

The Transformation That Comes Through Doing

There's a profound disconnect in modern Christianity that we rarely talk about. We've somehow convinced ourselves that accumulating knowledge about God is the same thing as becoming like Him. We attend Bible studies, listen to podcasts, read theological books, and nod our heads in agreement with sound doctrine—all while our lives remain fundamentally unchanged.

But what if transformation doesn't primarily happen in our minds? What if the gap between who we are and who we're called to be isn't closed by information, but by action?

The Pattern of This World

In Romans 12:1-2, we encounter a radical call: "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. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Notice that little word "therefore." It's a hinge that connects everything that comes before—eleven chapters detailing God's overwhelming mercy and grace—to everything that follows. The message is clear: Because of what God has done for you, here's how you should live.

This isn't just theological theory. It's a call to embodied practice.

The Living Sacrifice

In the ancient world, sacrifices were familiar. People brought animals to the temple, left them on the altar, and walked away. Their lives could continue unchanged. The sacrifice was separate from their daily existence.

But the call to be a "living sacrifice" demolishes that separation. You can't leave yourself on an altar and walk away. This new way of following God under the gospel of Jesus means your entire life—every moment, every decision, every interaction—becomes your offering.

Your work is worship. Your parenting is worship. How you drive in traffic is worship. How you treat the cashier at the grocery store is worship. There's no compartmentalization, no separation between "sacred" and "secular" moments. It's all-consuming, and it's meant to be.

The Deception of Mere Listening

James, the half-brother of Jesus, addresses this disconnect head-on in James 1:22-25: "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who

listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like."

That word "deceive" should stop us in our tracks. James is saying that we can fool ourselves into thinking we're growing spiritually when we're actually stagnant. We mistake information absorption for transformation.

The mirror metaphor is brilliant. A mirror can show you everything that's wrong. It can reveal that you're out of shape, aging, or need to change something. But no matter how long you stare at your reflection, the mirror itself will never change you. It only provides information.

The Barbell of Discipleship

Transformation requires a different tool—not just a mirror, but a barbell.

The moment you engage with a barbell, your body begins to change. You don't need to understand all the physiology. You don't need a PhD in exercise science. You simply need to pick up the weight and do the work. The doing itself creates the transformation.

You cannot think your way into being fit. You cannot read enough books about running to complete a marathon. You have to actually run. The same principle applies to spiritual formation.

Jesus understood this completely. After washing His disciples' feet—a task reserved for the lowest servant—He said in John 13:15-17: "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

The blessing doesn't come from knowing. It comes from doing.

Why Doing Changes Us

Western culture has trained us to believe that knowledge produces change—that if we just get smarter, we'll automatically become better people. This is the legacy of the Enlightenment and philosophers like Descartes, who famously said, "I think, therefore I am."

But research in psychology and sociology has consistently shown that knowing something rarely predicts behavior change. The reverse, however, is true: changing your behavior changes the way you think and feel.

This is why cultural practices—the things we do repeatedly—shape us so powerfully. Why are there so many Dallas Cowboys fans, despite decades of disappointment? Because

families watched games together, year after year. The repeated practice created the identity, not logical analysis of team performance.

Serving others works the same way. It's a repeated, embodied practice that, over time, reshapes what you love, what you notice, and who you instinctively become. It's not primarily about getting the right ideas into your head. It's about becoming the kind of person who loves rightly.

The Spiritual Workout

When you engage in serving others, several things happen:

You encounter the Holy Spirit. Serving puts you in situations where you need divine help. You're forced to depend on God in ways that comfortable living never requires.

You burn spiritual calories. Serving creates holy hunger. When you're pouring yourself out for others, you become desperate for God to refill you. Desperate people get fed. Hungry people devour what God offers.

You build spiritual health. Just as physical exercise prepares your body to handle illness and injury, spiritual disciplines prepare you to handle life's inevitable hardships. Healthy people survive difficult seasons better.

You stretch and grow. Serving will never become easy, but it does become easier. The weight will always be heavy, but you'll get stronger carrying it.

The Cost and the Blessing

Make no mistake: living as a sacrifice is costly. It's inconvenient. It disrupts your schedule and your comfort. But this is precisely what we're called to in light of God's mercy.

The question isn't whether serving is convenient. The question is whether you're willing to do the work of discipleship—to pick up the barbell, to get under the weight, to let the doing transform you into the image of Christ.

In view of God's mercy, this is our reasonable response. Not just to believe, but to become. Not just to understand, but to embody. Not just to know the way, but to walk in it.

The mirror and the barbell both have their place. We need truth to inform us. But we need practice to transform us. And somewhere between knowing and becoming, we must make the choice to do.

Scripture References from the Sermon

Directly Referenced Scriptures:

1. **Mark 10:45** - "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many"
2. **John 13:15** - "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you"
3. **Romans 12:1-2** - "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. 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."
4. **James 1:22-25** - "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it, not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it, they will be blessed in what they do."
5. **John 13** (general reference) - The foot washing at the Last Supper

Alluded to Scriptures:

6. **Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17** - "Come follow me" (referenced as appearing over 20 times in the Gospels)

7. **Philippians 2:5-8** - Christ taking on the nature of a servant and humbling himself to death on a cross

8. **John 16:13** - The Holy Spirit as comforter/Paraclete who leads into all truth

9. **John 14:12** - "You will do even greater things than these"

10. **Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23** - "Take up your cross and follow me"

Suggested Related Verses for Main Themes:

11. **Galatians 5:13** - "Serve one another humbly in love" (theme of serving)

12. **1 Peter 4:10** - "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others" (theme of serving)

13. **Matthew 25:40** - "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (theme of serving)

14. **2 Corinthians 3:18** - Being transformed into Christ's image (theme of transformation)

15. **Ephesians 2:8-10** - Saved by grace for good works (theme of faith and action)

16. ****1 John 3:18**** - "Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth"
(theme of doing, not just knowing)