

“CAPTURED BY GOD”
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One of the most attractive and life-giving parts of the Bible is its clear message that people can transform...

(Vs) 2nd Cor. 3:18 – “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

(Vs) Romans 12:2 – “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

- This is the life-giving message of the Good News, of The Gospel!

And so, of course, if the Bible teaches that this transformation is possible it would make sense that it would be packed full of... “People being called into the Transformation Process.”

- “Zacchaeus the Tax Collector...” – Friend of Sinner
- “The Woman taken in Adultery...” Where’s the man in this story by the way?
- I often wonder if that’s what Jesus wrote in the sand... His name?
- Scripture is littered with these kinds of stories!

Over and over, we see this “Transformational Invitation” being offered.

- But, we don’t as often see the actual transformation take place...
- I think there’s a reason, and that’s because, “True Transformation occurs in small Transitional increments.” Allow me to show you...

God calls us to walk out a transforming process every day of our lives...

(Vs) Ephesians 4:22-24 – “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

- But, like a child learning to walk, it's messy and often results in different slips and falls along the way...
- This is, "The transitional messy space between being as you were (Old Self) and the person you are becoming or Transforming into. (New Self)"
- And, it's unavoidable... You cannot Transform from "Old Self to "New Self," without walking through these messy places of "Transition."

There's one story for me that has always jumped out as one of the clearest examples of a life in obvious, messy Transition...

- ... One where the individual is aware for years that he really needs to change his ways but just doesn't do it well... **Jacob**
- To know Jacob's story is to know his life was one of never-ending struggles.
- He was a determined man; some would consider him to be ruthless...
- He was a con artist, a liar, and a manipulator. In fact, the name Jacob not only means "deceiver," but more literally it means "grabber."
- Among other things, deep-seated family hostilities characterized Jacob's life.
- These hostilities got so bad his older brother eventually vowed to kill him the next time they met...

Despite this... God promised Jacob that through him would come not only a great nation, but a whole company of nations.

- **Side Note:** This is The Way of God and is not unique to Jacob.
- Scripture proclaims over and over that God uses people to accomplish His will.
- That we are the hands and feet of His movement... and that He will accomplish all these incredible things even with the messiest of lives...

(Vs) 1st Cor. 1:27 – "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong."

But even though Jacob knew these promises of God, He was still a man full of fears and anxieties...

- At a pivotal point in his life, when Jacob was unable to avoid meeting his brother, Esau, who had vowed to kill him. Something messy happens...

His Old Self reacts...

- "Maybe I can still get out of this" ... Anxious for his very life, Jacob concocted a bribe, and sends a caravan of gifts along with the women and children across the River Jabbok in hopes of pacifying his brother... **ME**
- **His New Self responds...** Jacob prays authentically...
- It's so genuine it almost doesn't even fit with who we know him to be.

(Vs) Genesis 32:9-12 – And Jacob said, "O God of my father..."

Now physically exhausted, alone in the desert wilderness facing sure death, divested of all his worldly possessions, and powerless to control his fate...

- ... He collapsed into a deep sleep on the banks of the Jabbok River, for he was too spent to struggle any longer... Then God shows up...

(Vs) Genesis 32: 24-28 READ – “Jacob Wrestles with God...”

- This Series is called “From now to Forever,” and it’s supposed to be all about learning to capture the moments that matter...
- **Question:** But, what if some of the most important moments in our lives aren’t about us capturing anything at all, but about being captured by God instead?
- **Ponder:** Really think about wrestling God...

I love that it’s within this messy Transition, Jacob the Deceiver received a new name, Israel, which means: “He struggles with God.”

- But, that’s not what I appreciate the most within this passage!

(Vs) Genesis 32:29 – Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him.

- The story ends with God blessing him within the hurt!
- The blessing didn’t remove the pain! He limped the rest of his life!!!

Frederick Buechner, one the most-read authors by Christian audiences, characterizes Jacob’s divine encounter at the Jabbok River as the...

“Magnificent defeat of the human soul at the hands of God.”

- You see, it’s in Jacob’s story we can easily recognize our own elements of Transition: fears, darkness, loneliness, vulnerabilities, empty feelings of powerlessness, exhaustion, and relentless pain... Very common Human things... things even the apostle Paul experienced...

(Vs) 2nd Corinthians 7:5b – “... we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within.”

But Jacob’s story is also teaching us that without this mess, he would have never done what he needed to...

- Confront his failures, his weaknesses, his sins, all the things that were hurting him . . . and face God.
- “When we take it upon ourselves to wrestle with God and His will for our lives, we learn that despite our trials and tribulations, our strivings in this life are never devoid of God’s presence, and His blessing inevitably follows the struggle, and that even though we may well struggle with God through the loneliness of night, by daybreak His blessing will come...”