

## Conversation Starter *Week of November 23-29, 2008*

This Week's Theme: The Command To Be Transformed

Reading #1: Acts 7:59-8:1

Reading #2: Romans 12:2a

Reading #3: Philippians 2:14-15

In the book of Acts we find these words: *"While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then Stephen fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died. And Saul was there, giving approval to his death."* (Acts 7:59-8:1) Stephen who was stoned was a deacon in the church. Saul who gave approval to Stephen's death eventually became known as the apostle Paul. Prior to his personal encounter with Jesus, Paul persecuted Christians. However after his personal encounter with Jesus, he was a changed man. Instead of opposing the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, after encountering Him, he began to actively proclaim it. Paul's changed life demonstrates the reality of God's ability to change and transform people. So if you struggle with anger, He wants to transform you. If you are overwhelmed with fear, He wants to transform you. If you are in the valley of depression, He wants to transform you. If you feel like giving up, He wants to transform you. If jealousy, doubt, anxiety, bitterness, or feeling hopeless has been guiding your thinking or actions, God wants to transform you. The promise and hope of transformation is being offered to you ... are you willing to accept it? Are you willing to receive this promise right now? As you consider your response to these questions, are you aware that God doesn't ask Christians to be transformed and that He doesn't merely suggest that Christians be transformed, but in fact, He commands Christians to be transformed. As the apostle Paul writes: *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind...* (Romans 12:2a) This day, in response to the command to be transformed, ask God to show you what areas in your life are in need of His transformation.

1. Since God commands us to be transformed, in what ways does Philippians 2:14-15 tell us why God wants us to be changed and transformed?
2. Are there some areas in your life where you find the command to be transformed too difficult?
3. Do you really believe that God can change and transform you?
4. What is God's role in the transformation process and what is our role?
5. Why is it that in some areas of our lives transformation comes quickly while in other areas transformation comes more slowly?