

Transforming Our Community

Lesson 1

I want to talk to you men this morning and it may seem a little strange to our former way of understanding of the gospel but if you will chew on this for a while I believe it will change the way you see yourself in the kingdom of God.

Matt 3:2

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near

Matt 6:10

10 Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.

Matt 16:19

19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matt 24:14

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

God is doing a unique work on the earth today.

In the book of Revelation, chapters 2 & 3 He said 7 times, "*he who has an ear to hear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches*".

There are seasons in which the Holy Spirit speaks things to the Church.

- During one decade it might be a focus on evangelism.
- During another, it might be a greater awareness of the Holy Spirit.
- During yet another, it might be a focus on social problems in cities.

Today, God is speaking very clearly to the Church about community transformation.

Fifteen years ago, the idea of a community being totally transformed through the Gospel of Jesus Christ was a foreign concept.

However, according to George Otis Jr. director of the Sentinel Group, there are over 500 communities that are in some form of quantifiable transformation process today.

The defining characteristic of a community that is being transformed is that the socio-economic traits are being positively affected.

The crime rate goes down, the economy is improved, and the number of Christians in the city increases, prayer increases, and the city leaders become Christians.

It is the manifestation of Deuteronomy 28:13, *"The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom."*

In order to go beyond the Gospel of Salvation to the Gospel of the Kingdom we must exercise a different level of faith for our communities.

Jesus talked about the kingdom of God more than 70 times in the New Testament - much more often than he mentioned salvation.

While salvation is part of bringing the kingdom of God on earth, it includes much more.

When the Gospel of the Kingdom comes into a life and a community, everything in its wake is transformed.

Your families are transformed, your church, your work place, your local government. This seems a daunting task. But not for God!

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Roundtable Discussion

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Question to consider. *(15-20 minutes. Please stay on point)*

1. What is the difference between a 'kingdom' and a 'democracy'?
2. Is the Kingdom of God talking about this life or only the life here after? Why?
3. What do you feel would have to happen in order for our city to be transformed?
4. How might God want you to be the catalyst to bring the Gospel of the Kingdom into the lives and community you are called to influence?

Ending with - Open discussion with the whole group.

Practicing the Presence of God

Lesson 2

Genesis 5:24

Enoch walked with God.

The true test of a person's spiritual life and character is not what he does in the extraordinary moments of life, but what he does during the daily grind of everyday life when there is nothing tremendous or exciting happening. In the 1600's, there was a monk named Brother Lawrence who was a dishwasher in his monastery.

He made a profound discovery that is true for every believer in the workplace today. "For me the time of activity does not differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are calling together calling for as many different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as when upon my knees at the blessed Sacrament."

You see, he found no urgency for retreats, because in the common task he met the same God to love and worship as he did in the stillness of the desert. It is this kind of life that Jesus desires for each of his children. Enoch was also a man that practiced the presence of God. The Bible does not give a detailed account of his life. All we know about him is that "He walked with God." In fact, it says in Genesis 5:22 that Enoch walked with God 300 years! Wow! That is faithfulness!

What does it mean to practice the presence of God daily?

- It means we are constantly talking to our Heavenly Father about the issues in our day.
- It means praying about things as they come up.
- It means stopping at a red light and praying for the person God brings to mind.
- It means singing a song in your car while you are sitting in traffic. That is practicing the presence of God.

This coming week, when God gives you times alone or there are needs that arise, stop and consult your Heavenly Father about the situation. Then you will be practicing the presence of God.

Practicing the Presence of God

Roundtable Discussion Questions

Genesis 5:24

Enoch walked with God.

1. Do you separate your spiritual life from your “everyday” or natural life?
2. When you make decisions at home do you consult God about every little thing?
3. When is the most important time to have the “mind of God” in a situation of your life? Is it realistic to think God would tell you what to do?

Noah's Building Plan *Lesson 3*

Gen 6:22

"Noah did everything just as God commanded him"

When God chooses to do something on the earth He uses a man or woman to accomplish it. It is a partnership that is very one sided. God got the worst part of the deal.

God got to a very bad place with the human race. He decided to start over. He was going wipe out the entire population and begin afresh. He chose one man to place His entire strategy around.

Can you imagine that? God placed His entire plan around one man. Why? Because He could trust him. The Bible says Noah did everything just as God commanded him. He didn't argue with God. He didn't take short cuts. He listened and he obeyed.

Who was this man Noah? **Gen 6:9-10**

"Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God"

When it came time to execute God's plan, He chose Noah to build a big boat. However, Noah had no idea what a boat was or how to build one. So, God told him how to build it. He gave him the dimensions; the height, width, space requirements - everything he needed to complete the task.

God will instruct us in performing our work too. God is in partnership with us in our working life. He has given us the tools, the creativity, and the drive to accomplish what He placed us on earth to do.

That partnership requires us to listen to our senior partner though because He knows the exact way our project is to be done.

And when you follow His direction that project will be excellent in every way.

Isaiah 48:17

"Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: 'I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go'"

Do you need God to show you how to succeed in your call? Ask for His wisdom and understanding. God says he will give it generously (James 1:5).

Noah's Building Plan

Roundtable Discussion

Gen 6:22

"Noah did everything just as God commanded him"

Isaiah 48:17

"Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: 'I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go'"

James 1:5

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

1. Do you think God has a plan for you at work or in your retirement? What is it?
2. Do you argue with God when it comes to how you do your job? For example, God says to treat people one way and you do another. He asks you to do something for someone and you do another.
3. When was the last time God instructed you to do something and you were obedient?

You are in Your Assignment

Lesson 4

Gen 41:38

"Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"

I often hear people talking about going into full time ministry.

They think that because we are a Christian organization the pressures and the environment will be so much better than the place where they work.

That may be true, but there is a danger in this view.

The Bible says that God has defined the place and time in which we are to live.

Ps 16:5-6

"LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance".

God has uniquely gifted you to bring His presence and power in the area of your calling.

Once you begin to realize this, God will use you just as He did Joseph with his employer, Pharaoh.

Your life should be a testimony of the power, creativity, and servant-hood of Jesus that it impacts those whom you work for and with to the degree that they say the same thing Pharaoh said about Joseph: *"Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the Spirit of God?"*

When God accomplishes this in your life He gives you authority in your workplace as well as your areas of influence. You will begin to see others drawn to you.

You may begin to be ostracized as well. This too is part of your call. Do not fear this, Embrace it.

We should not be seeking to remove ourselves from the pressure cooker of life, but use that pressure cooker to reveal the power and grace of God through our lives to others.

It is here that we will receive our inheritance as we fulfill our purposes in and through our work life call.

You are in Your Assignment

Roundtable Discussion

Gen 41:38

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Ps 16:5-6

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1. Have you ever wondered if God had another job out there for you?
2. Did you ever stop to consider that God has planted you where you are and has a plan for you there?
3. Will you accept this assignment without complaining until He moves you?

Hearing God on the Job *Lesson 5*

1 Cor 1:26-27

"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong"

God is raising up a new kind of workplace believer who is experiencing the power of God in their daily work life.

Emeka Nywankpa, was a lawyer in Nigeria. Emeka spoke at a conference a few years ago on the subject of how the spiritual impacts the physical.

Emeka shared a story about arguing an important Supreme Court case in his country.

There were five points to argue in the case. The morning the trial began, he prayed with his wife and junior lawyers in his chambers.

During his prayer time, he sensed that the Holy Spirit was telling him, "Do not argue points one through four. Only argue point five." Imagine making such a change just before you are to argue a case before the Supreme Court!

In the courtroom, Emeka announced that he wished to drop points one through four and only wished to argue point five. The judge was shocked, but gave him permission to proceed. He argued point five and sat down.

The other attorney got up, and then for twelve minutes stumbled around trying to defend his position, unable to get a coherent word out. Finally, he approached the bench and said, "Your Lordship, it is unfortunate that my learned friend has dropped the first four points. I wish to yield the case."

The other attorney had only prepared for the first four points. Emeka won the case. God had given him a strategy to win his case supernaturally. It made no sense to him, but he obeyed and God gave him victory in a very unusual way.

Isaiah 48:17 tells us *"Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: 'I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go.'"*

When is the last time you allowed God to give you a strategy to be successful in your work life and bring glory to His name?

This is his desire for you.

Hearing God on the Job

Roundtable Discussion

1 Cor 1:26-27

"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong"

Isaiah 48:17

"Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: 'I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go.'"

1. Have you ever had a time when you felt God ask you to do something at work out of the ordinary? What was it?
2. Do you ask God for direction at work even though you all ready know what to do? Do you think it would make a deference?
3. Do you have another man whom you can make yourself accountable to with what you feel the Lord directing you to do?

A New Kind of Army

Lesson 6

Joel 3:9-10

"Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears".

God is raising up a new kind of army in these last days.

It is the remnant in the Body of Christ that has the greatest potential for societal transformation of any segment of society - men and women in the workplace. It is a remnant that has been largely silent.

Plowshares and pruning hooks are agricultural instruments that farmers use in their work. The prophet Joel says these very instruments will be used in the last days as weapons of war. However, it won't be a war against man and an enemy, but against the Kingdom of darkness.

As we enter the last days, men and women will begin to see their vocations as instruments to defeat the forces of evil and usher in the Kingdom of God. You will see Christ glorified in the marketplace like never before.

You will see hundreds and thousands become part of a new harvest of souls in the "9 to 5 window", where many have yet to experience the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

What has to happen for your plowshare or pruning hook to be transformed into a weapon of love, designed to cut through the strongholds of unbelief and corruption in your workplace?

You are a spiritual warrior in a worker's uniform.

God has called you to transform your view of yourself and your work. He desires to use you and your work life to impact your workplace, city and nation.

Are you ready to beat your plowshare into a sword and your pruning hook into a spear?

A New Kind of Army

Roundtable Discussion

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1. Do you believe that we are living in the last days? How can you tell?
2. Do you believe the church, as a whole, is doing a good job of evangelizing the lost? Why?
3. Do you believe the methods God used 200 years ago are still relevant to this present culture? How about what He did 25 years ago?
4. If people are not coming to church should we take the church to them? How?

The Integrity Test

Lesson 7

Psalm 15 :1 THE MESSAGE

"God, who gets invited to dinner at your place? How do we get on your guest list? 'Walk straight, act right, and tell the truth. Don't hurt your friend, don't blame your neighbor; despise the despicable. Keep your word even when it costs you, make an honest living, and never take a bribe. You'll never get blacklisted if you live like this.'"

In 2002, U.S. companies Arthur Andersen, Enron, and Salomon Brothers were all brought down by the rogue actions of a few who failed the integrity test. Their corporate integrity code failed to equip front-line employees to make the right decisions without supervision.

Lack of integrity is nothing new. The Bible is full of examples. One of these involves Gehazi, the assistant to the most famous prophet of his day, Elisha. It's hard to imagine that anyone working with such an anointed man who saw firsthand the power of God would fail the integrity test. But he did.

When Elisha healed Naaman (a general in the army) from leprosy, he didn't expect to be compensated and he didn't ask for money. When Naaman insisted that Elisha take some form of payment, the prophet answered, *"As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing"* (2 Kings 5:16).

Gehazi, however, did not agree with his employer. He saw this as a great opportunity for gain and took matters into his own hands. *"Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, 'My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him'"* (2 Kings 5:20).

As a result of his sin, God judged Gehazi. Elisha fired him and God struck him with leprosy, and his life was never the same. He was removed from serving one of God's most extraordinary prophets.

Each of us has the potential of being a Gehazi if we do not have a foundation built into our lives that makes us willing to receive only what God gives us through the fruit of our obedience.

Ask God to keep your motives pure in all you do.

The Integrity Test

Roundtable Discussion

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2 Kings 5:16

"As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing".

2 Kings 5:20

'My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him'.

1. What does it mean to be a man of integrity?
2. What is the best example you have of a person of integrity?
3. Is it easy to do the right thing even if it cost you?

Testing for Obedience

Lesson 8

Ps. 26:2

"Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind".

Throughout the Old Testament, we see many situations in which God tests His people in order to determine if they will follow Him or follow the systems of this world.

The nation of Israel was tested many times during the 40-year sojourn in the wilderness:

Deut. 8:2

"Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands".

You might ask, "Why does God need to test us? Doesn't He know everything, including what we would do in every situation?" Yes, God knows, but we don't know ourselves! God doesn't test us in order to find out something He doesn't already know. He tests us so that we can learn about ourselves and His love, power and faithfulness.

In Genesis 22, God tested Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac. By demanding that Isaac be sacrificed, God seemed to be nullifying His covenant of making a great nation of Abraham. How could God's promise be fulfilled if Isaac was dead?

God tested Abraham to reveal whether or not Abraham truly trusted His promise. Yes, God knew what Abraham would do, but He wanted Abraham to know as well. So God put Abraham to the test and Abraham passed. As Abraham raised the knife to sacrifice his own son, God stopped him and provided a sacrificial ram instead.

Every test involves obedience in one way or another. When God tests us, He reveals the true state of our hearts.

Are we obedient to His will, or are we self-willed?

We might think we know the answer, but we would never truly know unless we were tested.

Testing for Obedience

Roundtable Discussion

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Deut. 8:2 *"Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands".*

1. Have you ever been tested by God? In what way?
2. Do you think that God could get the same results by doing it another way?
3. Do you feel you are spiritually ready to be tested by God? If not, do you think that will stop Him?
4. If you can, pause for a moment and ask yourself where you think God might or may be testing you. Talk about it if you like.

Responses to Adversity

Lesson 9

Hab. 3:17-18

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior"

When we experience adversity, we generally respond in one of three ways:

- (1) We become angry;
- (2) We try to gut it out; or
- (3) We accept it with joy.

Anger

When adversity comes our way, we say, "Why me, Lord?" We become bitter and resentful and blame God and others for our problems. We view ourselves as victims and demand that God answer our accusing questions: "Why don't You love me, Lord? We feel entitled to life, health, wealth, and happiness.

Gutting It Out

Another way we respond to adversity is by adopting an indifferent attitude, repressing our emotions. We lie to ourselves and say, "I'm gutting it out. I'm demonstrating endurance." In reality, we are merely isolating ourselves with a shell of false bravery. We don't meditate on God's love, we don't pray, we don't believe God really has anything good planned for us. We simply tell ourselves, "This will soon be over. I'm a survivor."

We never receive what God has planned for us if we stay here.

Acceptance with Joy

This is the response God seeks from us.

When adversity comes, we rest in His love and trust that He knows best. We realize that nothing can happen to us without His permission. If there is pain in our lives, we know it's because God deems it necessary for our growth or wishes to use our pain to minister to others.

Closing

God revealed to the prophet Habakkuk that Israel was soon to be invaded by the Babylonians. Habakkuk knew that Israel was about to suffer intense adversity as part of God's loving discipline of His people. Habakkuk faced the looming national tragedy with an attitude of acceptance with joy.

If Habakkuk could be joyful in the face of a national calamity, then we can rejoice in the Lord no matter what comes our way.

The Real Deal

Lesson 10

Acts 19:11-12

"God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them".

We have expression in America that says, "He's the real deal." What we are saying is the person in question is really who they are appearing to be.

They are not trying to be or convince you they are someone they are not. It is a compliment when someone says "You are the real deal." It means you are not a hypocrite or trying to be someone you are not.

The apostle Paul was the real deal. God began using Paul in amazing ways as recorded in the book of Acts.

When God began to use Paul in such amazing ways there arose people who saw this power who also wanted to do the same acts as Paul. The problem was they were not the real deal. They were trying to be someone they were not. They were trying to appropriate the same Power Source as Paul without ever having a relationship with the Power Source. It nearly killed them.

Acts 19:13-16

"Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, 'In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.' Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. [One day] the evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?' Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding".

It is impossible to be the real deal without tapping into the real Power Source.

The Holy Spirit is our Power Source.

Do you want to experience miracles in your walk with God? If so, ask God to allow His power to be manifested in and through you.

The Real Deal

Roundtable Discussion Questions

Acts 19:11-12

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1. Do you believe God does the same thing through men today as He did with Paul?
2. If someone were to refer to you as the "real deal", what would you want them to be talking about?
3. When your family or co-workers look at you do they see the "real deal"?

What's Your Brand

Lesson 11

1 Thess 5:24

"The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it".

Coca-Cola is the number one "brand" in the world. Companies spend millions of dollars making their brands known in business. They want you to recognize their brand. When you think of their brand they hope you will have positive thoughts in hopes it will influence your next purchasing decision.

Every individual has a personal "brand" whether you want it or not. Cultures have a brand. Ethnic groups have a brand.

Your brand is defined by your conduct.

- If you are always late, you'll soon develop a brand or reputation for being late. Others will even show up late because they know you will be late.
- If you are a person who exaggerates the truth, others will soon fail to take you serious.

However, the opposite can also be true. Your brand can be incredibly positive. By being a man or woman of your word, who is consistent in dealing fairly and honestly with others, your brand becomes known as someone who is faithful in all aspects of life.

One of God's most important characteristics is His faithfulness. Faithfulness means one is true to fulfilling their promises to others in the time which was committed. God is faithful to fulfill all His promises to His children.

Moses was also an example of faithfulness to his call.

Heb 3:5-6

"Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house"

What is your brand among your peers? Is it a positive brand or does it need improvement? Allowing the Lord to make us more like Jesus is the only way our brand becomes trustworthy.

Ask the Lord today to make you a faithful brand in which others can trust.

Tested in Battle

Lesson 12

Ps 26:2 NKJV

Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart.

Heb 5:8

8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

Martin Luther said there are three things necessary to create a successful minister of God: prayer, meditation, and temptation.

You'll really never know the strength and reality of your faith until you experience difficulty in life. You'll never know for sure whether God can be trusted or if you'll fall to temptation.

The apostle Peter thought his faith in Christ was solid until the temptation came to deny Him. Jesus knew Peter was not mature yet and that he would deny Jesus three times in one day. Peter didn't believe it. Sure enough, Peter denied Jesus three times. Peter could not believe he could do such a terrible thing.

In order to discover this about himself, he needed to be placed in a situation to reveal his true condition. God allows circumstances to develop around your life to give your faith opportunity to be proven.

It is only when we are tested in battle that we become skilled warriors. You can be confident God will allow trials to come your way through situations like an unreasonable boss, a client who refuses to pay, a false assault on your character, or a difficult relationship that requires unconditional love.

These battles are sent your way to test what you know in the mind in order that they might become part of your heart.

If you fail the test, do not be worried, the exciting thing about God is, He will not stamp loser on your forehead, He will allow you to take another test until you pass.

The sooner you learn this about God the sooner you will try harder to pass the test.

Learn from it and grow through the experience just as Peter did.

Tested in Battle

Roundtable Discussion

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8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

1. Have you ever had experiences in your life that you looked back on and realized it was a time of testing? Did you know it was a time of testing when you were in the middle of it?
2. What was the greatest lesson you learned from a time of testing?
3. What are some of the signs to look or in order to determine that you are in a time of testing?