



How Are We Spiritually Transformed?

[1 Kings 18:16-38](#)

Last in a 4-part series titled: *Transformed*

Pastor Matt Friend – January 21 & 24, 2021

.....

– OUTLINE –

Introduction

Let's read and hear the true story of Elijah on Mount Carmel ([1 Kings 18:16-38](#)).

Today's Big Idea

We stack the firewood and trust God to send the fire.

Breaking it Down

#1 – What do I mean by, “We stack the firewood?”

“For we are co-workers in God's service.” —1 Corinthians 3:9 (NIV)

“Exercise thyself unto godliness.” —1 Timothy 4:7 (KJV)

#2 – What do I mean by, “[We] trust God to send the fire”?

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. —Ephesians 4:23 (NKJV)

The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it. —1 Thessalonians 5:24 (NIV)

It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose. —Philippians 2:13 (NIV).

Remain in Me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. —John 15:4-5 (NIV)

Today's Take-Away

Keep stacking firewood and trusting God to send the fire!



How Are We Spiritually Transformed?

[1 Kings 18:16-38](#)

Last in a 4-part series titled: *Transformed*

Pastor Matt Friend – January 21 & 24, 2021

.....

– NOTES –

Introduction

Let's read and hear the true story of Elijah on Mount Carmel ([1 Kings 18:16-38](#)).

This story teaches us many things: about God, about His plan to bring a Savior into the world through the nation of Israel, and even about life today. However, what I want to highlight is how this story illustrates our own personal transformation.

We most often use the word *salvation* to refer to the moment when we first decided to follow Jesus—the moment when we, by faith, committed our lives to Christ. However, we most often use the word *transformation* to refer to the remaining journey, whereby we walk with Jesus and become more like Him until we go to heaven.

The true story in [1 Kings 18](#) illustrates our transformation in the following way: Just as Elijah stacked firewood on the altar and waited for God to ignite it, we are responsible to do certain spiritual activities that God can “ignite” in our hearts, resulting in genuine love for Him and others.

In other words, God invites Christians to participate with Him in our spiritual growth. Theologians call this synergism. Others call this *sanctification*, *experiential theology*, *practical divinity*, *holiness*, *Christian ethics*, or *piety*. I prefer *spiritual formation* or *transformation*.

Every genuine believer wants to change to be more like Jesus... but how does that happen?

Today's Big Idea

We stack the firewood and trust God to send the fire.

Breaking it Down

#1 – What do I mean by, “We stack the firewood?”



How Are We Spiritually Transformed?

[1 Kings 18:16-38](#)

Last in a 4-part series titled: *Transformed*

Pastor Matt Friend – January 21 & 24, 2021

.....

As Christians, we have certain responsibilities in our spiritual formation. In other words, Jesus invites us to do specific things as we participate with Him in our progressive transformation.

“For we are co-workers in God’s service.” —1 Corinthians 3:9 (NIV)

“Exercise thyself unto godliness.” —1 Timothy 4:7 (KJV)

Though we are no longer under the Old Testament law, we are called to obey New Testament commands, beginning with what Jesus instructed in the Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 5-7](#)).

Keeping these commands, alone, doesn’t make us spiritual—just like Elijah’s stacking the firewood didn’t create fire. However, doing what Jesus invites us to do (like stacking firewood) puts us in the position to receive the “fire” when God sends it. Only God can make us holy, transform our hearts, and make us loving... BUT we are called to posture ourselves to be ready for God’s transforming work.

A great illustration of this is the way in which we get a suntan. Can we permanently tan our skin by sheer desire or discipline? No. The sun does all the work; however, it’s our responsibility to put ourselves in a position to be exposed to the sun. God “tans” our spiritual hearts in the exact same way.

Some call these actions “spiritual disciplines” or “spiritual habits.” I’m not wholly against those terms, but I much prefer the term “means of grace.” The following are examples of *means of grace* whereby we posture ourselves for spiritual transformation:

- Reading our Bibles
- Meditating and contemplating on God and His Word
- Praying
- Gathering with other believers for weekly worship
- Spending time with other believers
- Fleeing temptation
- Replacing bad habits with good habits
- Taking a day off sometime each week



How Are We Spiritually Transformed?

[1 Kings 18:16-38](#)

Last in a 4-part series titled: *Transformed*

Pastor Matt Friend – January 21 & 24, 2021

.....

- Fasting
- Enjoying God's creation
- Enjoying our own creation

We have chosen to phrase it this way in our [Member Statement of Faith](#) update:

The work of Christ secures the believer's salvation and begins the process of transformation into His likeness. Jesus works in individual believers and in entire churches to grow and change them over time. Out of love for Christ and while transforming into His image, we obey, do good works, love others, flee temptation, fight the flesh, endure hardship, and pursue holiness.

But let's remember—relating to the illustration of Elijah on Mount Carmel—these activities alone are only akin to “stacking firewood.” There's no promise that spiritual activity alone can change our hearts. For instance, there's no promise that if you fast and pray that you'll no longer struggle with lust. Holiness isn't something we can attain through an action plan.

If that's true, then what? This is where the second half of today's big idea comes into play. We stack the firewood and trust God to send the fire.

#2 – What do I mean by, “[We] trust God to send the fire”?

Just as only God can bring about salvation (making us genuine Jesus-followers), only God can bring about transformation (changing us over time to be more and more like Jesus).

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. —Ephesians 4:23 (NKJV)

The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it. —1 Thessalonians 5:24 (NIV)

It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose. —Philippians 2:13 (NIV)

Remain in Me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you



How Are We Spiritually Transformed?

[1 Kings 18:16-38](#)

Last in a 4-part series titled: *Transformed*

Pastor Matt Friend – January 21 & 24, 2021

.....

will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. —John 15:4-5 (NIV)

Let's remember the sun tan illustration above. We don't naturally tan our skin by sheer desire or discipline. Instead, the sun does all the work once we are in the position to be exposed to it. In the same way, when we dedicate ourselves to the spiritual disciplines, habits, and/or means of grace above—if we are indeed looking for Jesus in them—He will reveal Himself to us, and (in His perfect timing) warm our hearts with His truth and love.

Therefore, in all our spiritual activity, it's actually God we are seeking, for it's only God who can bring real change to our hearts.

God is the one we seek while...

- Reading our Bibles ([2 Corinthians 3:18](#))
- Meditating and contemplating on God and His Word ([Psalms 42:5-6](#))
- Praying ([James 4:8](#))
- Gathering with other believers for weekly worship ([Hebrews 12:22-29](#))
- Spending time with other believers
- Fleeing temptation
- Replacing bad habits with good habits
- Taking a day off sometime each week
- Fasting
- Enjoying God's creation
- Enjoying our own creation

With this perspective, in due time, God “sends the fire” and affects change within our souls.

The difference between doing religious activity without seeking God and doing it with a heart that craves God is the difference between convincing someone that $2 + 2 = 4$ (a purely rational act) and revealing something beautiful to them. Only God's Spirit can take what someone knows (e.g., facts about Jesus) and make these truths so beautiful in their hearts that they are caught up with love, devotion, and worship.



How Are We Spiritually Transformed?

[1 Kings 18:16-38](#)

Last in a 4-part series titled: *Transformed*

Pastor Matt Friend – January 21 & 24, 2021

.....

When God graciously meets us in our spiritual activity and opens our hearts to His truth, it's then that the following becomes true for us...

One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in his temple. —Psalm 27:4 (NIV)

Know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. —Ephesians 3:19 (NIV)

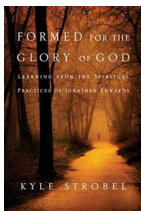
“Once we see the beauty of Christ our inner clocks are set to the pace of heaven’s time.” —Kyle Strobel

“Knowledge of God is of the beautiful glorious God. To know God is to love Him, and to love Him is to know Him. This is why light demands heat and heat, light. One cannot have true knowledge of God without loving Him. Likewise, one cannot have true love without knowing God. Unfortunately, more often than not, fallen people try to have one without the other. To receive both light and heat is to understand God, and it will turn your face to Him in affection.” —Kyle Strobel

Today's Take-Away

Keep stacking firewood and trusting God to send the fire!

Resource Recommendation



[*Formed for the Glory of God: Learning from the Spiritual Practices of Jonathan Edwards*](#)

by Kyle Strobel