A misty forest scene with a path leading to a bright light, surrounded by trees and fallen leaves. The path is covered in red and orange autumn leaves. Several large, dark rocks are scattered along the path. The trees are tall and thin, with some green and some yellowing leaves. The overall atmosphere is serene and spiritual.

# What it means to Worship God





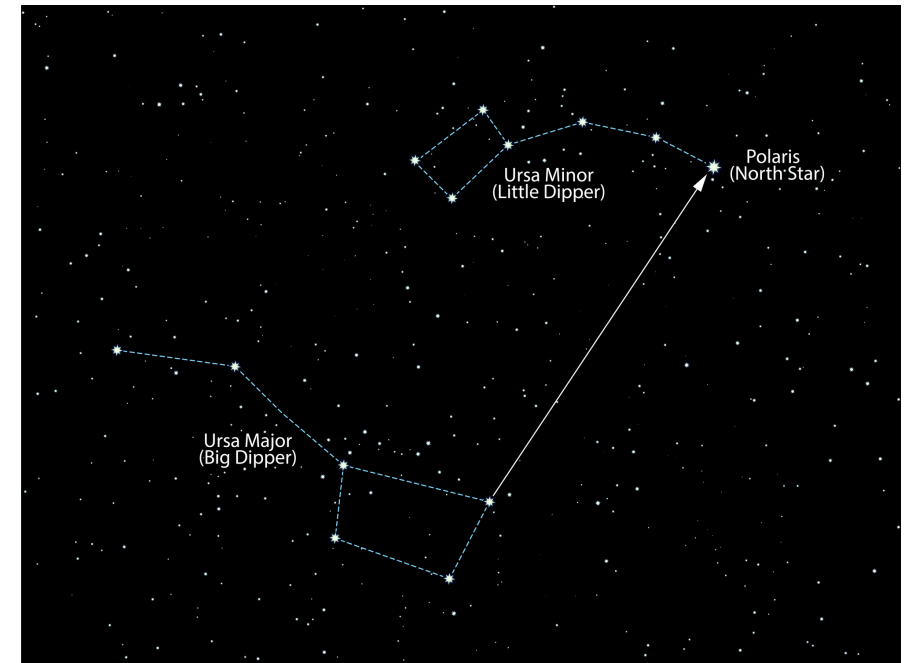
# Introduction

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the story of Arachne is presented in this way: "Arachne, vain-glorious of her ingenuity, challenges Minerva to a contest of skill in her art. The Goddess accepts the challenge, and, being enraged to see herself outdone, strikes her rival with her shuttle; upon which, Arachne, in her distress, hangs herself. Minerva, touched with compassion, **transforms** her into a spider" (cf. arachnophobia = a fear of spiders). Minerva said to her, "'Live, guilty woman! And that you may preserve the memory of this lesson, continue to hang, both you and your descendants, to all future times.' She sprinkled her with the juices of aconite (poison), and immediately her hair came off, and her nose and ears likewise. Her form shrank up, and her head grew smaller

# Introduction

yet; her fingers cleaved to her side and served for legs. All the rest of her is body, out of which she spins her thread, often hanging suspended by it, in the same attitude as when Minerva touched her and **transformed** her into a spider.”

Juno **transformed** Calisto into a Bear, and Jupiter placed them both in the sky where they form the Constellations of the Great and the Little Bear (Ursa Major & Ursa Minor).



Ursa Major and Ursa Minor

# Introduction

Outside of mythology, we are all familiar with the notion of transformation. A group of new recruits is transformed into a disciplined army of soldiers. Energy is transformed into heat. An alcoholic is transformed and lives soberly. A house is remodeled, thus transformed. An illiterate person learns to read and is joyfully transformed. France was transformed from a feudal confederacy to a monarchy. Film colorization is the transformational process of adding color to black and white films. The hurricane battered the coast and permanently transformed the landscape. The Beatles arrived in America and transformed the culture. In every case, something has occurred to bring about an alteration or change.



# Introduction

What, however, does it mean for a human being to be transformed? Is real change possible? Is it really possible for a person to become different from the person they have been in the past?

Some people, frankly, have given up on personal transformation. “It didn’t work for me” is not an uncommon admission. Others become quite discouraged when they make some progress, only to slip back into their old habits. Rather than experiencing transformation, they tend to live with troubling guilt or shame – or even a sense of failure. For these, “I give up” comes from a deep place within their hearts and reflects a despair that real change – at least for them – is not possible.

# Introduction

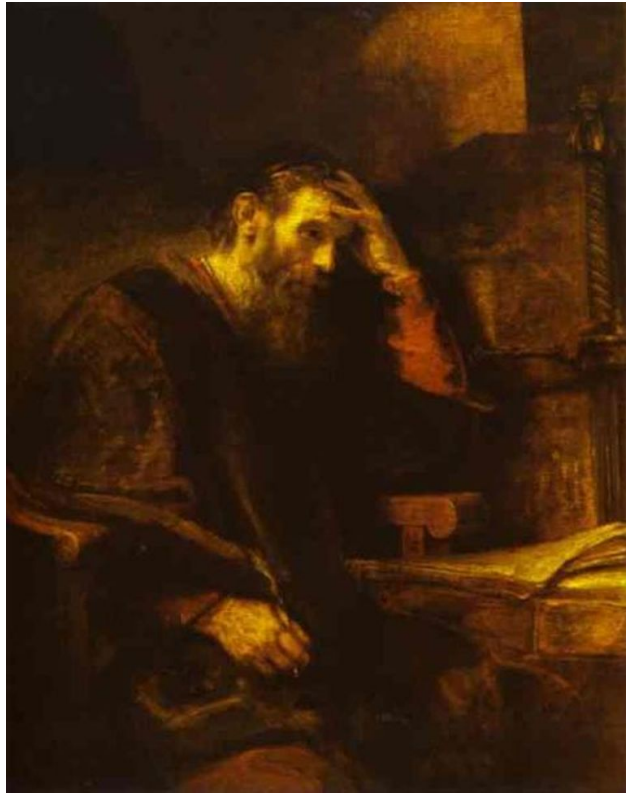
Real stories of real people who have given up on life cause us to ask the question: “Is there hope?” Or, better yet, “Is there hope for me?”

What if they have been sincerely looking for transformational help but have been looking in all the wrong places? What if all the popular self-help books, worldly-wise promises, and secular counselors offer elements of truth but are unable to capture the entirety of what it means to be human? What if they fall grossly short of capturing what it means that we are made in the *imago Dei* – in the very image of God?

Yes, there is hope for transformation. But let’s make sure we understand what real transformation looks like and how to experience it over the course of our lives – from God’s point of view.



# Paul's Transformation



**Rembrandt van Rijn**

1606-1669

*The Apostle Paul* (c. 1657)

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

“And all those hearing him (the Apostle Paul) continued to be amazed, and were saying, ‘Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?’ But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 9:21-22).

“...even though I (Paul) was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor” (I Tim. 1:13).



# Dr. Dallas Willard's Claim

“We *can* become like Christ in character and in power and thus realize our highest ideals of well-being and well-doing. That is the heart of the New Testament message.

“Do you believe this is possible?

“My central claim is that we *can* become like Christ by doing one thing – by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father.”



# Personal Transformation Begins With Worship



“If true worship is anything, it is a transforming experience. We need to understand this word and then discover what kind of transformation takes place in the life of the person who worships God ‘in spirit and truth.’”

-Warren Wiersbe

# God's Prescription for Transformation

“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of **worship**. And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

- Romans 12:1-2, NASV



Rook Chess Piece Casting Shadow of Castle on Wall



# God's Prescription for Transformation

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God **transform you** into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.”

- Romans 12:1-2, NLT





# The Language of Transformation

- The Greek word that the Apostle Paul uses in his oft-quoted passage in Romans 12:1-2 for *transformation* is *metamorphoō*, from which we get our English word *metamorphosis*.
- The passive form of the verb means *to be transformed, change in form, to be transfigured*. In other words, we will never be able to transform ourselves apart from our union with Christ (Rom. 6:2-6).
- The compound word consists of *morphe* (form or external appearance) + *meta* (to alter or change) = “to change into another form, to remodel” (Kittel). The Greek noun form, *metamorphosis*, means transformation.





# Comparing Two Different Greek Words

- The synonyms are *metamorphoō* (transform, change in form **from within**) and *metaschematidzo* (change the form of, transform, change).
- “Do not be conformed (*schema*) to this world.” In other words, “do not yield to the various manifestations of worldliness” (Hendriksen). Don’t be squelched (“crushing and squashing force” – OED) into the world’s mold. Rather - a strong contrast - undergo a deep abiding change (*metamorphoō*) by the renewing of your mind – an **inner change**.
- *Morphe* is the **essence** or **real being** of a thing. *Schema* deals with the quality of changes it may undergo (the **external, outward conformation**), while the thing itself is essentially, the same as it was before.

# Metamorphosis vs. Metaschematismos



Metamorphosis



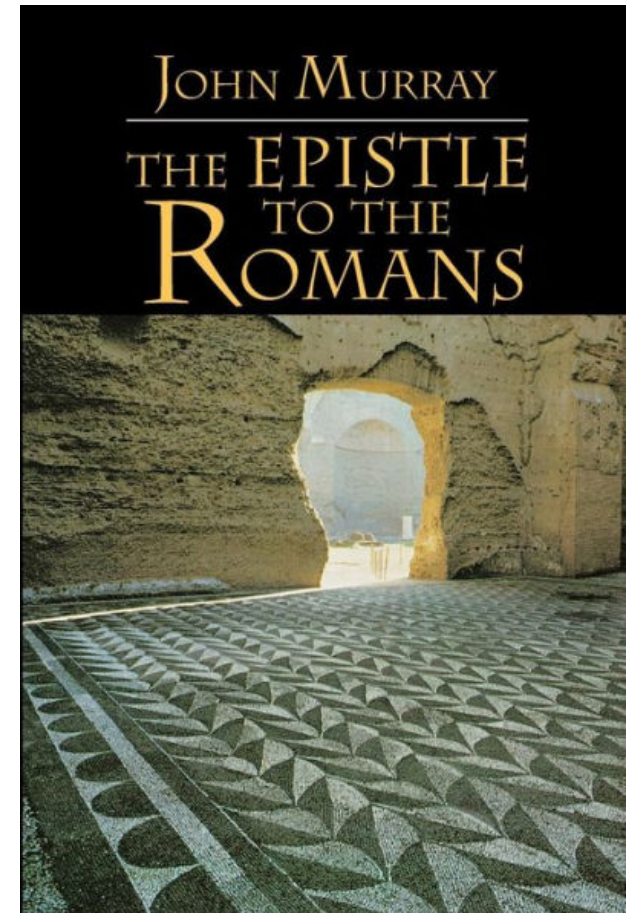
“If I were to change a Dutch garden into an Italian, this would be *metaschematismos* (essentially, still a garden): but if I were to transform a garden into something wholly different, as into a city, this would be *metamorphosis*.”

- Richard Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*



# John Murray on Romans 12:2

“We are to be constantly in the process of being **metamorphosed** by renewal of that which is the seat of thought and understanding. If there is any suggestion of the fleeting fashions of this age in the preceding clause (i.e., *do not be conformed to this world*), there is here reflection upon the deep-seated and permanent change wrought by the process of renewal. Sanctification is a process of revolutionary change in that which is the center of consciousness....It is the thought of progression and strikes at the stagnation, complacency, pride of achievement so often characterizing Christians.”



# From the Inside Out

“As the *kardia* (heart) is the integrating center of the person, **renewal occurs from the heart outward**. God causes the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ to ‘shine in our hearts’ (II Cor. 4:4-6). It is here that Christ dwells (Eph. 3:17), here that his peace reigns (Col. 3:15), and here that Christians are enlightened about God’s saving purpose (Eph. 1:18). It is the heart



**Dr. Knox and Virginia Chamblin**

Late Professor of New Testament  
Reformed Theological Seminary





# From the Inside Out

that receives the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 1:22), into the heart that God pours his love by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5), and ‘from a pure heart’ that acts of love arise (I Tim. 1:5). Similarly, it is Christ who explains Paul’s ‘affection’ for his people (Phil. 1:8). Corresponding to the depth of their former commitment to sin, Christians believe the gospel ‘in the heart’ (Rom. 10:9-10) and obey apostolic teaching ‘from the heart’ (Rom. 6:17).

**Dr. Earl Radmacher** said it this way: “As a man thinks in the center of his deepest reflection, that’s what he will be. The things he thinks about deeply are the raw materials which form his actions.”

# Metamorphosis

The butterfly, anticipating the type of man's resurrection (a lowly body into the form of Christ's glorious body), is immeasurably more beautiful than the caterpillar, yet it has come forth, or **unfolded**, from it. "The change on the outside is the normal and natural expression of the nature on the inside."



# Masquerade

“When a Christian conforms to this world and fashions his life after the pattern of unbelievers, he is changing the outside, *but the change is not coming from the inside*. It is not metamorphosis; it is *masquerade* (the assumption of a false character).”

- Warren Wiersbe



# Transformation by the Word of God



**John M. Frame**

1939 -

Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology & Philosophy  
Reformed Theological Seminary

“Many Scripture passages tell us that God’s Word changes us, sanctifies us, drives us to repentance, and incites us to love God and one another. It’s so important, therefore, to read the Word, to study it, indeed to meditate on it.”



# Transformation by the Word of God

- “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105).
- “But he answered, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God”’” (Mt. 4:4).
- “And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).
- “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

# Transformation by the Word of God

- “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (II Tim. 3:16-17).
- “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).
- “And we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts” (II Peter 1:19).



# John Murray on Romans 12:1-2

- We must present our whole persons (bodies = whole persons) as living sacrifices, which must “be a constant dedication.”
- We must embrace our physical bodies as well as our spirits, unlike what was taught in Greek philosophy. “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body” (I Cor. 6:19-20).
- Our calling is to holiness (i.e., *a living and holy sacrifice*).
- Our worship is to be rational, the term used in Rom. 12:1 (i.e., “your *rational* service of worship”).



# John Murray on Romans 12:1-2

- “The service here in view is worship service and the apostle characterizes it as ‘rational’ because it is worship that drives its character as acceptable to God from the fact that it enlists our mind, our reason, our intellect. It is rational in contrast with what is mechanical and automatic.”
- “There is no more searching question than that of the patterns of thought and action which we follow. To what standards do we conform?...This is the force of ‘be not be conformed to this world.’”
- “If all our calculations, plans, ambitions are determined by what falls within life here, then we are children of this age.”





# John Murray on Romans 12:1-2

- And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever” (I Jn. 2:17).
- *The Message* by Eugene Peterson reads this way: “Don’t love the world’s ways. Don’t love the world’s goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world – wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important – has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out – but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity” (I Jn. 2:17).



# A Concluding Thought by J.I. Packer

“God impels us to act up to our position as royal children by manifesting the family likeness (i.e., conforming to Christ), furthering the family welfare (i.e., loving the brethren), and maintaining the family honor (i.e., seeking God’s glory). This is His work of sanctification. Through this progressive deepening of filial consciousness and character, with its outworking in the pursuit of what God loves and the avoidance of what He hates, ‘we are **transformed** by the Spirit of the Lord in ever increasing splendor into His own image’ (II Cor. 3:18). So it is not as we strain after feelings and experiences, of whatever sort, but as we seek God Himself, looking to Him as our Father, prizing His fellowship, and finding in ourselves an increasing concern to know and please Him, that the reality of the Spirit’s ministry becomes visible in our lives.”

# N.T. Wright

“How can we not be changed when we look at the face of Love himself?”

