

How Can I Change? What the Bible Says About True Transformation

Change is something most of us want but struggle to sustain. We try to reinvent ourselves, only to fall back into old patterns. The truth is, lasting change does not come from willpower alone. It comes from transformation that starts on the inside.

Why Trying to Change Yourself on Your Own Doesn't Work

Many people have experienced the cycle of trying to change, making progress for a while, and then slipping back. The problem is not a lack of effort. The problem is the approach.

When we try to change ourselves, we are really just trying to conform to a different image. But conforming is not the same as being transformed. All we can do on our own is conform. God, on the other hand, can transform us from the inside out.

Real change is not about reinventing yourself. It is about being renewed.

What Does the Bible Say About Transformation?

Second Corinthians 3:18 gives us a powerful picture of how this works:

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." - 2 Corinthians 3:18

This verse points to something Moses experienced in the Old Testament. When Moses met with God, the glory of God would rest on Him and His face would literally shine. But that glory would fade over time because it was coming from the outside in.

For believers today, something far greater is available. God's presence does not just shine on us from the outside. He lives inside of us.

The Difference Between Moses and the Believer Today

Moses had to keep returning to God's presence to be refreshed. The glory he carried would diminish between those encounters. But through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit takes up residence inside every believer.

Think of it this way. We are like the moon, and God is like the sun. The moon has no light of its own. It only reflects the sun. In the same way, we reflect the glory of God, not our own. The difference is that this light now comes from within us, not just from an external encounter.

Moses visited God's presence. We carry God's presence.

Why Your Thought Life Is the Battlefield

The word "transformed" in 2 Corinthians 3:18 comes from the Greek word "metamorphoo," which describes an inward renewal of the mind. God is not just trying to change your behavior. He is trying to change how you think, because how you think determines how you act.

Research backs this up in a striking way:

- Studies from Penn State University suggest that about 91% of what people stress over turns out to be a false alarm.
- Research indicates that 90 to 95% of our daily thoughts are simply a repeat of what we thought the day before.
- Up to 80% of our internal dialogue leans negative, as the brain naturally focuses on threats and survival.

Our minds are wired to follow familiar paths, much like a cow trail worn deep into a field from years of repetition. Once a path is established, it is easy to keep following it. That is why renewing the mind takes real effort. It does not happen automatically.

How the Bible Describes Life Without Christ

Ephesians 4:17-21 gives an honest picture of what life looks like apart from God:

"So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart." - Ephesians 4:17-18

Three phrases stand out here: futility of the mind, darkened understanding, and excluded from the life of God. Together, they paint a picture of hopelessness. Life without Christ is measured by the world's standard, and even when we appear to be winning by that standard, we are still falling short of what God has for us.

What the New Life in Christ Actually Looks Like

Ephesians 4:22-24 describes the shift that takes place when we come to Christ:

"That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the Spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." - Ephesians 4:22-24

The image here is like changing clothes. You take off the old, dirty work clothes and put on something clean. The old life is laid aside, and the new life is put on. The word "renew" here means to cause something to become new and different, with the implication of becoming superior. The new life is not just different. It is better.

You Are Not Improved. You Are New.

One of the most important things to understand about what Jesus does is this: He did not come to make you a better version of yourself. He came to make you new.

As Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinks within himself, so he is." - Proverbs 23:7

As long as we believe we can improve ourselves through effort alone, we will keep falling short. The moment we recognize that Jesus does the changing from the inside out, everything shifts.

We are a new creation living in an old vessel. The old life does not disappear overnight, but it no longer has to have power over us.

How to Die to the Old Life and Walk in the New

Colossians 3:5 gives a clear instruction:

"Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry." - Colossians 3:5

The key word is "consider." We make a deliberate choice to treat the old life as dead. When something is dead to you, it no longer has a hold on you. The temptations may still exist in the world around you, but they lose their grip when you stop giving them life in your mind.

Colossians 3:9-10 continues:

"Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him." - Colossians 3:9-10

Do not lie to others, and do not lie to yourself. The new self is being renewed in true knowledge, a deep and personal knowledge of who God says you are.

Which Life Are You Going to Believe In?

Every believer carries two realities inside of them. The old life and the new life. The question is which one you are going to feed and which one you are going to follow.

When you look into the mirror of God's Word, what do you see? Do you see someone still defined by the old life? Or do you see someone who has been made righteous, holy, and new through Jesus Christ?

Faith in God changes how we see the world. Faith in God changes how we see ourselves. And when our thinking changes, our actions follow.

Life Application

This week, pay attention to what you are thinking about. Practice what psychologists call metacognition, which simply means thinking about what you are thinking about. When a negative or defeating thought shows up, stop and ask whether it lines up with what God says about you.

Choose one truth from Scripture about your identity in Christ and speak it over yourself daily. Let it begin to wear a new path in your thinking.

Ask yourself these questions as you go through the week:

- When I look at myself honestly, am I seeing who God says I am, or am I still seeing who I used to be?
- What thought patterns am I repeating daily, and are they pulling me toward the old life or the new life?
- Am I trying to conform myself through willpower, or am I surrendering to the transformation that only God can do from the inside out?

Transformation is a process. It goes from glory to glory, one step at a time. Trust that God is at work inside of you, and give Him the room to do what only He can do.