TransformedLiving™

5-PART DEVOTIONAL SERIES

ABCs of Transformation

Finding Freedom God's Way

FREEDOM
As Simple as ABC

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!" How often have you experienced that feeling yourself? We hear of God's miraculous power, we hear testimonies of how God instantly delivered someone from X, Y, and Z; but that isn't everyone's experience.

How many of us have jumped through all the hoops we were told to jump through, and yet, we are still bound and enslaved to unwanted thoughts and behaviors. With every successive attempt and failure, hope is diminished. Thankfully God is generous and loving, providing continued opportunities and pathways forward in our life journey. Let's consider 3 elements that contribute to real and lasting change – the ABCs of Transformation.

Let's look at Saul before he became Paul. Before his fateful trip to Damascus, and conversation with Jesus, he behaved 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. The power of some revelations can move us in a new direction. It can change everything. The "A-ha" is the first element in the ABCs, and it is often the first step, but not always enough for real transformation.

At times there is something else keeping us from being able to align our behaviors with our new beliefs. Spiritual strongholds may have formed, and it is here that we need "Breaking free" by the power of the Spirit, the B in the ABCs. 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."

A third powerful component of the ABCs 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. However, willpower alone is not enough.

After his transformative moment, Paul cries out to the Lord in frustration because he continues to do the things he doesn't want to do and doesn't do the things he wants to do. He is committed to changing but he doesn't have the power in and of himself. 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!

So, as we 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)

Over the next few days, we will dive deeper into scripture and see how God uses the Aha, Breaking Free and Commitment to change to transform the lives of people all throughout scripture.

Is there anything specific in your life that you are praying for freedom in over the next week?

Would you pray this with me: *"Father, you are the God of transformation. I believe in your power and your ability to take this issue and create a new reality for me. Lord, would you give me your revelation, break any connections I have to this issue, and help me to commit to live in Your truth. Lord, help me to rely on you and your word this week. In Jesus' Holy Name,* ***Amen****."*

More scriptures to meditate on: *Ephesians 1:6, James 1, Acts 9, Romans 8:29, Ephesians 2:10, Romans 7 – 8*

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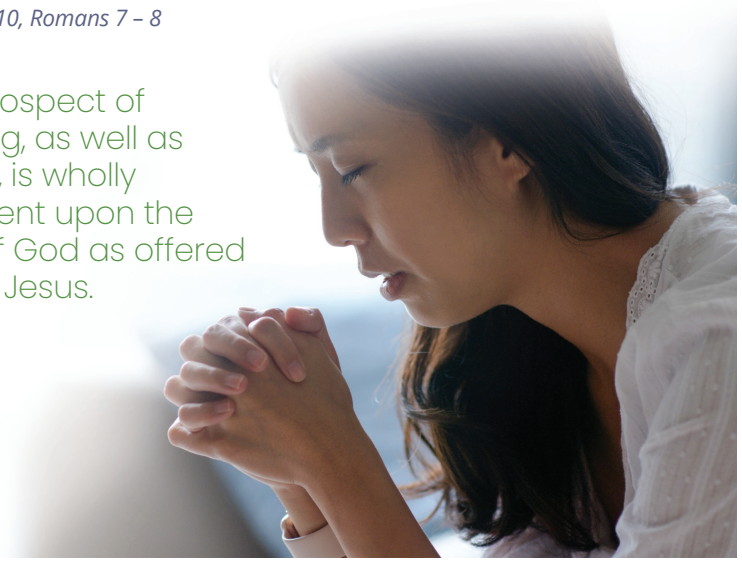

FREEDOM
Starts with the A-ha

How did a simple conversation while on vacation with a friend turn into a transformational experience?

Neither of us planned it or even had it on our minds, but a few sentences describing a deep conviction became an A-ha moment for me. We were sitting in the hotel coffee shop in a small town in Washington state. It was the only place open because of the major snowstorm that had stranded my husband and me, with our friends, Mark and Kathy, on our way to vacation.

Mark was an Associate Pastor at our church in Seattle. It was a large church, and Mark was responsible for multiple ministries and teaching several classes. I was struck by how serene he appeared no matter how busy things got. Following my curiosity, I asked him, "Mark, how do you handle the stress and stay so peaceful when there is such demand for your time?"

Mark's response caught me completely off guard, "I don't feel any stress. I don't have to do anything that I am doing." "What?" "What do you mean you don't have to do anything?" He replied, "If I don't do another thing but hang out on the couch, it doesn't change how much God loves me. I don't HAVE to do anything."

Now to some, that doesn't sound like the makings of an epiphany. But to me, his response struck me like a bulldozer as questions flooded my mind. "Why do I feel so stressed and driven?" "What is causing me to feel this pressure to perform?" The answer was sobering. I believed the lie that to be found worthy of being loved, I had to prove myself through success and being accomplished. Without realizing it, I was trying to impress God and ensure I was love-worthy. What would it take for me to believe the truth that I was already utterly and fully loved by God? This was a moment where God truly opened my eyes to something I had heard a hundred times before, but what was I going to do about it now?

"If I don't do another thing but hang out on the couch, it doesn't change how much God loves me. I don't HAVE to do anything."

The A-ha is when you see something you haven't seen before. It is often the beginning point of transformation. It may be the revelation or epiphany that allows you to finally see a problem clearly and/or the solution to a problem. When God is ready to change us, He often pulls back the veil so that we might see Truth.

While education will inform you, revelation from the Word of God will do much more; IT WILL TRANSFORM YOU!

Romans 12:2 tells us that the transformation process begins with the renewing of your mind. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing, and perfect will."

In other words, don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing, and perfect his will is.

Transformation is a process. For some of us, the process is lightning-quick, while for others, it is painfully slow and seemingly never-ending. So, during the process, we encourage all to "seek radical obedience, and give abundant grace!"

Are you in need of a revelation from the Lord today? Would you pray with me that he will reveal himself to you right where you are?

Would you pray this with me: *"Father, I thank you that you are the God of all Truth. Lord, I ask for a revelation today to change my heart from the lies that I am believing. Would you give me a revelation, a clarity about _____ so that I can release my old beliefs and cling to You and your Word. Lord, meet me in this place as I cry out to you. In Jesus' Holy Name,* ***Amen****."*

More scriptures to meditate on: *John 14:26, I Corinthians 2:10, 14, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, John 16:13*

FREEDOM
Breaking the Strongholds

Have you ever felt enslaved to a behavior or habit that you desperately wanted to be free from? Maybe you know someone who is constantly overcome with temptation and is unable to get free of a specific sin.

If transformation is our goal and our desire, it is helpful to understand what holds us back and keeps us from living free from sin. Sometimes it's as simple as gaining new understanding or having a revelation that changes what we think and believe. But what if that only gets us started and there seems to be something more that grips us with such force that we cannot seem to break free of its devastating influence? Paul alludes to these powerful forces in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4. He calls them strongholds, "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."

I don't think any of us fully understand how or why some sins are harder to break than others. We get glimpses throughout the Bible, but what we do know is that we need God's supernatural power for 'breaking free'.

Even the disciples, who walked with Jesus and had wielded the supernatural power to heal and remove demons, came up against situations that seemed to have a greater power than what they had experienced.

This power to break strongholds is not just for the disciples, we are told that we are given the same power when we believe.

In Matthew 9:14-38 we are told that a father brought his son to the disciples and asked them to cast out the tormenting demon that caused his son to be deaf and mute. They couldn't do it. When Jesus came upon them, He publicly reminded the father and the onlookers that faith was needed. Then privately he went even further. When the disciples asked why they couldn't cast the demon out, Jesus made it clear that there was more that was needed to break the stronghold that the demon had on the boy, prayer and fasting.

This power to break strongholds is not just for the disciples, we are told that we are given the same power when we believe. Jesus told his disciples to expect the power soon, in fact don't even start ministering without it.

When my son was in college, he had a particularly difficult break up. It was the first girl that he really opened his heart to. Months after the breakup he was still gripped with anger, pain and hurt. We were riding in the car and he was sharing how sometimes he felt overwhelmed with such a crushing force that he felt powerless to resist it. I felt something rise up in my heart and mind that this was more than just natural pain and hurt, but rather was being energized by spiritual forces in such a way that my son needed extra warfare to break through to freedom. I reminded him about strongholds and spiritual warfare and asked him if we could pray specifically for breaking these controlling strongholds.

I prayed a simple prayer starting with the Scriptures noted below, called on the power of the Holy Spirit of God, and proclaimed our trust in God to set my son free. What happened next was something neither of us have ever forgotten. He immediately felt a lightening in his heart and mind. It was like a pressure had lifted and it changed everything.

Depending on our experience, teaching, or background we will have varying degrees of understanding about spiritual warfare. No matter your background or belief, it is clear that the Lord and the Holy Spirit are necessary for the work of breaking free. Lean into the work of the Lord as you seek transformation.

Do you need a supernatural move of the Spirit to help you break free of something that seems impossible?

Will you pray this prayer with me: *"Father, only you know everything that is behind this sin, struggle, or burden. Lord You are the healer and the chain breaker. Father, I pray that your supernatural power would break off anything that is feeding this sin and that I would be able to lean into the freedom that you provide. I believe in your power and goodness. In Jesus name,* ***Amen****."*

More scriptures to meditate on: Ephesians 1:10-2:10, Ephesians 6:12, Luke 24:49

FREEDOM
Commitment to Change

For years, I'd tried to be a better person and stop sinning. Though I genuinely wanted to change, I couldn't do it by just trying harder and committing to doing better. Maybe this is your story too.

If the change we want involves short-term sacrifices for long-term payoffs, it will inevitably involve suffering and sacrifice. Because of that, we often "lose heart" and find it difficult to endure to the end. To compound this, many of us don't believe that suffering can be a good thing, and we go so far as to say that suffering is not good, and a good God would not require it of us.

Jesus models the powerful role of suffering as described in Hebrews 5:7-9, "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him."

The vibrant abundant life that God has called us to often requires difficult change. It may involve the ABCs of transformation: the A-ha moments, the Breaking free of strongholds, and Commitment to change. However, we too often try to start with the Commitment to Change, when we first need an A-ha, a revelation from God so we can align our beliefs with His truth. We may also need the power of God to break strongholds in our lives because of the deadly grip of sin. But our commitment to change is only effective when God affects the transformation, and then we intentionally cooperate with God to align our beliefs and behaviors to His will.

The E.A.S.E. Model

When God fills us with a desire to change, to be transformed, He provides a path. One option to consider is the E.A.S.E. Model.

The first E in E.A.S.E is Expectancy. There is a big difference between expectancy and expectation. When we start the process with specific expectations of how, when, or why God is doing His work in us, we often miss His plans and purposes. Instead, we are told that God is faithful, that His ways are higher than our ways, that we can trust Him to complete in us what He has begun. You can ask God to show you what He wants to change, what He is concerned about in your life.

When the needed change has been identified, the Bible encourages us to welcome Accountability, the A in E.A.S.E. For many, accountability has been a negative experience, it may have felt critical, impatient, demanding, or judgmental without love or grace.

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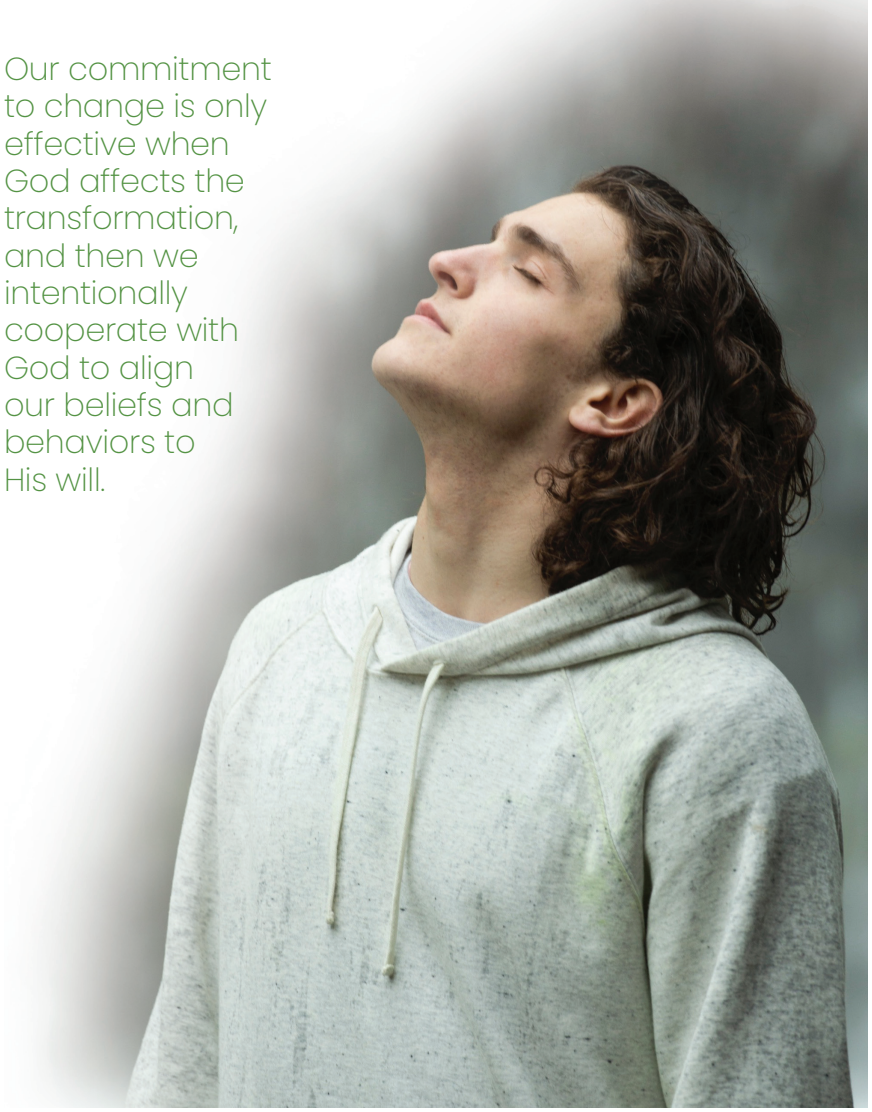

Healthy accountability can be structured in a way that helps achieve our goals and changes our behavior using positive peer pressure. The most productive kind of accountability is voluntary. We give access to someone we trust. It requires honesty, it is usually specific, and should be done in a way that is life giving.

In addition to accountability, we frequently need Support, the S in E.A.S.E. We may require a variety of support systems and resources. It may be friends, family, books, sermons, communities, programs; it takes many shapes and forms.

In one instance where I was struggling with a longstanding issue I heard, through a friend, about a couple that helped individuals overcome past hurts and wounds. In my case, I was overwhelmed and prone to depression over a deep belief that I was a failure in God's eyes. With their help I listed all the negative things I believed about God, myself, and others. This process was neither easy nor painless, but incredibly necessary. Then we began identifying the truth from God's Word in response to the lies. In their presence, I began confessing my sin and speaking God's truth over every single falsehood. Now, I was saying the same thing about myself and my sin that God says about it. Confession became a profound and powerful experience. For the first time I examined these things in the light, one by one. At times, I felt the burden of my failures and, at other times, the joy of being a new creation in Christ. Confession became the first step in my commitment to change.

Positive reinforcement is often the key to lasting transformation, we all need encouragement, the final E in E.A.S.E.

Positive reinforcement is often the key to lasting transformation, we all need encouragement, the final E in E.A.S.E. Encouragement might include praise, reward, celebration or simply the joy that comes when we are free from sin and aligned with God's design for us.

Encouragement solidifies and reinforces that "doing the right thing" - especially in difficult situations - is what matters most. Encouragement lets people know they're on the right track, and helps them to maintain positive, ethical and productive thoughts and actions.

The key to all of this is the grace of God. Hold fast to His promises and allow Him to do the work of transformation.

Questions to process with the Lord or a loved one:

Is there anything in your life that you know God wants to remove, heal or transform?

Is there someone in your life that you can invite to hold you accountable?

Are you accessing the support that God has provided for you?

Are you are being asked to provide support for another?

Will you pray this prayer with me: "*Father, please help me to lean into the movement that you are doing in my life. Help me to commit to change where you are leading and depend on your grace through the whole process. Lord, show me where I can continue to lean on you for healing and transformation. In Jesus name,* ***Amen****."*

More scriptures to meditate on: *2 Timothy 2:13, Isaiah 55:8-9, Philippians 1:6, I Thessalonians 5:11, Matthew 16:27, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10*

FREEDOM
The Impact of Grace

As a life coach I am asked to help people get unstuck. Throughout the process it is quite common to help people examine their thoughts or beliefs so they can walk in freedom and success. One of the common beliefs that frequently creates a roadblock to their desired change is the belief that we can always transform ourselves by simply applying the correct methods or strategies.

There is nothing wrong with methods or strategies, in fact the ABCs of Transformation and E.A.S.E Model that we offer have been incredibly effective in helping people implement what they are learning. But what has become abundantly clear, as a follower of Jesus, is that if we trust ANYTHING other than the grace, power, and love of Christ for our transformation, we will fail.

Obedience in the transformation process places us in alignment with God and His created order. However, the ONLY thing that will cause our efforts to even approach the possibility of working is God's grace flowing through us! Everything begins and ends with the grace of God extended to His creation. Grace provides the power and the environment conducive for transformation.

Ephesians 2:4-7 "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

I had heard it said and repeated it frequently, "I am a sinner saved by grace." The problem was, that became my identity. I was a sinner that sometimes acted like a saint. Even though I was saved by grace, my identity caused me to hide and be distrusting. Knowing my real self, the person that I was deep down and the things I struggled with that were clearly not "Christian," I was convinced that if someone

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knew that person, the real me, they would reject me.

Then, in 2006 I was sharing at a men's retreat and made the comment as I often did that I was, "just a sinner saved by grace." When I finished, a brother came up to me and said, "Rolfe, there is one thing that you shared today that simply isn't true." Well as you can imagine, my ears perked up. "You said you were a sinner saved by grace, but the Bible says that you are a saint, and not a sinner."

Now, I had heard this numerous times and had dismissed it as being just semantics. Surely it just meant that the word "saint" was the name that was used to make a distinction between sinners who had rejected Jesus and sinners who had accepted Jesus. But they were still sinners, right?

I thanked him politely even though I was thinking that he was just some Christian nerd and part-time theologian that wanted to ensure that everything was said, "just so." But to his credit he said, "I can see that you are not convinced about what I just

God not only took my punishment so that I could spend eternity with Him, but this God had made up His mind that I would be holy, even before He spoke the first word of creation.

shared, so listen to this teaching called True Faced, by John Lynch, it changed my life."

I listened to the teaching on the way home. Half-way through Lynch's presentation, I had to pull the car over because I was crying so hard, I couldn't see the road. The Holy Spirit was using this man to introduce me to a God of Grace, who has done everything for me. This God not only took my punishment so that I could spend eternity with Him, but this God had made up His mind that I would be holy, even before He spoke the first word of creation. Ephesians 1:4-5 tells us, "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will."

I finally understood what it meant when people pointed out that Jesus didn't die to make bad men good or good men better, but rather He came to make dead people alive! I was dead but received life as a new creation, a brand-new species. 2 Corinthians 5:17, 22 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

As we conclude this 5-part series on the ABCs of Transformation; we end with the key to all transformation - our confidence that God will provide His truth, power and most especially grace, to help us mature into who God says we already are.

So, as you begin to apply the ABCs of transformation, and possibly the E.A.S.E model, to your life, I pray that you are reminded of the One whose grace is truly doing the work in you.

Will you pray this prayer with me: "*Father, I am so incredibly grateful for your love, grace, and salvation. Thank you for beginning a good work in me that you will bring to completion. Lord, I pray that you would show me the correct next steps to take in this transformation process. Please help me to rely on your grace and your guidance with each step. In Jesus name,* ***Amen****.*"

More scriptures to meditate on: *Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 1:6, Hebrews 2*

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