

Missional Marker #2

Life Transforming Walk with Jesus

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To encounter the living Christ is to be changed. To walk with the living Christ is to experience an ongoing transformation. You not only “got” it. You are always “getting” it.

When I hear people ask the question, “how has knowing Jesus made a difference in my life?”, I have struggled with my answer. There was no profound conversion. I remember inviting Christ into my life at four years old after a scary missionary presentation at a Sunday evening service.

Can I really claim the life transforming walk when this is all I’ve known? I was the good kid, followed the rules, went to church, studied my bible and all that. But my context was pre-determined. I was raised in this stuff. It’s all I’ve ever known. Now I can look back and see where God’s hand has guided me and even protected me. I can even see the times where God has carried me. But I don’t look back and see much of anything that I would boldly describe as “transformational” in any dramatic sense.

I am aware as I attend churches around the country that there is an ambivalence that has built up in people like me. Though we share a clear cognitive theological understanding of Christianity, we have come to question its life transforming qualities. We’re hanging on for dear life to the stories of old and are warmed by the fresh wind of someone who has recently seen an answer to prayer, but it’s not been our experience with any regularity.

At a recent worship service we sang my favorite hymn, “And Can It Be”. While singing, my thoughts returned to an old friend at my former church who punctuated the idea of life transformation in my mind while singing this hymn. The third verse sings, *“Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and natures night. Thine eye diffused a quick-ning ray. I woke the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off my heart was free, I rose, went forth and followed thee.”*

While singing that verse my friend in the back of the church stood up and began marching around, shaking his hands like he had been loosed from shackles which had bound up his entire being. Those of us who watched knew at some level the transformation of bondage to freedom. He had no deep sinful past either. He just captured the essence of being set free and related it in a way that connected with the rest of us.

Paul writes the Galatians and says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set you free. Don't go back to slavery again!" "Get it!" A transforming walk with Jesus is the transformation from bondage of any form into the freedom of God's eternal Kingdom. And we are continuing to "get it". As all the layers of our bondage are pulled away by God's unfailing love, we are continuing to be transformed by our walk with Jesus.

In 2 Corinthians 3: Paul speaks of a new covenant which is being revealed through the Spirit. He says that, "where the Spirit is there is liberty. And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being "transformed" into the same image, from one manifested presence of our Lord to another."

The transforming walk with Jesus goes infinitely deep. Layer upon layer of bondage is peeled away and each peel reveals a new presence of the living Christ in freedom.

Friends, the transforming presence of Christ may not be accompanied by a dramatic outward change. But each of us can experience the hope of the freedom which is constantly renewing and refreshing. We are all still "getting it". "Amazing love, how can it be, that thou, my God, should die for me.