

from story to



transformation

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STORY: We began our journey with story, the one about us, what happened to us, how it happened, how it affected us, challenged us, how it made us feel and how we either responded or reacted. Story is what has made us who we are, affecting how we think act and live, and in the end, what we did with it builds our character. We all have one.



TESTIMONY: Story then led to testimony. This is where we tell it, live it in ways which communicates all that happened in our story. We narrate it through words, deeds, attitudes, and passions. Sometimes we tell our story well, just like it is, without adding or subtracting, but others times, we tell it how we would like to see it, how it was perceived or like it to be.

Depending on what happened to us in our story we can sometimes reshape it – alter it to make it sound better or safer. When abuse is in the mix, we would rather water it down, reorient some of the events too painful to relive, and so we live in our pains for much longer than we ought. Shame, guilt, false beliefs, and fear, will often keep our story from being truthfully told.



Other times we embellish our story, telling it differently because we feel like failures or not having achieved in life. This quite often harbours pride, grandiose attitudes, fears, and ego, all of which result from past put-downs or being shamed, distorting the way we tell our story.

REVELATION: And once our story was told time and time again, we discover that we learnt something, the story has taken on



a different flavour revealing something new, even unexpected. We share our revelations, the new experiences, and insights. Where our story had bits in it that may have been difficult to tell, we

now speak it with confidence and reverence. The story has begun to shape you, burying itself a little deeper becoming part of your being.

Revelation is the space where things are made visible to you having more clarity and definition. Feelings, emotions, motivations, actions, attitudes, and behaviours all swirl around. Here one makes decisions about their story, what impact it has and what effect it will have on you.

REALISATION: Time passes, the story, testimony and revelations have settled, it is history now, it happened a while ago and you discover it has moved into a different space. It has made you realise



some things. Realisation is the expression of surprise, of being caught off guard with something you did not see before. Revelation revealed some things to you, hidden at the time but now because of time, you realise that the hiddenness of those things are beginning to make sense.

TRANSFORMATION: Something which can be wonderful and terrifying at the same time. Sometimes it feels like you are on the edge of a cliff feeling like you are going to fall but getting ready to jump. Transformation is where you confront and are confronted with your true self, who you really are, making decisions about how to deal with that.



Sometimes you do not know what to do with what you find, it is so confronting, and other times you see the wonder of the transformation finding yourself running from it because it is too good to be true. But sooner or later you surrender, you give up the fight and confess that you, your life, is such a mess, that it is time to let go.

LETTING GO: Letting go is not easy, it does not come naturally to us. Richard Rohr says it like this, *“Transitions can only take place if we are willing to let go of what we have known, the worlds we have created, and our assumptions about “how things are.” To let go is the precursor to being reborn. We discard the baggage of societal expectations and, like a morning glory, open to the possibilities of each new day, each new moment, even if those possibilities are shadowy and disorientating.”*¹

¹ From RR Daily Meditation May 4, 2023

Letting go is the precursor to being reborn, how wonderfully terrifying this is coming upon us in most unexpected ways yet in some ways, expected.

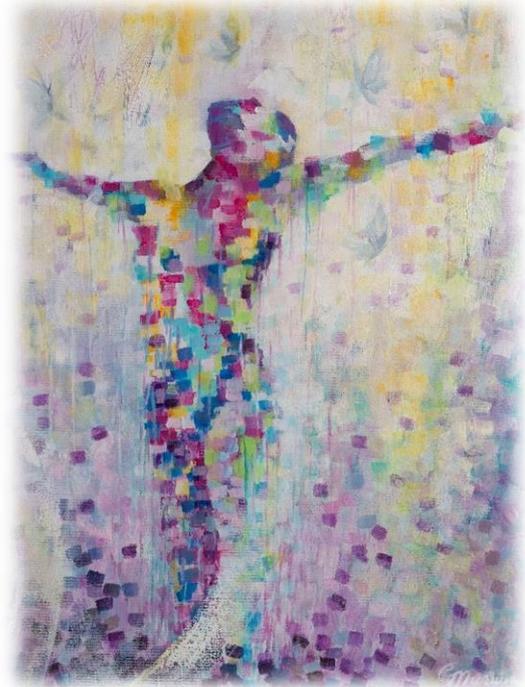
Your story is no longer something which happened a long time ago, teaching you some deep and meaningful lesson – telling those around you how tragic and painful it was. No, your story now has built something in you, it has come to life in ways which speak beyond wisdoms and lesson, it is now life and life changing, influencing you in ways which transcend lesson.

You notice something new happening here. When you tell your story, words fail, language seems inadequate to explain what you see and feel. Somehow the music of nature, a painting, a sunset, a beautiful rain forest are the only words which must tell your story. You have become one with God, the being who gave you life, eyes to see, a soul to live, and a heart to love.

The change in you is profound, it cannot be ignored and when the old self pokes its ugly little nose in again, you react. Where this old self is calling you to be, is not where you wish to go, messing this thing up is not an option. And here is where the miracle of God's grace can either live on in the new self, or revert and die back in the old self.

If the transformative experience of letting go has done its job right, then the decision is easy, you just let go, actively looking for ways to keep letting go. If the experience of letting go has not done its job, we go back to our story, tell it again and again, over and over again, sending us into the spiral of self. Instead of finding what life is in the story, we make the story itself, life.

NEW CREATION: Now the transforming person desires the new self, that being the scriptures teach as becoming a new creation. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”² In the Greek it read like this, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the old beginnings are passed over, behold all is becoming new.” The key words are, ‘becoming’ – it is ongoing, always active, and the word ‘new’ is not a reference to shedding the old, rather seeing new, being new, living new as you are becoming. How wonderful is that!



And then you notice something else, something which is fearful, you ask for help. You realise that you are part of a community, you are not alone. Transformation begins in the individual, it is very personal, private, and intimate. But transformation will lead us into the family of God, it will unite us with others bringing us into a collective of people who are also changing and transforming with you. You look to them for help, support, encouragement, and affirmation. You find that you are influencing others, awakening them to the same transforming life you are experiencing, you have become transformative, a natural consequence of transformation.

² 2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV

Including others in your story and they including you in theirs, is the amazing part of life WITH God. Like prodigals we come home, like lost puppies we find refuge, and God gives us rest. Everything changes, the way you see others changes, the way you see the world changes, the way you pray changes. Prayer in particular changes in that, prayer is not something we do in God; we learn that prayer is something God unfolds in us. We have surrendered to Him and His essence is in us, and we are in Him, and prayer is practiced in this context.

You are a new creation, a being divinely built, equipped to reveal God's transformative Kingdom to all whom come your way.

PRAYER AND PRACTICE: How often have you heard the question, "How's your prayer life?" or "How's your devotional life?" As well intentioned as these questions might be however, they do pose certain problems which lead us into habits which may not be helpful.

Prayer, the Greek word προσευχή – prosefki, meaning towards a wish or desire. It is not so much a practice with a posture as a posture with a practice. Prayer is not simply speech or words, songs and images. All these can be attributed to prayer but they, in themselves are not prayer. Prayer is the space these things create where God can engage and relate to us. It is a deliberate and disciplined act which creates the environment for God and us to be.

Discipline in sports is the concentrated effort to master the body so that it can obey the mind better. Discipline in the

spiritual life is the concentrated effort to create the space and time where God can become our master and where we can respond freely to God's guidance.³

If we frame the question towards the practice we lose sight of its purpose, we make the practice the focus of our devotion rather than the relationship the practice is intended to create and foster. Prayer, like many spiritual practices, is not the focus, it is the scaffolding for creating communion with the divine.

Personally, I find meditative and contemplative prayer the most effective ways to enter divine communion with God. To contemplate a passage of scripture, a poem, a song, or a sunset, these give cause to meditate such that I can enter the realm of God and He enter mine. The practices themselves are not the focus, they are the means by which we meet.

Real prayer comes not from gritting our teeth but from falling in love. This is why the great literature on prayer is frankly and wonderfully erotic. 'The Trinity,' writes Juliana of Norwich, 'is our everlasting lover.' 'O my love!' exclaims Richard Rolle. 'O my Honey! O my Harp! O my psalter and canticle all the day! When will you heal my grief? O root of my heart, when will you come to me?' 'Jesus, Lover of my soul,' pleads Charles Wesley. 'Let me to thy bosom fly.'⁴

When we pray, we see that God is moving into our spaces and places and we are moving into His.

³ Nouwen, Henri J. M.. Bread for the Journey (p. 81). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Foster, Richard. Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home (pp. 3-4). John Murray Press. Kindle Edition.

Jesus too needed to remind the Pharisees when they accused his disciples for doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath. "One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.""⁵

Keeping the Sabbath, the day of rest, was then, and I suppose still is, a means by which space is created for God to act and relate with us. The Sabbath itself is not the focus, but the relational outcome for which it was designed, is.

MEDITATIVE PRAYER: Meditative prayer is prayer done mostly silently, with few words, if any. It is the practice of allowing the moments of devotion to unfold around you rather than you seeking to unfold them. Meditative prayer is most likely the kind of prayer which directly affects and effects the intellectual mind and the egotistical soul.

What great opportunities this opens for us, in that we do not need to think of what to say or make up words to say, so that we could by some means come into the presence of God. It is like jumping into a river, floating on your back taken gently by

⁵ Mark 2:23-28 NIV

the current. We trust and fall surrendered, and God becomes the current taking us gently on His way.

The truth of the matter is, we all come to prayer with a tangled mass of motives – altruistic and selfish, merciful, and hateful, loving, and bitter. Frankly, this side of eternity we will never unravel the good from the bad, the pure from the impure.⁶

This is why all too often we dare to speak when really, we should be silent. King Solomon seemed to have grasped this when he penned, “Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. A dream comes when there are many cares, and many words mark the speech of a fool.”⁷

All too often our words become food for the ego. We speak boldly on matters which quickly grabbed our attention and have done little or no meditative or contemplative work on.

⁶ Foster, Richard. Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home (p. 8). John Murray Press. Kindle Edition.

⁷ Ecclesiastes 5:2-3 NIV