

# LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for September 18: How to be transformed

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Transform your life, and you'll have no difficulty finding your place of service. The Apostle Paul makes that clear with these words: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the patterns 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" (Romans 12:1-2).

The Greek word for "transformation" is *metamorphoo*, from which comes the word "metamorphosis." It literally means "to change into another form." An example could be when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly.

The word is used to describe what happened to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, which is recorded in Matthew 17:1-2: "After six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light."

Transformation is what's supposed to happen to us when we're born again, a time when we reject being conformed to the world and renew our mind in such a way as to be a part of the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

The concept is simple enough for almost anyone to understand. When we become a Christian, our character and conduct is supposed to change completely. We change from being a caterpillar to a butterfly.

Paul used the passive voice in our text, an indication that “transformation” is something we allow to be done to us—not something we do by our own power. All we do is submit to God’s power, and we’re transformed by his grace. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The goal of transformation, obviously, is to become like Christ; to live like him, and to present our body as a living sacrifice that is holy, and acceptable to God. That’s what Jesus did when he was on earth, so it’s what we ought to do, too. He has given us the responsibility of proving to the world his will is good, acceptable and perfect.

Of course, there has to be motivation for transformation, and some alleged Christians who should be motivated aren’t. The mercies of God—freedom from sin (Romans 6:16-18), the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23), peace with God (Romans 5:1), access to the grace of God (Romans 5:2), and being saved from the wrath of God (Romans 5:9)—are good reasons to be motivated.

God’s mercy, not fear, should move us to repent and seek transformation. Our love for Christ should motivate us to be transformed. We really don’t have options. We’re either transformed to be like Christ, or we’re conformed to the world. It’s one or the other.

If we claim to be a Christian without being transformed, we actually bring shame to the name of Christ—and even if we try to act Christian, the best we can be is a cheap imitation.

Transformation, however, is not as difficult as some might think. After all, it’s a passive process. We’re not strong enough or good enough to change ourselves. We must submit to God.

It all begins when we are spiritually immersed into Christ. Our sins are removed as we’re spiritually circumcised; buried then raised with Christ,

made alive with him and forgiven of all trespasses. In this process, we experience the renewal of the Spirit (Titus 3:5), a time in which we're saved by the mercy of God through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Having been buried with Christ by baptism into his death, having been crucified with Christ that we might be free from sin and having been raised to live with Christ, we rise to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-8).

The process of transformation continues as we renew the mind. Unless there is a renewing of the mind, any change in our lives will be superficial. Renewing the mind is possible when we set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:1-2) and on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5)—and when we pray, fellowship and feed our minds with the Word of God (Acts 2:42).

With our minds "renewed" we can experience a true transformation. We can put off the old person and put on the new person, and we can live according to the Spirit.

The process of transformation really is quite simple. Set your mind on things above; meditate and contemplate on God and his word; communicate with God through prayer; and engage your mind in spiritual worship through assembling with others.

We have been called to be "transformed" into the image of Christ, and God wants to give us a complete "makeover." He has provided the means (Jesus' blood) to remove the deformity of sin, and he provides the tools to fashion a new person.

In light of God's wonderful grace, being transformed into the image of Christ is our "reasonable" service, proving to the world that God's will is "good, acceptable and perfect."