

PROLOGUE

We have included an excerpt from RICK WARREN'S "BIBLE STUDY METHODS". It's all about having a meaningful Quiet Time. I know this may be the first time you have taken an intentional approach at a devotional. I pray this would be the launching point to a daily time with the Lord.

HOW TO HAVE A MEANINGFUL TIME WITH GOD

If we are convinced that we need a quiet time, how do we go about having one? We may become motivated to do it, but may not know how. We need to consider four essential elements of a good quiet time:

- Start with the proper attitudes.
- Select a specific time.
- Choose a special place.
- Follow a simple plan.

START WITH THE PROPER ATTITUDES

In God's eyes, *why* we do something is far more important than *what* we do. On one occasion God told Samuel, "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). It is quite possible to do the right thing but with the wrong attitude. This was Amaziah's problem, for "he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly" (2 Chron. 25:2).

When you come to meet with God in the quiet time, you should have these proper attitudes:

1. Expectancy.

Come before God with anticipation and eagerness. Expect to have a good time of fellowship with him and receive a blessing from your time together. This is what David expected: "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you" (Ps. 63:1; see Ps. 42:1):

2. Reverence.

Don't rush into God's presence, but prepare your heart by being still before him and letting the quietness clear away the thoughts of the world. The prophet Habakkuk tells us, "The LORD is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him" (Hab. 2:20; see Ps. 89:7). Coming into the presence of God is not like going to a football game or some other form of entertainment.

3. Alertness.

Get wide awake first. remember that you are meeting with the Creator, the Maker of heaven and earth, the redeemer of mankind. Be thoroughly rested and alert. The best preparation for a quiet time in the morning begins the night before. Get to bed early so you will be in good shape to meet God in the morning, for he deserves your full attention.

4. *Willingness to obey.*

This attitude is crucial: you don't come to your quiet time to choose what you will or won't do, but with the purpose of doing anything and everything that God wants you to do. Jesus said, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (John 7:17). So come to meet the Lord having already chosen to do his will no matter what.

SELECT A SPECIFIC TIME

The specific time has to do with *when* you should have your quiet time and *how long* it should be. The general rule is this: The best time is when you are at your best. Give God the best part of your day—when you are the freshest and most alert. Don't try to serve God with your leftover time. remember also that *your* best time may be different from someone else's.

For most of us, however, early in the morning seems to be the best time. It was Jesus' own practice to rise early to pray and meet with the Father. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35).

In the Bible many godly men and women rose early to meet with God. Some of these were

- Abraham—Genesis 19:27 • Job—Job 1:5 • Jacob—Genesis 28:18 • Moses—Exodus 34:4
- Hannah and Elkanah—1 Samuel 1:19 • David—Psalms 5:3; 57:7–8 (See also Psalms 90:14; 119:147; 143:8; Isaiah 26:9; Ezekiel 12:8.)

Throughout church history many Christians have been used most by God when they met with him early in the morning. Pioneer missionary Hudson Taylor said, "You don't tune up the instruments after the concert is over. That's stupid. It's logical to tune them up before you start." The great revival among British college students in the late 19th century began with these historic words: "remember the Morning Watch!" So we need to tune ourselves up at the start of each day as we remember the Morning Watch.

If Jesus is really in first place in our lives, we ought to give him the first part of our day. We are to seek his kingdom first (see Matt. 6:33). Doctors tell us that the most important meal of the day is breakfast. It often determines our energy levels, alertness, and even moods for the day. Likewise, we need a "spiritual breakfast" to start our day off right.

Finally, in the morning our minds are uncluttered from the day's activities. Our thoughts are fresh, we are

rested, tensions have not yet come on us, and it's usually the quietest time. One mother sets her alarm clock for 4 a.m., has her quiet time, goes back to bed, and then rises when everyone else in the household gets up. Her explanation is that with kids around the house all day, early morning is the only time when it is quiet and she can be alone with God. It works for her; you need to select a time that will work for you.

You might even consider having two quiet times (morning and night). Dawson Trotman used to have code letters for his nightly quiet time: H.W.L.W. Whenever he was with a group of people at night or home with his wife and the conversation seemed to be ending, he would say, "All right, H. W. L. W.," after which a passage of Scripture would be quoted without comment and all would go to sleep. H.W.L.W. stood for "His Word the Last Word," and he practiced that through the years as a way of ending a day with one's thoughts fixed on the Lord (Betty Lee Skinner, *Daws*, NavPress, p. 103).

Stephen Olford, a well-known pastor in New York for many years, said, "I want to hear the voice of God before I hear anyone else's in the morning, and his is the last voice I want to hear at night."

David and Daniel even met with the Lord three times each day (see Ps. 55:17; Dan. 6:10).

Whatever time you set, be consistent in it. Schedule it on your calendar; make an appointment with God as you would with anyone else. Make a date with Jesus! Then look forward to it and don't stand him up. A stood-up date is not a pleasant experience for us, and Jesus does not like to be stood up either. So make a date with him and keep it at all costs.

The question is often asked, "How much time should I spend with the Lord in the morning?" This is a matter to be decided between you and the Lord. If you have never had a consistent quiet time before, you may want to start with seven minutes (Robert D. Foster, *Seven Minutes with God*, NavPress) and let it grow naturally. You should aim eventually to spend not less than 15 minutes a day with God. Out of the 168 hours we all have in a week, 1 hour 45 minutes seems terribly small when you consider that you were created to have fellowship with God. Here are some additional guidelines:

- *Don't try for a two-hour quiet time at first.*

You'll only get discouraged. You must grow in this relationship as you do in any other. So begin with a consistent seven minutes and let it grow; it's better to be consistent with a short time than to meet for an hour every other week.

- *Don't watch the clock.*

Clock-watching can ruin your quiet time faster than almost anything else. Decide what you can do in the Word and prayer during the time you have selected; then do it. Sometimes it will take more time than you have set aside, and sometimes less. But don't keep looking at your watch.

- *Emphasize quality, not quantity.*

There is nothing super-spiritual about having a two-hour quiet time. It's what you do during your time — whether it's 15 minutes or two hours or something in between — that's important. Aim for a quality relationship with the Lord.

CHOOSE A SPECIAL PLACE

The location — where we have our quiet times — is also important. The Bible indicates that Abraham had a regular place where he met with God (Gen. 19:27). Jesus had a custom of praying in the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. "Jesus went out *as usual* to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him" (Luke 22:39). Your place ought to be a *secluded place*. This is a location where you can be alone, where it's quiet, and where you will not be disturbed or interrupted. In today's noisy Western world, this may take some ingenuity, but it is necessary.

It ought to be a place . . .

- where you can pray aloud without disturbing others.
- where you have good lighting for reading (a desk, perhaps).
- where you are comfortable. (*Warning: Do not have your quiet time in bed. That's too comfortable!*)

Your place ought to be a *special place*. Wherever you decide to meet with the Lord, make it a special place for you and him. As the days go by, that place will come to mean a lot to you because of the wonderful times you have there with Jesus Christ. Your place ought to be a *sacred place*. This is where you meet with the living God. Where *you* meet the Lord can be just as holy as the place where Abraham met him. You don't have to be in a church building. People have had quiet times in their car parked in a quiet place, in an empty closet at home, in their backyard, and even in a baseball dugout. Each of these places became sacred to them.

FOLLOW A SIMPLE PLAN

Someone has said, "If you aim at nothing, you are sure to hit it!" To have a meaningful quiet time, you will need a plan or some kind of general outline to follow. The main rule is this: Keep your plan simple. Don't let it detract from your time with Christ. Foster's *Seven Minutes with God* suggests a simple plan for beginners.

The following six-point plan is workable for a quiet time of any duration. You will need the following items:

- *A Bible* — a contemporary translation (not a paraphrase) with good print, preferably without notes.
- *A notebook* — for writing down what the Lord shows you and for making a prayer list.

1. *Wait on God (relax).*

Be still for a minute; don't come running into God's presence and start talking immediately. Follow God's admonition: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10; see also Isa. 30:15; 40:31). Be quiet for a short while to put yourself into a reverent mood.

2. *Pray briefly (request).*

This is not your prayer time, but a short opening prayer to ask God to cleanse your heart and guide you into the time together. Two good passages of Scripture to memorize are:

- "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23 – 24; see 1 John 1:9).
- "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law [the Word]" (Ps. 119:18; see John 16:13).

You must be in tune with the Author of the Book before you can understand the Book.

3. *Read a section of the Scripture (read).*

This is where your conversation with God begins. He speaks to you through his Word, and you speak with him in prayer.

Read your Bible . . .

- *slowly*

Don't be in a hurry; don't try to read too large an amount; don't race through it.

- *repeatedly*

Read a passage over and over until you start to picture it in your mind. The reason some people don't get more out of their Bible reading is that they do not read the Scriptures repeatedly.

- *without stopping*

Don't stop in the middle of a sentence to go off on a tangent and do a doctrinal study. Just read that section for the pure joy of it, allowing God to speak to you. remember that your goal here is not to gain information, but to feed on the Word and get to know Christ better.

- *aloud but quietly*

Reading Scripture aloud will improve your concentration if you have that problem. It will also help you understand what you are reading better because you will be both seeing and hearing the words. read softly enough, however, that you don't disturb anyone.

- *systematically*

read through one book at a time in orderly fashion. Do not use the “random dip” method—a passage here, a chapter there, what you like here, an interesting portion there. You will understand the Bible better if you read it as it was written — a book or letter at a time.

- *to get a sweep of a book*

On some occasions you may want to survey a whole book. In that case you will read it quickly to get a sweep of the total revelation. Then you need not read it slowly or repeatedly.

4. *Meditate and memorize (reflect and remember).*

To have the Scriptures speak to you meaningfully, you should meditate on what you are reading and memorize verses that particularly speak to you. Meditation is “seriously contemplating a thought over and over in your mind” (see chapter 1 for a brief discussion of this).

5. *Write down what God has shown you (record).*

When God speaks to you through his Word, record what you have discovered. Writing it down will enable you both to remember what God revealed to you and to check up on your biblical discoveries. recording what God has shown you is one way of *applying* what you see in the Scripture that pertains to your life

6. *Have your time of prayer (request).*

After God has spoken to you through his Word, speak to him in prayer. This is your part of the conversation with the Lord. To help you remember the parts of prayer, think of the acrostic *P-R-A-Y*:

P—*Praise the Lord.*

Begin your time of prayer by praising God for who he is and what he has done. The former is *adoration*, the latter *thanksgiving*. Adoration is real worship; it is giving God the recognition he alone deserves. So praise God for his greatness, power, majesty, strength, and other attributes. Examples in Scripture of pure praise may be found in Psalm 145 and revelation 4 – 5. You can worship God in this way by reading the Psalms (particularly Ps. 146 – 50), reading great hymns of worship, or considering the names of God (see 1 Chron. 16:25 – 29; Ps. 50:23; 67:3; Heb. 13:5). David gives us a beautiful example of a prayer of adoration 1 Chronicles 29:10 – 13.

We also praise the Lord for what he has done for us, particularly in salvation and daily provision. This is developing the prayer of thanksgiving. During any quiet time, think of at least 20 things you can thank God for that day. (read Psalm 100:4; Philippians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:18.)

R— *Repent of your sins.*

This is the prayer of *confession*. After seeing God in his holiness (see Isa. 6:5), we recognize our own sinfulness. Don't just tell God about the sins you have committed, but ask him to help you turn away from them. This is repentance. God already knows your sins; he just wants you to admit them and turn away from them. (read Psalms 32; 51; Proverbs 28:9, 13; 1 John 1:9.)

A — *Ask for yourself and others.*

These are the prayers of *petition* and *intercession*. Begin with your own personal requests (petition). Throughout the Bible God urges us to ask for things for ourselves in prayer. These may be physical needs such as food, clothing, and shelter; spiritual needs; or help in coping with the difficult problems of life. God loves us, wants to bless us, and wants to give us what we need (see Matt. 7:7 – 9; Mark 11:22 – 24; John 14:13 – 14; Heb. 4:16). Not only are we to pray for our needs, but God is also pleased to give answers to our desires that are in his will (see Ps. 37:4; 84:11; 145:19; Phil. 4:6).

It is important to be specific in your praying, and one of the ways to do this effectively is to set up a prayer list. Just take a sheet of paper, rule off four columns, and fill them in. As you begin to fill page after page of answered prayer, your faith will grow greater and deeper.

Ask for others (intercession). The Bible calls on Christians to intercede for others — to pray one for another. So pray for your family, relatives, and friends; pray for your pastor, church workers, missionaries, and others involved in kingdom work; pray for your leaders, teachers, and employers or employees; pray for people to whom you are witnessing; pray for those whom you do not like or those who do not like you — and watch what happens! (Note these passages: 1 Samuel 12:23; Job 42:10; Romans 15:30; Ephesians 1:15 – 16.)

You might want to divide up the days of the week in your notebook and pray for different people on different days. Get a world map and pray “around the world” for missionaries according to their location.

Y— *Yield yourself to God's will.*

Your prayer time should end with a time of personal recommitment to the Lord. Reaffirm the lordship of Jesus Christ in your life and pledge your submission and obedience for that day to him. (See Romans 12:12; 14:8 – 9.)

Transformed Daily Devotional

Day 1:

Growing up I loved the cartoon series called Transformers. Maybe it was because I was the typical boy, but there was something about a red and blue big rig transforming into a giant robot that kicked some serious robot behind! It amazed me that something so normal could transform into something phenomenal. Now you might be wondering why I started this devotional by talking about an 80's cartoon. Here is why, we are not much different than Optimus Prime (The Big Rig/Giant Robot I mentioned earlier). God takes us normal, every day, regular human beings and can transform our lives. He can use the normal and ordinary to become world changing! That is what Jesus does; He transforms us from ordinary to extraordinary. Look at what Acts 4:13 says about two of Jesus' disciples.

Acts 4:13 (NIV)

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

Something miraculous happens when we spend time with Jesus. Common becomes the uncommon, regular becomes irregular, and ordinary becomes extraordinary. We become life-changing, world-changing and difference-making people. That is what Transformed is all about. We are going to dive into what it means to be a follower of Christ and how God can change our lives through Jesus. The first transformation we are going to look at is the transformation that Salvation brings. To close off our day 1 devotional I would like you to open your bibles and read 2 Corinthians 5. Underline, highlight and/or circle whatever speaks to you as you read. Pay close attention to verse 17.

After reading 2 Corinthians 5, write down your Salvation story in a journal. How did the Lord change you when you gave your life to Christ? Knowing your own transformation story is a great marker in the roadmap of your life. It is something you can look back to you as you look forward to what Lord has for you. Maybe you haven't taken that step of faith yet, that's okay. Keep reading in this devotional tomorrow and the next day and the next day and so on. Dig into the Scriptures that we are going to look at each day. Investigate for yourself and maybe you will be ready for Jesus.

I'm praying for each of you as you join us on this journey called "Transformed"!

- Pastor Matt

Day 2:

God's Word uses many different metaphors to describe who can and does transform us. The Gospel of John has some great examples of this. In John 1 we get a glimpse into God's transformational power.

John 1:1-5, 9-14, 16-18 (ESV)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."

The Gospel John starts at the very beginning. Jesus was there at creation. Jesus is the Word and that Word became flesh for us. He is God's Word in living form, setting the example and rescuing us from sin. John uses his first metaphor for how God transforms us, here in this passage. He takes us from darkness to light. Think about it, whenever you walk into a dark room and flip the light switch, what happens? The darkness disappears, it vanishes and it's transformed. Now what was hidden by the darkness is visible. What was veiled is now laid bare before us. John culminates this passage in verse 18, *"no one has ever seen God"*. He had remained hidden, like darkness, but Christ changed all of that. He has made God the Father known. He has given us the ability to have a relationship with God the Father.

John 8:12 (ESV)

"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

That is the starting point in our journey of faith. God desires to have a relationship with us. He has brought light into the darkness. He has provided His son for us. Once we can grasp the magnitude of that we can begin our journey. John says in 1:16, *"For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."* It's all because of His grace that we can begin to fathom a relationship with the Lord. God's grace is the foundation behind verse 12, *"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."*

When we receive Jesus, we have the right to become His children, to be adopted into His heavenly family and to cry out to Him, our Father! Have you grasped the fact that God is our Father, that He loves us and that we can have a relationship with Him? That truth right there is transformational!

Day 3:

Staying in the Gospel of John, in chapter 3 we get another example of God's transformational power in salvation. John 3 is where we get the term "born-again". Jesus gets visited by one of the Pharisees, by one of the religious leaders in Israel, named Nicodemus. Nicodemus sneaks away during night to find Jesus and learn from Him. Nicodemus, like all Pharisees, is well versed in Scripture. From an early age, he had to memorize the Jewish Scriptures, our Old Testament. Imagine that for a second, he had the entire Old Testament memorized! Next time you think that you can't memorize a verse, think about the Pharisees. They memorized books like Leviticus and Numbers, we are just challenging you to memorize a singular verse. Forgive my rabbit trail, back to Nicodemus and Jesus. Like a faithful Jewish man should, Nicodemus desired to grow deeper in his faith and the things Jesus was teaching were radical and for many, transformational. Nicodemus wanted this so Jesus challenged him!

John 3:1-7 (ESV)

"Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.' Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

You can sense the sarcasm in Nicodemus's response to Jesus. I'm supposed to crawl back into my mother's womb? It's impossible! It's preposterous! It's inconceivable! Well, we all know Jesus wasn't actually talking about physically being born-again but spiritually. Jesus hammers this home in verse 5. Jesus says you must be born of water and the Spirit. Now don't get this confused with baptism. Jesus isn't talking about baptism here. Remember when I said that Nicodemus would have had the Old Testament memorized? Well Jesus knew that too and he references and Old Testament Scripture that foretold about God's plan to transform lives!

Ezekiel 36:25-27 (NIV)

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

That passage right there is the Old Testament pointing to what God was going to accomplish through Jesus. Undoubtedly Nicodemus thought of this and many other places in the Old Testament Scriptures that talk about a new heart and new life! In fact, Ezekiel 37 goes on in detail about a valley of dead bones coming to life. Take a look.

Ezekiel 37:1-6 (NIV)

“The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ I said, ‘O Sovereign LORD, you alone know.’ Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’”

Being born-again is the transformation process the Lord does within us when we receive Jesus. He removes the cold, hard heart of stone and replaces it with a new heart. He takes our dry, dead bones and breathes life back into us.

No matter what is going on in your life, Christ can bring healing and change. No matter what your addiction is, Christ can bring freedom. No matter how depressed and alone you feel, Christ can bring you a new heart and new life. You can be born-again!

Day 4:

The Gospel of John is chalk full of transformation stories so we are going to continue working our way through it. Our next stop is in John 4 where we encounter the Samaritan woman at the well.

> Let's open up our bible and read John 4:1-30.

What an amazing story, right!? Just on the surface you can see the transformation story but I want to dig deeper. It's time for a little context. Jews hated Samaritans and that is not an exaggeration, they truly hated them. Samaritans were mixed breeds. They were half Jewish and therefore just half a human,

unworthy for any Jewish man or woman to associate with. Get this, most Jews would take great detours just to avoid Samaria, they wanted nothing to do with them! Jesus doesn't take a detour, he isn't afraid to meet a Samaritan. Nobody is out of reach for Jesus! No matter how terrible, broken, sinful and lost they may be, Jesus still cares, Jesus still desires a relationship and Jesus still wants to transform their life.

Take note of the contrast from John 3 to John 4. In John 3 Jesus meets with a "moral", "good" or "holy" man in Nicodemus and in John 4 he takes time to be with a "sinful", "broken" and "unworthy" Samaritan woman. No matter what the social, economic, racial or intellectual barriers may be, Jesus will meet with us, right where we are! All of the surface stuff doesn't matter! Jesus lives out what the Lord said in 1 Samuel 16.

1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV)

"But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'"

The Lord is truly concerned about the condition of our heart. Jesus' words to the woman at the well prove that. Jesus comes back to the theme of water in His conversation, this woman was at the well because she had a physical thirst but deeper down, she had a spiritual thirst. Much like this woman, we all thirst for something. That thirst isn't always good and rarely is it a righteous thirst. Most likely we thirst for power, for prestige or for pleasure. The unfortunate truth is that once we find what we are thirsty for, we are ultimately left wanting more. Nothing can quench it! Jesus transforms this gal's life by offering her the one thing that can satisfy the deepest thirst. Jesus is the living water that can flow in our hearts and lives. He is the one that can transform the barren wasteland of our lives and give us new meaning and purpose. He can heal any broken heart and fulfill the loneliest of conditions. What is it that you thirst for? Once you find it, are you still thirsty?

What happens next is incredible. The fact that she is given new life and new heart isn't enough. She is so moved and changed that she goes and tells everyone about what Jesus has done. Not just her family or friends, but everyone in her village. She shouts from the rooftops what God has done to change her! Once you have experienced that change we can but help tell people what God has done for us!

The woman tells everyone about what Jesus had done for her and everyone comes to faith! The entire town began to believe. God transformed her life and then God used her to share the Gospel and transform her community. What are you doing to transform the community around you? Do people know what God has done for you? Do they know how He has changed you? I think of the Apostle Paul and what he wrote in Romans.

Romans 1:16 (ESV)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

The Gospel is the power of God to change our lives. The Gospel is new life, it is a new heart and it is a living water to quench the deepest of thirsts.

John 7:37-38 (ESV)

“On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

The Gospel is how God transforms us!

Day 5:

John 5 opens with man that has been paralyzed for 38 years lying beside a pool that was known to help heal afflictions. Jesus visits this pool named Bethesda and we get another astonishing transformation story.

John 5:1-15 (ESV)

“After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, ‘Do you want to be healed?’ The sick man answered him, ‘Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Get up, take up your bed, and walk.’ And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, ‘It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.’ But he answered them, ‘The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” They asked him, ‘Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’’ Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.’ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.”

I want you to picture in your mind this scene. Of all the people lying beside this pool, he picks this one guy to heal. He changes this one guys, he transforms and heals just him. Why? Jesus is teaching a key

point here in Scripture. Notice what Jesus asks of the paralyzed man in John 5:6, “Do you want to be healed?” Instead of immediately saying, “Yes Jesus! Heal me!” he begins to make excuses!

Aren’t we all a little like this paralyzed man? When God begins to move, and challenge us in our faith, we begin to make excuses. Lord, I don’t have time to read your Word today! God, I just can’t get out of bed to make church this week! Jesus, I won’t tithe, I earned all this money!

Despite his excuses, Jesus still does a work in this man’s life. Despite all of our selfishness and excuses, God will still work in our lives. Let’s cut the excuses and be ready for God to heal us. All of us have scars on our heart; all of us have wound and hurts from the past. Let’s stop passing the buck and allow God to heal those areas in our life. No more can we play the victim card! Jesus bore the cross to rescue us from that type of thinking and living!

Jesus said, “Get up and walk!” That same message is being spoken to us, get up and walk. Walk this journey of faith. Walk as someone who is healed and whole not broken or empty!

This opening provides the background for Jesus words that complete the rest of John 5.

> Open your bible and read John 5, rereading the portion I provided above.

The end of John 5 notes Jesus’ authority. It is because of Jesus, and His sovereignty, that worked in this man’s life. Jesus backs this action with His words at the end of this chapter.

Have you recognized Christ as the authority in your life? Have you turned everything over to His will and His plan for your life? Will you stop making excuses and take a serious step in your faith today?

Day 6:

> Open your bible and read John 6

That was long wasn’t it? You just read the longest chapter in the New Testament! There is a lot going on in John 6, some of which we are going to look at later on in this Transformed devotional. Today I want to focus in on the opening narrative.

We encounter the famous event when Jesus fed the 5,000. I want to remind you, they just counted the men. There was probably closer to 10,000 than 5,000 there. This miracle shows us what God can do when we are willing to offer up what we have to Him.

Jesus is testing His disciples, even though He already had a plan. They don’t have any answer for Him. Truthfully they respond in the flesh and only think about the financial burden feeding that many people would be. Do you ever do that? When God calls you to something radical, something that could be world changing, do you stop and consider what it will personally cost you? Cost you financially? Cost you

relationally? Cost you socially? Shouldn't we respond in faith when faced by such a daunting task the Lord may lie at our feet?

Andrew brings a little boy who was willing to respond in faith. I love this picture of what unashamed faith can do. This little boy saw the need to feed the people and he responded in faith to give Jesus everything he had. Five little loaves and two fish was a meal just right for growing young boy but he selflessly offered it to Jesus. Jesus took his meager offering and did something amazing with it!

Are you ready to offer what little you have over to Jesus? Do you want God to use you? Do you want to see God not only transform your life but the lives of those in your community and tribe? Maybe this morning is it time to let go and give your offering over to the Lord. Even if it is just 5 loaves and two fish, let God do the work.

Day 7:

> Open your bible and read John 7

That is it for today, just read John 7. You might be wondering why no commentary or questions. Well, because today is Sunday and the commentary, the questions and challenge happen during the message. DO whatever it takes to be in church today. Sit under the teaching of God's Word and allow it to transform you.

Looking forward to seeing you at church!

- Pastor Matt