

**Hope Community Church  
Transforming Belief #4  
A Lost World Around You**

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## **Introduction**

Transformation describes what happens when a caterpillar turns in to a butterfly. Transformation also describes the kind of change that occurs when an individual is changed from the inside out by God's power. This kind of metamorphosis is not the product of determined effort. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2) Transformation is the by-product of "the renewing of your mind." Transformation relies on changing what you believe. With transformation, changes in behavior are the result of changes in belief.

The "Transforming Beliefs" study focuses on truths found in the Bible that will change how you behave by changing what you believe. You will discover truths that will change what you believe about God, others, and yourself. As you learn and persevere in believing these truths, they will transform you.

These four lessons summarize the essential messages contained in the Bible. You will not be told what to do in these studies. They focus not on how you should behave differently but on what you should believe differently. Changing beliefs is the key to changing behavior. Study this material thoughtfully and carefully. Pay special attention to the Bible passages written in italics. Ask God to give you insight and understanding. If you do, you will discover that these truly are "transforming beliefs."

### **Transforming Belief #1-The Bar Behind You**

When you begin to embrace the belief that through faith in Christ God accepts you, transformation begins to occur. Believing that you have come to be accepted in God's sight becomes the soil from which a transforming personal relationship with Jesus Christ grows.

### **Transforming Belief #2-Heaven in front of you**

Believing that you have an eternal home in heaven transforms values. The hope of heaven provides encouragement and promotes perseverance as you face difficulties here on earth.

### **Transforming Belief #3-God's Spirit inside you**

Believing in the transforming influence of God's Spirit inside you empowers change that is marked by freedom and love rather than by condemnation and fear.

### **Transforming Belief #4-A lost world around you**

Believing that lost people matter to God will transform the way you look at others and yourself. Beginning to believe that you can be used by God to make a spiritual difference in the life of another person will produce joy and fulfillment.

## **A Lost World Around You A Lost World**

### **Lost people matter to God.**

Jesus came to earth and revealed the heart of God to us. Because he did, we know that God feels compassion toward those who stray from Him.

*On one occasion "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. " (Matthew 9:35-36)*

### ***What did Jesus see when He looked at crowds of people? How did He feel?***

In referring to people as sheep, Jesus tells us a lot about what he perceived when he looked at peoples' lives. Jesus felt compassion for them; the same compassion he feels for present day *"lost sheep."*

He attributed their *"harassed and helpless"* condition to the absence of His guidance and leadership. He could see that what they needed most was not a better country, a better army, a better house, a better job, better friends, better hobbies, a better retirement plan, or better weekends. He saw that they needed a loving shepherd to lead them. They needed Him. His compassion was fueled by his awareness that they could not be expected to function well on their own. They desperately needed a shepherd. They were perishing for want of one.

### **Jesus came to seek and save what was lost.**

Jesus came *"to seek and to save what was lost."* (Luke 19:10)

*"I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father- and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also."* (John 10:14)

### ***What do you learn about Jesus' mission from these verses?***

Jesus is a good shepherd who comes to care for a flock of sheep. The flock has been mismanaged, neglected, and abandoned. Sheep have been scattered by predators and neglect. As they fled, many of the flock had been injured and lost.

Jesus is not watching the world's inhabitants, angrily waiting to banish them to hell. He is watching the world's inhabitants, tenderly longing to bring them into His flock. Jesus envisioned people as lost sheep and Himself as the good shepherd who came to seek and save them.

Jesus does not seek a relationship with us in order to get something from us. He seeks us out to give something to us. He has come to find us and care for us.

***Review the verses in this lesson once more and summarize what you learned.***

## **A Lost World Around You God's Plan**

### **God sent His Son to bring good news to a lost world.**

Jesus characterized the message the Father sent Him to herald as "*good news.*"

Jesus said, "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news...*" (Luke 4:18)

The message Jesus proclaimed is often referred to as the "*gospel.*" The word "*gospel*" literally means "*good news.*"

When Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant, he decided to break off their engagement because he knew he was not the father of her child. After he considered this, "*an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'*" (Matthew 1:20-21)

### ***What news did the angel report to Joseph? What was good about this news?***

The angel told Joseph that the child was conceived not by the involvement of another man but by the miraculous involvement of God Himself. This child was to be named "*Jesus.*" The name "*Jesus*" literally means, "*God saves.*" Jesus did not begin to exist when he entered Mary's womb. He had eternally existed as God. He came into the earth through Mary's womb to "*save his people from their sins.*"

The Bible says, "*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*" (1 Peter 2:24-25)

### **What would Jesus have to do to "*save his people from their sins?*"**

The "good news" is that through faith in Jesus Christ "lost sheep" who are "harassed and helpless" can come under the eternal care of Jesus Christ, their good shepherd.

**God uses His children to bring good news to a lost world.**

When Jesus called the disciples to follow Him, He issued this invitation;

*"Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. (Matthew 4:19)*

***What did Jesus intend to teach His followers? What does this mean?***

Because He came to seek and save what was lost, He trained his followers to reach out to the lost as well. He gathered around Himself those who were willing to reorganize their priorities in order to learn to seek and save others.

Jesus' passion for lost people is the same today. He calls His followers to focus their effort on bringing "good news" to a lost world around them.

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17)*

***Why is Jesus' coming into the world "good news?"***

Jesus called his message "good news." While Jesus' message contains commands to be obeyed, at its' heart it is news to be believed. Sharing this "good news" centers on encouraging people to believe that God loved them so much that He sent His Son into the world to save them from having to eternally bear the penalty of their sin.

***Review the verses in this lesson once more and summarize what you learned.***

## **A Lost World Around You God's Messengers**

### **God chooses ordinary messengers to carry His message.**

Jesus did not choose the spiritual superstars of his day to be his messengers. He used individuals who were characterized as "*unschooled, ordinary men*" (Acts 4:13) He chose flawed individuals to be His messengers.

It is natural to assume that the best messenger of the good news is a spotless, shiny person. However, God entrusts the job of carrying the precious cargo of the gospel message to common, ordinary, flawed vessels.

*"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." (2 Corinthians 4:7)*

A "*jar of clay*" is an ordinary container; one used for everyday occasions. God chooses to use ordinary messengers to transmit His extraordinary message so that the focus is on the brilliance of the message rather than on the brilliance of the messenger.

### **God does not shield His messengers from difficulties.**

It is comforting to know that God uses "*jars of clay*" to transmit the "*good news*" to a lost world. There is a disturbing aspect to being a "*jar of clay*" though. These containers were exposed to ordinary treatment and rough handling. They were not kept safe out of harm's way. We might compare them to everyday dishes that are left on end tables and stacked next to the sink.

Paul revealed that, "*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.*" (2 Corinthians 4:7-9)

***What did being a "jar of clay" mean to the apostle Paul and his co-workers as they proclaimed the good news about Jesus?***

God allowed Paul to be treated in an ordinary way. His adversaries used the difficulties Paul encountered as evidence that he was not an authentic representative of the "good news." They argued that if he were, God would have protected him from trouble. However, Paul pointed out that life as a "jar of clay" can get rough sometimes. He also realized that God caused used the tough times to bring about a "good" purpose, to save others' lives.

**In heaven, God will shower His ordinary messengers with extraordinary rewards.**

Living as a child of God will mean short-term pain but it will also mean long-term gain.

As Paul reflected on the pressing, perplexing circumstances in his life he commented that *"our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporal, but what is unseen is eternal."* (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

***What do you learn about Paul from this verse? When life became difficult, what did he think about?***

When we remember that heaven is in front of us, it helps us to endure some of the difficulties we experience in living in this world.

***Review the verses in this lesson once more and summarize what you learned.***

## **A Lost World Around You Satan's Messengers**

### **Satan's messengers proclaim a different Jesus.**

Paul wrote, *"I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For is some one comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough."* (2 Corinthians 11:2-4)

*"Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness."* (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

### **What was Paul afraid of?**

### **What do you learn about Satan? Satan's messengers? Satan's purpose?**

Satan attempts to lead children of God away from *"sincere and pure devotion to Christ."* Paul warned that Satan *"masquerades as an angel of light."* Satan uses many schemes to prevent people from loving and trusting Jesus Christ. However, Paul observed that one of Satan's most clever schemes to deceive children of God was to send messengers who appeared to be *"servants of righteousness,"* but who preached *"a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached."* Satan's most effective strategy is to dispatch godly looking messengers who talk about Jesus, but misrepresent Him and His teachings.

In Paul's day these messengers talked about a Jesus who blesses you when you obey and curses you when you disobey. They talked about a Jesus who forgives you so that you can try again and again to earn God's acceptance by observing His commandments. This "other Jesus" offers Old Covenant promises. His message is, "If you keep God's commandments you live. If you don't keep God's commandments, you die."

This was not the Jesus Paul preached. The "real Jesus" existed eternally as God before coming into the world to "save his people from their sins." The "real Jesus" entered the world as God and purchased a place in heaven that He offers

as a gift to those who believe in Him. On the night before He was crucified, the real Jesus said, "*This is the New Covenant in my blood.*" The "real Jesus" offers New Covenant promises to those who place their faith in Him. His message to those who believe in Him is, "Because you haven't kept God's commandments, I died. Because I have kept God's commandments, you live."

### **Satan's messengers present a different gospel.**

Satan's messengers proclaim a different Jesus and present a "*different gospel.*" The real gospel is that through faith in Christ, children of God receive New Covenant promises. They are confident that God loves and accepts them because their acceptance is based on what Christ has "done," rather than on what they "do."

The "*different gospel*" is based on Old Covenant promises. There is no real confidence with the "*different gospel*" because acceptance is conditioned by what we do rather than by what Christ has done. If I believe that, "God loves me because of faith in Christ, but He will love me even more if I do..." I have lost sight of the real gospel and have begun to believe a "different gospel."

When U. S. Treasury inspectors learn to identify counterfeit currency, they do not spend time studying counterfeit bills. Instead, they study authentic currency. They have learned that the best way to avoid being fooled by a counterfeit bill is to be thoroughly familiar with the genuine article.

There are also many "counterfeit gospels" being circulated. The best way to prepare to detect these "forgeries" is to be thoroughly familiar with the simple, authentic message of the gospel.

***Review the verses in this lesson once more and summarize what you learned.***

## **A Lost World Around You The World's Values**

### **The world values "possessing what you want."**

*"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does- comes not from the Father but from the world." (1 John 2:15-17)*

### ***What characterizes worldly values that are opposed to God's values?***

The world values "possessing." The "*cravings of sinful man*" are fed by "*the lust of his eyes.*" The word "*lust*" is not confined to sexual desire. It includes the desire for money and power as well. To see something, desire it, and go to any lengths to get it- is a value of the world.

When we talk about "*the world,*" we naturally think about secular institutions and worldly pursuits. However, the values of the world fit very comfortably in sacred institutions as well. When we focus on getting what we want, whether that is in a church or in a bank, we operate by the world's values.

The frustrated desire to possess is at the root of interpersonal conflict.

*"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want." (James 4:1-2)*

### ***What causes fights between people?***

Jesus addressed the desire to possess when He said, "*do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes*

*near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Luke 12:29-34)*

***What advice does Jesus give?***

If we believe that our treasure is in this life, our minds and hearts will naturally place a higher priority on obtaining this world’s temporary rewards. If we begin to believe that our treasure is in heaven, our minds and hearts will naturally begin to place a higher priority on obtaining eternal treasure.

The assurance of eternal life influences us to invest in eternal rewards by increasing our confidence that we will go there to collect them. We normally do not store our treasure in a place we might not get to.

***The world values “parading what you have.”***

“If you’ve got it, flaunt it!” “Got it” captures the desire to possess. “Flaunt it” captures the desire to parade what is possessed. The “cravings of sinful man” include “boasting of what he has and does.”

It has been said that, “People buy things they don’t need, with money they don’t have, to impress people they don’t like.” The desire to impress by parading possessions and accomplishments is at the heart of the world’s value system. Jesus warned against “parading” material possessions and human achievements. Jesus also warned against using religious practices to gratify the desire to “parade.”

Jesus said, *“Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 6:1)*

***What warning does Jesus give here? Why?***

***Review the verses in this lesson once more and summarize what you learned.***

## **A Lost World Around You God's Values**

### **God values the eternal over the temporal.**

Many of the men and women in this world would take issue with being called "lost sheep." Admittedly, many have disregarded God and seem to be doing very well on their own.

There is a story about two neighboring farmers. One of them believed in God and sought to conduct his affairs in a way that would please Him. He decided that he would not farm on Sunday as an expression of his desire to please God. He believed that God would reward him for this decision. His neighbor did not believe in God. He worked extra hard on Sunday just to spite his believing neighbor. When the crop was gathered, it was determined that the unbelieving farmer had the better yield. He felt vindicated and wrote a letter to the editor of the local paper proclaiming that the greater yield he harvested proved that faith in God was meaningless. The letter provoked a torrent of letters representing both sides. The controversy, however, was finally put to rest by one letter that simply stated, "God does not settle all his accounts in October!"

*Jesus said, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36)*

### ***What warning does Jesus give here? What is the danger He wants to protect us from?***

From his eternal perspective, Jesus calls into question the wisdom of an individual who carefully provides for the minimal years of their earthly existence but neglects to consider the eternal balance of his or her life.

### **God values mercy over sacrifice.**

Jesus was frequently criticized for associating with irreligious people.

*On one occasion, "While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and 'sinners' came and ate with him and the disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'? On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy,*

*not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'" (Matthew 9:10-13)*

***Why did the Pharisees criticize Jesus?***

***How did Jesus respond to their criticism? What does He tell them about Himself?***

Some religious leaders demanded to know how Jesus could spend time with "sinners." The term "sinners" was the term they used for people who did not measure up to their standard of holiness. Jesus did not refer to people this way. He did not see people as "sinners," He saw them as "lost."

These religious leaders misjudged God's priorities. Because they did not understand that God valued mercy over sacrifice, they were not able to associate with lost people. They believed that they were putting their spiritual health in jeopardy by doing so. They thought that God liked it when they avoided contact with people who did not try as hard as they did to make God like them. They thought God liked it when they disassociated with people who were not as devoted as they were.

Those who fail to understand God's priorities separate themselves from "sinners." Those who understand God's priorities come alongside those who are "lost."

***Review the verses in this lesson once more and summarize what you learned.***

## **A Lost World Around You God's Priority**

**God's wants His children to express their faith through love.**

*"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." (Galatians 5:6)*

*"And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us." (1 John 3:23)*

Faith in Jesus Christ and love for others are twin evidences of an authentic relationship with God. They are like Siamese twins in that one cannot exist without the other. Authentic faith in Jesus Christ will manifest itself in love. Love for others flows from faith in Jesus Christ.

*"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'God, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that- and shudder.'" (James 2:14-19)*

***What proved that this man's faith was inauthentic? What actions would have accompanied authentic faith?***

Faith that lacks compassion lacks authenticity. Holding to the correct beliefs about God and yet being unresponsive when confronted by others in need is a sign of dead faith. Love is the mark of living faith.

*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:21-23)*

***What proof of faith was given in these passages? What proof was missing?***

It is natural to assume that someone who backs up his or her belief with supernatural experiences is an authentic follower of Christ. However, miracles performed in Jesus' name are not conclusive evidence of authentic faith in Jesus. Living faith is loving faith.

**The love that results from faith expresses itself in serving others.**

The kind of love that characterizes both God and those who follow Him is not necessarily emotional in nature. When God tells us to love others, He is not telling us to "feel" something for someone else.

*"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us." (1 John 3:16-18)*

***When God tells us to love others, what is He asking of us? What does the word "love" mean to God? How does this differ from popular notions of love in our society?***

God's love expresses itself in actions. When children of God express their concern for others not merely in words but by providing for their physical needs, this pleases God because this is how God expresses love.

God is particularly sensitive to the needs of those who are the poor and needy in their culture. Coming alongside those without adequate food, clothing, shelter, and support is a hallmark of authentic faith.

*"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.*

*Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'*

*Then the King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" (Matthew 25:31-40)*

God cares about the sick, the stranger, the prisoner, the hungry and thirsty. When a child of God reaches out to meet the needs of those without adequate resources, God takes this personally. He interprets love for the needy as love for Him. Conversely, He interprets apathy toward the needy as apathy toward Him.

*"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'" (Matthew 25:45)*

Love that expresses itself through service cannot be fueled by fear. To the degree a child of God understands and trusts in the perfect love of God, there is the power to love others.

The person driven by fear to love others will not be able to serve others in love. *"There is no fear in love."* Fear cannot fuel love. The fear of punishment must be driven out by a growing awareness of God's *"perfect love."* Only those who are growing in their awareness of God's love for them will be able to reach out in loving service to others. *"We love because he first loved us."*

***Review the verses in this lesson once more and summarize what you learned.***