

We are TRIUNE Beings. We Are BODY, SOUL and SPIRIT.

When we believe that Christ Jesus died on a cross for our sins and we receive Him as our savior, our SPIRIT man is 100% saved. Our Spirit man is transformed from death to life.

But our SOUL, which is, our mind, will, and emotions, must be transformed into the image of Christ.

*2 Corinthians 3:18 says that we “are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

This is the biblical concept of “Sanctification”. At the point of salvation our Soul transformation begins. The process begins! We begin to change. Our Spirit is now saying to our Soul, “Soul, get things lined up in accordance with the truth in the Word of God. Change your thinking. Be transformed.”

### **Transformational Friendships**

When you think about it, a lot of transformation that has occurred in your life has been through the influence of other people. For me:

- I was transformed into a Dallas Cowboys fan by my Dad.
- I was transformed into a tennis player by my friend, Bill. (Bill, “The One Thumbed Wonder” tried to transform me into a basketball player as well but, look at me, that didn’t work.)
- I was transformed into a lover of physics by an awesome professor in college who made it fun.

Most of us like to do something, or we are something, because someone, or several people have influenced us in that direction.

**This is true in our spiritual transformations all well.** Yes, spiritual transformation comes from Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but would you agree with me that along the way, God has used other people to help you be transformed into the image of Christ?

- I was transformed into a lover of Jesus and His church by my parents and their faithful example.
- I was transformed from death to life by Jesus as a result of the preaching of Pastor James Medima.
- I was transformed and grew in knowledge by people in the local church that I grew up in; Sunday School teachers, VBS, camps, choir, and more.
- I was transformed into a Spirit filled believer through the teaching and influence of Bill Ligon.
- I was transformed further by the Youth Group I faithfully attended in High School.
- I was transformed into someone who loves to minister to other people by my mentor and friend, the late Bill Godwin.
- I was transformed to love evangelism and outreach by one of my seminary professors.
- I was transformed in my understanding that lost people matter to God, and learned how to be a church for the unchurched by Bill Hybels and Andy Stanley.

I could go on and on with fond memories of other transformers in my life but it would just bore you.

Instead, today, I want you to stop and think about the people and friends that have spoke into your life, encouraged you, helped you, influenced you, and made you more like Jesus, transformed more and more into this image.

**Next Life Transformation Step - Write a thank you note to someone who has helped you in your spiritual journey if they are still living, or send it to their nearest living relative.**

I believe that in addition to the work of the Holy Spirit, feeding on the Word of God, and Prayer, one of the best things you can do to quickly bring about spiritual transformation in your life is to develop Godly relationships, Godly acquaintances, and surround yourself with Godly influential people.

If you want to learn to do anything in life, hang around other people who are doing it well.

If you want to be transformed into the image of Christ, hang around other people who are being transformed and especially those who are doing it well.

### **Friendship Warning**

As much as I believe in friendships, understand that we need them, and want to encourage you to make friends, I must stop here and share a few dangers of good friendships.

**Friendships Are Dangerous When They Are Ungodly Friendships.**

Who’s Transforming Who?

Like Jesus you can be a friend of a sinner, but you can’t let them influence you, you have to influence them.

1 Corinthians 15:33-34 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." <sup>34</sup> Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame. (This is true for children, teens, and adults!)

**"You can't fly with eagles if you are hanging around buzzards."**

Ephesians 5:11-12 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.

Sometimes we not only mention the sinful deeds of others, but we celebrate it, reward it, and even desire to be a part of it. This should not be.

Remember from last week, the problem Paul was having with the Corinth believers was that some of the Corinthians thought that "we live by the standards of this world." (2 Corinthians 10:2)

We don't! Our standards are different because God's standards are different.

### **Friendships Are Dangerous When Your Friends Become Idols.**

An Idol Is Anything or Anyone You Put Above or Before God.

- Friendship are idols when we protect our friendship over being obedient to God.
- Friendships are idols when we form clicks and shut others out.
- Friendships are idols when they influence others to leave a church without even considering truth.
- Friendships are idols when you would rather spend time with your friends than with Jesus.

Well I know as a Pastor that I couldn't throw the baby out with the bath water, I knew that Godly transformational friendships are what we all need, desire, and were created for.

## **Transformational Life Groups**

### **1. Life Groups Become Transformational When You Join One and/or Lead One**

One thing that bothers me about our Life Group Free Market System is that they will not work at all unless you join one or lead one. I can't make this happen by myself. I need you to make this work. I can't make you attend a Life Group and I can't force you to make friends. You have to want to do it. Join or lead.

Join a Life Group: Proverbs 18:24 (AKJV) A man that has friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

If you want to make friends, it takes effort on your part. Get out there and be friendly to others. You've got to SIGN UP and SHOW UP. (Say it to your neighbor.)

Lead a Life Group: In our Free Market Life Group System, I can't say, "Hey we need a Life Group on Marriage, Parenting, or Serving", and teach all the groups myself. I can't even assign the Life Groups out to others saying, "Here is my vision, now run with it."

No, our system depends on you being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and being obedient to start and lead a Life Group yourself based on Common Interest or Felt Needs. If you are interested in a topic, other people are interested in it too! We will train you, approve you, and release you.

Remember Common Interest and Felt Needs are the hooks to get people to join together with others. But when we gather for spiritual transformation, on official Jesus business, Jesus promises to show up, and you will be blessed, encouraged, inspired, taught, cared for, and transformed.

*"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:20*

**Next Life Transformation Step – I will Sign Up and Show Up for a Winter Life Group.**

**Next Life Transformation Step – I will attend Life Group Orientation and Learn about Leading a Life Group.**

### **2. Life Groups Become Transformational When You Attend One With Purpose**

Buy into what the Spirit of God is leading me to tell you today, believe it and act upon it. Attend a Life Group with an awareness that you are going to be transformed and make the most out of every opportunity.

#### **A. Attend with the purpose of personal transformation.**

Not only will you enjoy yourself and make Godly friends, but like those in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church, you will be transformed through:

- **Teaching** *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching... Acts 2:42*
- **Prayer** *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42*

- **Accountability** *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16*

**B. Attend with the purpose of helping others be transformed.**

I'm always a little taken back when people say, "I'm not going to join a Life Group or go to mine tonight, because I don't need it, I'm good." I don't think they know how selfish they sound. It's not all about them, it's also about them being there to help, encourage, and build up others, to help others be transformed into the image of Christ. You can help or hinder, not only your transformation, but the transformation of others as well.

*Romans 15:2 Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.*

**C. Attend with the purpose of bringing the Life Changing Transformation of Jesus Christ to the lost.**

Lost People Matter to God. They matter so much that God allowed Jesus to die to save them from their sins, and someone needs to love them like God does, and let them know this Good News. As a matter of fact, along with our salvation came this responsibility and ministry.

*2 Corinthians 5:17-20 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

I want us to start inviting people to our Life Groups, and I want us to start thinking about Life Groups that will appeal to lost people or are designed to reach the lost for Christ Jesus.

Everyone wants and desires authentic relationship.

More than they need friends, they really need a relationship with Christ Jesus. You have got to wonder how anyone can live without Jesus, so let's leverage everything we have at Believers Church, services, outreaches, fun family events, and yes, our Life Groups to bring people to Christ Jesus.

When it comes to Life Groups we have been fairly successful. I don't like to compare, but we have done better than some in this area, and others have done better than us. But over the past sixteen years, I don't feel like we have ever fired on all eight cylinders when it comes to Life Groups.

I would love to see us all buy in and give this Life Group concept a try.

We are sitting on a potential explosion of transformation if we would just decide that now is the time.

Now is the time to get fully invested in Life Groups, one of the most powerful tools we have for transformation.

### **Life App Group and Family Devotional Application**

1. What person or group of people has been instrumental in your spiritual transformation and why?
2. Is there someone that you are mentoring or investing in to help them in their spiritual transformation?
3. If you are in a Life Group, awesome! Now who comes to mind that you can invite to your Life Group?  
If you are not in a Life Group, why not?
4. What are the Three Ways to attend a Life Group with Purpose in mind?
5. How can we make Life Groups more evangelistic and reach lost people?