

Humans Being

Transformed by Training vs. Trying

November 1, 2026



Today we're figuring out how to go about being transformed!



Question is: **Are you allowing what God's renewing?** And how's that going? And by what *means* is it *happening*? And to what *end*? Most of us *want to be* transformed, but aren't sure *how* to go *about* it. So **we grit our teeth and try-try again**. And *fail-fail* again. But the *command* is *strange*.



Do not *conform* [*imitate*] any *longer* to the *pattern* of this world, but *be transformed* [*allow transformation; lit. be metamorphosed, like a butterfly*] by the *renewing* of your *mind*. – Romans 12:2 NIV



It's called a *passive voice command*. It's like "Be encouraged." Okay, *encourage* me. Or "Be blessed." Okay, *bless* me. **We're not told to make it happen, but to allow it to be happen-ing**. And *how* do we allow *that*? "By [*allowing*] the *renewing* of your *mind*." And *how* do we allow *that*? **By not blocking what prevents it, and engaging what permits it**. I've compared God's Spirit *tugging* on our *heart*, to a tugboat turning a tanker. It's *one little bump* at a time. But **a tugboat can only do what only a tugboat can do if you the tanker allows it to**. Otherwise it's just a *gentle bump-bump-bump* against a 109,000 horsepower Wartsila-Sulzer. The tanker's like, "Go on back to the dock, li'l tugboat."



The Spirit *Tugs* on our *heart* to *apologize*. And we the *tanker* says, "I'm sorry, but *no way*." Can't *fault* that *powerful tugboat*; it's *bumping away*. So, do not *conform* any *longer* to the *pattern* of this world, but **be turned by the bumping of God's Tugboat**. The Spirit *tugs*, "Hold your *temper*." And we the *tanker* *blast* our *horn* and *full steam ahead*! In Hebrews 2:10, Christ is called "the *Captain of our salvation*". And *most* of us have already *given* Him *permission* to *come aboard*. But, **we've gotta learn to surrender command of His Workmanship**, and start taking *orders* rather than taking *back control* according to the *pattern* of this world.

For I have the *desire to do* what is *good*, but I cannot *carry it out*. – Romans 7:18 NIV

Without ... *what*? **Desire ebbs and flows and fizzles out**. Have you *found* that **simply trying harder doesn't have much staying power?** In fact, **the harder you work the faster you wear out**. Hence the expression, "Work *smarter*, not *harder*." We put too much stock in *try-try-again*, while *again* and *again* we *bite off more* than *humans are capable of being*, without ... *what*?

If *trying* was *all* there was to it, we'd *all* go *transform ourselves*. How many of you could *not run and finish* a *full* marathon this *afternoon*? But, **what if you tried?** Nope. But, **what if you tried harder?** Nope. Not without ... **training!** Same goes for *humans being Christlike*. Only way *harder* than a *marathon*. Cuz it's *more demanding* and *longer lasting*. It's the *marathon of marathons*!



At the *end* of Paul's run, he likely writes from this prison, awaiting execution, to *timid Timothy*, who was asked to *run* the church in Ephesus, and *run out* all the imposters after *Paul ran up against* that 25,000-seat-theater mob!



The time will *come* when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to *suit* their own desires ... they will *turn* their ears away from the *truth* ... But you, *keep* your head in all situations ... I have *fought* the good *fight*, I have *finished* the *race*, [by which he means] I have *kept* the *faith*. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award ... to all who have *longed* for His appearing. – 2 Timothy 4:3-8 NIV



A marathon is 26.22 miles, in honor of Pheidippides who *ran* from Marathon to Athens, *announced* victory over the Persians, *warned* of retaliation ... and *dropped* dead. From *running* 26.22 miles! His statue is on the original route to Athens. So the *guy* the race commemorates would say, "Ya crazy? It killed me!" Apparently the statue depicts the *less famous* moment just *before* he left, titled: Pheidippides misses his ride to Athens!



Most of us *couldn't* run a full marathon this afternoon, no matter how hard we tried or what was at stake. But *most* of us, with few exceptions, and months of passionate, persistent, smart training could become genuine marathon runners.

So, *how do we allow lifelong marathon tug-bump transformation?* By renewing by retraining our mind with His mind by way of His thoughts via His Word. *Allowing it to clear away what's in the way when He's bumping away.* Like us re-seizing control rather than renewing our old pattern.



Because, admit it: *the tug of His still, small voice is loud and clear if you want to hear.* Which we do. We *have* the desire. Till it tells us to carry out what we *don't* want to do. And *that's the moment we decide to either mutiny or to be transformed.* Or abandon ship altogether! And humans being able to make the right decision in the heat of that battle takes training. Whether physical, intellectual, or spiritual, *truly transforming takes incremental training.* And yet, we so overrate the short-lived power of trying, and underrate the staying power of training.



Some will abandon the faith ... [so] *train yourself to be godly.* – 1 Timothy 4:1, 7 NIV

Godliness training is our only hope, because Godliness trying fizzles out fast.

Impostors will go from *bad* to worse ... But as for you, *continue* in ... the Holy *Scriptures*, which are *able to make you* wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [For] All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for *teaching*, [bump] *rebuking*, [bump] *correcting* [bump] and *training* in righteousness, so that the [true] servant of God [the Captain] may be *thoroughly equipped* for every good work. – 2 Timothy 3:13-17 NIV

We read, see, or hear something inspiring, and say to ourselves: "I'm gonna try really hard to do that." But then *we lose our breath and feel defeated and give up.*



How many of you could *not* show *perfect* Christ-like *grace* and *merciful thoughts* toward the *guy* who *cuts you off*, *flips you off*, and *drives 10 mph slower*, this *afternoon*? But ***all of us, with passionate, smart training could become genuine Christlike responders.*** Because, as *Jesus Himself said*:

[A student] who is fully trained will *be like* his *teacher*. – Luke 6:40 NIV

Being *trained* and being *disciplined* are basically the *same thing*. That's why ***there's discipleship training but not discipleship trying.*** *Training* is just *engaging* whatever will *get us to our goal*.

Do you not *know* that in a race *all* the runners *run*, but only *one* gets the *prize*? [So] Run in such a way as to get the prize. [Which means in the *right direction* with the *right training* to *compete, complete, and conquer*] Everyone who *competes* in the [Isthmian] games [at *Corinth*] goes into strict training. [And] *They* do it to get a *crown* [of *leaves*] that will *not* last; but we do it to get a *crown* [of *righteousness* (2 Tim 4:8)] that will last *forever*. [And *never leave*] *Therefore* I do not run like a man running *aimlessly* [in circles: *try-try again, fail-fail again, again and again*] – 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NIV



But, run *"as to get the prize,"* and you've *already got* the *victory*! I read about a *young man* with *twisted legs* who *joined* the *track team*. And he *trained* and *trained*! And when the *race came*, he was *ready*. From the *start* he was in *last place*. And *still* he *ran*. The *race was done*. And *still* he *ran*. He *fell*. *Got up*. *Fell again*. And *still* he *ran*. Because ***he hadn't been training to be first, but to finish.*** And with *bloody knees*, he *finally crossed* the *finish line* ... and you *know exactly* what *happened*. The *crowd went wild*! And the *runners* from *all sides*, *led* by the *one* who'd *won* the *ribbon*, *lifted* him and *carried* him in *victory*. *Why?* Cuz they *instinctively, simultaneously* *recognized* that ***he won the more significant race.*** That only he was *running*. And it was *far more worthy* than *theirs*, cuz it was for *far more* than a *ribbon*.

And also [remember] if *anyone* *competes* in *athletics*, he is *not* *crowned* unless he *competes according* to the *rules*. – 2 Timothy 2:5 NKJ

And the *rules* of *godliness training* are all about ***steadily increasing strength and stamina while building the body of Christ.*** I'm *mesmerized* by *bodybuilders* who *achieve full human potential*. If I'm *flipping through channels* I *gotta stop* on the *bodybuilders*. Because their *arms* are the *size* of my *thighs*. And their *thighs* are the *size* of my *chest*. I mean, we have *so much* in *common*!

For while *bodily training* is of *some value*, *godliness* [training] *is of value* in *every way*, as it *holds promise* for the *present life* and *also* for the *life to come*. – 1 Timothy 4:8 ESV

I *stopped* on *bodybuilders* once, and *Shar* says, "I'm *not attracted* to *guys* with *muscles*." *Good?*

Not that I have *already obtained* all this, [Paul *admits*] or have *already been made* perfect, [Amen brother!] but I *press on* to *take hold* of that [which "*holds promise*"] for which Christ Jesus *took hold* of me. ... I do not consider myself yet to have *taken hold* of it. ... [But] *forgetting* what is *behind* and *straining toward* what is *ahead*, I *press on* toward the *goal* to *win* the *prize* for which *God* has *called* me – Philippians 3:12-14 NIV

The way *Paul* saw it: **if we're not straining, we're not training.** But the *big difference* between *training* versus *try-try-trying*, is a **realistic goal**, achievable **incremental steps**, a loving, **inspiring coach**, a qualified, **proven trainer** with a **clear plan**, and strong **moral support**.

[After telling Timothy] I do not *run* like a man running *aimlessly*; [Paul refers back to fighting the good fight, saying, similarly] I do not *fight* like a man *beating the air*. No, [he knows his target] I *beat my body and make it my slave* so that *after* I have preached to others, I myself will not be *disqualified* – 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NIV

We must *each run* as to win our own race, and *fight with purpose* our own good fight. Because **we each have our own hurdles and challenges and battles.** And yet, we're *in this together!* For:

Christ *himself* gave the *apostles*, the *prophets*, the *evangelists*, the *pastors* and *teachers*, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be **built up** until we *all* **[individually]** reach unity **[together]** in the *faith* and in the *knowledge* of the Son of God and *become mature*, attaining to the *whole* measure of the *fullness* of Christ. Then we will no longer *be infants*, tossed *back and forth* by the waves, and blown *here and there* by every wind of *teaching* and by the *cunning* and *craftiness* of people in their deceitful scheming. *Instead*, speaking the *truth* in *love*, we will grow **[bump by bump]** to become in every respect the *mature* **[fully trained]** body of Him who is the Head, **[Coach]** that is, *Christ*. **[The team Captain of our salvation!]** From Him the *whole body* ... *grows* and *builds itself up* in *love*, as *each part* does its **[own unique]** work. **[Running our own race and fighting our own good fight]** ... [To] put off your **[scrawny]** *old* **[try-try-again]** *self*, which is **[a human]** *being corrupted* by its **[own]** *deceitful desires*; to be made *new* **[by His Spirit and Word]** in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new **[train-train-again]** *self*, **[which was]** *created* to be *like God* **[our Father and faithful Friend]** in *true* righteousness and holiness. ... **[So start your training by allowing your proven Tugboat Trainer to train your tongue; and]** Do not let any unwholesome *talk* come out of your *mouths*, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs ... Be **[humans being]** *kind* and *compassionate* to one another, *forgiving* each other, just as in *Christ* God *forgave* you. – Ephesians 4:11-32 NIV



But for *that*, **we must allow the Lord to train our brain and bump us along on a daily basis**, so we will no longer be *infants* just tossed by waves, but *tugged* to become what no humans are capable of being on their own. And **don't worry about falling or failing in front of others.** Just keep running. Your Christlikeness may get *winded* pretty quickly this afternoon, but those little bumps add up quickly as well. So, **don't compare your progress to the other runners around you.** You're not even in the same race. And:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of *witnesses*, let us **[train to]** *throw off* everything that *hinders* and the *sin* that so *easily entangles*, and let us run with *perseverance* the race marked out for *us*. – Hebrews 12:1 NIV

[Because] "There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." – Luke 15:7 NIV

So keep your head ... Coach, and keep the faith, and keep bumping and running toward home!