

Your Powerful Place of True Transformation

As a follower of Jesus you are called to change. God has something better for you than the broken-down condition in which He finds you. You are powerless to make this change on your own, and yet God requires your deep investment in the process. So what's your role? More than any other single thing, your role is to keep coming back to the place where real transformation happens.

If you are desperately sick and need surgery, you go to a hospital. If your car is wrecked and needs major repairs, you take it to a body shop. If you desire an academic degree, you enroll in a university. And if you need heart change, inner healing, character growth, freedom, victory, you go to where transformation happens—the presence of God.

We often place so much emphasis on religious behaviors as the pathway to transformation. But it's not the church services, Bible reading, small groups, prayer and acts of service that in themselves lead to real change. It's possible to be in church every time the doors are open, be a world-class theologian in biblical studies, and do all the other religious stuff good Christians are supposed to do and still remain the same. That's why some Christians only seem more shriveled up and bitter the more time goes by.

All these behaviors are only ultimately helpful in transformation to the degree they help us into God's presence.

What Happens in God's Presence

Imagine if you could physically see Jesus here on earth right now. You'd probably make every effort to go spend time with Him, be around Him, listen to Him, be close to Him. For those who did spend that kind of time with Jesus when He was

physically here, they changed so much that people “they marveled. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13b).

How astonished are people when they notice you? The disciples who spent time with Jesus were not perfect, but they changed so much that people couldn’t help but be amazed. Here are a few of the things spending time with Jesus accomplishes:

- Lose fear and grow courage
- Lose selfishness and grow to care about others
- Go through serious troubles with faith
- Live a life consistent with God’s laws
- Do everything with integrity and excellence
- Exhibit joy and love always

Those who have spent lots of time in God’s presence do what they say and say what they do. They’re the same whether in public or in private. They maintain an eternal perspective on things. (We could do a whole Bible study on these points.)

So that’s the result. How do you get there? How do you keep coming back into God’s presence?

How to Enter God’s Presence

The longer you spend time with someone, the more like them you will become. Husbands and wives experience that over many years of marriage. And it’s especially true of God’s presence. “But we all, seeing the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

There are countless devotional books, email series and text services to give you raw material to help turn your mind toward God daily. There is worship music and prayer journals/guides to help you focus. Those are wonderful starting places, but the point is to intentionally enter God’s presence.

God can and does show up anywhere and in any way He chooses. But we can choose to come close. You can do that both in the company of others and when you're alone. Both are powerful and important.

Entering God's Presence with Others

Corporately, choose to be in gatherings where God's presence is welcome. Not every service or meeting will result in the same emotional experience, but inviting the presence of God needs to be intentional. Simply doing religious activities does not do it. The focus must be on God and not on us. If your home church does not do this, consider also going to other Christian events to be where God's presence is welcomed.

In such a gathering, you will feel the Holy Spirit pulling your spirit to go deeper. You will have the choice at that moment to remain superficial and "on earth," or to enter God's presence in a spiritual dimension. Your physical senses may continue to hear the music or prayers or sermon, but part of you is caught away. Sometime deeper is happening.

When you feel that pull, answer it. Go there. Sometimes you may feel emotional, though not always. Your soul will almost always be still, though very much alert and alive. In God's presence you're not the one acting; He is.

Entering God's Presence when Alone

God's presence is just as available when you're alone as it is when you're with others. You can enter His presence every day. Sixty seconds spent reading one verse is better than nothing, but real change is not likely to happen that way. I believe at minimum you need 15 minutes a day in God's presence for your soul to experience lasting transformation. And once a week won't do it. If your need is great, you may need to soak in God's presence for extended periods of time.

Now don't buy into the guilt trip you may feel right now. This

isn't a "you're bad"; it's an invitation to something spectacular, available, real and personal.

Don't give up until you find what works for you. Sure, use a devotional, worship music, your journal and/or a Bible reading plan. You can do this in your closet, out in nature or while driving alone in your car. But remember that the point is to come into God's presence so that He can work His transformation in you.

And be sure to get quiet. Intentionally lay out your thoughts and feelings before God and then stay there. Don't just get up and run away. Stick around for a little while and listen. That's when He will speak to you and change you.

Keep coming back into God's presence. That's where real transformation happens.

Your Turn: *What helps you experience God's presence? Have you experienced change there? What are you going to do this week to enter God's presence? Leave a comment below.* {eo}

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