

Bible Study: Transformed

Introduction:

There is a tension between being “in the world” but not “of the world.” Through birth we are born into the world. Through faith, however, our true home is in heaven. When the writer to the Hebrews talked about believers who lived before the time of Christ he wrote:

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. (Hebrews 11:13)

And just a few chapters further we are reminded:

For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. (Hebrews 13:14)

In the popular hymn we sing:

*I'm but a stranger here; Heav'n is my home.
Earth is a desert drear; Heav'n is my home.
Danger and sorrow stand Round me on ev'ry hand.
Heav'n is my fatherland; Heav'n is my home. (CW #417; CW21 #853)*

Discuss: How does knowing you have an “enduring city” to possess in heaven affect the way you view life in this world? _____

Do We Influence the World, or Are We Influenced by the World?

We cannot help being in the world. But what effect do we have on it, and what effect does it have on us?

Matthew 5:13–16 You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Discuss: What does this passage say about your role in the world? _____

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”

Galatians 5:7–9 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”

Galatians 6:1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

Discuss: What do these passages say about the world’s ability to influence you? _____

Missing Simpler Times:

We long for simpler days with better morals and a better reception of Christian values and the Christian faith. Some suggest we need to escape from the world – cloister ourselves just with our own friends, family, and others who think like us.

1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Psalms 84:2 My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Ecclesiastes 7:10 Don’t always be asking, “Where are the good old days?” Wise folks don’t ask questions like that. (The Message)

Discuss: What do these passages say about the passage of time, and how we should view our time? _____

Fixing Worldly Problems:

When Adam and Eve fell into sin it brought pain, problems, and destruction into the world. The standard by which we judge all these things is the Word of God. Using it enables us to see the consequences of sin in the world, in fellow Christians, and in ourselves. We are directed to be forces of good in the world and to fellow Christians, but we often must approach the world and fellow Christians differently.

Discuss: What are the moral problems of the world? _____

Discuss: What are the moral problems of Christians (and ourselves)? _____

Discuss: Should we be concerned about correcting sin in the world? Why or why not?

Discuss: In what way(s) do we approach the world and fellow Christians that are the same and that are different?

Being Part of the Solution:

Yes, the world has many problems because of sin. We see the manifestation of sin all around us. The Word of God also provides direction on ways we can be part of the solution to sin.

Luke 6:41 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”

1 John 3:18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

Revelation 3:17 You say, “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.” But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Discuss: How do these passages prescribe our responsibility to do something? _____

Conform vs. Transform

Jesus changed everything. He was more than a moral example of exemplary living. He was more than a good role model for how people can get along. Jesus, true God and true man, became the only acceptable sacrifice for all of our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21). This reality “transforms” who we are and what we do.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Discuss: What is the difference between “conform” and “transform”? _____

Discuss: In what ways do we “conform”? _____

Discuss: In what ways do we “transform”? _____

Discuss: What does “transform” look like – in light of the following passages?

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

John 6:27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.

Philippians 2:3–5 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.

Matthew 5:39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

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