

Announcer

Welcome to transformed by the word, a podcast about discovering how to live your life with gratifying purpose. God created you for a reason and the Bible contains the keys to unlock your transformed life. Now, here's your host, Debora Barr

Debora 0:28

Thanks for joining me for episode 36, of Transformed by the Word. For the next few episodes of this podcast, I will be inviting people that I know whose lives have been transformed by God, to share with us their personal stories of transformation.

What is it about Jesus that completely alters the course of life for people that believe in him? Well, we see examples throughout the Bible of lives of people that were transformed. But perhaps you didn't grow up in a Christian family and have never read the Bible for yourself. Well, there are a lot of people, myself included, whose lives have been changed by their encounter with Jesus. Such a powerful transformation, in fact, that the course of their lives was altered forever. One of those people will be on my show today. Her name is Anne Paulk. And she is a dear friend of mine and a sister in Christ, and is the executive director and a board member of Restored Hope Network. And she's advocated for men and women struggling with unwanted same sex attractions for decades as an author, a speaker, and a spokesperson.

Her mission in leading the organization, quite literally, to restore hope, to those broken by sexual and relational sin, especially those impacted by homosexuality. She does this work because of the work that the Lord Jesus Christ has done in her. Anne explains, I know it's possible to be set free from sexual confusion and sin. Because that is my story. It is the testimony of thousands just like me. We at Restored Hope want to make sure all who seek the same healing that we've experienced through the love of Jesus Christ, can have it be their story.

Stay tuned, we'll be back in just a moment.

<<MUSIC INTERLUDE>>>

Debora

Anne it is so good to see you even just to connect with you remotely. I wish I was there with you in Colorado, and we were getting ready to go out and get another hike in the mountains. But that's gonna have to wait for a little bit.

Anne 3:33

Yeah. Oh, what fun it is to hang out with you and go for a drive up in the mountains and hike someplace. And horseback riding? Yes, yes.

Debora

And you'll have to find a new hike for us for when I come out again,

Anne 3:45

No problem. I already have one in mind. I've got a plan.

Debora 3:50

Great, great. Well, as you know, today, we're discussing life transformation, how Jesus transforms lives. But before we get into the gist of the message here, why don't have you tell us a little bit about where you grew up a little bit about your childhood, your family. And here's a fun one what you wanted to be when you grew up?

Anne 4:17

Right? So when I was a little bit - well I was born in Idaho, and youngest of four my family my parents are faithful in their marriage and they celebrated I think 50 to 54 years of marriage before my dad passed away. So that's the news about my family. Two older brothers one older sister and then little me came along I wanted to be working in an office I loved doing store type things like paper store and just love handling paper - felt so official Who's doing the work in an office? Right? And I'd rather be outdoors.

Debora 5:08

Things change as we grew up,

Anne 5:10

They do.

Debora

Well, another thing I love to hear stories of people how they first encounter Jesus, how they had that first encounter. So could you share that with us?

Anne 5:23

You bet I was away at college, I'd had a few moments of faith along my life up until then I asked for miraculous answers and then received them but not surrendered my life to Jesus. So that happened two or three times prior to this event. But in my college years, I was embracing being gay and wrestling with what I'd read in the Scripture. And then so rather than rejecting God, so in the middle of him showing up, I had what little I knew about him, I'd rejected it was wrong anyway. So it's not the worst case scenario. He does like the correct information about himself being known. I guess I felt the wrong information was a belief. Several my family members had really believed that God made the universe and then stepped back. It's a deist philosophy that's inaccurate, right? He's actually personally interacting with people all the time. The creator of the universe wants relationship with us. I didn't know that God.

So my first year in college, I was at asking all these questions, having dreams about Jesus, and then was in a evangelism training class as a non believer. It's so funny, divine providence it is they used to call it ET because the movie ET had just come out right then. So there I was pretending to fit in. And God showed up in that final meeting, after all these questions and wrestling through things and who is he really? And why does evil exist? And if God is real, then why do people have pain and so on? All of those are questions people still ask. I mean, those are primary on the way toward salvation. You know, they get in the way of it. And they're important questions, and actually, they have really significant spiritual answers.

Anyhow, as I was walking this way, and exploring all those questions, the final meeting, we bowed and prayed. And little did I know that God would show me that he was in the room, and that he was full of kindness and full of authority. And what a majestic combination, and I fell in love. That was the beginning I, I was stunned by the person that I realized was in the room that was invisible. And he opened up my understanding to know that he was there. He was listening to the prayers, He was interacting with the people who were praying. And that night, I surrendered my heart to Jesus, it was not a hard choice, I surrendered everything, including my lesbian attraction to him and give my whole life. Anything was worth it, to have him in my life. So that's my encounter with Jesus. Wow, that's amazing. I can't imagine growing up thinking that God is has like, set the universe in motion, and he's far far away. And then to actually meet him like that in a class like that.

Debora 8:32

That's amazing. So what changed about your life after this encounter with Jesus?

Anne 8:36

Holy smoke, everything, everything dear, everything, my friend. The first thing that changed was I felt joy. It was ignited in my soul, like, the best expression I can explain is like if you have a kitchen countertop, item, like a blender, and you don't have it plugged in, and you put fruit in it, and then you push the buttons, nothing's going to happen, right? There's something missing the electricity, the power. Well, God plugged me into His Holy Spirit. I was finally connected with the one I was meant to be connected with. And it filled me with joy to know that all my sins were forgiven, to know that I belong to Him. And now I'm a daughter of the king, when he made everything.

So another one of things that changed. When I go for walks along the beach. I went to school at UC Santa Barbara, just right along the beach, this beautiful coastal line. And I used to walk there and be depressed. And now I sat at the edge on the bluff looked over everything and I'm like, I know the one who owns all this who made it all. And in the the verses in the Psalm spoke to me, even the trees of the field will clap her hands. And he mentioned the rocks would pray out if praise wasn't given. And I realized, oh my goodness, these things are true. And I now know the one who made it all. Wow. So belonging, also my conscience kicked in, in a big way. I remember somebody asked me to do something. We're playing flag football, which intramural sport with a bunch of gals. It was a girls team. And I was very good at playing that game. And somebody asked me to knock down the best player on the other side, and I felt tremendously guilty. You would have done that before, right? Yeah, I would have done it with no question. And like, yeah, it's just for the game, you know. But now I'm like, Oh, I injured somebody that got me. And I feel bad. Oh, I feel terrible. So later, like weeks later, I found her on campus and apologize. I could not get past my conscience I had to. So my hunger for the reading the Word. I've never really hungered to read the Bible. Never. It's just not part of my DNA. After asking Jesus to forgive you my sins and come in and be the Lord in my life, I couldn't get enough of it. I was spending all my extra time. So those are some of the transformations that happened in pretty rapid succession. Because of the presence of God in this. This person. Thank you, Lord.

Debora 11:31

It's that born again experience – something coming alive on the inside. What about relationships? Did any of your relationships change?

Anne 11:40

Yes, who I was friends with changed a lot. The friends who were trying to take me into the lesbian life, realized that they now as someone who wasn't willing to go there, and those relationships change. I became much more networked with fellow Christians who are amazed at what God was doing in my life. And were willing to come alongside of me. I still had non Christian friends. But the ones who really wanted to take me to the rugby games and what have you. They just realized, oh, Jesus is in this picture. I don't really want to hang with her. So those things began to change right away.

Debora 12:29

Well, since she made this radical transformation has living for Jesus, Jesus been an easy journey for you?

Anne

Yes and no. Yes, in the sense of the joy of forgiveness, a relationship with God is overwhelming to any challenge. Honestly, he's worth it. And more. Has my life been easy? Not in any way, shape, or form? Have there been times I've ever thought about giving up Jesus Not on your life or my life? It's more of my life. I'm not threatening yours, by the way. Thank you. You're welcome. We're friends so I can get Yes, a goofy Thank you. What I mean is, there is never been a challenge to his love. By the by the difficulties that have been through Yes, living for Him has been difficult. But living hurt for him is the very best thing that's ever happened in my life.

Debora 13:27

Yeah, I can totally relate with that. And sometimes when we first accept Christ, it seems like everything comes at us to try to make us turn back. Can you talk a little bit about that? And what you seen in that? I don't know if you experienced that. But certainly other people that you've talked with?

Anne 13:46

Oh, sure. I think everybody experiences some degree of that. When you're born again, I remember Pastor Bob, who shared with me how to pray that night, after I'd expect experience the fact that God was in the room, he said, and the enemy's not going to want to let you go easily. I'm like, I don't get any of this. But I'm listening helped me out here. So that night after I received Jesus, the girl who she was a friend who was a lesbian. And she and I have been trying to connect with the lesbian community. And she called me that night. It was like 10 o'clock at night, which you would have been asleep. I was wide awake. You know, I had to go to sleep soon because I had school in the morning. And I thought to myself, Why is she calling me right now to come over? Now? I don't get it. You know, like, this is a really weird time. And then I realized, Oh, I remember what the pastor said. And it made I doubled over in laughter because the enemy confirmed the fact that I was a new creation. I belong to somebody else now. That was like fast Sitting here sorry against himself.

Debora 15:02

Yeah, let me send you a little temptation right here.

Anne 15:04

Yeah, yeah. And when I started, when I got there, I did go see her and I just started blabbering on about Jesus because I couldn't withhold it. And she was Jewish. So she wasn't really up to that. So, so she, I remember her telling me, and then you can go now. You know, I was all excited about everything. I was excited about everything, being able to share with her what happened in my life, just like hours prior to everything.

What happened shortly thereafter, it was difficult for me as I began to have very dark dreams. Like, I didn't ask for them. I wasn't watching anything scary, but it was like terrifying. I remember having these really scary dreams at night. And I friend of mine said, call out for Jesus in the middle of your dream, if you can, I thought, How do you do that in a dream? But when I went to bed that night, and caught and I did, I cried out for Jesus and my dream and the whole attack evaporated. It was like, wow, I don't know what's going on. But I just saw power happen.

And then that wasn't all this is all in like weeks, you know, it wasn't over a long period of time. My roommate was Hindu. Sweet gal. Sweet gal. But she was Hindu. And she began having like, she would sit up and do really weird things in her twin bed over there against the wall. It was scaring me a little bit. So she was having what appear to be some degree of manifestations. Okay, this has never happened before what is going on? So I had a battle that, and then just learning new relationship skills.

I didn't have temptation for about six months related to homosexuality, I was so full of joy that nothing could break that. It wasn't until I was having difficulty again. And my emotional level went back down a little bit. And I began to struggle with temptation. And then yes, there would be people sent my way one girl really tried to tempt me. younger girl, she was on the softball professional, she was on the school softball team. I don't even know why she, we were friends. I can't remember how we even connected. And she tried to get me to go to a lesbian party. And you know, there was a whole bunch of stuff going on. And I knew it didn't quite fit in my life anymore. And so I just had to go this other way and tell her graciously, no, sorry, I can't do that.

But I had to learn all those little steps along the way. And that was just the first couple months.

Debora

So yeah, that's, that's really good. You know, because when people first accept Christ, if they're not expecting this, they may get caught off guard and not understand what's going on. But just hearing about what what has happened in your life in other people's lives will help them to know. Yeah, these are attacks of the enemy trying to get you to go back to who you were before you accepted Christ.

Anne 18:17

That's right. That's exactly what it was. And everybody has their own form of that, don't they?

Debora 18:25

Well, there's switch gears here. When I asked you of all the Bible characters, which one do you most identify with? And why?

Anne 18:36

Sometimes Peter, just because of the not incredible faith, but rather that he went into the water, sort of looking at that. I just jumped right out of the boat, right. Yeah, we're getting reviewed by Jesus and not

quite getting it right. And yet the loved. I think what I like about Peter and I have learned a lot and I had to learn a lot in my life, that failure is can be a route towards growth and growth that really grounds you, as opposed to not that you're seeking failure, but that you don't condemn yourself because you did something stupid or said something stupid, more likely that I'm going to say something. Appreciate and correct. You know, and I think humility allows people to bond with you as well. I think a lot of people relate to the imperfect Peter, as opposed to Mr. Perfect, who's got everything together and never makes mistakes. So I appreciate those who can learn and grow from their mistakes. And it took a while to gain that for me, but I love more. Mary in particular, sitting at Jesus feet, soaking in him relationship. I love that. So sometimes identify with that. What about you?

Debora 20:01

I identify with Paul, Saul/Paul, because of my background. And I was going after Christians to not not to kill them, but to berate them because they believe something that I thought was ridiculous, that they could believe in an invisible god that there was no God. That was my mantra at the time. But I too, had an encounter with Jesus that completely changed my life. And I became, like, Paul, an advocate, and just trying to help people understand how much God loves them. So God can turn us around radically. And yeah, and I love what you said about Peter. I mean, I just imagined that Jesus loved him. Just continue to love him. Even in his rebuke of him. He felt loved. And he was loved. And that's how we, we all are. God loves us, even if we go down the wrong road for a while.

Anne 20:58

Right. And he became the head of the church for a while. Mm hmm. Yeah. Yeah. Of all things. One of the three, one of the three most intimate human relationships that Peter was in that with Jesus, yeah.

Debora 21:18

Do you have a favorite scripture? As far as a life verse that you hold on to? I mean, what? Which one would be your favorite if you had to choose only one?

Anne 21:27

That's really tough. So true, because every time I read scripture, I think you find that Oh, that's my favorite. I would have to say that I think the one most representative of my life is Psalm 103. So I'm gonna pull it up real quick. Do you want me to read it?

Debora 21:47

Sure. Yeah, that would be great.

Anne 21:51

I am almost there. Psalm 103 just fills me with gratitude. A lot of people relate to other parts. But Psalm 139, which is gorgeous, I know. Then Psalm 45, which is about the king of the bride, entering the chamber of the king and how much he loves us, where his bride Yeah, and I could go on but someone to three is kind of long, so I won't go on forever. Bless the Lord, oh, my soul, all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord on my soul, and do not forget all his kind deeds. He who forgives all your iniquities and heals all your diseases. he redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with loving devotion and compassion, who satisfies you with good things so that your youth as renewed like the

eagle's he executes justice or righteousness and justice for all the oppressed is made his known ways known to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel. The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abundant, abounding and loving devotion. He will not always accuse us nor harbor His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins or repaid us according to our iniquities. And here's my favorite part. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His loving devotion. For those who fear Him, as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us, as a father has compassion on his children. So the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. For He knows our frame, he is mindful that we're dust. So I'll just stop there.

Debora 23:38

Yeah, it sounds like that's the guy that you met in that classroom.

Anne 23:42

Mm hmm. And he's that same God today that he was 2000 years ago that he was 4000 years ago and so on. How tender his heart towards those who believe. Yeah. Loves us, loves us a lot.

Debora 24:05

He does. But I, I believe we might have some listeners out there that are reluctant to surrender all to him. What would you like to say to them right now, maybe they're not sure that they're, that they want to take that step and surrender?

Anne 24:21

Well, it is a big step. First, I'd validate that, because Scripture also says that you need to count the cost before you build the tower. You need to count the cost. There's a cost of discipleship. And it's not just simply only mental assent, we're talking about life alignment with the King of kings and Lord of lords. So first, I would say you probably you can't be born again. Have your own authority anyway. So one, you don't have that fear. I remember fearing that if I surrendered to Jesus, I'd become a different person. I mean, completely different like not Anne in any way. Be somebody else. So I had a really wrong conception. You guys might have wrong conceptions about what it means to be born again too, and that you have to pull off this new life in Christ on your own where you don't, you actually have to allow him to do the work in you so that you can reflect Jesus. It's His work in us. It's not our wrestling our own disagreement with God, it's our going God, I disagree with you here - help me see your way.

I think his favorite thing is when his children say, Lord, I've tried it, but I can't do it alone. Help me. And boom, guess who shows up? Just He's happy. He's sometimes waiting for that. Yeah, oh, if you think you have to pull off on your own folks. You don't, you've got not just an advocate, but a person who's fully engaged, willing to grow you willing to walk and recreate in you, the character that he knows is best for you. So there's that. The other thing is, it's important to weigh the cost. I was willing to give it all up because I saw the amazing person he was and I knew that I could trust that person. Maybe you don't know that yet. Maybe you need to do a little digging in and exploring him reading who he says he is. And is he really faithful. It's important to weigh that out. There's no rush on it. But it's, um, we don't know how many days we are given. So it is important to do that while we have the opportunity, and really asked the hard questions. God's not afraid of hard questions. But you might have to go digging, you might have to see who actually can answer those things.

Debora 27:01

Yeah, that's good. Well, your testimony and my testimony are similar and that we both overcame homosexuality. And I know since then, you have devoted the vast majority of the rest of your life helping people in this area. And as the executive director of Restored Hope Network, would you explain to our visitor our listeners, what RHN is about? And how do they can get connected if they are interested?

Anne

Yeah, you bet. Restored Hope is a coalition of ministries across the US, of which All Things New is one of those members. I'm grateful for that. And really, the local ministries, pastors and counselors are there to support those who are grappling with unwanted same sex attraction. In other words, there are people who are looking for more help more leverage more answers, and support in their own desire to leave homosexuality, no coercion, no pressure, it's a matter of that person's goal and desire to move forward, out of homosexuality into the man or woman that God calls them to be. It doesn't necessarily mean married, Debora you're not married. Right? And I, my marriage broke up when my ex-husband went back into the gay life. So I'm not married now. And, you know, you can live faithfully for Jesus as a single person. And you can live faithfully for him as someone who's married to your opposite sex spouse. So you, you know, those are all options.

There's no formulaic aspect, it's a matter of if there are some things that are gripping a soul, that kind of have been stumbling blocks for a man or woman who are looking to overcome some of those stumbling blocks. There's support for you, there's fellowship for you, there, there are people willing, and excited to walk alongside of you, and offer hope and help and Jesus and scripturally based and wise and have many of whom have walked this road themselves. So they know, a bit of the, the pathways that people end up taking and, and faithfulness. So it's not an all or nothing. It's a roadmap of a life journey towards greater and greater Christ likeness. And that means leaving behind old things that, that God called sin, and into a new identity in Christ and so and knew and not having to struggle the rest of your life with a constant, unbearable, same sex attraction, which many of us did for years, right. But as we walk closer to Jesus as we allowed him to transform our souls, and open up areas of wounding that we needed to to allow Him to minister to us in we found greater and greater freedom in price. Again, I'm not saying all or nothing. I'm saying it's a life. It's a gradual kind of Like a, what is that? Like? It's a continuum. Yeah, it's more like a dial than a light switch. Commitment to Christ. And being born again. Activate activates a new, incredible journey and a companion along the way, who is irreplaceable. But that doesn't mean that everything's going to be rosy as we've already talked about. It can be there can be struggle, there can be temptation, there can be difficulties. And it's really great to have the body of Christ will walk alongside of you, and with knowledge, know how to help and encourage. And so that's what restored hope is,

Debora 30:48

Yeah, and talk about how Restored Hope helps pastors, ministry leaders, family members, what else you know what other support is available through our HN? And how do people connect?

Anne 30:59

You bet people can connect first, I better say that. So don't miss it. [Restoredhopenetwork.org](https://restoredhopenetwork.org). You can look at the contact page or just scan all the different website pages. We have a lot of information on that website. We do have ministry opportunities for equipping for pastors. And we have a whole bunch

of ministers amongst that 50-member ministry team that do equip pastors routinely. Debora, you speak at churches. Gary Ingram, I just talked to today speaks at churches and there is Linda Siler with the Assemblies of God. And there are a number of different denominations represented. We're not one denomination, we've got all Orthodox Christian denominations represented pretty much or not all of them, but we've got a variety, right. So many different offerings, like living waters training, which pastors can take to learn how to start a support group, a living water support group in their church, we've got all things new materials that that Debora and her ministry put out. Excellent materials, there's Portland fellowship, taking background curriculum, they have an online program.

Boy, I'll tell you, there's a lot more resources they ever guess on this topic. And we have a lot of them there. But yeah, pastors can connect for that. Anybody who wants to start up a support group, there are resources that we can direct you to. So please, contact strugglers, definitely we can connect you with local support. And family members, especially Christian parents of kids who are identifying it, LGBT. Right now, as you know, Barna recently came out with a survey that says 30% of Gen Z Christians identify as LGBTQ. Those parents are really grappling with a bit of pain and sorrow. And we have support groups for parents, also all across the US. So an annual conference called the hope conference is available to you. There's a lot out there, believe me more than I could say.

Debora 33:12

Yes, after God transformed our lives, we're now able to provide resources and help to others. Anne, is there anything else that you would like to share with our listeners before we wrap up our time together?

Anne 33:27

Yes, I think a lot of people have heard that help of any form creates suicidality in the lives of somebody who's grappling with same sex attraction. And I think it's really important to know what the truth actually is. Instead of creating harm, by helping people who want help, and actually reduces suicidality in adults is 17 to 25 times less likely for a person to be suicidal, if they're simply supported in their own goals. So I'd like people to know that if you want to know more about that, you can email me check the contact page on restored hope network, there's research that that comes up with that claim, and it's backed up by a vast quantity of data. Yeah, so there's a lot more to this, folks. But I think the main thing is, if you are enchanted with if you're drawn to spiritual things, if you're hoping that there's more than what you can see around you, I mean, it's just a it's scripture says it's a glimpse of what is yet to come. It's just a glimpse or looking at a dull mirror. The old time mirrors when that was written was very dark. It wasn't you can really see your face very well. Our mirrors today look a bit better, right? Yeah. We are given a glimpse, if you appreciate the beauty of the mountains or the ocean or the colors of the sky or the sunset, that is just a glimpse at the creator's heart and creativity and his love. Yeah. So I would hope that the listeners would take into account that there is a Creator God that they were made to be in relationship with. That he really wants a relationship with you. Yeah, he does. And he'll take care of the rest. That's the best part. We don't have to do the work. We just have to where are we willing to give them a chance to move in our lives?

Debora 35:48

Yeah. Well, thank you so much. And before I let you go, would you pray for our listeners?

Anne

Absolutely. And thank you Debora, for having me on. What a privilege to be here with my friend and also to enjoy this fellowship with your listeners as well.

Lord God, I thank you that you are King of kings and Lord of lords that you stoop down, to lift up those whose hearts are hurting, whose lives are struggling, that you don't disrespect them, but that you long for them. And so Lord, if there's anyone listening to this, who is longing to experience more of you, or to experience you for the first time, father asked that you would come, they would ask you actually pray this right now. Lord, God, please come into my life. As the Jesus would forgive because of him, that I'd be forgiven my sense, and my rebellion and my rejection of you, and that you would forgive me for that and come into my life, and become Lord and leader, and King and Savior, in my life, and that you would show me what to do next, and how to walk with you. How to be in that relationship, Lord, I invite you to come into my life. In Jesus name. And so Lord, I just want to pray for those who maybe are listening and want a closer relationship with a man struggling and stumbling, and maybe need a little bit more help to then walk with you or maybe haven't caught the joy that is intended to be there as a believer. And so Lord, would you move in their lives right now? Would you draw them near? Let them know how much you long for them, that you'd love to just walk down the street with them and a sunset and see what's going on and visit with them. That they would actually begin to reach out to you and express their heart to you not go for a formulaic prayer, but actually talk to the God who created them. Just talk and listen, like a normal relationship because you king of kings, a lot of word care. And that's what you always intended for the beginning of time. We were made for that court. So I ask that you come and they'd show that kind of relationship. Thank you or that you are great, but you despise no one. But they're not too far gone. Nobody's too far gone. You just want to draw them near and Jesus name. Amen.

Debora 38:38

Amen. Don't go away. We'll be right back after this short break.

<<MUSIC INTERLUDE>>

Debora 39:26

We just heard from Anne Paulk about life transformation. She shared her own story of her encounter with Jesus and how it changed the course of her life. She also shared with us how to surrender your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you just made a decision for Christ, you prayed that prayer of surrender. I would love to hear from you. Visit my website at TBTWPodcast.com and click the link. Let me know about your decision so that I can reach back to you and support you in the next steps of your faith.

My prayer for you today is that you would allow the Lord Jesus Christ to direct your steps that you would fully surrender to Him and experience the fullness of joy that comes from a relationship with the One who created you and loves you, above all others. Stay tuned for our next episode of transformed by the word, where we will hear more life transformation stories.

Announcer 40:42

Thank you for listening to transformed by the word with your host Debora Barr, be sure to subscribe to our podcast on iTunes or Google Play and connect with us at TBTWPodcast.com. Until next time, be blessed.