

Living our lives in the Potter's Hands

2 Corinthians 5:14-20

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

We aren't who we want to be; our hope is to be transformed. God created us to be his masterpieces, yet we fall short, loving God too little and sin too much. Caught between disappointment and hope, we long for the life he appointed us to live. Our hope is that our fallen state isn't all there is and that the transformation promised in the Christian gospel really is possible.

The primary goal of spiritual life is human transformation— real change in the essential nature of the person.

God is in the business of transforming ordinary people like us so that we express his character and goodness in our whole being. This is real transformation from the inside out—learning to think as Jesus would think, to feel what he'd feel, to perceive what he'd perceive, and

therefore to do what he would do. It is a far cry from pseudo-transformation, the adherence to external rules or behaviors intended to identify us to others as "transformed" people.

If we are serious about spiritual transformation, we must not merely "try harder," we must "train wisely."

Growth in our relationship with God results from training in the spiritual disciplines. It happens whenever we become intensely serious about learning from Jesus how to arrange our lives. Spiritual disciplines are the practices we live by that enable us to do what we cannot do by willpower alone. These practices help us grow in the ability to love God and people—the true indicators of spiritual well-being.

Discussion Guide:

1. Think about your disappointments honestly. In what way(s) have you struggled between disappointment and hope?
2. If someone asked you, "How is your spiritual life going?" how would you respond? What would you say about yourself that would be impressive? What would you hesitate to reveal?
3. Would you say that you are training to become more like Christ, or trying to be more like Christ? Why?
4. We can't transform ourselves; God transforms us. How would you describe the difference between spiritual training and self-transformation? In what way(s) have you attempted self-transformation?