

Becoming

Me:

Over the last few months, I've begun to make a shift in my life. I'm doing a lot less digital and a lot more analog things. For example, I ditched my Apple Watch, started reading my physical Bible again, and began journaling with a pen instead of a keyboard. I'm not saying that is what you should do. I don't tell you that for a pat on the back, either. It's less efficient. It's also been really good for me. Things are taking longer, which means I can't accomplish as much. That sounds bad, does it? But the reality is I had filled my day with a bunch of stuff that didn't really matter. As a result, I felt pressure to complete all of this, but even when I did, it didn't bring the fulfillment I thought it should. As a result, I became increasingly anxious and stressed, despite producing at a rate I had never produced before. This past summer, I went to the Dominican Republic and I was teaching on the fact that every decision we make shapes the people we become. Sometimes the words that hit you the hardest are the words you think God gave you to say to someone else. If you were to look in my prayer journal, you would see that I pray daily for God to shape me into the man He wants me to be. But while I was on the mission trip, God started working on me. He convicted me that praying that prayer is one thing, but acting on that prayer is something else entirely. Who I'm becoming is a daily decision. The choice is mine.

We:

The same is true for all of us. Many of us don't give it much thought. As a result, we think we're staying the same. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are always becoming. Stronger or weaker, richer or poorer, disciplined or distracted, joyful or bitter, compassionate or calloused, holy or hardened, surrendered or self-reliant. Who we become isn't a mystery. It's quite predictable. It has everything to do with the choices we make. Who do we surround ourselves with? What do we choose to eat? Do we exercise? What do we watch, listen to, and read? When do we do that? How are we filling our days? All of these things have shaped us into the people we are today and continue to shape us into the people we will become.

As followers of Jesus, we understand that we are supposed to become more like Him. We are supposed to pattern our lives after His. We talk about it around here all the time: Believe, Belong, Become. We want to become the people God has called us to be. Here's the problem: Too many of us are sitting around waiting to learn the thing that is going to help us become the person God wants us to be. Maybe, and that's a big maybe, we have a

lack of information. But for most of us, that's simply not true. We're just not intentional about growing in Christ. John Mark Comer said, "If we're not being intentionally formed by Jesus himself, then it's highly likely we are being unintentionally formed by someone or something else." I would say it isn't "highly likely," it's absolutely certain. We're all being formed. Either we're being formed by Jesus or someone else. We get to choose.

God:

You have no excuse for not growing in Christ. God has already given you everything you need to live a Godly life. Those aren't even my words. If you have your Bible with you, open it up to 2 Peter 1:3-11 (NIV).

"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." - 2 Peter 1:3-11 NIV

What did Peter say? God has already given you everything you need to live a godly life. He sent Jesus to give His life for you. When you became a Christian, you were filled with the Holy Spirit of God. There are likely some of you in this room who have never become a Christian. Let's start here. Why should you become a Christian? Every one of us does things that we know are wrong. The Bible calls that sin. Sin is what separates us from God. He will not be in the presence of sin. That's why Jesus came to earth. He lived a perfect life and gave His life for you on the cross so you could receive forgiveness. Jesus is the only way to heaven. There are not multiple paths. This is not multiple choice. These are not even my words. This is the claim that Jesus made. So either we believe Him or we don't. We believe Him. So, if we want to spend eternity with God, there is only one way: through Jesus. To become a Christian, you must hear and believe, repent of the sin in your life, confess Jesus as Lord, be baptized by immersion into Christ, and live your life for Jesus each day until He

returns or you die. If you have any questions about what I just said, I'd be happy to discuss them with you today before you leave.

Living your life for Jesus might seem a little vague, so let's take a look at what Peter had to say and put some flesh on this. My list people are going to love this. Peter said we should make every effort to grow in faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. If we're growing in these things, we will be effective in the mission He has given us. What's the mission? To glorify God and make disciples of the nations. Peter said if we practice these things, we will never fall.

As we begin to unpack this, let me say this: This is not how you earn salvation, but it is how you are to live your life. You can't earn your salvation. Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection made that possible. That does not excuse you from putting in the effort. Grace is not opposed to effort; it is opposed to earning. Are we together on this? This is who you are to become, but it won't happen by accident.

Peter's list starts with faith. It makes sense because without faith, none of the rest of it matters. Not as far as eternal life is concerned. Put your faith in Jesus and then move on to the next thing. The next thing on the list is virtue. You are to live a moral life. This doesn't mean a passive life. To live virtuously is to live courageously, the way Jesus taught us to live. Then you add knowledge to the equation. You are to be rooted in faith, live the best way you know how, but continue to grow in what you know. You'd better spend time in the Scripture, show up to church, and sign up for that Group so you can continue growing in knowledge.

But knowing something and doing something are two different things. So Peter adds self-control here. He said you'd better learn to master your desires and passions. I know, our culture tells us that if we feel something, that means we should do it. That's how we're wired, so that must make it right. Wrong. There are so many things you naturally want to do, but you should not do. We have to teach our kids that from a young age. I know you want to smack that kid and take his toy, but you can't do that! Some of you need to stop telling yourself you deserve it. No, you really don't. Learn to tell yourself no. Exercise self-control as you pursue a life patterned after Jesus.

Then we stack patience on top of this. The patience we're talking about here isn't patience with yourself, though. It's patience as you endure trials and sufferings. When you start following Jesus, that stuff is going to follow. That patience is going to help you develop

Godliness. The Godliness we're talking about here is an attitude that pleases God and is focused on His will for our lives. When we have that kind of attitude, it's a lot easier to have brotherly kindness. We're supposed to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. This kind of love is known as "phileo" love. It is the kind of love that is present between best friends. It is generous, affectionate, and warm. We are supposed to love each other that way.

But Peter doesn't stop there. He ends this list with love. But he ends it with Agape love. The essence of agape love is goodwill, benevolence, and willful delight in the object of love. It doesn't come naturally to us, and is produced in us by the Holy Spirit of God.

You:

Is that enough to be getting on with? As it turns out, living for Jesus isn't a mystery. He didn't hide from us what that is supposed to mean. Today, I've given you some information, but I want to remind you that knowing something and becoming someone are two different things. I want to share this quote with you:

"Information alone does not produce transformation. Because knowing something is not the same as doing something, which is still not the same as becoming the kind of person who does something naturally as a by-product of a transformed inner nature." - John Mark Comer

If I could only tell you one thing, it would be this: Grow on purpose. The mission is vital. Eternity is at stake. You will not grow in your faith unintentionally. So I will ask you this: Who do you want to become?

We:

We want you to become a Kingdom Worker. We want you to become the person God has created you to be. We believe the local church is Jesus' plan for the Gospel to spread to the ends of the earth. The mission is vital. That's why we created the Growth Track. We want everyone to grow on purpose and for a purpose. We're here to glorify God and make disciples of the nations. I don't know about you, but I'm done messing around. We're ready to help you take your next step. We can't take it for you, but we will take it with you. Let's go, church. It's time.