

Spiritual Transformation

How People Change

In Bill Hull's book, Conversion and Discipleship, he makes the following statements regarding how people change:

The Holy Spirit is in the business of making us new people by transforming our mind and changing our character. The transformed mind informs the will, and from the will, we act.

Discipleship occurs when we answer Jesus's call to learn how to live by his perspective and standards and become the people who naturally act like him.

For us to gain his perspective and standards, we need a **change of the mind**. That change of mind (or repentance) comes only through a complete understanding of the gospel Jesus preached – a gospel that helps us understand our identity and responsibility as a Christ-follower. We will never develop a Christlike character unless God first transforms our mind, because the mind is the seat of the will and desires and directs action.

Next, as we yield to the Holy Spirit, He can begin **changing our desires**. He does this by affecting the intentions of the heart and implanting a desire to serve and please God.

While changing our mind and will are crucial first steps, they are just that – first steps. The next step that leads to Christlike character are **spiritual practices** (or exercises). Spiritual practices include things like prayer, reading and responding to God's Word, worship, using one's spiritual gifts to serve the church, tithing, confessing sin, submitting to authority, and helping others become disciples.

Once a person learns and begins to incorporate these spiritual practices into their lives, the next step is for them to become **habits**. The key for these spiritual practices to become habitual is for a disciple to differentiate between one's feelings and their will. A spirit of self-control and discipline is essential to weave these spiritual practices into the normal rhythms of one's life. Studies have shown it takes at least 3-4 weeks to form a habit and being a part of a community increases the chances of developing habits.

Finally, these habits lead to **Christlike character**. Hull puts it this way, "Character is the result of the will acting over and over again until it is consistently manifested through our bodies in behavior."

The Process of Change

