



UNASHAMED



RECOGNIZING TRANSFORMATION

By Philip Nation

An assignment without a means of gauging success normally ends with frustration or abandonment.

In the church, our work is to see disciples made. But can you really “measure” discipleship? A strong case can be made that it is ludicrous to measure transformation in a person’s life. Nevertheless, there are biblical injunctions that halt our progress into sin and prescriptions that lead us toward spiritual maturity. In the Transformational Discipleship project, we did not set out to randomly create objective measurements against which a person’s life would be deemed infantile, growing, or mature. We did, however, uncover attributes that indicate growth and/or the desire that growth is occurring.

The research revealed eight issues we named the “Attributes of Discipleship.” They are not new ideas necessarily, but they stand out as key ideas in the lives of Protestants in North America.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



BIBLE ENGAGEMENT

OBEYING GOD AND DENYING SELF

SEEKING GOD

SERVING GOD AND OTHERS



SHARING CHRIST

EXERCISING FAITH



BIBLE ENGAGEMENT

It should go without saying that believers will be engaged in the study of the Scriptures. Leadership, however, must often begin with the restatement of the obvious. Transformation can be recognized in a person when their mind is sharpened by the Bible, their perspective is shaped by the Bible, and their actions are directed by the Bible.

OBEYING GOD AND DENYING SELF

Discipleship is the process of obedience to one who is in authority over you. In our study, we found that people progressing in their faith are the ones who prioritize God's desires over self-will. Transformation can be seen in them because they progressively set aside earthly delights for kingdom priorities.

SERVING GOD AND OTHERS

Just as Jesus said that He had come to serve and not be served, so must believers. The choice to serve others is just that... a choice. It

highlights a maturity of soul that we allow the needs of others to trump our own needs. Transformation is evident when personal needs, and even dreams, are set aside for the needs we see in others.

SHARING CHRIST

Inherent to being a disciple of Christ is the making of other disciple-makers for Christ. Even with the need to live out the effects of the gospel, maturing believers know that speaking about the message is a necessity. Transformation is evident when we talk about the source of it.

EXERCISING FAITH

Can you measure a person's faith? Probably not. But you can see it when it is put into action. Believers participating in the research noted that they knew the importance of living by faith as opposed to by personal strength. Transformation is seen in believers when risk-aversion is set aside and our lives are characterized by faithful obedience to God's will.

SEEKING GOD

A person becomes a disciple of Christ because they intend to follow Him and become like Him. A continuous hunger should arise from this life. It is referred to in Scripture as our "first love," and believers are commanded at times to return to it. Transformation is seen when our desire is to know God more deeply and experience His work more fully.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Our faith is personal, but it is not intended to be private. Jesus established the church for our collective good and our collective growth. After all, humans are relational by nature; spiritually, we are no different. As believers, our horizontal relationships should develop just as our vertical relationship with God does. Transformation is occurring when relational maturity is evident in our lives.

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From previous studies, "unashamed" was new to

our list, but we were not surprised by its appearance in the research. It is natural to think that a person following Christ would be willing to publicize such a matter. The research noted that believers felt it appropriate, and even necessary, for others to know them as Christians and be held accountable for a life exemplary of that name. Transformation is evident when a believer is unashamed in presenting their own life as being aligned with Christ.

The old adage is that **if you aim at nothing then you will hit it every time. At the very heart of Christianity is the work of making disciples for Christ. It should never sit at the fringe of our life or the church. Through work like that of Transformational Discipleship, we are able to better recognize when we are effectively reaching toward that goal.**