

Behavior Modification vs. Life Transformation

As parents, we have likely had that moment in the grocery store where our child is the one screaming at the top of their lungs, knocking cans off the shelf down every aisle, and demanding to get out of the buggy; it is in these moments that so many of us have thought, “Would you please try to blend in with society child?” We tell our child “straighten up and act right.” While this is not a wrong thing to want to say, and see our child do, I believe we need to ask ourselves, “Am I seeking life transformation in my child, or simply seeking behavior modification?” Do we simply want to just have a “good kid,” or do we want a faithful follower of Jesus?

How do we get them to that point? How do we strive as parents to see life transformation in our child? I believe there are 4 actions that we need to take. This is not an exhaustive list, but I do believe these are areas that if worked on will assist in leading to a transformed life.

1) Realize we cannot force this upon them; it is a work of God and His Spirit.

As bad as we may want it to be true, the fact remains that we cannot produce life transformation in our child by our own power. We have to trust in the power of God and His Spirit to do the work. In Ezekiel 36, God says,

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

We see in this passage that it is the Lord who does the work. Therefore, we must trust in God above all else to do the work, and be faithful to the calling that He has called us to; and this is all done by His power.

2) Pray for life transformation to occur

Oh, how often we forget the power of prayer. We have this incredible opportunity to commune with God, and pour out our thoughts, struggles, pains, praises, and whatever else upon Him; and yet, we sometimes neglect this opportunity. My hope for parents is that they will understand their great need of God to work in their lives as they strive to pour spiritually into their children. We can read all the books on parenting, and seek all the counsel we could ever want concerning the raising of our children, but if we neglect to faithfully pray for God to do a work, we do not truly understand who is behind the work of life transformation.

3) Read God’s Word with our Children

This seems obvious, but we must grasp the fact that understanding Scripture is the only way anyone will know what a transformed life looks like. Reading God’s Word consistently can be a challenge to do on an individual basis; therefore, making it a family priority can be even more challenging. While it may be difficult to begin, I would highly encourage you to make it a regular

routine to read Scripture with your children. There are incredible resources out there to help you. For example, Sally Lloyd Jones's *Jesus Story Book Bible* is a great resource for those who have young children. Another resource for parents who want to know what family worship time looks like is *Family Worship* by Don Whitney. This is a short and affordable read. With a little research, you will be able to find multiple trustworthy resources to help you.

4) Be there

Lastly, one of the greatest ways you can work toward seeing life transformation in your child is to simply be there. Be there to hear their questions, be there to play in the floor with your child when they desire your time, be there when their heart has been broken, and be there when they need you to give them advice. We live busy lives, never become too busy to simply be there.

Again, this is not an exhaustive list to leading your child to life transformation; but I do believe these are areas we can all strive to work better on for the sake of our children. Let us not settle for just behavior modification, let us strive for life transformation.