

CONTINUE THE MORPH: STUDY GUIDE

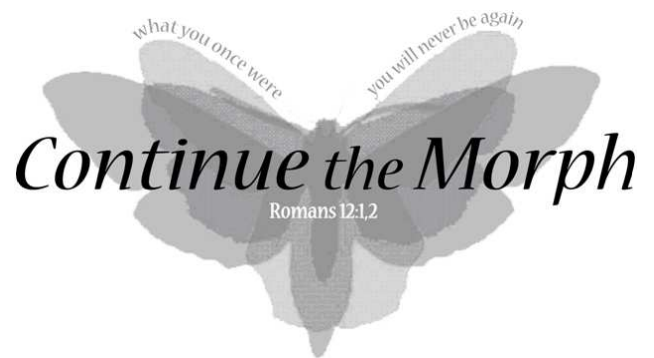
Welcome to a journey of transformation.

This ten week study is designed to remind and awaken, encourage and strengthen, clarify and empower. My best guess is I don't need to convince you that followers of Christ need to continue their journey of personal transformation. The very fact that you are reading these words is evidence that you recognize that more transformation is needed in your life. I commend you for recognizing that truth and for taking this significant step forward in your morph.

I do however desire to make something very clear right now: This journey of transformation is not about your efforts or your sweat equity. The metamorphosis that Jesus has called us to is one that occurs as naturally as the DNA driven process of transformation that affects butterflies and dragonflies. Caterpillars and nymphs don't pour a lot of effort into their personal change process. Their metamorphosis happens naturally from within and their only real effort is to break through the barriers that restrain them and emerge once their metamorphosis is complete.

That reality is also true for us as followers of Christ. The Holy Spirit drives our process of change naturally from within. Our only effort is to ensure that we don't stop the natural process of change out of fear, disobedience, ignorance or flagrant sin. Change occurs naturally if we remember to simply keep ourselves in the place we need to be for it to occur.

That is what this study guide is all about. It is a simple reminder to take the truths that we encounter in the Sunday morning sermon, review them in deeper detail and thereby remember to stay where we need to be for our personal morph to continue. This study guide is designed with a group setting in mind; indeed our personal morph is always done best as we follow Jesus together. It is designed to take us deeper into some of the Biblical texts that we will touch on in the sermon; reviewing truth always reinforces truth. It is designed to get us sharing and



praying together because in the company of others we recognize that we are all on the same journey and can encourage one another to continue the morph.

At the same time however, please recognize that this material is only a guide. Feel free to focus on only one passage, create your own questions if you don't like the ones offered, create your own personal application or simply head in a different direction. This guide is only a suggestion of how to go deeper; it is most definitely not the only way to go deeper. I do however ask one thing: Please go deeper. Pray about these truths. Reflect on them. Memorize scripture. Engage others in the process of thinking them through. Join others in the journey of personal transformation. Why? Because doing so ensures that we will continue our morph.

How do we access this guide?

Each week a study guide will be posted on the church website on the Friday before the sermon. If you cannot access the website, paper copies will be available at the church each Sunday morning. If you encounter any challenges in accessing the study guide please contact the church office.

Let's continue to follow Jesus together as we continue our morph.

Pastor Larry

Lesson # 1

Sunday September 18: *It Is Possible*

Our age has been described as an era of great cynicism and skepticism. Many television series specialize in exposing frauds and news reporters have regularly revealed that many claims of the miraculous are in fact, anything but miraculous. Furthermore, our current cultural challenge with seemingly insurmountable addictions has created an atmosphere where any discussion of real transformation and freedom is openly ridiculed. There are good reasons why people respond to the whole topic of transformation with cynicism:

If real change is possible, why do we see so little of it? If real change is possible, why are so many seemingly stuck in cycles of addiction and self-destruction? If real transformation and change is possible, why are so many followers of Christ unable to experience it themselves?

Consequently, many people, even followers of Christ, feel that real transformational change is just not possible. The best we can hope for, they argue, is enough grace to be saved and enough divine intervention to cope with the worst of our bad habits and addictions. Real transformation, they say, may be true spiritually (we are forgiven and made new) but it definitely is not true in the real world. If it was, we would see more it.

Conclusions like these are absolutely understandable given our current challenges and realities. At the same time however, they are not Biblically-based conclusions and most definitely are not rooted in the character of God. Rather, conclusions like the above are rooted almost exclusively in our desire to cope, control and explain, not in our ability to believe and follow.

As we start our journey into transformation, let's begin by recognizing a very simple truth: It is possible. Contrary to the cynics and the very real failures, real transformation and change is possible.

Discovering Together: Group Discussion

- If you discovered a partially transformed butterfly, frog or toad would you be intrigued? Concerned? Would you wonder how something so natural and intentional stopped midway in the process of transformation resulting in something unnatural?
- Imagine that you know a Christian who has begun their own journey of transformation and appears to be stuck somewhere in the journey. Would you be concerned? Would you feel it is none of your business?
- In your estimation, is it normal for Christians to partially change and then stop being transformed? Is it normal or abnormal to observe followers of Christ change and keep on changing throughout their whole lives?
- Do you really believe a transformed life is possible for followers of Christ? Or is it something that really only happens when we get to heaven?

Going Deeper: Read Romans 12: 1-2

The letter of Romans was written to a group of Christians living in Rome who had never met the apostle Paul but had heard a lot about him. Paul was intending to come to Rome to set up a base of support there, but before he arrived he really wanted them to hear from him directly (Romans 15: 23-24). Specifically, he wanted them to understand his gospel –the truth that he had been preaching and teaching for many years (Romans 1: 16-17). Therefore, all the way through the letter to the Romans he spelled out his gospel and what it means for our lives (Romans 1-8). Then, he went on and also described in specific detail what the gospel meant for Israel (Romans 9-11). As he started chapter 12, he summarized everything he had said up to that point with one word: *Therefore*.

- What does Paul urge the Romans to recognize? (In view of...)
- When you think of the mercy of God, what ideas and feelings arise in your mind and heart?

- Why do you believe that Paul starts with the mercy of God?
- In verse two, Paul urges us to be transformed. Do you believe that this transformation is primarily spiritual, affecting our relationship with God – or that it refers primarily to the possibility of our whole life being transformed?
- Does the word *transformed* elicit feelings of hope or despair? Does this feel like something that is really possible? Does this word feel like something that involves a lot of self-effort and legalism?
- Paul notes that the choice before us is either to be conformed or transformed. How would you describe that choice to someone who was new to the faith and wanted to understand what Paul was saying?

Read II Corinthians 5:17

The apostle Paul in this section of 2 Corinthians was writing about the incredible gift of reconciliation that is available through Jesus Christ. His point was simple: everyone can be reconciled to God and when they are they in turn become ministers or ambassadors of reconciliation. In verse 17 he made a statement about the possibility of transformation:

- What do you think it means to be in Christ?
- How do you like the imagery of being a new creation?
- What do you think it means that the old has gone and the new has come?
- Do you really believe it is possible that followers of Christ can be new creations?

Read Ephesians 3:20-21

- Do you really believe that God is able to do immeasurably more than you can imagine? Or do you find yourself cautious that while he may be able, it probably won't work for you and your situation?

- If you are cautious, what is your caution rooted in? Is this something that the group can pray with you about?
- If you believe he really is able, what specifically are you going to pray for as we start this journey together?
- As a follower of Christ, his power is already at work within you. Can you point to a place or places in your life where have you seen his power?

Responding to the Truth:

The scriptures overwhelmingly affirm two key truths: That God is all-powerful and as such is able to do anything; and God never asks or offers something he is not willing to follow through on. In other words, he would never ask us to morph without making it possible. Are you willing to and able to believe that it is really is possible to completely change? ***Are you willing to continue your morph?***

Prayer Time:

- Please pray together that we would believe that it is possible to see our lives completely morph by the power and presence of God.
- Is there any cynicism or skepticism that has taken root in your life that needs to be confessed and released? Please note that cynicism and skepticism are not the fruit of God's presence in our lives.
- Is there one specific area of your life that you desire to see really transformed? Can you share it with the group and ask them to pray with you for the morph to occur in that area?

Foundational Truth:

Real transformation is possible for those who follow Jesus Christ. Read Luke 19: 1-10 and remind yourself that a life can be completely transformed by simply following Jesus Christ.

