

Freedom

As Simple as ABC

By Rolfe and Lea Carawan

How often have you heard someone say, “I have asked Jesus so many times to change me! And yet, no matter how hard I try, I am still stuck. It’s exhausting!” This has been my experience and the experience of so many others that I have worked with. We hear of God’s miraculous power and testimonies of how God instantly delivered them from X,Y, and Z; but that isn’t everyone’s experience.

Multitudes have jumped through the hoops they were told to jump through, and yet, they are still bound and enslaved to unwanted thoughts and behaviors. With every successive attempt and failure, hope is diminished. As a coach, what do we have to offer such a soul? What do we believe about God’s ability to transform someone? What questions do we ask to uncover the “reality” our coachee lives under? How do we help them get “unstuck?”

Getting people “unstuck” is why we developed the ABCs of transformation. When helping someone gain freedom from old habits, behaviors or beliefs, we must help them find the area that keeps them stuck. Real transformation often eludes us when we don’t uncover its obstacles.

Paul, before his fateful trip to Damascus, and conversation with Jesus, was behaving according to his deeply held belief that Jesus and all of His followers were a threat to the true God. However, when God revealed the truth to Him on the way to Damascus, everything changed! And we see his radical change.

Due to Paul’s “blind spot” regarding Jesus, God gives Paul the first component of our ABCs to freedom and transformation, the Ah-ha! The Ah-ha is the revelation or epiphany that allows you to finally see or

understand something you didn't see before. God pulls back the veil when He is ready to change us. As a coach, you have an opportunity to help another identify lies that are taking them in the wrong direction. For example, an open question such as "What do you believe about God in this situation?" can reveal deep-rooted beliefs about God. You can follow up by asking questions that expose whether these beliefs are lies or truth.

The power of some revelations can move us in a new direction. It can change everything. It is common to see momentum in a new direction, an excitement that this may be the game changer. And sometimes it is. But what if it's not all that is needed for real transformation?

At times there is something else keeping a person from being able to align their behaviors with their new beliefs. Spiritual strongholds may have formed from being sinned against, repeated sinful behaviors or beliefs that spiritual forces may energize. It is here that we need the second component of the ABCs; Breaking free by the power of the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 10:4-4 tells us that "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Armed with the understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit and the weapons we wield, we help uncover the areas in their life that need extra attention and prayer. When you hear a coachee describe a sinful behavior from which they have repeatedly and earnestly tried to get free to no avail, it may be due to a stronghold that is energizing the sin beyond normal levels. "We often ask questions such as "What do you think God wants you to know about this situation or sin?" It is common to recognize that freedom will require a level of spiritual warfare they may not have considered. Depending on the openness of the coachee, this can be an opportunity to provide coaching that opens them up to spiritual weapons against strongholds such as freedom prayer, fasting, forgiveness or confession.

The last component that plays a part in the transformation process is the Commitment to Change. In James 1 we are instructed to be 'doers' of the Word and not 'hearers' only. In James 4:17, he explains why we need to choose to do the right thing because "whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." We have a role to play in our own transformation. It is by engaging our will. But willpower alone, though needed and helpful, will fail us in our attempt to do the right thing.

Are you surprised to hear Paul describing years later how frustrated he was because he was still doing what he didn't want to do? Mortified, Paul cries aloud, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver [drag me out of danger to rescue and deliver me] from this body death?"

God opens Paul's spiritual eyes to the truth and he proclaims, "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:25a) Interestingly, the Holy Spirit uses a very special word, "charis," that here is interpreted as "Thanks," but elsewhere it carries a different interpretation.

The Greek word "charis" is translated as grace, favor, charitable act, and generous gift of God. This is His disposition towards us through Jesus Christ. Let's now read God's reply to Paul's cry, "Who will deliver me?" Paul, you are delivered by the "[Grace, favor, unconditional acceptance] of God, [found in and through] Jesus Christ our Lord." Paul's prospect of changing, as well as our own, is wholly dependent upon the grace of God as offered through Jesus. Yes, you read that correctly. God is the One who changes us!

Every part of the transformation process is dependent on God's grace. When walking with another person through their personal epiphanies, we find it helpful to ask questions that uncover their understanding of God and God's grace role in their change process. We might ask questions such as, "What do you need to hear from God about _____?" "If He said that, how would that change things for you?"

*It is God's grace that conforms us into the image of His Son. (Romans 8:29) We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. (Eph 2:10) The One who made us can be **trusted** to transform us progressively and decisively.*

So, as we come alongside others to cooperate with what God is doing by His grace, let us go forward in confidence that He who began a good work in us will complete it... "to the glory and praise of His grace." (Ephesians 1:6)