

Soul Transformation

by Don Ekstrand (2012)

The book is a compilation of 22 books he studied about transforming our lives to be more Christ-like & summarized a report of each (adding his own input). **Most people see trials as signs of God's disfavor, but in reality, they are opportunities to help us grow.** Don't negate the work of the cross by seeing our sin as a deterrent from God's acceptance. The biggest problem with people is their inability to handle their feelings & emotions. Trials test & prove our faith. Control your thinking. It's harder to trust Him in the dark when we can't see what's going on.

The more we experience God's love & grace the more we want to please Him. You can handle any truth when you know you are loved & valued. **We are a lot worse than we think we are, & God's grace is bigger than we think it is.** The closer we are to God (more light) the more we see our sinfulness. Christ dying on the cross justified us before God (just as if we never sinned). But we must work out our own sanctification (transformed & to be set apart for Christ). That which cost nothing is worth nothing.

There is more mercy in Christ than sin in us. Many are lost in this world for want of encouragement. The more sin is seen, the more it is hated (just as dust is seen when light comes in). The Bible is not concerned with making life easier, but with giving us the courage to face the world as it is. **One of the essentials for true joy is constant fellowship with God.** When we sin, confess it & move on. There is no joy in God's fellowship with unconfessed sin. Never let Satan discourage you from going to Christ. Let us labor to know the mercies of God & be transformed into His likeness every day.

Talk to God about whatever makes you restless. **If you truly believe in God, anything that may happen to you, ultimately, will drive you nearer to God.** If we make happiness our aim, we will not find it; but if we make righteousness of goal, we will be filled with happiness. Take our eyes off the problem & turn to God. When I cannot think of Jesus, Jesus is thinking of me. The physician attacks the disease, not the patient; his object is the cure the one he causes to suffer.

There is no peace without repentance. Satan wants to shake our confidence in God. Either we trust God alone or not at all. When we are at our lowest, keep in mind: this can change; we can recover & accept God's grace. Troubles draw us near to God, but sin drives us away. He believes best, that knows best *why* he should believe. We should be praising God as if we already possess that which has been promised. Life is given to us to do something better than mere living. **A thankful disposition is a special help in an afflicted condition.** If we have all, but not God; we have nothing.

Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace, and your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace. Greek word for transformation is metamorphosis (like the caterpillar). It is one thing for sin to live in

us; it is quite another thing for us to live in sin. Prayer is the tangible expression of our dependence on God.

Grace is God's willingness to look at us from the perspective that sees His holy Son in our place. When I am perfectly satisfied, then what can tempt me? The more things go against us the more they drive us to Christ. **Our character is not tested in easy times, but in hard (anyone can be good when it is easy).** Love-sick people are those who are unhappy because they are separated from the one they love. Do we desire to be in the presence of God? All the world fades away in comparison to God; just like we cannot see the stars when the sun is out. When the fire is going out, throw on some fuel (read the Bible).

None of us enjoy suffering, but it does draw us closer to God. Charles Spurgeon's sufferings allowed him to comfort & encourage others. **In calm times we say a prayer; in desperate times we truly pray.** We are preoccupied with our circumstance, but God is concerned with our character. Honest entries into a journal help people move beyond a stressful event (be honest with God as well). Wrong choices become patterns that engulf us until we cry out for help. As soon we are discouraged, we don't try as hard. We are more content when we count our blessings (Phil 4:11).

The greatest pleasure we can find is an intimate relationship with God. When everything is going well men become proud; and prideful men don't feel they need God. It's those hard times that open our eyes for God. Society feels we should be happy, but there is more to life than just happiness. Seasons of personal suffering are opportunities for God to do His deepest work.

Don't be impressed with charisma; look for character. Trusting who God says I am laying the foundation for maturity. Some build walls to protect them, but they simply become isolated. Forgiveness releases us from bitterness & resentment. The Law shows us what is wrong; the Spirit helps us do right. Nothing we can do can make God love us more, or love us less. The surest way to fall into sin is to allow oneself to be in situations where inevitable temptation exists (alcoholics shouldn't go to the bar). Bill Bright uses spiritual breathing: confess (exhale) & yield to the Spirit (inhale). **Men praise what they value.** Prayer is not a matter of getting our will done in heaven, but getting God's will done on earth. Prayer is to align our will with God's. Most people with psychological problems were so obsessed with themselves it made them sick. When they helped others, their problems vanished.

We do not get to the other side of the door without going through it. Christian faith believes what God has said; our actions should reflect what we believe. 90% of illness is a direct result of toxic thoughts. Either you master your thoughts or they will master you. **Change our thoughts & we change our life.** The Greek word for repent is *metanoeo*. *Meta* = transform [as in metamorphosis], & *noeo* = mind (transform your mind).

What do you have to do to get out of shape? Nothing (& that goes for our spirit as well). When we love someone, we desire to do things that please them. Our primary goal must be to have an intimate relationship with Christ. Stop fixating on the problem (sin), fixate on the solutions (Christ). God has placed you on the grand stage of the universe to participate in the cosmic battle between good & evil. **Fight the good fight.**

Quotes: “Lord, you would have more friends if you treated the ones you had a little better.” (St. Theresa of Avila)

“If you don’t deal with your guilt, you will have a ministry of condemnation.” (Steve Brown)

“Lord, keep me on a short leash; don’t let me get away with little sins.” (Jerry Bridges)

“What I want above everything else in this world is always be in that *intimate relationship with God.*” (Martin Lloyd-Jones)

“God would never permit evil, if He could not bring good out of it.” (St. Augustine)

“The Father is never closer to the vine than when He is pruning it.” “We are far more secure in the storm with Jesus in our boat, than we ever are on the shore without Him.”

“Satan’s masterpiece is not the prostitute or the skid-row bum – it is the “self-sufficient believer” who has made his life comfortable.” (Larry Crabb)

“Two roads diverged in the woods – I took the one less traveled, and it made all the difference.” (Robert Frost)

“We are to love God enough to be contented, & men enough not to envy.” (Francis Schaeffer)

“Our mind will either be our best friend or worst enemy.” (Caroline Leaf)

“A man is what he thinks about all day long.” (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

“The church exists for nothing else but to draw men to Christ.” (C.S. Lewis)

“I want to be the kind of friend to Jesus that He enjoys being around, someone who is not always asking for something.” “In order to make a difference – we need to be different.” (Bill Hull)

“I have read many books, but the Bible reads me.” (Karl Barth)

Poem: A bend in the road (David Jeremiah)

Books:

Spiritual Depression (Martyn Lloyd-Jones); A Scandalous Freedom (Steve Brown); Soul-Depths & Soul-Heights (Octavius Winslow); Glorious Freedom (Richard Sibbes); Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled (Martyn Lloyd-Jones); The Soul’s Conflict (Richard Sibbes); Holiness (John Ryles); The Disciple Of Grace (Jerry Bridges); Holiness By Grace (Bryan Chapell); Fellowship With God (Martyn Lloyd-Jones); The Bruised Reed (Richard Sibbes); Enjoying The Presence Of God (Martyn Lloyd-Jones); All Things For God (Thomas Watson); When Your World Falls Apart (David Jeremiah); Shattered Dreams (Larry Crabb); True Faced (Thrall, McNicol & Lynch); The New Nature (Renald Showers); True Spirituality (Francis Schaeffer); Christlike (Bill Hull); The Human Mind, Crime Punishment & Myth of Mental Illness (Dr. Karl Menninger); Who switched off my brain? (Dr. Caroline Leaf); 7 Pillars of Health (Dr. Don Colbert); Hearing God (Dallas Willard);

