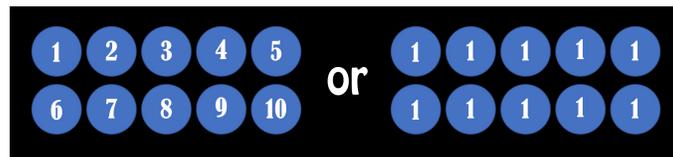


Bob Chisholm



Several years ago, I heard a question that so impacted me that I wrote it down and carefully thought through its implications. Here it is:

What is the difference between a Christian with ten years of experience and a Christian with one year of experience ten times?

Ponder that for a while. Both Christians travel through the same amount of time, but one intentionally manages the time while the other haphazardly stumbles through the time. The first finds depth and growth with each passing year (1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10) while the second has no vision and follows no plan. He simply repeats his empty, aimless year over and over (1 – 1 – 1 – 1 – 1 – 1 – 1 – 1 – 1 – 1).

It brought to mind something Albert Day had written in ***Discipline and Discovery***:

To argue about whether such purity is attainable is scarcely the business of most of us who have never made it our serious consecration, let alone our possession ... Instead of throwing up your hands in despair or throwing away your hunger for God in reversion to some lesser idol, seek it. Seek it for ten years, for twenty years, for thirty. Then come back and tell me what you think. Men have been searching for values of vastly less significance for a longer period. Some of them died searching.

As our spirits are shaped and formed by God, there will be evidence. Much of the change and growth will be internal, and while those around us may not immediately notice the slow, progressive transformation, God is nevertheless at work in our lives. The evidence of spiritual formation will accumulate as our spiritual life moves from stage to stage:

FROM PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE TO GOD RELIANCE ...

This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord. That person

will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. “But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

— Jeremiah 17:5-8

FROM FOLLOWING CULTURE TO FOLLOWING GOD ...

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

— Romans 12:1-2

FROM PERSONAL AGENDA TO KINGDOM OF GOD ...

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

— Matthew 6:33

FROM DEFIANCE TO OBEDIENCE ...

Why did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?” “But I did obey the Lord,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal. But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

— 1 Samuel 15:19-22

FROM SPIRITUAL INDIFFERENCE TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH ...

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.

— 2 Peter 1:3-8

FROM SERVING SELF TO SERVING OTHERS ...

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

— Philippians 2:3-4

FROM CONCERN FOR IMAGE TO CONCERN FOR CHARACTER ...

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

— 1 Samuel 16:7

FROM WASTING RESOURCES TO INVESTING THEM ...

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

— Matthew 25:14-18

FROM FEELING ENTITLED TO FEELING GRATEFUL ...

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him — and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

— Luke 17:11-19

FROM ISOLATION TO COMMUNITY ...

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

— Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

FROM CONFLICT TO LOVE ...

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

— 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

FROM BITTERNESS TO FORGIVENESS ...

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

— Ephesians 4:29-32

FROM DISRUPTION TO COOPERATION ...

Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

— 1 Thessalonians 5:13-15

FROM POSITIONAL LEADERSHIP TO RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP ...

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

— Mark 10:42-45

Make the decision to seek God for the long term. Be the Christian with ten years of experience. Find and follow a plan. And know that anything valuable will be expensive and that you will have to go through shallow to get to deep. In other words, spiritual transformation will take place throughout your entire lifetime as God slowly molds and shapes your inner life. It is a life-long journey, which will require all that you have, all that you are, your entire life. But what an exciting journey it will be.