



Planted with Purpose

GOD'S CULTIVATION BRINGS OUR TRANSFORMATION

Lesson 4: Lessons From the Underground

(Chapters 3 – 10)

This lesson is part of a series of bible studies entitled "Planted with Purpose." This lesson series is a type of companion study of Bishop T. D Jakes' book entitled "Planted with a Purpose" Although this series will feature some of the themes of Bishop Jakes' book, it will not precisely follow the author's premise or literary structure. Nevertheless, you may find that using the book along with these lessons will greatly enhance your learning experience. The chapters in parenthesis under the lesson's name refers to the chapters read in Bishop Jake's book in preparation of this lesson – Blessing to You!

Things I learned While Underground

Ps 119:71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. KJV

I am a real proponent of formal education. I think education is how we can "stir" the gifts of God within us. But as much as I believe in formal education, I must admit that most of my life altering lessons didn't occur in any formal classroom. These are those lessons we all must learn by living. The process of living will take us into unfamiliar and often uncomfortable places. It was in some of these dark, sometimes isolated and lonely places, that God taught me some crucial lessons. These are the things we can only learn while underground.

Transformation Isn't An Event

Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, (*mind translates intellect, understanding, will and affections*) that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. KJV (Eph 4:23)

Most of us have heard the scripture "be not weary in well doing" the promise being that if your hold out, your season of "reaping" will follow. I guess I can be somewhat alright with "well doing," it's that "well waiting" that gets tough for me to endure. At least, if I am "well doing" then that sounds like I am busy at least "doing." Many of us are waiting on that day of exciting change and transformation! But that's the problem. God's work of transforming us isn't an event or some special day. God's work of transformation is a continual process. The scripture in Romans informs us that transformation is accomplishing through the "renewing" of our minds. This renewal is a continuing process. It is this inward change that results in our outward transformation. Without this inner renewing, any outward change is just hypocrisy. Satan and the world want to control your mind, making you're a "conformer", God wants to transform your mind to embrace His perfect will. This renewing is continually operating in the life of a believer. **QUESTIONS:** How do we as Christians continue to renew our minds? What is the difference between a "controlled" mind and a "transformed" mind?

The Tyranny of the Familiar

2 Peter 2:22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. KJV (Prov 26:11, I John 2:1)

I was about 30 years old when I finally learned how to swim. Admittedly, I'm still not an exceptional example today. But I do enjoy swimming, although I wouldn't want to swim for my life! Shortly after I had learned the basic hand-over-hand stroke, I saw another swimmer doing the breast stroke. It looked so graceful and pretty easy so I jumped into 13 feet of water and decided to give it a try. Bad idea! That method is much harder than it looks and I almost immediately found myself sinking towards the bottom of the pool. What did I do? I went right back to the stroke I was familiar with. I call this tendency that causes us during the times of stress, to resort to what we already know, the "tyranny of the familiar." When I felt myself sinking, it was a natural reflex to go back to the swimming method I was familiar with. This was probably a good thing. But often, when we are going through tough times of divinely ordered cultivation, we can become stressed or even fearful of what we are experiencing. Loss of income, companionship or previous status can be perceived as a fearful thing. When this happens, our normal response can be to return to what was doing it for us in the past. This is where Satan convinces us to give our flesh permission to do what it desires to do. These are real temptations that when engaged will only serve to prolong our process and our full transformation. **QUESTIONS:** Is this an irreparable condition? Why would a person give themselves permission to sin?

The Issue of Self-Soothing

Gen 9:20-21

And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: 21 And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. KJV

Some babies for one reason or another learned to quiet and sooth themselves. Maybe they will suck their own thumbs or sit and rock themselves. We call these actions "self-soothing" behaviors. However, babies are not the only ones who have a tendency to practice self-soothing behaviors. When stressed, exhausted, angry, anxious or fearful, adults can likewise resort to self-soothing behaviors. Perhaps Noah's ordeal with the great flood and that floating "stinky" zoo left the old man a bit disheveled and made him vulnerable to over indulging himself. God's work in our lives and at times feel tedious and even frustrating. Like the Apostle Paul, we may pray and ask God to take away some of the thorns that are irritating us only to hear God say "my grace is sufficient." **QUESTIONS:** Does God's grace always feel sufficient? Is self-soothing always a sin?

Some Things Aren't Supposed to Come Back

Col 3:5-6 (*Rom 6:13, 8:13*)

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: KJV

We have spent considerable time in this series of lessons contrasting the difference between being planted and being buried. We concluded that the main difference is the expectations applied to each; one to come to life and one to go to death. However, there are some things that should "die" in the process of planting, cultivation and transformation. We understand that the seed's outward covering dies in the growing process. Likewise, our carnal and sinful nature should perish during God's transformation process. The Apostle uses the word "mortify" meaning to cut off the source of life. Kill it! This implies that we have a personal role in insuring the death of our sinful nature. If left unchecked, the old nature will entangle itself with the newly emerging Christ-centered nature resulting in spiritually weakened growth. Our sinful nature has a ravenous appetite. The more you feed sin, the hungrier it becomes. Our flesh may promise that this will be the last time, but that is seldom the case. **QUESTIONS:** How can we kill our sinful nature? Why doesn't God just destroy our sinful nature?

