



FORMED BY LOVE: WHERE TRUE DISCIPLESHIP BEGINS

Imagine squeezing a rubber ball with all your strength. What happens? It shifts and deforms under pressure. But the moment you let go, it snaps right back to its original shape.

Isn't that how discipleship can feel sometimes? We want to change. We try harder, commit to disciplines and make commitments, but year after year we find ourselves wrestling with the same things.

Now, imagine squeezing a piece of soft clay. With far less pressure, the clay is reshaped into something entirely new. This is the kind of transformation we want as we seek to grow in discipleship this year.

Isaiah 64:8 says

*We are the clay, and You are our Potter.
We are all the work of Your hand.*

But how do we actually surrender ourselves to the Potter in a way that leads to lasting change?

It begins with truly grasping the unfathomable love of God and the reality of sin.

Timothy Keller said, "You are more sinful than you could dare imagine, and you are more loved and accepted than you could ever dare hope."

Holding these two realities together helps us surrender to growth.

Our sin is dark and disgusting. It led to the very Son of God being crucified on a cross.

Scripture consistently reveals the seriousness of sin. When the prophet Nathan sought to awaken David to the reality of his sin, he told a story of a rich man who heartlessly stole a poor man's only lamb (2 Samuel 12:1-7). When Jesus spoke about a certain sin, he said it would be better for a millstone to be tied around one's neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea (Matthew 8:6).

The ugliness of sin lives within each of us, and it grieves the heart of God. When we truly grasp how destructive sin is, we will take radical efforts to rid it from our lives.

But we cannot face the awfulness of our sin unless we first grasp the truth that we are deeply loved and wholly accepted. When we truly understand God's magnificent love, we are able to boldly approach His throne and be changed.

Imagine yourself as a child being cared for by the most loving Father. A sheep being carried by the most gentle Shepherd, or a piece of clay being formed into a beautiful masterpiece. Imagine yourself walking boldly up to God's throne and being welcomed near.

These are not wishful images, but the way the Bible describes reality. This is who God is. And this is the secure place we hold in relationship with Him. In this close relationship, we are safe to bring all our faults and allow Him to lovingly shape us more into His image.

3. Read James 2:10. In what ways do we tend to minimize certain sins in ourselves or others?

How might this prevent us from growing in discipleship?

4. Romans 2:4 says that it's God's kindness that leads to repentance. How does that truth reshape our understanding of what actually leads to lasting transformation?

5. Read Psalm 103:10-12 and Hebrews 4:15-16. What stands out to you from these verses?