



CHANGE/TRANSFORM/GOALS

SCRIPTURE VERSES (NIV)

Luke 14:28

²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?”

Matthew 6:33

³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 19:26

²⁶ Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform 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.

Philippians 4:6-8, 13

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

Jeremiah 29:11

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

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YOUR BELIEF UNLEASHES THE POWER OF GOD

Rick Warren — September 14, 2015

“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’” (Matthew 19:26 NIV)

Everything is possible with God.

We have a big God. People say, “Who do you think you are?” Wrong question. The question is, “Who do we think God is?” My God can do anything.

Jesus said, “According to your faith let it be done to you” (Matthew 9:29).

God wants to use you. He wants to bless you. He wants to do amazing things in your life. He wants you to be a world changer in your world. But he’s waiting for you to trust him. You need to stop saying, “I can’t.” “I can’t make this relationship work.” “I can’t do what God wants me to do.” That’s a lie! All things are possible with God.

Ephesians 3:20 says, “Now glory be to God, who by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of — infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes” (TLB). That’s why I push you through these devotionals, because I know you have enormous potential — far beyond what you ever imagined. God wants to use you, and according to your faith it will be done to you.

You know what the opposition to your faith is? It’s not other people. It’s not critics. It’s not even the devil. It’s your own unbelief. You are the biggest problem in your own life. Why don’t you believe God more? Why don’t you trust him more? It’s your choice. There are a lot of things you don’t have control over, but you can choose to believe God.

Do you want God to do big things in your life? Then start believing.

“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible’” (Matthew 19:26 NIV).

Talk It Over

- ◆ What is something seemingly impossible that you want God to do in your life? Do you honestly believe he can do it?
- ◆ How does thanking God in advance show him your belief?
- ◆ What is an “I can’t” that you need to turn into a “God can”?

WHAT IT TAKES TO CHANGE

Rick Warren

***“If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth.”
(1 John 1:8 NLT)***

We’re all defective. None of us measure up to a standard of perfection. It is silly to pretend that you’ve got it all together when everybody knows you don’t. In fact, the Bible tells us it is self-deception.

You will never be sinless on this planet, but it is possible to sin less. So why is it so hard to change stuff in us that we really don’t like?

- 1. Because we’ve had our defects so long.** Some of our destructive patterns were developed in childhood, perhaps in resistance to pain or as a stress coping device. These defects may be self-defeating, but at least they’re familiar!
- 2. Because we identify with our defects.** We often confuse our identity with our defects. When you see yourself connected to your defect, you set yourself up to perpetuate it.
- 3. Because our defects have a payoff.** Whatever is rewarded gets repeated. The payoff for the defects you have in your life may be to mask your pain, cover up a fear, give you an excuse to fail, or compensate for guilt.
- 4. Because Satan discourages us.** Once you start to work on something in your life that you want to change, Satan starts saying, “Who do you think you are? You haven’t been able to change in the past. Do you think you’re going to be able to change now? It’s hopeless. It’s not going to work.” Those fears are planted in your mind by the Devil himself.

These things keep us from changing the hurts, habits, and hang-ups that we know are unhealthy.

So what does it take to change those deep patterns in your life that you really don’t like about yourself?

“Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God — truly righteous and holy. So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. And ‘don’t sin by letting anger control you.’ Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil” (Ephesians 4:21-27 NLT).

Talk It Over

- ◆ Have you ever tried to change a bad habit in the past and felt discouraged? Why do you think you felt that way? How did you respond?
- ◆ What defect do you perpetuate by thinking it is part of your make-up? Try changing your thinking. Instead of saying, “I’m a workaholic,” say, “I work too much.” Instead of saying, “I’m lazy,” say, “I have a tendency to put things off and procrastinate.”
- ◆ What truths and promises from Scripture can you use to combat Satan’s lies about your ability to change and become more like Christ?

FAITH GOAL

Rick Warren

***“I know that I have not yet reached that goal, but there is one thing I always do. Forgetting the past and straining toward what is ahead, I keep trying to reach the goal and get the prize for which God called me through Christ to the life above.”
(Philippians 3:13-14 NCV)***

I believe in setting goals. I've set them all my life, because goals are simply statements of faith. The Bible says, “The just shall live by faith” and “Without faith it's impossible to please God” and “According to your faith it will be done unto you.”

God always operates in your life by faith. That's why you need goals in your life, because a goal is a statement of faith. A goal says, “I believe God wants me to accomplish something by a certain date.” If you don't have a date, it's not a goal. It's a wish. It's a dream. It's a desire. But wishes are a dime a dozen; they're worthless. The only thing that will change your life is setting a goal. You've got to wake up from the dream and go to work!

A “**FAITH**” goal has five characteristics:

[F] Focused. That means it is specific. If you use the words “more” or “less,” it's not a focused goal. “I want to be less angry” or “I want to weigh less” or “I want to be more like Jesus” are not goals because you can't measure them. You have to be specific.

[A] Attainable. If you set an unrealistic goal, it's just going to discourage you. If you say, “I'm going to pray three hours a day,” you're setting yourself up for failure. Set a goal that stretches you and then trust God will help you stretch.

[I] Individual. That means it's personal. You cannot set goals for other people because you can't control them. You can't set goals for your children, your husband, or your boyfriend or girlfriend. You can only set goals for yourself, because you can control you and not anybody else. The only way you can change other people is by changing yourself.

[T] Trackable. Trackable goals can be measured. They're verifiable. You set a date and say, “By Nov. 30 I will have accomplished this, and by Dec. 30 I will have accomplished this, and by Jan. 30 I will have accomplished this.”

[H] Heartfelt. Your goals have got to be heartfelt. You'll never reach a passionless goal. If you're not passionate about the goal, wait until you get passionate about it. If you don't have a deep desire to do it, don't set it.

I encourage you to set one spiritual goal for your life today. Maybe your goal is to have a quiet time for five minutes every day for the next month. That is a FAITH goal, and you can accomplish it in faith.

Talk It Over:

- ◆ What are the goals that you have been working toward? Do they meet the criteria of a FAITH goal? How does prayer play a role in the way you set goals?

DREAM BIG

Rick Warren — July 30, 2016

Faith is choosing and believing God's dream for your life. Nothing starts happening in your life until you start dreaming. God gave you the ability to dream, to create, to imagine. Dreaming is an act of faith. Everything you see on this planet started as a dream.

So, how do you get God's dream for your life? You do three things:

First, you dare to ask for it. Ephesians 3:20 says, *"Now glory be to God, who by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of — infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes"* (TLB).

If you want God's blessing on your life this year, you must dare to ask for it. You must say, "God, what's your dream for my life? What do you want me to do?" Then you ask yourself, "What would I attempt for God if I knew I couldn't fail?" Let that expand your vision.

Second, you believe God's promises. The Bible says in Jeremiah 32:27, *"I am the Lord, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me?"* (NLT, second edition)

Never let an impossible situation intimidate you. Let it motivate you to pray more, believe more, trust more, experience more, learn more, and grow more. Faith always works in the realm of the impossible.

Hudson Taylor said there are three stages to God's will in your life: impossible, possible, and done.

Third, you dream big. *"Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession"* (Psalm 2:8 NIV).

The size of your God should determine the size of your goal. You haven't really believed God until you've attempted something that can't be done in the power of the flesh. If you want to know how big your dream should be, ask yourself two questions: How much time do you have to give to it? If it's a dream you can give the rest of your life to, then you can really dream big. What are you shaped to do? What are your spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences — the five things that make you *you*. What do you love to do? What are you gifted to do?

Dream great dreams for God. It's the first step in your walk of faith.

Talk It Over

- ◆ Have you been waiting on God to make your dream happen? What have you asked of him concerning your dream?
- ◆ What is the seemingly impossible thing you would attempt if you knew you wouldn't fail?
- ◆ How do your dreams reflect the amount of faith you have in God?

WHO CONTROLS YOUR FUTURE?

Rick Warren — November 24, 2015

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” (Romans 8:28 NLT, second edition)

One of the great fears we all face is the fear of the future. We fear for the futures of our families, our friends, our jobs, our communities — and everything else in between.

It's natural. We're not in control. But that realization should drive us to trust God more deeply.

We might not be in control of our future, but God is. He created the whole universe. If he wanted to, the Lord could just snap it out of existence in a moment. Yet he is working his plan in history. He is moving history to a climax, a destiny. One day Jesus Christ will come back to Earth. Nothing will stop that. Just as he is working in history to move events toward that day, he will work in your life for a purpose, too — if you'll let him.

The Bible says, *“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them”* (Romans 8:28 NLT, second edition).

God's Word doesn't say that everything is good. It also doesn't say that God causes everything. He doesn't cause war. He doesn't cause cancer. He doesn't cause rape, abortion, incest, or molestation. He doesn't cause evil. We do that. God gives us the freedom to choose. Evil is the price of that freedom.

But the Bible does say that God causes everything to work together for good. He can take the dumb, evil, and bad decisions I've made in my life and use them for good if I'll trust him. Romans 8:28 isn't a promise for everyone, though. It's for “those who love God.” It's for those who trust God and say, “Here, Lord, you take all the broken pieces of my life and put them together.”

This is why when I read the headlines each day, I don't worry. Sure, there are a lot of problems in the world today, but God is still in control. God is still moving history to a climax. And God is still moving his people toward his best for them. One day God will work everything out for his purpose.

Because God is in control, we can trust him with everything — including the good, the bad, and the ugly of our lives.

Talk It Over

- ◆ How will knowing that God is in control help you to trust him better?
- ◆ How have you seen God take a bad decision and make something good out of it?
- ◆ What's one fear of the future that you can hand over to God today?

GOD'S WAKE-UP CALL

“Insider” Deone — November, 18, 2016

Coming to prison was God's wake-up call to me. If I didn't come to prison, I'd be dead. Being in prison is God telling me that He's not done with me and wants me to do something for Him. Coming to prison, I found healing. I carried so much bitterness, hate, anger & self-loathing.

I know each prison is different. DW isn't that bad, but then I follow the rules and don't try to make things harder for myself. I just know God had me and wouldn't let anything bad happen to me. He protected me and is protecting me. He opened doors that no one but He could open.

All I had was God. All my hidden wounds came flooding to the surface. I had no choice but to deal with each one. I had to give each one to God to be healed. I had to forgive those that had hurt me my whole life. I had to forgive myself and quit beating myself up.

I lost everything just like Job. I'm in prison just like Joseph, Paul and so many others. I see now that nothing matters but my relationship with God. Being in prison is God's training ground for me. I'll get out when He's ready for me to get out and work for Him.

I read my Bible every day. I do many different Bible studies. I've learned to forgive, how to live for Christ, how to show love, compassion and help to others. I'm becoming the woman God wants me to be. You can become the person God wants you to be too. You can be healed and forgiven. And you can live for God where you are.

Deone's signature scripture verse is Titus 2:13 “while we wait for the blessed hope-the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

TRANSFORMED...“MEEK”

“Insider” J. Malone, Jefferson City , MO

Blessed are the meek! For they shall inherit the earth. These are the words of Jesus Christ, which he said during His Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:5

As I read the Bible I love to look at historical context. What I mean by that is I like to find out what was going on in the world or specifically the area these events were taking place at that time. I like doing this because I want to find out what the people of that time would have thought when Jesus said the things He said.

In this passage I wonder what all these Jewish men thought when Jesus told them the meek shall inherit the earth. I know I thought, ‘Yeah right. I’m not weak, I’m not soft, and this goes against the things I was taught as a kid.’

I immediately associated meekness with weakness. My father told me once to punch a kid right in his nose so that his eyes would become blurry and I could stay on him. This came after many complaints by my brother that a kid was calling us names.

Wanting to please my dad I punched the kid in his nose. I learned two things that day. One was I didn’t have the heart to ‘stay on’ someone after I punched them, I ran. The second thing I learned was if I wanted someone to stop doing something to me all I had to do was punch them. The second lesson didn’t serve me well down the road.

I didn’t just learn these lessons from my father. Society played a pretty big role as well. I remember movies and T.V. shows where vigilante justice was applauded, and the “tough guy” image was praised.

In the Old Testament an eye for an eye was the law. Now Jesus is telling all the Jews, ‘The meek shall inherit the earth.’ My first thought was they would be disappointed because this conquering King they have been expecting is now telling them to be gentle, humble, mild, and meek. This is not what they wanted from the man who came to free them from their oppression.

Luckily, a friend told me this was just the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. He hadn’t told anyone who He really was at this point.

Unfortunately that didn’t help answer my question.

It just went from Jesus to some really cool guy who was performing miracles. This led people to say, “I think I’ll follow Him and see what He has to say.”

So I looked up meek, and came to define it as gentle and humble.

Knowing there is a vast difference between English and Greek I also looked it up in my Greek word study Bible. The Greek defined meek as a meekness which differs from the usual connotation of the word in English. It is the middle standing between two extremes, getting angry without reason and not getting angry at all. It is the result of a STRONG man’s choice to control his reactions in SUBMISSION to God. It is a balance born in STRENGTH of character, stemming from confident trust in God, not from weakness or fear. This was the answer I was looking for and it changed my attitude toward meekness completely.

WOW! I don’t know how you felt when you just read that but I feel powerful. I feel like I was weak and soft before. I feel like when Jesus told us to turn the other cheek, He meant it. I know this is a very hard subject for most men. I also feel if we can master this in our society, the rewards in Heaven will be great.