

Puddling – Humbly Transforming Our Lives

MAGH

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Thank you Ps Lakers for the opportunity to share today.

PART 1 – Humble Beginnings:

Our world is full of wonderful transformations and metamorphosis. It is all around us in God's creation.

Some insects grow through a unique life cycle called complete metamorphosis. Examples include butterflies, moths, bees, wasps, ants, and beetles. Complete metamorphosis has four distinct stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult.

The transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly is of course one of the most spectacular examples of such a transformation.

When we were in Malaysia in June my wife and I visited the KL butterfly park and walked into an enclosure which houses five thousand butterflies. We marvelled at their beauty. Colours flew around us as we walked along the garden path. We sat on a bench under a waterfall and sat quietly together and prayed.

I can now reflect on how each of these 5000 butterflies came from a humble start.

The life of a butterfly starts when a female butterfly lays her eggs, usually on leaves or stems of plants. Inside these tiny eggs, caterpillars grow. **During this time the egg is of course exposed and susceptible to being eaten and to the elements.**

I reflect here on my life and how it was when I started as a Christian. I remember the day I raised my hand in church nearly 3 years ago. I too felt exposed and susceptible to all the eyes locked on me as my wife started crying (she'd waited 30 years for that day) and friends gathered around me.

And like the butterfly it required a humble start.

It started with me, like each of you did, surrendering my life to and declaring Jesus as my Lord and saviour. As Paul set out in Romans 10: 9:11

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you will be saved.”

This call to humbly surrender and start our new life with Christ is referenced in most versions of the sinner's prayer.

For example, Billy Graham's version is well known and reads:

“Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. In Your Name. Amen.”

Gentlemen, think back to who you were before you fully gave your life to Christ. Think back at when you raised your hand.

***Let's pray.

PART 2 – Transformation Is A Process:

Once ready, the caterpillar leaves its egg home by eating their way out of the egg and immediately start eating the leaves of the host plant. During this stage, they shed their skin four or five times. As it is growing its skin becomes too tight and splits open, revealing a new, larger skin underneath.

Once fully grown, the caterpillar turns into a “pupa” (or chrysalis). This is a vessel in which the caterpillar changes into a butterfly. They usually do this on twigs or safe, hidden areas around the host plant. During this time, a hardened case forms around the pupa to protect it from predators and extreme weather conditions. And inside, the tissue, limbs and organs of the caterpillar transform.

When we gave our lives to Christ we too had our lives transformed by becoming a citizen of God’s Kingdom.

In Colossians 1:13, we hear: “God has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the son of His love.”

By delivering us Jesus has rescued us from the jurisdiction of the enemy to have power over us. Paul then says we are conveyed into His Kingdom. This means we are moved from the old kingdom where the enemy had the legal right to rule over us and then moved, placed and born again into (conveyed into) the Kingdom of God.

And so just as the caterpillar left one home and moved to another, so did we when we declared Jesus as our Lord and saviour and move into his kingdom.

This requires that we align our lives with God’s Kingdom so we can receive the blessing from it. Every blessing is available to us when we are in the Kingdom of God and when we align ourselves to the culture and teachings of the King that rules this Kingdom – Jesus Christ.

But this process of aligning ourselves isn’t always as easy as we’d wish. We can remain entangled in some way with the kingdom of darkness – in the old patterns of thinking and old ways.

It can be a process to fully shed off the old for the new. This is just like the caterpillar that must shed its skin a number of times before it is ready to turn into a pupa.

We all face the struggle of dealing with our flesh. Paul said, “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God...” (Romans 8:6-7)

We all have a flesh and it does not magically vanish when a person becomes a believer. Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The flesh is our old, carnal nature. It must be dealt with.

But for each area where our flesh is weak, we are blessed with the solution – the Holy Spirit.

Paul said in Galatians 5:16 NKJV, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

So the key to overcoming life-dominating habits is to walk in the Spirit.

***Let’s pray and thank the Holy Spirit for bringing light into any area of our life where darkness may remain and where the flesh makes us weak.

PART 3 – Transforming Through Humble Submission to God:

Once the butterfly is ready to emerge, the case around the pupa splits open. But it’s not time for take off just yet, as the wings are at first wet, soft and wrinkled against its body. The butterfly waits for its wings to dry, and pumps a liquid called hemolymph into them so that they become big and

strong. Once fit for flight, this brilliant bug then takes to the air in search for flowers to feed on and for other butterflies to mate with.

Like the butterfly that emerges fully transformed, Paul urges us to transform our minds and very way of thinking.

In Romans 12:1-2 Paul tells us:

“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. ² 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.”

But how do we transform our mind when the pull of the flesh can be so strong?

Paul gives us the answer in the next 3 verses in Romans 12:3-5:

“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

And in Romans 12:16

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.”

It is no coincidence that Paul’s teaching on transforming our mind was immediately followed by verses on humility.

This is because our pride and ego block our ability to see that we need to transform or that our thinking needs to change in the first place.

But instead a humble heart allows us to look for and find those parts of our character or thinking that need to change. Without humility we won’t go there because we’ll tell ourselves that the status quo is ok even if it is not, even if it’s breaking our relationships and marriage. Our go to is to avoid looking for these things as to do so is to admit that we haven’t got it right in the past and that we made wrong decisions. I know as that’s how I used to think (and sometimes still find myself doing and correcting). It’s why my first marriage ended.

When you look around nature this humility abounds. It’s in the tree limbs and leaves that bow to the wind, in the fish that humbly follow the annual migration routes set by the ocean currents and even by a butterfly after it has emerged from its case.

Yes I’m saying a butterfly is humble. Despite it completing the transformation and being one of nature’s most stunning creatures, butterflies still humble themselves with a practice called puddling - a fascinating behaviour where butterflies gather around damp or muddy areas to sip on mineral-rich water. They do so to absorb essential nutrients from the substrate. It’s also a social gathering and opportunity for courtship.

So even a beautiful butterfly will humble itself by puddling.

Living in God’s Kingdom and disentangling us from the kingdom of darkness requires that we too practice puddling. That we do so by facing into it every hidden area of darkness in our hearts and minds. We need to practice bringing these hidden things into the light.

The good news gentlemen is we don’t need to do it alone. The Holy Spirit is with us.

In John 16:13, we hear, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

In Romans 8:26-27, we hear, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

The Holy Spirit is the great revealer of truth. When I'm lost or stuck and can't see what I need to change I pray for Him to reveal this to me.

We need to humbly declare we don't know the answers and pray that they be revealed, no matter how much the truth might sting. Then we must pray that we be cleansed and relieved of the desire to continue with the old path.

This is a journey to freedom. I can humbly testify and I thank God every day that I am freer now than I have ever been in the past but, with the help of the Holy Spirit, not as free as I will be tomorrow.

***Let's pray. We humbly and boldly confront these hidden things that continue to bind us to the old kingdom so that we may become more and more established in God's Kingdom way and can be freed of any remaining vestiges of the old kingdom that we have left behind.

***Would anyone like to share?