mind, the inward man, day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). "Renewing" means "the adjustment of our thinking to the mind of God."

- C. When someone asks, "How can I know about renewal?", the simple solution is to give them the proper starting point: the Spirit's means of accomplishing this is the word (Psalm 119:11; Colossians 1:28). This word teaches us how to live and glorify God (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 4:17-32; 2 Timothy 2:1-5; Titus 2:11-14).

III. **Service**

- A. As Paul transitions from doctrine to practice, his thoughts jump quickly to how all have talents to serve the Lord and His church (vss. 3-8). But serving in the Lord's congregations is too often understood as a "one size fits all" endeavor. And most Christians do not feel as if they fit. Therefore, we need to help Christians develop their talents (Matthew 25:14-30).
- B. Living the transformed life means participating in the disciple-making process in the way God has personally called and equipped you (Acts 5:20; 6:4). Beyond making disciples, helping Christians to serve in the appropriate way allows every Christian to aid in others' transformation (2 Peter 1:12).

IV. **Love**

- A. The word "love" is terribly abused in our language. Perhaps it is because we only have one word to refer to our love for a spouse, children, sports team, and pizza. The emphasis necessary for living out our transformation is to understand the purity involved in the Christian ideal of love (vss. 9-10). It is the love more associated with a hero's death than a romantic comedy's fairy tale ending.
- B. For most of us, the removal of hypocrisy must come first. One of the most effective means to do this is by encouraging Christians to sincerely love one another (Hebrews 13:1). It is good for us to look for ways to prefer one another in honor (Philippians 2:2). Love is essentially the choice to value the needs of another rather than our own. Though simplistic as a definition, it is a manner of living that runs counter to the world.
- C. Transformation shows up in many forms in Christian's lives, but love is one trait that Christ clearly said would distinguish our lives from the rest of the world (John 13:35). Therefore, we need to push love to the forefront.

Conclusion. The marks of a transformed life are merely the signs of Christ in us. They are the witness of the Spirit-revealed work in our lives. When we see these marks, it is because God keeps His covenant to conform us to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). These are the marks that should be respected as we work in the Lord's church.