



INFLUENCERS

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At our annual COUPLES RETREAT a few weeks ago, I watched the most beautiful sight I have ever seen. It was better than the Grand Canyon, the Alps of Austria and Switzerland, the Smokey Mountains of Tennessee, and even more beautiful than Jordan Hare football stadium at Auburn University. It was a room full of couples standing, embracing, and praying for each other in what we call the “prayer hug.” Men were praying for and over their wives and wives held their husbands and prayed for them.

TRANSFORMATION (def) “to change completely for the better; a major change in form, nature, function, character or condition; to CONVERT: a change fitting a man for a new or different use or function; METAMORPHOSE: suggests an abrupt or startling change induced by a supernatural power.”

I LOVE DEFINITIONS! They help me identify the essential quality or depth of a word, which gives me a more distinct, clear, detailed understanding of what it really means. A definition explodes the word in a way that helps me understand it to a much greater degree. When I teach, I often define words for the guys so we can all really get at the heart of what God wants us to learn. We need all the help we can get.

TRANSFORMATION is one of those words. It is foundational to spiritual life, and the goal of our efforts at growth, discipleship and spiritual development. It is the goal of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In II Corinthians 5:17 Paul put it this way, “*If any man is in Christ he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*” When God chooses a man for Himself, He transforms the man. He doesn’t just polish up the old guy so that the outside looks good while the inside remains ugly. He makes a completely new man from the inside out, with a new heart, new habits and behavior, a new perspective, new attitudes and a new destiny! He becomes a new man who never existed before. Now that may give the most desperate heart some hope. We can change. We can be different. We can be a Man of God! **TRANSFORMATION!** What a concept!

Transformation is one of the mysteries of spiritual life that escapes most men, until that man truly comes into a very personal relationship with Jesus Christ through His work on the Cross, and the Holy Spirit’s work in bringing this man to new life in Christ. **NEW LIFE!** That’s what Jesus said in John 10:10, “*I came that you might have life, and have it abundantly.*” Jesus came to transform a man with new life, and not just a little new life, but abundant new life—to the full until it overflows. He said, “*I came that you might have life...*” He also said in John 14:6, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the LIFE; no man comes to the Father, but through Me.*” **It’s extremely important to keep firmly planted in our minds that this new life can only be found IN JESUS CHRIST!**

So, what transformation are we seeing Jesus bring about in men’s lives? Let me mention a few:

- Men who seldom if ever prayed with their wives are learning how to do that.
- Men are learning to personally pray and speak to God from their heart.
- Men are sharing their faith and are becoming much more concerned for their friends' spiritual lives and eternal destinies.
- Men are leading other men in a process that helps them know God for who he truly is as they learn to hear His voice for themselves and to connect with Him at the heart.
- Men are being transformed in their understanding of who God is and what He is like.
- Men who have been marinated in a performance, works-based spiritual life riddled with guilt and shame, are learning about grace and trusting God and are becoming free in Christ for the first time in their lives.
- Men are beginning to really believe that God loves them, not because of what they do or don't do, or have done or not done, but because of His grace and unconditional love. They're getting that He loves them, no matter what.
- They are more willing to connect with this God of grace who understands their struggles with sin and Christian living, and who stands with them to help them work it out.
- Men are learning how to deal with their sin and are starting to run to God for forgiveness and grace, rather than running from God into shameful hiding.
- Men are learning what it means to be a Man of God, and are beginning to find their identities in Jesus Christ rather than in their work or profession, or in their possessions or accomplishments.
- Men are learning to become a Band of Brothers who care for each other and who band together to become the men God created them to be. They are learning that this cannot happen apart from the fellowship, friendship and camaraderie of being in relationship with godly men.

God's men are changing, growing, and transforming into the kind of reliable, dependable, courageous Men of God that their families, friends, colleagues, and this frantic, stressful world so desperately need.

This is the kind of transformation our world needs. When God gives a man back his heart, it's a beautiful thing to see. Thank you for your prayers and generous gifts that help bring about this transformation of men who are impacting their families, churches, their spheres of influence and the world...for such a time as this.

Give 'em Heaven!

Pete