

Principles for a Transformed Life (PTL)

Introduction

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

Every one of us has some area of our life that is not what we would like it to be. Some have habits that are causing problems, yet they find it difficult to change. Others have conflicted relationships that cause pain and consistent unhappiness. There are those with chronic or recurring physical problems. Many have job situations or financial problems that hamper their happiness. Some have lost loved ones and still grieve. Still others have been mistreated or abused and, in spite of the best efforts of friends and counselors, are still broken. In our day, a good number are simply unhappy and don't know why: life is just not worth the trouble. If you are dissatisfied with your life, if you feel that you are somehow falling short, if you think others must know secrets you have not seen, then *PTL* has help for you.

In order to live in freedom, we must become willing to take an honest look at ourselves, then make whatever changes are necessary. Church attendance is nice, but religion is not enough. We need a real relationship with God. To live on a new and higher plane we have to take some action. The Principles described below are a simple roadmap which, if followed, is guaranteed to move you toward a better life. Our groups will take topics from this list as springboards for study and discussion. **These principles are non-negotiable.** They apply equally to all facets of human frailty. These principles are simple, but they are rarely easy. Many will begin, then fall away. Don't be dismayed. Life will drive them back, and the door remains open when they return. The important thing is to begin, so let's go!

Some Helpful Definitions:

- **Addiction:** compulsive need for and use of a habit forming substance (as heroin, nicotine, or alcohol) characterized by tolerance and by well-defined physiological symptoms upon withdrawal; persistent compulsive use of a substance known by the user to be harmful. (Any substance: Nicotine, caffeine, sugar, etc.) Addiction may also function in particular behaviors: gambling, danger, relationships, sexual practices, etc. Pr 23:32-35
- **Habit:** a pattern of behavior, thought, or emotion acquired by frequent repetition or physiologic necessity that occurs regularly, predictably, and that has become nearly or completely involuntary. Romans 7:14-15 / 1 Cor 6:12
- **Life-controlling habit (LCH):** any habit or addiction that an individual continues to practice contrary to his own well-being and best interest, and which he finds himself unable to permanently amend by acts of will. This may include chemicals, food stuffs, relationships, repeated behaviors, modes of thought, emotional response, etc. Matthew 6:24 / 2 Peter 2:19
- **Freedom:** The capacity of an individual to consciously choose his behavior, his thinking patterns, and his response to emotion. Learning to respond thoughtfully to life's events rather than reflexively react. Malachi 4:2 / Romans 6:14
- **Transformation:** The process of restoration and healing following the cessation of a life-controlling habit. This includes changes in thinking, feeling, and acting. It means bringing the life under the control of the Holy Spirit and the Word. The process of moving from confusion and bondage into mental and emotional clarity and behavioral freedom. Romans 12:1-2

Topic for Discussion

In the definitions above, do you find anything that describes something in your life or behavior? List them.

According to the definition, transformation begins after the LCH is stopped. Can you picture yourself living free? What does that look like?

7 Principles for a Transformed Life

Here are the ingredients for freedom from life-controlling habits, habitual negative thinking, and crippling emotions. If you don't like the way life is going, maybe it's time to take a step back and read the instructions. These principles will provide the basis for a life well-lived. They will also form the basis for discussions in our group and self-assessments for each individual.

1. **Deflation:** Admission - Desperation – Willingness
 - a. Admission: This is the destruction of the alibi system, a breakdown of denial, and an admission of the need for help.
 - b. Desperation: This is the end of hope in self-effort and ability.
 - c. Willingness: The motivation to take difficult action that comes from the awareness that there are no alternatives or compromises.
2. **Faith in God:** Dependence on God, not self. Prayer and Bible Study.
3. **Accountability:** Using other people as an external control while internal controls are established.
4. **Self-examination:** Developing the habit of questioning our own motives and thinking patterns, then correcting areas found lacking.
5. **Restitution and restoration:** Taking positive steps to right wrongs and restore relationships with other people. Without these steps repentance is a mental exercise, not a spiritual reality.
6. **Commitment to ongoing spiritual growth.** This means a defined commitment to activities, including church involvement, which enhance and encourage spiritual development. Transformation is a process, not an event.
7. **Service to others.** You cannot keep that which you do not give away.

Are there any of the 7 Principles that sound difficult or frightening to you? Why?

Do you recognize any of these Principles that are already useful to you in your life? Which ones, and how do you apply them most important to you? Why?

Before our next meeting, pick the 3 most pressing issues from the list you made above. For each one, make an attempt to identify the root cause of each one