

SPIRITUAL

Growth



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LESSON 2

personal
spiritual growth

BIBLE STUDY

**Desire the sincere milk of the word
That you may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2)**

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In the opening lesson we exposed the truth that God has many expectations for those who bear the identity of being His children.

- One of those expectations is His anticipation and provision toward our growth
- Eph. 4:11-13 And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors that are teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³till we all come to the *unity of the faith* and of the *knowledge of the Son of God*, to a *perfect man*, to the *measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*.

Now to be sure, there is no official and exact definition of spiritual growth. Therefore, we use personal spiritual growth as a synonym for other terms **personal spiritual development**, **developing higher spiritual awareness** or to **developing higher God consciousness**.

One can also define personal spiritual growth as way to integrate spirituality to a higher and higher degree in our daily live.

LAST WEEK WE STARTED EXAMINING THE BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH:

I. WE GET TO KNOW GOD PERSONALLY

II. WE BECOME FAMILIAR WITH GOD'S VOICE

III. WE GROW IN YOUR FAITH IN GOD

IV. WE ARE GIVEN DIRECTION IN LIFE

The word of God provides guidance and answers to every situation or circumstance in life.

Psl. 119: 58-60 reads “With all my heart I want your blessings. Be merciful as you promised.⁵⁹ **I pondered the direction of my life**, and I turned to follow your laws.⁶⁰ I will hurry, without delay, to obey your commands (NLT)

- While studying the word he was led to study his own life, and this caused a revolution.
- He came to the word, and (b) then he came to himself, and (c) this made him arise and go to his Father.
- Consideration is the commencement of conversion: first we think and then we turn.
- ***Then he acknowledged in Psl. 119:105*** that God's word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.
 - ❖ **Prov 6:23** For the **commandment** is a **lamp**; and the **law is light**; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:
- The textual admonition is particularly clear for those whose pathways lead them into darkness

- Here the model of a bright lamp represents our level of awareness, where the body represents the lamp which is lit ever more brightly as our consciousness increases.
- The brightness of our **awareness/ consciousness** lights up our surroundings so that we can see and hence perceive additional aspects of ourselves and our surroundings.
- If we can get our feet right as to holy walking, we shall soon get our hearts right as to happy living
- When our minds repent of unrighteous ways, then our feet are led into good ways
- But there will never be repentance until there is deep, earnest thought.
- Thus, God's word will help us decide **in agreement** with His word.

V. WE WILL HAVE A PEACEFUL LIFE

As we grow spiritually, we will have peace regardless of what is going on in our personal lives, or in this world.

- Spiritual life has often been compared to walking upstream; and we you are not progressing forward, then you are going backwards.
- The disquietness of the world is too powerful and the depraved culture of this world is always seeking to push a believer backwards.
- Therefore, we must always seek to progress in our spiritual lives; otherwise, we will be spiritually declining.
- We have peace because God's promises us that when you need healing, He has already provided it for us ; He promised to supply our needs; He promised to protect us.

- However, He **will not make us trust Him or spend time with Him.**
- It is our responsibility to find out what the Bible says about our lives
- If we believe this, we will advance in our journey of **Spiritual Growth.**
- **Paul wrote to the Church at Philippi:** And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,¹⁰ that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,¹¹ being **filled with the fruits of righteousness** which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (**Phil. 1:9-11**)
 - ❖ Paul's prayer was for continues spiritual progress; not because they lacked maturity—however, no believer has maxed-out their potential for improvement.
 - ❖ His prayer raises specific petitions which teach us about a mature Christian.

1) A Mature Christian Is Marked by Abounding Love: And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more (Phil. 1:9)

✓ Christ said all of the laws were summed up in love. Matt. 22:37-40 says this: Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

○ **IF WE HATE ANOTHER, ITS BECAUSE WE DON'T LOVE OURSELVES**

✓ He also taught that love would be the mark of every true follower of Christ: “They will know you are my disciples by the way that you love one another” (John 13:35).

2) A Mature Christian Is Marked by Growing Knowledge

✓ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight (Phil. 1:9)

a) A mature Christian is growing in the **knowledge of Scripture.**

○ One can't know what is best if he/she doesn't know the Word of God.

b) A mature Christian is growing in the **knowledge of God.**

○ We see Paul pray for this all the time in his letters.

○ Consider what he said in Ephesians & Colossians: I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. (Eph. 1:17; Col. 1:9)

c) A mature Christian is growing in the **knowledge of others.**

3) A Mature Christian Is Marked by Spiritual Discernment” Phil. 1:10

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.”

- ✓ **The word “discern” in V 10 [dokimazō] can be translated “approve” or “examine.” It was used of a metallurgist testing metals or coins to determine their purity or genuineness.**
- ✓ **In Luke 12:56, it is translated “interpret or analyze.”**
- ✓ **Mature Christians are discerners who test everything to hold onto what is good and best for their spiritual life and others.**
- ✓ **They put everything into the fire—to see if it is excellent.**

- a) Mature Christians **test everything** by the Word of God. Heb. 5:13-14 says this: Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.
- b) Mature Christians test everything by **discerning what edifies**.
- I Cor. 10:23 says, “‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.”
- c) Mature Christians test everything by **discerning what is evil**.
- Paul said in I Thess. 5:21-22, “Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”
- d) A Mature Christian is marked by **Spiritual Integrity** “....so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be **pure and blameless** until the day of Christ (Phil. 1:10)

- to be sincere and blameless refers first to the inner attitudes and then to the outward behavior
- The word “pure” [eilikrineēs=sincere] carries the idea of testing something by sunlight.
- Our English word “sincere” comes from the Latin word “sincerus,” which means “without wax.”
- In ancient Rome those who made pottery often covered cracks with wax to deceive those who purchased them.

4) A Mature Christian Is Marked by Good Works “...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:11)

- ✓ The word “filled” speaks of something completed in the past and having continuing results.

✓ Paul pictures these Christians as having born fruits throughout their life and one day standing at the judging seat of Christ surrounded by these fruits (v. 10).

a) Godly attitudes are a fruit of righteousness. Gal. 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

b) Praise is a fruit of righteousness. **Heb. 13:15** says, “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.”

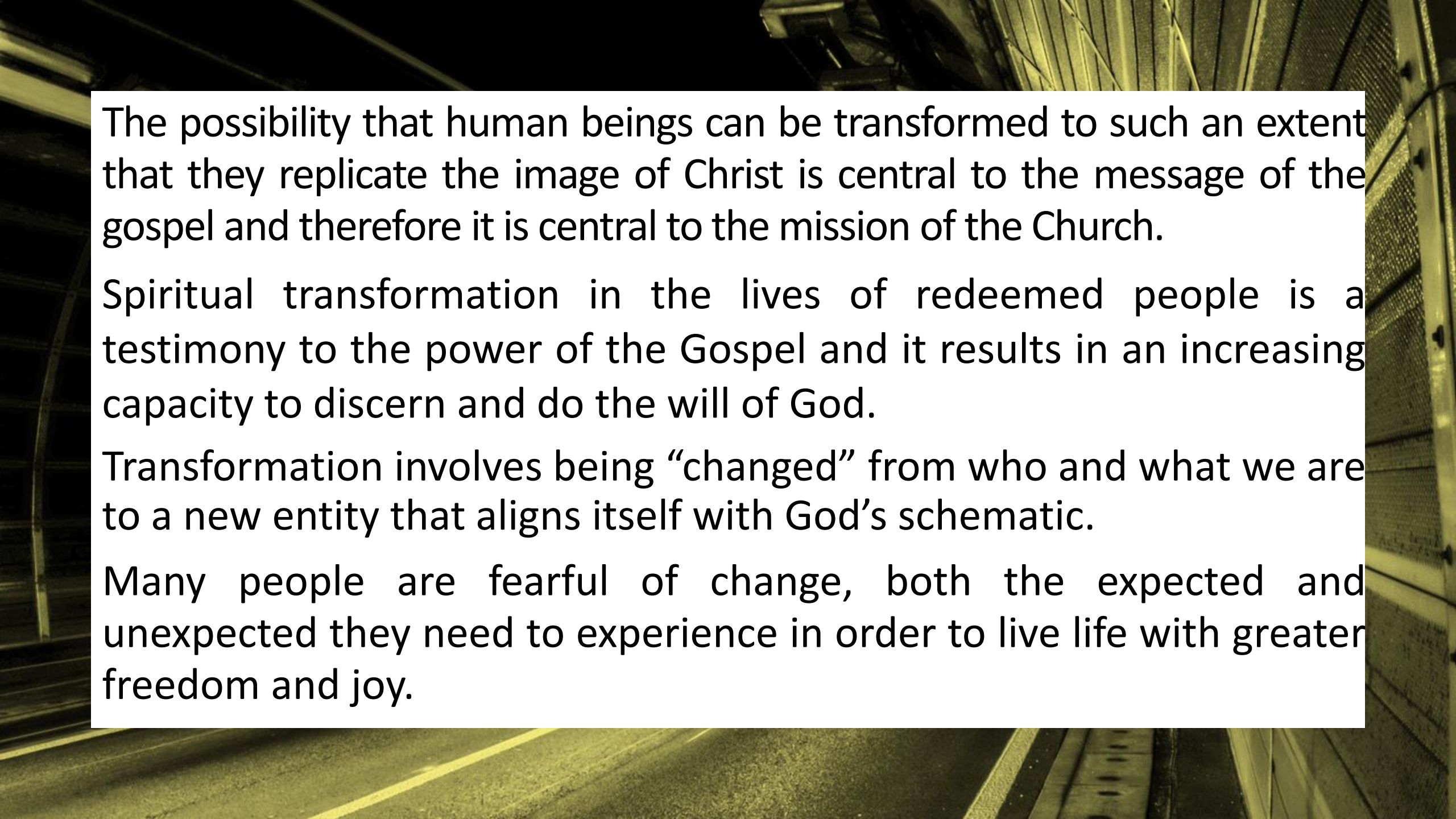
c) Discipleship is a fruit of righteousness. **Rom. 1:13**: I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

5) A Mature Christian Is Marked by Glorifying God “filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:11)

- ✓ The mature Christian’s life will glorify God while on the earth and ultimately throughout eternity.
- ✓ Their lives will constantly point people to God. Listen to these Scriptures:
 - This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15:8)
 - In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matt. 5:16)

We have talked about **spiritual growth** or **spiritual maturity** almost exclusively in terms of setting goals for growth and ingestion of biblical ideals that promote that growth

- Just for a moment, I would like to examine it through the lens of “**transformation.**” Spiritual transformation is the process by which **Christ is formed in us** ...for the glory of God, for the abundance of our own lives, and for the sake of others.
- **Gal. 4:19** My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is **formed (morpho = to fashion)** in you,
- **Rom. 8:29** For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed (symmorphos = jointly formed) to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.
- **Rom. 12:1-2** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be **conformed (syschēmatizō)** to this world, but be **transformed (metamorphoō)** by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.



The possibility that human beings can be transformed to such an extent that they replicate the image of Christ is central to the message of the gospel and therefore it is central to the mission of the Church.

Spiritual transformation in the lives of redeemed people is a testimony to the power of the Gospel and it results in an increasing capacity to discern and do the will of God.

Transformation involves being “changed” from who and what we are to a new entity that aligns itself with God’s schematic.

Many people are fearful of change, both the expected and unexpected they need to experience in order to live life with greater freedom and joy.

Like the acorn that has to die [i.e., separate from its source of origin] in order to be reborn as an oak tree, we are all in the midst of being transformed.

With this transformation, we become more compassionate, caring people who offer our unique gifts in the service of a larger whole.

Change offers us the possibility of **growing beyond our perceived limitations** to the fullness of our **divine potential**.

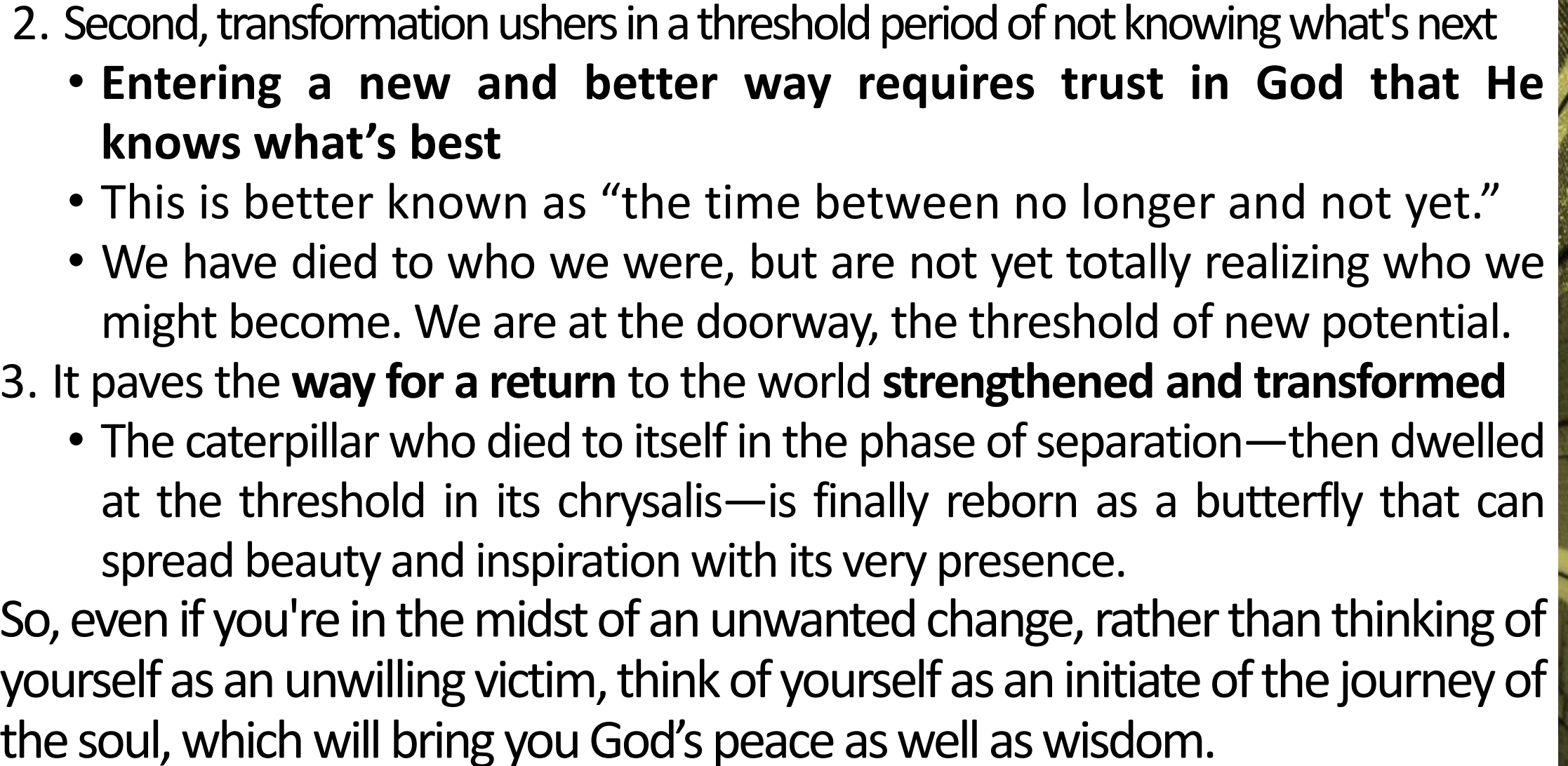
The mysteries of change are known in every world wisdom tradition and provide us with an archetypal map for spiritual growth.

1. First, change entails **separation from the old life**

- This first step may involve illness, job loss, financial reversal, betrayal, divorce, or death of a loved one – all which disrupts our world and shatters our previous identity

Paul in two scriptures in the NT appeals to the product of God's power, as opposed to human effort.

- **II Cor 5:17** Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new [kainos]** creature [**ktisis = formation**]; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become **new [ibid]**
- **Gal 6:15** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creature [kainos ktisis]**
- Deprived of familiar frameworks, we are invited to enter the ritual process of transformation.

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2. Second, transformation ushers in a threshold period of not knowing what's next
- **Entering a new and better way requires trust in God that He knows what's best**
 - This is better known as “the time between no longer and not yet.”
 - We have died to who we were, but are not yet totally realizing who we might become. We are at the doorway, the threshold of new potential.
3. It paves the **way for a return** to the world **strengthened and transformed**
- The caterpillar who died to itself in the phase of separation—then dwelled at the threshold in its chrysalis—is finally reborn as a butterfly that can spread beauty and inspiration with its very presence.
- So, even if you're in the midst of an unwanted change, rather than thinking of yourself as an unwilling victim, think of yourself as an initiate of the journey of the soul, which will bring you God's peace as well as wisdom.

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