

## The Sponge

If you have been intentionally practicing your faith through prayer, meditation or actions of word and deed, you know that God is in the transformation business. You have felt the tug of God's will on your heart.

But what can we expect from this transformation? Into what will you be transformed?



A friend once told me that, as a young man, he used to pray for God's direction but always feared God would send him across the world as a missionary – away from his family and his career. So his prayers were always reluctant and guarded. He could feel God's call but was afraid of responding, because he wasn't quite ready to give up his own dreams. Eventually he submitted to God and asked earnestly what God wanted of him. To his surprise, God had use for him within his own community. Now he works, has a family, goes to church, and leads a ministry that worships and prays with prisoners at the local jail. This ministry of hope and compassion was just what God needed, and my friend's openness to God allowed that ministry to form and continue for many years. By submitting to God, he was able to be transformed from someone who wanted to work for God to someone through whom God works.

What if transformation doesn't necessarily mean changing into something completely different? What if instead we see ourselves as a dry sponge? As a dry sponge we aren't much to look at; shriveled up and hard, aren't very useful. Our usefulness comes when water is added.

God transforms us by dipping us into warm soapy water where we soak up God's presence and love to the point of saturation. Then we are sent into the world to bring the relief that only soapy water can bring to a dry and gritty world.

When we have soaked up the dirt of the world we need to be wrung out. So, we return to worship where confession wrings out the dirt we've acquired and music, prayer, communion and meditation dip us back into the clean, warm, soapy water of God's love. Remembering our baptism each week through worship and other spiritual practices, we squeeze out the grime, soak in God's presence and are transformed once again for the sake of the world.

Life as a disciple is an ongoing cycle – soaking in clean water, we are filled with God's presence then sent to share God's love and compassion with a dry and dirty world. Returning to God, we can let go of the dirt and absorb God's water of grace and love only to be sent out again and again.

*Questions for meditation and journaling:*

- 1) What kind of sponge are you right now? Dry? Clean? Dirty? Warm and soapy?
- 2) Describe how this cycle plays out in your own life:
  - How do you soak up clean, soapy water of God's presence?
  - How and where do you share the soapy water of God's love with others and the world?
  - What practices help you wring out the dirt and become ready for God's refreshing presence again?

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