

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide Resurrection, Transformation, and Mission

Key Passages: Acts 4:1-22, Romans 12:1-2, II Corinthians 3:16-18

Throughout the book of Acts we see portraits of transformation. Simon, the impetuous fisherman that we're introduced to in the gospels, becomes (morphs into) the great apostle and church leader Peter. Saul, the persecutor of the Church/Christians, becomes (morphs into) the great apostle, missionary, and writer of much of the New Testament, Paul. James, the unbelieving half-brother of Jesus who we meet in the gospels, becomes (morphs into) the great leader of the Jerusalem church. These are just a few examples. But what accounts for such transformation? Simple: the Resurrection of Jesus and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit!

Ever since the Resurrection and the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, there have been (and continues to be) literally countless transformations all over the world...including you and me. In fact, one of the greatest apologetics/evidences for the truth of the Gospel is transformed lives...lives in which there is no other logical/explainable reason for such metamorphosis other than the Resurrection of Jesus and the power of His Spirit at work in people's lives. (Likewise, a lack of transformation is one of the strongest arguments against the Gospel. This is why one of our major emphases as a church is spiritual formation...helping people to be rooted, established, and built up in the faith so that they/we can experience transformation.)

One of the reasons why we are emphasizing "stories" is to help people identify how God (the Holy Spirit) has been active and involved in their/our lives, and how He has been morphing them/us for His glory and purposes. Additionally, and ideally, we will all (individually and communally) cooperate with Him in the morphing/transformation process.

The account in Acts 4:1-22 underscores and demonstrates some VERY important truths for us. Notice verse 2, "*They [the religious leaders] were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.*" The resurrection is at the very core of the Gospel message. It is our means of grace and our hope of glory. The religious leaders took exception to both the message and the messengers. The messengers (the apostles Simon and John on this occasion) were nobodies, "*unschooled, ordinary men*" (verse 13). They weren't "properly credentialed" from the religious leader's perspective. Plus, the message of the resurrection implies the crucifixion, of which the religious leaders were complicit. From verse 10, "*...It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.*" Transformation should be an expectation we have, and hope for, due to the reality of the Resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit. In verse 8 we read, "*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...*" Luke correctly understood from where Peter received his information, understanding, and courage. So, we can/should expect fruit/evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in the life of a follower of Jesus.

The religious leaders recognized an important truth, “...they took note that these men had been with Jesus.” (4:13b). We don’t want to miss that. This is what we can experience too. We can be “with Jesus”. His Presence is still with us today through the Holy Spirit. The “with God” life is what we were created for. This is why “spiritual disciplines” are so important. They give us handles to experience Jesus. If we want to see transformation/morphing in our lives, we need to spend time with Jesus regularly.

A necessary piece of the mission of Jesus (which is the mission of the Church/Christians) is the proclaiming of the Gospel. We could say it this way, Peter and John, as we encounter them in Acts 4, were simply engaging in the mission of the Kingdom. Notice also that they endured flack for that. The reality is that participating in the mission of the Kingdom has a cost to it. There are people and powers that would prefer the Gospel never be heard. Resistance and challenge to transformation can come from both external and internal forces. We have to WANT/DESIRE the “with God” life and the resulting transformation. God doesn’t transform us without our cooperation.

As followers of Jesus, we experience a “chicken and the egg” phenomena: our transformation leads us to engage in the mission and engaging in the mission leads to further transformation...and the cycle continues. But step number 1 is always spending time with Jesus.

- Q. As you reflect upon your life, describe some of the transformation/morphing you’ve experienced.**
- Q. How are you cooperating with the Holy Spirit in order to experience change/morphing in your life? (Or to say it a different way, what are you doing to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to bring about positive change in your life?) On the flipside, how might you be resisting the Holy Spirit, or how are you being uncooperative with Him, in the morphing/transformation process?**
- Q. What practices, exercises, habits have you found to be helpful in allowing the Holy Spirit to change you? What spiritual discipline do you regularly engage in?**
- Q. Are you disappointed with the lack of morphing/transformation in your life, or the pace/slowness of change in your life? Explain.**
- Q. What examples/stories of transformation inspire you? (Or, whose story inspires you, or encourages you, that there is hope for your transformation?)**
- Q. The reality is that change/transformation tends to not be a consistent path of growth (on a graph, it’s not a nice straight line of up and to the right). Typically, the path is filled with ups and downs (i.e. the rollercoaster we see in Simon Peter’s life.) Share some of the ups and downs that you have experienced.**
- Q. Share something that Jesus/the Holy Spirit is currently teaching you.**

Q. How are you engaging in the mission of the Kingdom? What costs have you experienced from that? What transformation/growth have you experienced from that?