

## Transformation & Expectation

What does transformation look like? One of the biggest blockbuster movies in 2007 was the sci-fi action flick *Transformers*. Filled with Autobots and Decepticons that “transform” from various vehicles into towering robots, *Transformers* captured imaginations and entertained millions of people worldwide. The movie was based on a popular line of toys that have the ability to “transform” from vehicles into robots, animals, and devices and then back again. These clever toys have fascinated young boys and girls since 1984 – robots in disguise. Is this what transformation looks like – having the ability to interchange between forms at will? Or does real transformation have a little more staying power?

Webster’s Dictionary defines the word “transform” this way: “to change (something) completely and usually in a good way; to change in composition or structure; to change a thing into a different thing.” This definition of “transform” denotes a permanent change in form, nature, or function, not vacillating, and definitely not temporary. An example that readily comes to mind is the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. The caterpillar is completely transformed on all levels: form, nature, and function. It has become an entirely new creature. The transformation is complete – it can never be reversed. The lowly caterpillar is the true representation of a “transformer.”

Some time ago, a young girl experienced a different kind of transformation. Going about her daily business as a dutiful daughter, soon to be married, a transformation was visited upon her. Archangel Gabriel met and spoke with the young girl and informed her “Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.” (Luke 1:30-31, MSG) Despite being a virgin, Mary soon discovered the truth of the angel’s words. She was pregnant. In that instant, Mary was transformed.

Life would never go back to what it once was. Her heart, mind and body became the dwelling place of the Son of God. Even though her transformation was fraught with danger and disgrace, Mary understood that a radical change had taken place, not only to impact her in the near future, but also impact all future generations. She sang, “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name.” (Luke 1:46-49 NIV)

This transformation – the change that God wanted – gave Mary a new identity. She will always be known as the mother of Jesus, and should be honoured as such. She did nothing to become pregnant; God himself initiated her transformation. Mary partnered with God knowing that the Holy Spirit had intimately filled her life and she could look forward with expectation to the imminent fruit of this supernatural encounter. Just as Mary experienced this radical transformation, so too can people living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century experience the change God desires. God is not looking for a change in behaviour. What God desires is for

all people to experience a change in their spiritual orientation. Every person born into this world has a spiritual orientation of death. “We *all*, like sheep, have gone astray, *each* of us has turned to our own way...” (Isaiah 53:6, *italics mine*) Romans 3:23 says, “*All* have sinned and come short of the glory of God (*italics mine*). This is due to the fallen nature that every human has inherited since Adam and Eve.

People with same sex attraction are no exception and they are no different. The problem is not behavioral: it goes much deeper. Every man, woman, and child has been born with a spiritual orientation that is turned away from God. And just as Adam died, the same fate befalls every sinner. Death – physical and spiritual.

This death sentence can only be reversed through sacrifice, the perfect sacrificial lamb, Jesus. Through his death and resurrection triumph, transformation has made available to all who would believe. “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” (Acts 16:31). The sinner has a new identity, that of a saint. The saint has passed from death to life. There’s an old chorus based on 2 Corinthians 5: 16-19.

Old things are passed away, behold  
All things have become new  
My life is hidden in Christ I’m told  
He’ll do the same for you

This very important truth from Scripture applies equally to people who experience same sex attraction as to everyone else. People with same sex attraction need to experience a change in their spiritual orientation. They must accept the death & resurrection of Jesus through which God gives them a new identity in Christ. This kind of change is initiated in the heart of the unbelieving sinner through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. The change God wants has taken place. Their spiritual orientation is now based on the life of Christ and their new identity.

Unlike the slow metamorphosis of the lowly caterpillar in the cocoon, God’s initial transformation process is instantaneous! He immediately takes up residence in his new dwelling... he is there to stay. Upon belief in Jesus, the life so desperately needed is provided by the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. His righteousness is imputed to the new believer. Paul writes, “I become righteous through faith in Christ.” (Philippians 3:9 NLT) This transformation affects all areas of life. No matter male or female, race, social status, political preference, opposite or same sex attracted, this transformation is complete. It is finished. The transforming work of salvation is accomplished.

It’s important to note that the process doesn’t stop with salvation... God has a much bigger goal in mind. He wants to transform and empower his children to grow into the likeness of Christ. Romans 12: 2 states, “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” This word “transform” in the original Greek is transliterated “metamorphoo” and is a verb in the present tense. This connotes an ongoing transformation, a daily renewal, a process more commonly known as sanctification. This ongoing transformation can be

# opening doors

likened to the change that happens within the chrysalis of the cocoon. The transformation of the caterpillar does not happen in an instant; it is a process that takes about 14 days.

How does this transformation happen in the lives of saints? Ephesians 4:23-24 says that putting on the new self in Christ will result in perpetual restoration so that we will be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Scriptures instruct us to be transformed and empowered by the Spirit of God so that our life and words will display Christ and glorify God. The great news is that God didn't just transform people's spiritual orientation; he also provided himself on a permanent basis in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is alive in each saint, whispering words of encouragement, empowering a holy life, comforting, and revealing Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the impetus in ongoing transformation as minds are being perpetually renewed in the likeness of God.

As believers grow in knowing God and welcome the Holy Spirit's power for living, several important things take place. First, true identity is revealed; it is hidden with Christ in God – his nature has been given to every believer. (Colossians 3:3) Second, who God is begins to be reflected in external behavior. This naturally flows out of growing in grace. Third, as growth in grace and maturity takes place, believer's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours imitate their Heavenly Father and older brother, Jesus.

For the believer with same-sex attractions, one of the components of this transformation is gender wholeness. God earnestly desires that they be willing to grow into mature expressions of the man or woman that God created them to be; accepting, believing and growing into their new identity – the way Jesus sees them – not the way that the world or personal feelings dictate. In the *Ragamuffin Bible* Brennan Manning wrote: "He (Jesus) knew who he was – the Son, Servant, and Beloved of his Father – and he permitted nothing and no one to stand in his way of being himself. In full acceptance of who he was, Jesus is the archetype of personality integration. When we "put on Christ" and fully accept who we are, a healthy independence from peer pressure, people-pleasing...develops."

Another component is becoming authentic about personal temptations, weaknesses and struggles. Pretending not to have temptation is denial and robs believers of experiencing God strength in one's own weakness. God says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV) Because of this promise, the Apostle Paul goes on to say "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me...when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10,11)

Relationships must be transformed. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus enables believers to move towards healthy and godly same-gender and opposite-gender relationships. Also it is wise to become better at tending to the needs for love that remain. Danny Silk gives godly counsel in his book *Keep Your Love On*, "Ever since sin entered the world and we became disconnected from God, we have been looking for ways to get our needs met outside of relationship because being vulnerable could mean rejection, which means shame and heartbreak. But counterfeits never come through, they promise love but are always out of reach." Ensure that the normal human needs for love are being met through healthy, godly relationships.

What part does expectation play in this transformation process? The initial transformation of redemption has taken place, and the ongoing transformation through sanctification continues in the life of the believer. Now what? Just as Mary waited with great expectation for the birth of her Saviour, so also can all believers have the assurance that God will bring about the changes he desires.

For many years the Hebrew people waited for the fulfillment of the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 that said a saviour will come who would reverse the curse that resulted from Adam and Eve's fall from grace. Isaiah prophesied "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) In 1745, Charles Wesley wrote these famous lyrics:

Come, Thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's Strength and Consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear Desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

The primary goal God has for every person is to have an intimate relationship with Christ and become able to live with integrity in Christ. Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6 "He who began a good work in will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." God gives this assurance; "Never will I leave you: never will I forsake you." (Hebrews. 13:5) He will continue to transform his children into the image of his son, Jesus.

Expect God to change lives. Expect God to never give up. Expect a message to come from a mess. Expect a testimony to arise out of tests. Expect great things from God. After all, he is "able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." (Ephesians 3:30)

## What Can I Do?

**Pray.** God works through Exodus Global Alliance when you pray. Pray that we will be effective in proclaiming that God has good news for people who experience same-sex attractions and for people involved in homosexuality. Pray that we will be effective in equipping churches to minister God's truth and grace to people impacted by homosexuality.

**Give.** Exodus' ministry to people depends on your financial support. Our support comes from individual donors, not institutions, company sponsors or government grants. Will you give as God directs you? Send your gift using an Exodus response card, give online or contact the Exodus Global Alliance office.

**Invite Us to Your Church.** Exodus welcomes invitations to speak in churches—sharing how the Gospel is good news to people impacted by homosexuality, sharing testimonies of God's transformation and discussing how the church can minister God's truth and grace. We would love to receive an invitation from your church. You can take the first step by contacting us to say you would like us to speak in your church. We'll take the next step of contacting your pastor.