

## Metamorphosis

We all need transformation. I do. So does the thief and the drug dealer. And not only does my annoying neighbor need it, but the sweet and helpful one does too. So does the person I love most in the entire world. There are no exceptions.

We all have behavior that needs correcting, and changing our behavior is necessary. When we seek to change our behavior, we need to think about it. We need to decide what we are going to do, and act on it. This is part of the wonderful process of growth, and it is good that we should participate in it. God, in fact, requires it of us (2 Peter 3:18).

But we can often accomplish this ourselves, through the application of Biblical principles, like so much fertilizer on our well-tended gardens. There is something more fundamental than behavior, though. It is the thing that drives our behavior: the mind behind it. To change it, we need more than growth – we need metamorphosis. “Be transformed [Greek, metamorphoo],” we are urged, “by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:2).

We are transformed when we begin to do godly things without having to think about them, when we are no longer driven by the flesh, when our behavior is good because we love doing good rather than because we have figured out what is the right thing to do.

Brand and Yancey (*Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, 1980) refer to the difficulty of assessing each and every situation to figure out what is right as “sorting through a blizzard of information.” The result is “helpless inactivity”.

“If I must decide whether to tell the truth in the face of every situation, my life is hopelessly complex. But if I have a reflex of truthfulness...I can learn to walk as a Christian without having to think about each individual step.”

If a bird had to analyze its speed of approach, rate of deceleration, angle of descent and grams of pressure to apply to the landing surface, it would be immobilized by the complexity of the process, even if it had the capability for such analysis.

But birds don't analyze, they simply fly. Similarly, we need to do godly things intuitively. Our natural instincts are mostly self-serving. We can't help that – it's the way we are made. But what is not natural to us can become instinctive. What is not our nature can become second nature. As Brand and Yancey suggest, we should “ground ourselves in contact with God and his Word so thoroughly that our Christian actions become like reflexes to us”.

We need to do this because we are not able, of ourselves, to be all that God has planned for us. Even though we may desire to be, we just don't have it in us. "For to will is present with me," says Paul, "but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:18).

Sometimes even the will to do good is missing. It's clear that we can't be what God desires of us if we simply follow our own nature. We just can't do it. But God can, "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13)

The mystery of metamorphosis is that the change is total. Growth, though beautiful and miraculous in itself, is not transformation. Transformation goes beyond growth. It is a complete change from one kind of life into another.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17). Here is the transformation God seeks for us. We are no longer driven of ourselves, but of God.

This wonderful hope of transformation is ours not only as individuals, but for the world itself. Like the "old man" (Romans 6:6) that is put away, Jesus will say "the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4). And like the "new creature" that is of God, he will say of the world itself, "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

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