

Why Am I Not Transformed?

Introduction. None of us likes something that stalls, but everyone seems to have experience with it. When I was first starting to drive, I owned an old Chevrolet pickup with the shifter for the transmission on the steering column. It would stall if you shifted the gears incorrectly. The only way to get my stalled truck to move again was to open the hood and manually move the gear linkage. It was embarrassing to say the least.

The first letter to the Corinthians was probably tough for Paul to write and tough for the church to receive. They were in the midst of a city known for all of the wrong moral standards. The moral standards of the city became the moral standards for many of the Corinthian Christians -- and the same happens in our day.

I am often forced to admit that a stalling effect has taken place in my own transformation. The members of the Corinthian church had obeyed Christ and moved from darkness to light (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 1:13). But their lives stalled. They had lost the forward momentum for transformation, and 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 gives us a portrait of what we have to guard against in order to experience the fullness of transformation God intends.

I. ***Lack Of Spiritual Exercise***

- A. The Corinthian Christians were acting like "babes in Christ." They were in Christ but were neglecting to grow (Hebrews 5:13-14). They should have been eating solid spiritual food but needed to stay on spiritual milk because they lacked maturity (1 Peter 2:1-2). A baby who acts like a baby is a joy, but an adult who acts like a baby is a tragedy.
- B. We all know that a Christian cannot be transformed without the truth. Time in God's word is a necessity for our spiritual exercise.
 1. Church members cannot think that our time at the assemblies is enough. It is good for us to be involved in a small group Bible study and be exposed to strong biblical preaching, but leaving out your personal time with the Bible is a quick path to stalling your spiritual transformation (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 119:59, 99).
 2. Many seem to spend a lot of time looking for ways to feel closer to the Lord as they worship and serve Him (Romans 10:6-8). Closeness comes from the gospel message!
 3. The gospel message reveals three good ways to exercise and strengthen ourselves.
 - a) Exercise begins with prayer (Philippians 4:6). When approaching God in prayer, we draw closer to Him, and farther from Satan (Hebrews 4:16; James 4:7-10).

- b) Remaining active in sharing the gospel is also important in staving off the stall that can occur (Matthew 28:19-20). Evangelism has the side effect of reinforcing its own power in the life of the one who does the teaching (Luke 15:10).
 - c) Serving others keeps us on track as a spiritual exercise leading people toward transformation (Acts 9:36, 39; Revelation 2:19). Service lifts our eyes from personal needs. God uses service to aid others and to conform us to the image of Christ (Acts 10:38).
- C. As physical exercise is a discipline, so is spiritual exercise. Transformation is something that actively takes place within us. We are transformed by the gospel to consistently become more like Christ and lead others to do the same.

II. ***Envy And Strife***

- A. In verse 3, Paul tells the Corinthians that they are “still fleshly.” Continually yielding to the world precludes a person from yielding to the way of Christ. Obsession over the lives of others brought on by envy and strife distracts from a focus on the life of Christ.
- B. Envy and jealousy are extreme forms of selfishness (Genesis 4:4-8; 37:18-20; Mark 15:10; Acts 13:45).
 - 1. With envy, we want someone else’s life more than we want to be like Christ. With jealousy, we want what others have more than we want Christ Himself.
 - 2. These forms of selfishness move us away from transformation and into strife (Galatians 5:19-21). Furthermore, where there is a state of rivalry because of envy, there will be antagonism or hostility (Proverbs 20:3; 25:8; Romans 13:12-14; Philipians 2:3-4; James 3:14-16).
- C. The fleshly attitude of refusing service to one another is a self-inflicted wound. When we serve, envy and jealousy have no room to stall our transformation. The service becomes an outworking of Christ’s transforming character within us.

III. ***Carnal Living***

- A. Immature, fleshly Christians are never the result of deficient spiritual genes or of a spiritual birth defect. They are that way because of their own choices. One of the worst problems the church can have is to be full of Christians who are not growing because they seek to fulfill fleshly appetites (Galatians 6:8; Ephesians 2:3).
- B. One of the greatest condemnations that can come into the life of a Christian is that he or she has settled for an ordinary life.

1. In C. S. Lewis' *The Weight of Glory*, he wrote: "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and ambition, when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."
 2. Lewis is right; we should see the pleasures of this world as trinkets in comparison to the transformation offered by Christ (Luke 14:16-20).
- C. Life is too brief to live like the world and deny our new birth in Christ. It seems counter-intuitive, but giving our lives over to the perfect law of liberty every day is the active path of glorious transformation (1 Peter 5:1, 4).

Conclusion. Satan and his angels are masters at transformation, but for all the wrong reasons (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). We often define worldliness only in terms of dancing, drinking, etc. But worldliness is much deeper than sinful enjoyments; it is an orientation, a way of thinking and believing. It is looking to the world for our standards, attitudes, and meaning.

Imagine the transformation possible if you chose to place the interests of God and others before your own. Perhaps too many people simply hope to survive the day unnoticed and unscathed. Such a mentality is too much like the world and too little like Jesus.

It is natural for energy and interest to wane, but your life does not have that purpose. God creates a new life in us and wants to transform us into a portrait of the gospel's power. Decide today that stalling is no longer an option for you, and choose the hope born from transformation.