

Transformed by the Word

By Carrie Cavanaugh

One of the sweetest promises in the Bible is found in Philippians 1:6: “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” This sanctification—God’s making us holy—is something that every Christian longs for. Even in the sphere of business, we may see our sinfulness impeding us from being the Christian leaders that we ought to be and so God’s work of sanctification in our lives is a blessing not only to our soul’s but also part of the greater establishment of His Kingdom on earth as we are better able to lead others in ministry and better able to reflect who God is for all around us to see.

The Bible is full of tensions and one tension is that of how this sanctification takes place. Clearly transformation of our hearts is the work of God, just as His work of forgiveness is entirely by His doing and not our own. And yet the Bible teaches that we have some part in this process; Philippians 2:12-13 lays out both our responsibility as well as God’s graciousness in the process: “work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

One of the primary means by which God transforms our hearts is through His Word. Thus this mystery of His work and our work is reconciled as we see the need for

us to make time to read His Word to us.

Romans 12:2 exhorts, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” The truth is that we are not static entities, but rather are continually influenced by what we observe around us. Thus it is imperative that we are continually in the Word so that our understanding and heart’s desires are shaped in conformity with God’s truth.

The reason the Bible is such a powerful force in transforming us is that it is more than just a text. Although books can radically change the way we think, the Bible is also a discourse, a relationship with Jesus himself. And through this relationship we actually meet our Savior and see what it means to be holy. This level of learning is far more powerful, as II Corinthians 3:18 explains, “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” This passage is alluding to the story of Moses, who would have a face so radiant after His encounters with God on Mount Sinai, that he would have to cover his head with a veil because it was too much for the Israelites to take in. That same kind of radical

transformation occurs in us when we spend time with our God through His revelation of himself in the Word, except that now God has revealed himself in greater fullness by sending His son, Jesus, so our transformation is all the more profound.

The Word of God is a powerful thing. Sometimes it is a source of hope and comfort, but often it is something that is hard to read as it exposes our sinfulness. Hebrews 4:12 gives this description of the Word, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Even this penetrating power, which can be so uncomfortable, is a blessing! Especially for those in leadership positions, it can be hard to find people who are both brave enough and care enough to honestly speak into our lives about the areas in which we fall short. Proverbs 27:6 explains: “Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.” In this way, Jesus proves the depth of His friendship to us in that He speaks the truth about our need for His forgiveness and sanctification. So, let us not be discouraged in studying because we need these wounds of the Word in order to be transformed.

There is a plethora of advice for leaders of organizations—more

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than enough to fill the day—and so wisdom dictates that leaders prioritize what is of greatest worth. I propose that time in the Word is essential to your leadership as it is the place where God will do His work of transformation, making you into all that He created you to be and finishing the work that He has begun in you. Of course you will personally benefit from investing this time in your relationship with God, but it will also shape the way you lead and so, will bless others.