

# The Nature of Christ's Transforming Love

by Marti Wibbels

The word transform is from the Greek *metamorphoo*, which describes “the change of moral character for the better, through the renewal of thinking power” (New Unger's Bible Dictionary). How does God's love change us?

His love changes our **attitudes** as radically as a caterpillar transforms to butterfly: “Consider a caterpillar crawling in the dust—an ugly, hairy worm. One day this worm weaves about its body a cocoon. Out of this cocoon there eventually emerges a butterfly. We do not understand fully what has taken place. We only know that where once a worm crawled in the dust, now a butterfly soars in the heavens. Man calls this change a ‘metamorphosis.’ So it is in the life of a Christian—where once we lived on the lowest level, we now dwell on the highest plane, experiencing a full and abundant life. Jesus referred to this change as a ‘new birth’” (Dr. Bill Bright).

His love changes our **thinking**. *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* (Romans 12:2, ESV).

His love enables us to **love ourselves and others**. *‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’* (Mark 12:30, 31, NASU).

When we make the choice to love, obeying God, the emotions of love follow that choice. In *Practicing the Presence of People*, Mike Mason says, “Love is like oxygen. The breath of it I had just a moment ago will do me no good if I do not take another breath soon. To stay alive I must keep breathing. In both Greek and Hebrew the word for *breath* is the same as the word for *spirit*. But there is one vital difference between physical and spiritual breathing, for while the former is governed by an autonomic system, the latter is governed by the will...spiritual growth cannot happen automatically but only through conscious choice.”

Research shows that when we expect others to like us, they probably will. If we walk into a room expecting people to dislike us, though, they probably will. Obeying God's command to “love your neighbor as yourself,” we choose to live in His unconditional love—first for ourselves, then for others.

We can experience God's transforming love through His Son: *To us, the greatest demonstration of God's love for us has been his sending his only Son into the world to give us life through him. We see real love, not in that fact that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to make personal atonement for our sins* (1 John 4:10, Phillips).

In Christ's love, you can **love your enemies** (Luke 6:27) and **bless those who curse you** (v. 28), choosing to **do to others as you would have them do to you** (v. 31). We can **forgive others because God forgave us**. *We can be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you* (Ephesians 4:32). Although forgiveness doesn't always include reconciliation, it does include letting go of bitterness, hurt, rage, or anger.

How can we be transformed? God's Spirit accomplishes the work of transformation! *And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit* (2 Corinthians 3:18, NIV).

Moment-by-moment, as we allow God to empower us with His unconditional love, our thoughts, attitudes, and behavior are transformed:

- Because God is love, we can be loving (see Galatians 5:22-23).
- Because God is compassionate, we care about others' needs and concerns (1 Peter 3:8)
- Realizing God wants people to know we are His disciples by how we love one another, we choose to love one another with the love He provides— (see John 13:34, 2 John 5).
- Because God is kind, we can choose to be kind (see 2 Peter 1:7).
- His Word trains us to live in His love.

*Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you. How? you ask. In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God* (2 Corinthians 5:16-21, MSG).

*How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young,  
compassionate with the aged,  
sympathetic with the striving  
and tolerant of the weak and strong.*

*Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.*

George Washington Carver