

HOPE CHURCH SOUTH HAVEN September 28th, 2025

Non-negotiable value: TRANSFORMATIONAL

Acts 12:11-13; 13:1-5; 13:13; 15:36-41.

Colossians 4:10–11.

Being RELATIONAL – it describes the **CONTEXT** for following Jesus.

Being INCARNATIONAL – it describes the **STRATEGY** for following Jesus.

Being TRANSFORMATIONAL – it describes the **OUTCOME** we strive for.

One word to describe your life after COVID?

The **Badenhorst family** would be change / **transformation**.

- A journey that started in 2013 – first time I felt the calling. Everything culminated in the last 5 years.
- Remember receiving a text message from Brian Timmer – asking if I am still available.
- We left everything we know and understood for our entire lives.
 - ⇒ New country.
 - ⇒ New culture.
 - ⇒ New language – not only speaking but having to start thinking in a new language.
 - ⇒ New groceries and medicine etc.
 - ⇒ Saying goodbye to lifelong friends and making new ones.

⇒ City slicker discovering the beauty and challenges of living in a small-town community.

REASONS why TRANSFORMATION is so hard:

- We want to **change for the wrong reasons**. We're pushed to change by guilt or shame or fear — not because of good or healthy reasons.
- We try to change everything at once. We take on too much instead of making one small change at a time.
- We don't realize that **change is a process**. It takes time and patience. We often underestimate how much work it takes.
- We're just not fully committed. We want things to be different, but we're not all-in when it comes to doing what's needed for the change to last.

But TRANSFORMATION is not a nice to have. TRANSFORMATION is **crucial** for the here and now – for our broken messy world. But TRANSFORMATION is crucial for eternity.

We are called by God to live as our uniquely created selves – our temperament, our gene pool, our history. But to grow spiritually means to live increasingly as Jesus would in our unique place – to perceive what Jesus would perceive if He looked through our eyes, to think what He would think, to feel what He would feel, and therefore to do what He would do.

John Ortberg

When God changes us, we start to see and experience life differently than most people do. We learn to **see life as a gift**, even when things get messy and hard. We discover that all the ups and downs and the tough times have meaning and purpose.

As we keep growing. As we continue transforming. We become better people. We **grow closer to God**. Our lives become more stable. We learn to **trust God more deeply**.

- Our faith doesn't get shaken every time we hear a new idea.
- Our faith doesn't falter when we are confronted by different teachings.
- We don't question our faith when science discovers something new.

We become solid and grounded followers of Jesus.

The goal of TRANSFORMATION is a **deep and lasting change**. Not just trying to put make-up on this pretty face.

The process isn't always neat or straightforward. It sometimes **gets messy**. Everyone's JOURNEY looks a little different. But if you follow Jesus, TRANSFORMATION isn't just an option. **It's mandatory**. Every believer is meant to grow and keep changing.

In life, there is **four different** spaces that shape us or transforms us:

Stagnation: This is when **nothing much is happening**. Things feel STUCK and LIFELESS and maybe even COMFORTABLE. No signs of growing. When we settle for “just getting by” instead of pressing on to know Christ – no signs of any holy discontent.

Order: When things **make sense and are predictable and stable**. Order can be valuable but if order becomes too rigid, it RESISTS GROWTH.

Complexity: This is when **new challenges or opportunities** enter the picture. When life starts PRESSING US TO ADAPT. Complexity feels *busy and stretching and even overwhelming* sometimes. Complexity shows up when God calls us to go deeper. To trust Him in new ways.

Chaos: Chaos is **full-on disruption**. When *everything feels out of control* — like when a natural disaster happens or a pandemic. CHAOS ISN'T COMFORTABLE, but it can be the place where God brings breakthrough. But we can't maintain that intensity 24/7 or 365/year.

Best space for transformation and growth is complexity.

Today we're going to explore the TRANSFORMATION story of a young man named John Mark. If I wrote his biography, it would be titled – *from streaker to martyr*.

- According to Christian tradition we meet John Mark for the first time in **MARK 14**. The night Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane:

Then everyone deserted him and fled. A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

Mark 14:50-52 NIV

- Ancient writers often PORTRAYED THEMSELVES in a super positive light, making their lives appear **more remarkable or even magical** than they truly were.
- But the BEAUTIFUL THING about the Gospel writers were that they didn't try to make themselves look good. They didn't worry about looking foolish – running away scared and naked into the night.
- They understood that the story of Jesus was about much more than their reputations.
- John Mark is mentioned next in **ACTS 12**.
- Peter is in prison in Jerusalem. The night before he is to appear before Herod, an ANGEL helps him **escape from prison**.

Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were

hoping would happen.” When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. //

// Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!” “You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.”

Acts 12:11-15 NIV

- Peter knew where the believers in Jerusalem gathered.
- It was at John Mark’s mother’s house – faithful family sold out to Jesus.
- **DANGEROUS reputation:** could cost them everything.

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” //

// So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

Acts 13:1-5 NIV

- Paul and Barnabas take him along on their first missions' trip.
- John Mark must have shown a lot of potential and character and depth of faith.

We read what happened next a few verses later:

From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.

Acts 13:13 NIV

- It doesn't explain the reason for John Mark's decision – crisis at home or illness or felt overwhelmed or got scared.
- But John Mark abandoned them and went home.

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. //

// They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Acts 15:36-41 NIV

- John Mark's DECISION had a huge impact on Paul and Barnabas's relationship – he was the reason why the band broke up.
- Brilliant way that God uses our messes and mistakes – **the Gospel was shared in two locations.**

Did his actions set his life on a path he could never escape? Was he only known as “the guy who left Paul and Barnabas behind”? Caused a good friendship to crash and burn?

Shortly before **Paul's death** – while he was in prison in Rome waiting for his execution – Paul wrote a letter to the CHURCH IN **COLOSSAE**:

My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.

Colossians 4:10-11 NIV

- From a disappointment to a comfort...

John Mark didn't let his mistake in Pamphylia define him. That decision didn't ruin his life:

- He became a **missionary** and helped shared the good news about Jesus.
- Barnabas mentored him.
- He became a close friend of the disciple Peter.
- He WROTE the **Gospel of Mark**
- According to one of earliest **Church Father's Eusebius**, John Mark started the church in Africa. He became the first bishop of the church in Alexandria where he served from **AD 49 to 62**.
- He died as a martyr — he was dragged through the streets with a rope around his neck.

John Mark's story is a story of growth and transformation. What can we learn from his life?

Don't get stuck in the past – failure is not final.

- John Mark made a big mistake — he abandoned Paul and Barnabas when they needed him. Caused two friends to part ways.
- But Mark's failure didn't mean he was finished or useless. God gave him another chance, and he ended up doing important work for God.

- **Show yourself grace.** Learn from your mistakes. Resist the *woulda...coulda...shoulda* thoughts.
- God restores people.
 - ⇒ Just like Mark, your regrets **don't have to control your future.**
 - ⇒ You're **not stuck** because of past choices.
 - ⇒ Let go of old mistakes and **step into the freedom** that God offers.

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do:
 Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win
 the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14 NIV

- Mark's story isn't just about him working hard to get back on track. **It's also about the people around him** — especially Barnabas — who encouraged him and forgave him and helped him start again.
- WE NEED EACH OTHER. Community **helps us heal and move forward** after we mess up.

Perseverance is essential.

- John Mark's story shows us that we should keep holding on to our faith, even if we mess up along the way.
- **Real faith isn't about never failing.** It's about getting back up when we do fail **asking for God's grace** and continuing to serve Him.
- Growing a backbone – putting our adult pants on.

⇒ To **persevere** in OUR FAITH.

⇒ To **persevere** in LOVING OUR ENEMIES and TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK.

⇒ To **persevere** – no matter how hard this life gets – in EMBODYING GODS LOVE AND GRACE in this messy broken world we live in.

Perseverance is the badge of true saints. The Christian life isn't just about how we start with God, but about sticking with Him all the way to the end.

Charles Spurgeon

- Following Jesus in every decision we make. The choices you and I make are what **God uses to shape our lives.**
- ⇒ If you marry the wrong person but treat him or her right, you can have a great marriage.
But if you marry the right person and treat him/her wrong, the marriage will suffer.

It's a lifelong journey.

- Growth is process – no instant gratification or quick fixes. Super challenging for us today.

Where everything happens instantly.

- SPIRITUAL HABITS like **praying, learning from God's Word, and serving others** help us grow.

But the Bible is clear that discipline is a godly means of grace. Spiritual growth and spiritual greatness come to us through our recurring practices. Habits create a framework that God fills with His grace. They become the highway on which grace is delivered.

Chip Ingram

- **Choose intentional** for COMPLEXITY. Moments and experiences outside of your comfort zones.
- Have a saying in Afrikaans – **skuif jou lyf**. Best translation: Let's get moving.
- Real growth **takes time and perseverance** and most of all, **God's grace**.