

A 60-day plan of transformation into Christlikeness

Day #7: Solitude, Spiritual Disciplines, and Transformation

1. Carve out at least 30 minutes of quiet time with the Lord.
 - a. If you need to, I suggest you set your alarm 30 minutes early. If you need to go to bed earlier, I suggest you do it. If you can't do it in the morning, do it whenever you can. However, at the same time, this transformation plan should not become a burden. If you do not do it, it is not a sin. It is not sinful not to have quiet time with the Lord. It is just that you will miss out on an opportunity to develop a rich life with the Lord by accessing His grace needed to transform you into Christlikeness.
 - b. This practice is called the spiritual discipline of solitude. A spiritual discipline is defined as "an intentionally directed action by which we do what we can do in order to receive from God the ability/power to do what we cannot do by direct effort." It is part of seeking God's Kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).
 - c. Christ practiced the spiritual discipline of solitude: Mark 1:35, "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." Jesus got up early the day after a full day of ministry (Mark 1:21-34). Why? to gain perspective, focus, and strength. The "solitary place" was a place where He could be alone with God. By doing this, He is accessing the grace of God needed for upcoming events. This is the same principle we follow when we practice the discipline of getting alone with God. And by developing this time with the Lord, not only do we put ourselves in a position to receive His grace in developing a rich and personal relationship with God, we also gain virtues of not being rushed—and being rushed always brings anxiety, which destroys our peace with God.
 - d. Christ directed His disciples to practice the spiritual discipline of solitude: *Mark 6:31, "And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a quiet place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)*" Here Jesus, in the midst of very important work, instructed His disciples to go to a quiet place and rest a while. Sometimes all we need is a good rest. There is a very close connection between our bodies and our souls; a body that is exhausted will affect all 6 areas of a person's life.
 - e. Becoming like Jesus in our inner thoughts, emotions, hearts, body, social life, and soul requires following His example and commands. Both are designed to instill into us the kind of inner life that Christ enjoyed. The practice of solitude transforms all 6 areas of our beings. As our mind feeds on the Word of God, our minds are transformed through the new images, ideas, and information, which

then affections our feelings for God away from the world, which affects our decisions for God away from the world, which affects our body orientation away from the world, which affects our soul, which the world tends to fragment. As we do this daily, each area is transformed. As long as one has the right attitude of wanting to be more like Christ, one will be successful regardless of one's status in life (i.e. ability, IQ, social status, or spiritual status).

2. Transformation into Christlikeness is not behavior modification.
 - a. Behavior modification is the direct effort of man to make himself into the kind of person he knows he should be, like Christ.
 - b. Behavior modification is a dead-end. One cannot by direct effort make oneself into the kind of person he needs to be. For example, we cannot make ourselves humble by trying to become humble. Action on our own will make us all the prouder. Or, if we go out and try very hard to love our enemies, we will fail miserably. Always. This strength, this power to love our enemies—that is, to genuinely and unconditionally love those who curse us and spitefully use us—is simply not within our natural abilities. We cannot do it by ourselves. Ever.
 - c. Behavior modification is what Christ had in mind when He criticized the Pharisees for only cleaning the cup on the outside.
 - d. Jesus offers us a better way: transformation. In transformation, the cup is cleaned on the inside, the tree is made good so it can bear good fruit. We are transformed into being humble people who love our enemies naturally, easily, and pleasantly.
 - e. The way of transformation is always through the various spiritual disciplines: e.g., solitude, prayer, Bible study, fasting, serving, etc.
 - f. Spiritual disciplines (1 Tim 4:7-8) in and of themselves have no merit whatsoever. They possess no righteousness. Their only purpose is to place us before God. After that, they have no other purpose. All the disciplines are designed to place us before God, where the grace of God steps in and takes the non-meritorious simple act of offering ourselves to God and transform us into the kind of people who are naturally humble and lovers of enemies. In fact, after such transformation, it would be difficult for such a believer not to be humble and not to love his enemies.

3. Scripture Reading:

- a. Read Romans 12:1-2 outloud, slowly and repeatedly. One of the reasons that I suggest that you read passages outloud is because we all have the temptation to manipulate the Word of God to make it fit what we want. We tend to desire, unconsciously or consciously, to be in charge of what the Bible says. In other words, we all want to be in charge of what comes out of the Bible rather than entering the process of transforming the whole person and our whole life into Christlikeness. Reading it out loud several times slowly tends to mitigate this problem. If we want to be transformed, we must be prepared to have our dearest and most fundamental assumptions about ourselves and our values challenged. We must read humbly and in a constant attitude of willingness to repent (change our minds).
- b. Note the presentation of your body and mind to God in Romans 12:1-2. While Plato and the ancient Greeks despised the body, and Rene Descartes reduced man's essence to a soul in the pineal gland, the Bible places great emphasis on the body as an integral part of man's being. Read out loud, slowly, and repeatedly the following passages on the body: 1 Cor 6:9-10, 15-20; Rom 6:13-19; 7:12-18, 23; 8:5-7; 13; Gal. 6:8; Col. 3:5-7.
- c. In sum, Romans 12:1-2, following the great doctrinal teaching of eleven chapters, says "therefore" present your entire lives to God, body and mind. Notice that we are command to do something: present ourselves—that is our part. Notice also that "transform" is in the passive, which means we receive this transformation by grace—this is God's part. And God desires that every believer to be like Christ in mind, emotions, will/character, body, social life, and soul. And the Bible provides the instruction manual complete with examples and directives.

The 60-day transformation of the mind, heart, and emotions into Christlikeness

Day 1 – A life that lacks nothing (Psalm 23), <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-1.pdf>

Day 2 - Satan, the enemy (1 John 2:15-16), <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-2.pdf>

Day 3 – Review, reflect, journaling, and Psalm 19, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-3.pdf>

Day 4 – The six areas of inner transformation, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-4.pdf>

Day 5 – The Word of God, Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-5.pdf>

Day 6 – 2 warnings & the promise of transformation, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-6.pdf>

Day 7 - Solitude, Spiritual Disciplines, Transformation, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-7.pdf>

Day 8 – VIM (Vision-Intent-Means) for personal transformation,

A fellow disciple of Christ,

Pastor Don