

The Transforming Power of the Gospel

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2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-4:6

By Bill Magsig

Using This Study

❶ EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Open your time with prayer. The words God uses to communicate matters, so go back and pay close attention to the details that are emphasized or repeated in the passage.

❷ EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN? Asking questions of the text helps surface how the details relate to the message God wants to communicate.

❸ EMBRACE His Word

Why does it MATTER to me? Embrace God by responding to what you discover in His word in faith and obedience.

Introduction:

Rob wanted to change. He knew he needed to grow as a husband and as a father, but no matter how much he wanted to change, every time his kids messed up, he simply couldn't overcome his desire to lash out in anger at his family.

Leslie wanted to change. She knew she needed to grow in her self-esteem and confidence, but no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't help but hate the person she saw reflected in the mirror every morning.

Eric wanted to change. He knew his addiction had caused his marriage to suffer dramatically, but no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't overcome the urge to turn to alcohol to help him escape from the disappointment he felt about his life.

Mike wanted to change. He knew he needed to grow in his willingness to reach out to his surrounding community, but no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't overcome the fact that his church seemed more interested in their rituals and routines than in engaging the city around them.

It is very common for people to look at their lives and deeply desire to change. Whether it's overcoming sinful behavior, negative emotions, apathetic faith, hidden addictions, or any number of other issues, most people long to see their lives transformed. However, one of the biggest problems people experience is that often their *desire* to change doesn't match their *ability* to change.

Yet, even though so many people fail to change, as a society we continue to pursue new ways to attempt to change. For example, it is estimated that Americans spend more than \$10 billion per year on self-help books and materials. This seems to indicate that we have been exposed to more methods for change than ever before, but the real problem is that these methods don't seem to be working.

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6 is a passage about hope. It's a passage about hope because it is a passage that talks about change. But it doesn't just talk about a superficial outward change of behavior. Instead, it talks about a life altering transformation of the very core of a person's heart. The kind of transformation that doesn't just change your religious habits on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights, but instead transforms every area of your life.

In this passage, we'll see that true life transformation is not a result of our own efforts to pull up our boot straps and try harder, but rather true life transformation is fueled by the Gospel – the good news that in Jesus we see reflected to us everything that makes God worthy of our heart's deepest affections.

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Prayerfully note significant details and terms emphasized in the passage.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6

¹² Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away.

¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.

¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.

¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

¹⁸ And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

^{4:1} Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

² Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

⁵ For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN?

1. a. Looking at verse 16, what happens when we “turn to the Lord?”

b. What is the “veil” that is talked about in verse 16? (see verse 13 and Exodus 34:29-35)

2. a. Looking at verse 18, what does it mean to “contemplate the Lord’s glory?” (The word for “contemplate” is often translated “beholding as in a mirror.”)

b. What is the result of beholding the glory of God in verse 18?

3. a. What do you think Paul means by the “Lord’s glory” and why is it so critical?

b. What makes God worthy of our heart’s deepest affections and desires?

4. a. Jump down to 4:6. What did God give us in verse 6?

b. Where do we see it put on display?

c. Looking at verse 4, what does it mean that Christ is the “image of God?”

5.
 - a. What displays the “glory of Christ” according to verse 4?
 - b. What was the content of Paul’s preaching in verse 5?
 - c. What role does the Gospel play in transforming us, and what role should the Gospel play in our churches today?

6.
 - a. Tying it all together, what causes the transformation according to 3:12-18?
 - b. Where is God’s glory put on display according to 4:1-6?
 - c. How does this method of transformation differ from some of the prevailing methods of transformation in our culture today?

7.
 - a. Why is Paul able to encourage the Corinthians to not “lose heart” in verse 4:1?
 - b. Have you “lost heart” in your life?
 - c. What things are preventing you from “turning to God” this week?
 - d. Who can you share these things with, and how can you help one another turn to God this week and see in Him everything your heart desires?

③ EMBRACE His Word

Why does this MATTER to me?

Summarize your thoughts on the passage:

Write about what God wants you to KNOW, to FEEL, and to DO...

Sermon Notes
