



TRANSFORMATION

To everything there is a season

By Alison Lublink & Kezia September



Part 1: Knowing Your Identity in Christ

Read: Ezekiel 36:26, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Ponder:

One of the incredible things that happens when you become a Christian is that your life is transformed. For some people, they quite literally experience an immediate and intense transformation that makes them feel and act differently. Watching it from the outside can seem like it's almost "magic" (though, of course, it's not). For others, this transformation starts out slow and progresses over time. Whatever our experience, transformation is part of our experience as Jesus followers. We hope to continue to be transformed all the way through our lives and never become stagnant.

All of this comes from knowing our identity in Christ. When we enter into a personal relationship with Jesus there is an identity shift that takes place. People often joke about married couples becoming more and more alike the longer they're married; dressing the same, finishing each other's sentences, sharing food preferences. The same can be said about our relationship with Christ. The longer and deeper our relationship is with him, the closer we become to knowing our identity in him. Our hearts of stone are softened to be more

receptive to Jesus' ways. We become new creations; the old passes away and the new Jesus-ways take its place.

Ambrose Muhia started to volunteer with *BethanyKids* in 2016 at our Kenyan location of Kijabe. After that he joined the team as a wheelchair technician at Joytown Primary School in 2017.

Joining *BethanyKids* transformed his life. He was given the opportunity to serve people with different abilities. It is there that he found the real meaning of God's purpose in his life. He learned an important truth: everybody has a purpose in life, and that whether we are rich or poor, God created us all.

Ambrose realized that in every situation he goes through, God is moulding and transforming him for His purpose. Just as He led the Israelites through the desert to Canaan, Ambrose feels God has used him as an instrument to show His love to the people through Jesus Christ. Ambrose says, "I have a great responsibility to show and spread the love of Christ to anyone who comes my way and to make those who feel unwanted or unloved, realize God's unconditional love."

For Ambrose, the notion that *Christ is All* is his drive to accomplish God's purpose and desire to love, serve Him and inherit His Kingdom. The transformation of Ambrose's life from the inside out continues to positively impact all those around him; including the children at Joytown school whose lives are transformed by the use of the wheelchairs that Ambrose helps to produce.

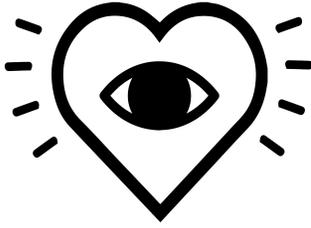
Discuss:

1. Did you experience an immediate transformation when you entered into a relationship with Jesus? Have you noticed any differences in those you know that have become Christians?
2. Have you had a significant experience in your life that has caused you to transform an aspect of your life?

3. What is an area of your life that you perhaps feel a “poking” or “prodding” at to transform? Is there something that your heart continues to stay hardened to that you should soften?
4. Think about the way your life appears to the outside; do you think that others can see that your life has been transformed by a relationship with Jesus? How?

Pray: God of Transformation, I ask that you would soften the hardest parts of my heart so that I might continue to be made new in you. Replace the old with the new and use me so that others might be drawn closer to you through the evident transformation of my life.

Do: Consider your words/actions this week - do they show evidence of a transformed, Jesus-centred life? If so, that's wonderful! If not, consider how you might be able to transform certain aspects of your life to give God the glory he deserves.



Part 2: Open the Eyes of My Heart

Read: Psalm 139:23-24, Hebrews 4:12

Ponder:

Blood enters the heart through two large veins - the inferior and superior vena cava - bringing deoxygenated blood from the body through the heart. This is our physical heart and a physical explanation of blood flow. To those outside the medical field, it might sound rather boring or even gross. Yet, it is the heart, this same blood-filled organ, that is often referred to when we talk about love, compassion and consciousness in western cultures.

In Christian circles we will even use the phrase 'the eyes of my heart' to mean our true longing and desires. Something that we know is only fulfilled in *seeing* God in all things. For in Him we live and move and have our being.

When Bilha brought her daughter Jane to Kijabe Hospital, she was traumatised by her baby's diagnosis of hydrocephalus spina bifida. Being disturbed and sad, she could only see the despair and sadness. She had no idea how to even attempt to help her child to survive in this new and unyielding world.

Through darkness and despair, Bilha stepped in prayer with Chaplain Mercy, opening her eyes to God's salvation. Following constant discussions and shared scriptures, Bilha

found the needed strength and perseverance as Jane had undergone her necessary operation.

Seeing the world through God's eyes - our opened spiritual eyes - you won't feel fear, trepidation, stress or worry. But instead you'll have feelings of peace and happiness.

Discuss:

1. When opening the eyes of your heart to the love of Jesus, were you able to overcome the harsh darkness of this unyielding world? Have you experienced "loss" recently where you could see no light, only despair?
2. What occurrence in your life has opened your eyes to the splendor of God's
3. salvation?
4. Is there any part of your life that you don't want God to see? If so, what may be the cause for you to hold back?

Pray: Omnipotent Lord and Saviour, I ask that you open my eyes as I dwell in spiritual darkness. Lord, bless me indeed and enlarge my territory to serve and spread Your Name as I am transformed by your light.

Do: God is omnipotent. He knows our thoughts and sees our actions. Think about your actions being a delight in the word of God. Does this draw you closer to God? Every action has a reaction and in doing so, ask yourself if you have anything to hide, or even to justify. If so, take a step back, re-check your intention and try again. We serve a forgiving God!



Part 3: Renewing Your Mind

Read: Isaiah 26:3, Romans 12:2

Ponder:

Think about your life for a moment. With the upset of an unprecedented global pandemic coupled with isolation, a killer disease, loss of income, loss of family and friends, becoming the order of the day, it is pretty easy to become overwhelmed. We experience difficulty in this life, and that seems to be an ever-present reminder in 2020.

Can you remember when last you experienced perfect peace? When all was good and hunky dory? Was it when you found the perfect parking spot right beside the mall entrance? Or was it when you found the jar of sweet tangy pickles that has been out of stock since the lockdown? Our minds have been in turmoil as we wonder how much of what we consider "normal" will be changed forever.

Being officially employed by BethanyKids as staff since September 2018 has provided Dennis the opportunity to constantly serve and help others who are less fortunate and in dire physical need.

Dennis has experienced the ups and downs not just of life but questioning his faith. He had an inner and physical struggle to

understand how he could both serve a God that could render him paralyzed but could also be the fountain of all goodness. The inner struggle might have been more poignant than the physical.

Through further soul searching, Dennis has taken a proverbial page from the life of the Good Samaritan who had given more to others than to himself despite hardships that may lay ahead. Building a foundation of faith has empowered Dennis to serve a God who wants our lives to overflow with mercy, love, and compassion.

Remembering that the glory of God is the only promise of perfect peace which refreshes the mind with gladness. We can renew our minds when we change how we think. When we put aside the thoughts of this world and focus on Jesus we are renewed; transformed.

Discuss:

1. Often we can get caught up in self-focused or self-defeating thoughts. Does this happen to you? How do you handle these thoughts?
2. In which areas do you think your mind needs to be renewed? How would you go about doing this?
3. If there was one characteristic you could change about yourself, what would it be? Why? Have you thought about how you are created in the image of Christ?
4. Has God told you to do something that you haven't done yet? What's stopping you? How would changing this help transform and renew your mind?

Pray: Father, I ask You to bless me spiritually. Lord renew my mind and fill it with gladness for I praise You. Would You bless me with power and strength today? I need You! Without You, I'm a mess but, with You, all things are possible.

Do: Each time you start to have a thought that is pessimistic or self-deprecating, try to turn it around and do something

positive for yourself or others. Rather than put down a friend that doesn't eat well (maybe cause they can't afford to), cook them a healthy homemade meal. Rather than telling yourself you're not good enough, tell yourself that you are made in the image of God and you are worthy. Try to renew your mind by mentally shifting the gears in practical ways.



Part 4: Seeking After God

Read: Jeremiah 32:38-40, Philippians 1:6

Ponder:

Part of living a transformed life is continually seeking after God. While it's all well and good to enter into a relationship with God, we can't stop there. We need to make an intentional effort to follow God's will for our lives. This can seem challenging though, when at times things perhaps feel uncertain, confusing or overwhelming.

Despite how we might be floundering, God has promised that he will continue to be at work in our lives. Though, this isn't a pass for us to just hop on the train and hope it gets us to where we want to be - we need to be active participants! The very word "seeking" implies that it is continuous. But this is a conscious choice we must make.

One part of seeking after God is through our communication with Him. Are you praying regularly? Are you reading the Bible daily? If you're not communicating with God, then you're likely not seeking after Him. After all, if your boss asks you to let her know about your findings from your latest reports, you wouldn't ignore her request and instead spend your time

watching netflix! That would create poor workplace relations. The same goes for seeking after God. We can't possibly expect to find answers from him if we don't actually do the work of seeking after him.

In Uganda, Aisha had been dealing with the stress of an unwell infant. Her child, Zainabu, underwent surgery twice, and had to start using a gastrostomy tube in order to get food in her baby. She could have easily sought out answers and wisdom from useless sources - horoscopes, inspirational quotes, medical websites, etc. But instead, she sought after God.

After the second surgery she said "I thought my child would die when she was in the ICU but I kept on asking God to protect my child. And God has been faithful to answer my prayers". We're pleased to report that Zainabu is now growing very fast and feeding well.

How comforting it is to know that when we seek after God, he is there for us. It doesn't mean that he is like a genie in a lamp granting all our wishes; but he *has* made a covenant with us not to turn away from us.

Discuss:

1. What are some ways that you regularly seek after God?
2. Do you feel like you could give more intentional effort at seeking after God? If so, what are some ways that you could incorporate this into your life?
3. Have you ever had an instance where you've sought after God, but things didn't turn out the way you wanted or expected? How did this make you feel about your relationship with God?
4. Try taking note of the things that have become obstacles to you in seeking after God. Are there things that you need to get rid of? Consider this.

Pray: O Wise One, may I ever seek after your goodness, glory and grace rather than my own selfish ideals. Let me transform my heart to mirror yours, knowing that it is your heart that knows best.

Do: Perhaps try to seek after God in a new way this week. Have you tried fasting (it doesn't have to just be from food!)? What about seeking after God while being out in nature? Perhaps rather than seeking out God's will for your neighbourhood or city from inside your home, you could ask him while prayer-walking! Are you artistic? Seek after God by painting out your concerns. Are you a writer? Put pen to paper! There are many ways to seek after God, and what works for you might not work for someone else. Experiment at what draws you closer to God!



Part 5: Personal Growth in Community

Read: Jonah 3:5, Hebrews 10:24-25

Ponder:

If you've ever raised children or taught children, then you know that watching them grow is the most fascinating process. Even over just a short few weeks you can witness transformation as they learn new skills that start to shape and mould them as a person. Rarely does it feel like as adults we are transformed so quickly.

As individuals we are formed best when in community. We learn from one another no matter what our ages or what our skills. It's a gift we have been given!

Some of us are a part of numerous communities: workplace, school, family, friends, church, neighbourhood, sports teams, music groups; and each of these communities shapes us for better or for worse. So it is important as we consider these groups to ponder how they are transforming us. There's a quote that is often attributed to motivational speaker, Jim Rohn. It says, "You're the average of the five people spend the most time with." Pause and consider that for a moment. What five people (or five groups?) do you spend the most

time with? Are they helping you to become a better person? Or are these groups bringing you down?

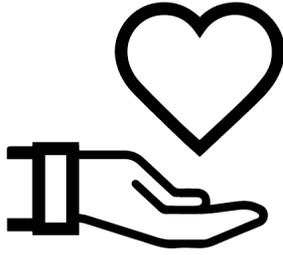
At *BethanyKids* we are so blessed to have Mercy as our chaplain at Kijabe Hospital in Kenya. Mercy says, "I have always been passionate about transformation of the lives of my community; especially children and those living with disabilities and I thank God for the opportunity to serve them at *BethanyKids*." Mercy's job can be quite difficult. She is approaching families that are in great distress, dealing with really complicated health challenges. But Mercy knows that her role is an important one in the *BethanyKids* community. Mercy comments, "...sometimes I feel inadequate but through difficult situations I have hope because God says He will strengthen me and He is my strength. When I see a child in need I know that He is the provider and through [*BethanyKids*] and everyone working as a team here the child will receive financial and surgical assistance."

Discuss:

1. What are you doing to devote yourself to learning about God? If we want to be transformed by God, then we need to do the work. Are you studying the bible? Praying? Fasting?
2. Make a list of all the communities in which you are a part. Make note of how each one contributes to you as a person. Are you being transformed positively through these communities? Is there something you can do to change any negative outcomes from these communities?
3. Consider your own contribution to your communities. Are you helping to transform the lives of others? Are you other-centred?
4. What are some ways you can practice hospitality and build community in your neighbourhood?

Pray: God, transform my life through community. Allow me to see you at work with the people that I spend time with. Help me to in turn shine your light and spread your love. Let all those in my community know that you are the reason why I press on each day.

Do: We are all so important to God. He has made all of us in His image, and yet completely unique. Where is God calling you to serve others in His name?



Part 6: Stop Living for Yourself

Read: Isaiah 1:17, Ephesians 2:10

Ponder:

Whether we believe it to be chance, fate or destiny, the path that lies ahead has been set for us by God. It is clear that living in our safe little cocoons shields us from the stark clarity of the call by God to care for the vulnerable. If we can break free from the restraints set by society, and stop living for ourselves, and instead live by the Grace of God, we can create restoration and transformation all over the globe.

We love a God who loves justice. In our work, we have to seek justice for those who have been victims of crime or injustice. The child who has been physically or sexually abused deserves justice. The woman who has been beaten black and blue deserves justice. The child who has suffered negligence deserves justice.

In our broken world full of structural violence and systemic injustice, many times families find themselves in situations with no one to fight for them or plead their case. It is up to us as Christ-followers to educate ourselves and learn to do right.

Such an example of an angel on earth is Pastor Judith, who has been a part of the Kenyan *BethanyKids* discipleship team since 2013. She has tirelessly worked towards helping those

in need. Whether she was building new churches, ministering to men, women and children in neighbouring counties; or whether she was distributing bibles amongst communities near and far; Judith is a lesser-known modern day Mother Teresa. She selflessly spreads the word of Jesus, our Saviour, through her commitment to help those around her that are oppressed by circumstances beyond their own limitations. This has made her a role model and inspiration to many on what it means to stop living for yourself.

Discuss:

1. Have you ever been in a position where you see injustice happen? How did this affect you?
2. How has God given you life through His scriptures? Has this influenced your perception of how to step in when inequalities and injustices are prevalent around you?
3. Ask yourself what armour do you have in your spiritual arsenal to defend yourself and those around you when faced with injustice and oppression?
4. What elements of your life do you need to set aside in order to start living for others instead of yourself?

Pray: Heavenly Father, grow my heart to move by intersecting with those in need of healing in body and soul. Spirit lead my body, mind and soul, to conquer my fears and free my mind to be able to help others. Remind me that I am not alone, that I can find salvation in your arms.

Do: To live for others is to show up for those around you. Look beyond your own confines of life. Think of practical ways that you can stop living for yourself this week, and instead transform someone's life by being the hands and feet of Jesus for them. Help an elderly neighbour get their groceries; [donate to BethanyKids](#); listen to someone who is struggling.

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Kezia September is originally from sunny Cape Town in South Africa. She has been living and working as a teacher in the Middle East for the past 15 years with her husband Werner, and daughter, Jada. Kezia is an advocate against social injustice and firm believer in empowering those less fortunate through the powerful voice of the written word and music.