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FAITH & TRANSFORMATION

Integrating Faith in Personal Transformation

Forgiven. Set free. Redeemed.

Each of us comes to faith with these desperate needs. Our greatest need, forgiveness of our sins against God, is received immediately as we repent and embrace Christ in faith. But despite our conversion to Christ, our own personal brokenness hinders our walk of faith in Christ. In our day-to-day life, we find that our character is flawed and our faith falters. We fall short and we fail. We share the Gospel with words, but our life sends a contradictory message. We resolve to boldly live our faith and then we fail at following through. We are still captive to the corruption of our minds, souls, and bodies, even while knowing we've been saved from the penalty of sin. Like Paul, we might say, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24).

We need transformation!

OCF's mission is to "engage military leaders in Biblical fellowship and growth to equip them for Christ-like service at the intersection of faith, family, and profession." Simply stated, to execute our mission of serving effectively in the domains of military life, we must grow up, we must be transformed in Christ-like truth, wisdom, and character. Christ-like service springs from the Christ-likeness of the one serving. So our first challenge in fruitful living is internal transformation in order to foster an external effect. Living a life of "Christ-like service" in the home, profession, and community is difficult, isn't it? It only makes sense that to truly live this kind of life, we would have to be increasingly Christ-like in the way we carry ourselves.

Let me share some good news. In saving our souls, God both calls and enables us to a personal and continually growing encounter. In that encounter our own lives are transformed to His likeness and for His purposes—and then He uses and progressively empowers us as His agents in the critical domains of life.

As Jesus walked, He led His followers in their own transformation, He called them disciples. The Bible calls that transforming process, growth in discipleship. So let's now begin a journey.

IT STARTS BY SAYING YES TO THE CALL OF DISCIPLESHIP.

When Jesus first called His disciples to "follow me and I will make you become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17), there was an order in the calling. First, they were to follow, and only as a result of their



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following they would become His fishers of men. We know the story. They immediately arose from their boats and began a process of growth as His disciples. Jesus was a Jewish Rabbi, a teacher, and equipper of those who followed Him. Following a Rabbi in those days implied three things.

First, the disciple progressively learns who the Rabbi is. They learned about His attributes, His purpose and mission. They learned from His wisdom and insight. They grew in their love for Him and by extension grew in love for the Father He served. The apostle Paul captured the imperative of knowing Christ saying, “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” and continues with “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Philippians 3:8, 12). In his classic *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A.W. Tozer writes, “A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well.” Who you say Jesus is, will determine how you respond to him.

Secondly, the disciple progressively knows what the Rabbi knows. As the disciples lived and walked with Jesus, they beheld His works and His ways. Scripture records for us Jesus’ teachings, methods, and purposes. As we commit to Scripture in study, meditation, and in fellowship with other Christians, we not only learn more about the Rabbi, we learn from Him in order to become more like Him. And that leads to the third implication.

The disciple progressively does what the Rabbi does. Followers of Christ are imitators of Christ. The writer to the Hebrews scolded shallow and immature believers who had apparently neglected their growth in discipleship. He makes a compelling remedy for their inability to grasp the deeper things of God, “But solid food is for the mature, for those who have the powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:11-14). Growth is initiated through knowledge; it is confirmed and cemented within us through constant application.

Consider Christ’s disciple, Peter. His experience is instructive. Early on we see Peter leaving his fishing nets to follow Jesus’ call (Matthew 4:18-20). Why? The inherent authority of the Rabbi? His charismatic qualities? Reports heard about His ministry? We really don’t know. But what we do know is that it meant for Peter to abandon his fishing business livelihood and begin a journey with the Rabbi without knowing exactly where it would all lead. He understood the call at a basic level and responded.

We too start a journey with Christ without complete awareness of what the journey may entail. However, the journey itself, puts us on a path of more deeply knowing Him, increasing transformation into His likeness, and fruitful living in the service He calls us to.

Jesus’ call to His disciples extends well beyond easy and shallow application. A cavalier approach to following Christ will likely frustrate us and render our witness and service impotent. Fortunately,



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Jesus set a standard, a bar to pursue—and a high bar it is. In fact it is an impossible goal in purely human terms. The goal of a Christ-follower requires Holy Spirit empowerment that is received through our walk of faith in surrender, repentance, personal disciplines, and resolve.

SAYING YES TO THE CALL OF DISCIPLESHIP IS THE BEGINNING, BUT DECIDING TO PURSUE THE HIGH GOAL OF DISCIPLESHIP IS WHERE THE GREATEST GROWTH OCCURS.

Through His ministry Jesus identified six clear marks of a mature disciple that you'll be discussing following this video. The call to follow Him is both a high privilege and a daunting goal. In the gospels Jesus specifically identified marks of a disciple and none speak of a casual relationship with Christ. They are hard-biting, challenging objectives. They include denial of self when He said, "If anyone would come after me, let deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me," (Matthew 16:24), radical stewardship in saying ". . . any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33), abiding in God's word (John 8:31-32), demonstrating love for fellow disciples (John 13:35), a transcendent love for Christ (Luke 14:26), and bearing Gospel fruitfulness (John 15:8).

Like Jesus' first disciples, no one today begins their discipleship journey satisfying all these criteria. Yet, we ought to make this journey with our eyes wide open, striving with God for His high call. But even his closest disciples failed Him and so do we, no matter how hard we try. So if I am just going to fail, what is the point? Discipleship is a journey, not a one-time achievement. We do start with trusting in Christ in faith and then growing through our successes and failures through Him.

AS YOU MAKE THIS JOURNEY, YOU MUST PERSEVERE AS YOU GROW IN DISCIPLESHIP. WITHOUT PERSEVERANCE YOU WILL LIKELY QUIT BEFORE THE FRUIT IS SEEN.

Discipleship is a lifetime journey with daily challenges. We see that many who began a journey as disciples later turned away when confronted with hard teachings of the Gospel. John writes, "After this, many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him" (John 6:60-66). How many today begin their walk with fire in the belly, only to find the vision fade or the road too difficult? The seduction and cares of the world overtake them, and their walk of fellowship with Christ becomes but a distant memory.

John tells us that some remained with Him, however. "So, Jesus said to the Twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'" (John 6:67-69). In short, following Jesus means abandoning every life domain to Holy Spirit renovation—it involves risk, challenge, and time. His apostles' example bears witness.

The questions arise: "How do I grow in discipleship? How do I cooperate with God for my transformation? What do I do?" The apostle Paul pleads with us, "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:1-2). After Paul pleads for a



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full commitment, he first says not to be conformed to this world. The world's values, priorities, ways, and rewards are often contrary to God's.

Then Paul challenges us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. What does that transformation produce in our lives? Here are a few areas where we should see transformational change occurring:

- Growing and ever-deepening knowledge of and affections for Christ.
- Knowledge of God's wisdom and truth found in His word—and the growing application of it in life.
- Authentic fellowship. The writer to the Hebrews calls us to not neglect meeting with believers but instead to encourage and stir each other to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- An abiding relationship with Christ through prayer, worship, and other means that produces the fruit of the Spirit (John 15:1-11).
- Service. On the evening Jesus was betrayed, He modeled and called His disciples to a life of service. After washing their feet, the chore normally assigned in that day to a lowly servant, He said, "I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

These are some of the areas of growth we should be seeking now and we will experience results over time. The methods that enable such outcomes are innumerable. Study and meditation in scripture, biblical fellowship, prayer, repentance, and embracing life's sharpening experiences submitting to the Spirit of God are just a few of the methods. OCF fellowships. Conference Center opportunities, accountability and mentoring relationships, corporate worship, and service opportunities are a just a few of the means.

Transformation is a lifetime journey involving teaching we receive, personal study and meditation, and the life experiences God provides. It is not a start-and-stop effort. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells us the mature believer's, the transformed follower's goal is "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). The *full* stature of Christ. Indeed, that's a lifetime goal.

As this presentation ends and you break into groups, share and discuss all the ways we can grow in our Christ-likeness so that we can live the abundant life He has for us and serve Him more fully in all that we do.