

total
TRANSFORMATION

Following God's Design
for Spiritual Renovation

CAROLE COMBS



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Total Transformation: Following God's Design for Spiritual Renovation

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Preface

A popular television program, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, would choose a family affected by a natural disaster, a significant loss, or debilitating medical needs and remodel their broken-down or insufficient house, transforming it in just one week.

This study does not promise to take your broken-down, in-need-of-repair life and transform it in one week. However, this study promises to walk through the rooms of your soul, from the top of your head to the tips of your toes, and begin making you over by the power of God's Word, if you allow it. This transformation will not happen in one week. Instead, it is a beautiful transformation taking place day by day, week by week, month by month, and year by year.

God's Word reveals the truth about who you are: You are His spectacular creation! You were created on purpose for a purpose—a unique design blueprinted in Heaven. This world is full of lies; it will try to deceive you as you seek truth. The world and its lies can tear you down instead of build you up.

I hope you enjoy getting into this study book as you dig into God's Word. Allow His Word to transform you!

Warning: Prolonged use of God's Word will cause joy and godliness.

Getting Started: How to Be Transformed

This may be the first time you have picked up a Bible study book, or it may be your hundredth. No matter the number of times, I want to bless you: I pray you allow God to work in you through His Word. I pray you find yourself being made over to bring glory to God. I know time can be very limited for you. I pray you make the time to be changed spiritually.

Each lesson in this study is designed to be read six days of the week. God created this beautiful universe; then He rested. I suggest you read the commentary and answer the questions for six days and then rest. Dwell on what God has taught you during the week. Ask Him to show you what needs to be transformed. I have put “tools” in each lesson to help you. Sometimes you may think you do not know an answer to a question. Ask God. He can open your heart and mind to His truth.

So now it's transformation time!

L E S S O N 1

You Are Spectacular

WHEN GOD CREATED THE LIGHT and separated it from the darkness, when He spoke into existence the waters and dry land, brought forth grass and trees, and hand-placed the twinkling stars in the sky, when He filled His air and sea with creatures and made the animals to wander upon the land, “it was good” (Genesis 1). But it got better! God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” He made you like Him. Regardless of what you think, feel, or were told, you are not an accident. God has a special plan for you; He desires for you to be like Him, your Creator. God made you on purpose, and He made you spectacular!

RENOVATION DAY 1 **God Created You**

You are valuable to God.

Bible Tool: *Image of God* = shadow or likeness of God

1. Read Genesis 1:27. You were made in God’s image. How does that affect your value as a human being?

Our culture often measures a person’s value by productivity. Nowhere in God’s Word will you find this standard for a person’s

value. According to God, you are valuable if you are unable to walk or talk or move. You are valuable married or unmarried. You are valuable if you have children, cannot have them, or choose not to have them. You are valuable rich or poor. You are valuable if you have a different skin color from the person next to you. You are valuable if you grew up in a troubled home or a peaceful home. You are valuable incarcerated or free. You are valuable if you make bad choices or good choices. You are valuable educated or uneducated. I could take the rest of this book to tell you how valuable you are.

God made you in His likeness; you are a photocopy of Him. Be reminded today of your value. You occupy a higher place in creation because humans alone are made with godlike characteristics. You are valuable!

You were meant to bring glory to God.

2. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). We were created for God’s glory. As Christians, we are to live in a way that makes God look good. Do you reflect well on your Father? If not, why not?

3. Choose to live a life that brings glory to God. Choose to live so others want to know the God Who created you. What do you need to change in order to bring glory to God?

Trust the God Who made a spectacular universe to make you into something spectacular too. Remember, you were created by God and He does not, nor will He ever, make junk!

KnowledgeTool: God had a plan for you long before you could see it.

RENOVATION DAY 2

God Takes Personal Interest in You

If you are like me, you may often feel amazed that out of the billions of people who live on earth, God knows you personally by name. I struggle remembering the names of the new people I meet, just as I also struggle remembering the names of the people I already know. I work hard at remembering their names because they are important to me. How much more are we important to God? Do you think God knows your name?

God sees and knows you!

One summer I served as a counselor during a week of camp. We played a game of hide-and-seek, with the students looking for the counselors. I decided to lie flat in the tall weeds and bushes that lined the camp road. As I lay still, undetected in the weeds, I gazed up at the beautiful blue sky and thought, “God sees me lying here.”

You may feel overlooked or unnoticed by your family or friends. Maybe even at your job. Know that God sees you. He always has His eyes on you. Is there a place you can go that God cannot find you?

4. Read Psalm 139:1–18. How does realizing God knows everything about you affect you?

KnowledgeTool: Nowhere you go and nothing you do surprises God.

God counts your hair!

Have you ever tried to count the hairs on your head or someone else's? Counting a full head of hair is pretty much impossible. You may be taking cancer treatments or have other health circumstances that have caused hair loss. God knows every strand you have lost. He takes personal interest in every detail of your life.

KnowledgeTool: The average human has one hundred thousand hair follicles, and God counts them all.

5. Read Matthew 10:29–33.

(a) Why do you think God mentions the number of hairs on your head?

(b) In these same verses, God tells us not to fear. What is the connection between God knowing every hair on our heads and telling us not to fear?

(c) Has fear been crippling you? What will you do about it after reading Matthew 10:29–33?

God made a way for a relationship with Him!

God not only takes personal interest in knowing you, but He takes personal interest in the opportunities He has for you. Plus, He is available for you personally. God sent His Son for you and me so we could have a relationship with Him. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

KnowledgeTool: God cares enough about you that He sent His Son, Jesus, to make a way to Him.

RENOVATION DAY 3

God Loves You

God loves you genuinely and unconditionally—as you are and where you are. You do not have to do anything to deserve His love. John 3:16 tells us that God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life. The word *love* is only a word if we don't understand the love of God. God is love! God and love cannot be separated. It may be hard for you to accept or receive God's love, but to be transformed spiritually, you need to accept it.

God loves you and wants you to love Him and others.

Word Tool: *Abide* = accept or act in accordance with

6. Read John 15:9–13. Besides God's love, what benefits does God want you to receive from Him when you keep His commandments?

7. Read 1 John 4:7–12.
 - (a) What do these verses tell Christians to do?

 - (b) What do the verses say about those who do not love?

 - (c) What did God do for sinners because He loves so much?

Word Tool: *Propitiation* = “God ‘loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for (active mercy concerning) our sins.” —*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*

If you have accepted God’s love by receiving His Son as your Savior, you are practicing to love like He loves. I grew up taking piano lessons. I liked practicing at home, playing songs I enjoyed. The worst part of my piano lesson years was the recitals—all the people watching and listening to me as I played through a song I had worked on perfecting for hours and hours. The songs did not always come out the way the composers had intended, but I did my best. Like my piano recital songs, your actions and responses may not always come out as you intend, but they continue to be perfected in God’s love. Allow God to guide and direct your mouth, your mind, and your moves.

8. Identify three people who need your love.

(a) How will you demonstrate your love to them?

(b) Choose at least one person that you don’t love naturally and ask God to demonstrate His love for that person through you—you’ll be practicing Christlike love!

9. How will you demonstrate your love for God today?

Jesus, the good shepherd, gives abundant life.

Bible Tool: “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isaiah 53:6).

Word Tool: *Abundant* = more than enough

In John 10 Jesus describes Himself as the good shepherd. A shepherd cares for his sheep. Christians are the sheep, and Jesus is the shepherd. If you are a believer, Jesus is working daily to care for and protect you from the one who wants to steal, kill, and destroy you. Not only is Jesus protecting you, but He came to give you abundant life (John 10:10). Eternal life in Christ is more than enough—it is more than you ever have imagined possible.

Because of God's great love for you, His Son, Jesus, willingly laid down His life for you. Choose to accept the love of God.

RENOVATION DAY 4

God Sent His Son to Give Eternal Life

Our sin separates us from Holy God; however, because of His grace, He sent His only Son into the world so the world through Him might be saved. Jesus was the perfect, sinless sacrifice for your sins and mine. He died a sinner's death, yet He was victorious as He conquered death, rising from the grave. Each person has an individual choice to accept or reject the gift of eternal life that Jesus paid for in full.

We are sinners, separated from God.

10. Read Romans 3:21–23.

(a) According to these verses, who has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God?

(b) Who receives the righteousness of God? How?

We can be justified freely by God's grace through Christ Jesus.

Word Tool: *Propitiate* = to gain or regain the favor or goodwill of

Word Tool: *Propitiation* = wrath-removing sacrifice. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross satisfies God's wrath and removes His anger at our sin.

Jesus is our propitiation. Through His blood, we are justified by God's grace.

Word Tool: *Justified* = declared or made righteous in the sight of God

11. Read Romans 3:24–25.

(a) Can you be justified before God on your own merit?

(b) Why is being justified before Holy God called a gift of grace?

(c) Have you chosen to accept God's gift of eternal life through God's Son, Jesus? Why or why not? Explain your answer.

When I was twelve years old, I accepted God's gift of eternal life through His Son, Jesus. When my life is over on this earth, I know that I will live eternally in Heaven. It was by faith that I received Christ as my Savior. (See Ephesians 2:8–9.)

12. Read Romans 5:6–11 and 6:23. Who can give us peace with God?

13. Think of a person you love greatly. What would you do for that loved one if asked? What if the request was for you to die in that person's place?

Jesus willingly died for you and me, even when we didn't ask Him to do so. He died in our place so we might be saved from the wrath of Righteous God. Our sin made us His enemies, but Jesus reconciled us to God. Through Christ we are no longer God's enemies.

14. Read John 5:24 and Romans 10:9–10. Have you received Jesus as your Savior? Write out how you know you have eternal life. If you are unable to answer yes to this question, go to page 87 to learn how you can accept Christ and receive eternal life.

15. Have you shared with anyone about your experiences with God? Why or why not?

RENOVATION DAY 5

God Welcomes You into His Family

My husband and I adopted a beautiful little girl. She became part of our family because we chose to make her part of our family. On adoption day, the courts of Michigan made it legal, permanently changing her last name to ours. She received a new birth certificate that invalidated her original birth certificate.

She did not have to pay for that position or earn her way into our family.

You've been adopted!

If you have trusted Christ as your Savior, you have been adopted into His family. Your family name has been changed! Remember, this change in your position is a gift from God. You did not have to do anything to earn your position in God's family. God chose you!

Bible Tool: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

16. Read John 1:12 and 13. What does it mean to be a child of God?

When our adopted daughter took on her new last name, it brought responsibilities, including to carry her new name with honor and respect, to obey her new daddy, and to assimilate into her new family.

17. Read 1 John 5:1–3. What similarities are there between my daughter's responsibilities to her new family and a new believer's responsibilities toward God?

18. What has been a challenge to you as you assimilate into God's family?

My daughter, now an adult, is still part of our family. She didn't always carry her new name with honor and respect. Obeying her father was a struggle, and assimilating has been difficult.

Does this sound like your walk with God? I am so thankful our Heavenly Father's love for us never ends, no matter how disobedient, disrespectful, or dishonoring we have been. God won't ever remove us from His family. And once we are in His family, we cannot remove ourselves either.

You are an heir!

If you have been disobedient, disrespectful, or dishonoring, do not stay this way. Be an overcomer! For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world (1 John 5:4). You are His heir! As I was writing this, I realized the T-shirt I was wearing says, "I am a princess because my Father is the King."

Word Tool: *Heir* = someone who is entitled to inherit something

19. Read Romans 8:14–17.

(a) According to these verses, who are heirs?

(b) What do these heirs receive?

My mom once asked me, "Is there anything of mine that you would want?" (My dad had passed a couple of decades earlier due to cancer.) I didn't have an answer for her that day. I had never thought about being an heir to her things.

Do you realize you are an heir to the things that belong to God? He wants you to have what He has. His most valuable possession for you is eternal life. Do not miss out on what is available to you today.

Word Tool: *Abba* = an intimate term for God as father; "Daddy"; "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15)

We who have received Jesus as our Savior share eternal life, and right now we are sharing in our Abba's riches. What a humbling thought!

RENOVATION DAY 6

God Welcomes the Praise of His Children

We praise things every day—be it our coffee in the morning or a sunset in the evening or anything in between. The ability to praise is a characteristic of mankind. However, I'm afraid we have praised all the wrong or unimportant things and have neglected to praise the One Who is worthy of all our praise: the God of the universe, the Creator of life, the Redeemer of the believing soul. He welcomes the praise of His children.

Word Tool: *Praise* = to express warm approval or admiration of

20. Read Hebrew 13:15. Should you praise God only when circumstances are going well? Explain your answer.

Our praise of God should take place in good times and bad. Habakkuk said it quite well in Habakkuk 3:17–18: “Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the [produce] of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will take joy in the God of my salvation.” Here is how I see Habakkuk's message in my own words: Though life has not gone how I planned it and there is no gas in my car, I got fired from my job, the doctor diagnosed cancer in my body, and my family is falling apart, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

21. Write out your own paraphrase of Habakkuk 3:17–18. Do not forget the most important part—to rejoice in the Lord.

Word Tool: *Priesthood* = how believers represent God to others

22. Read 1 Peter 2:9–10. What reasons do these verses give for praising God?