

SESSION 1 – Living a Transformational Life

Icebreaker (15 MIN FOR 90-MIN FORMAT/5 MIN FOR 60-MIN FORMAT)

Series Overview (to be read aloud in the meeting) (10/10 MIN)

Prayer (1/1 MIN)

Premise of this Session (2/2 MIN)

As we follow Jesus, we transform. Transformation is fundamentally different from making “changes.” The original word for “transform” is *metamorphosis*, or evolving into a different being altogether.

Key Scripture Passage (2/2 MIN)

Romans 12:2 (HCSB) Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Commentary (to be read aloud in the meeting) (10/10 MIN)

Our human tendency is to conform to the age in which we live. We can get caught up in various idols or gods. Some examples might be comfort, addictions, rage, power, sex, pride, possessions, unhealthy comparisons, etc. Even good things like physical fitness can become an idol. Essentially, anything that we put first over our surrender to Christ will hinder God’s work in our lives.

How do we overcome the gods of this age? One primary way is by the renewing of our minds. The mind is the gateway to the heart. If we can think new thoughts, thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, anything that is excellent or praiseworthy (Phil 4:8), then it gives the Holy Spirit an opportunity to effect change in our hearts. As our hearts change, we are transformed.

The lifelong goal for a Christian is to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. Transformation happens in two fundamental ways. The first is when we initially surrender to Christ—when we respond to His invitation to “follow me” (Matt 16:24). It is an event. It is one and done. We are adopted (Eph 1:5) as sons and daughters into the royal family. We have a new identity. Our eternal life with God is secure.

If our initial transformation is an event, the subsequent transformation is a journey. The invitation from Jesus to “follow me” extends for a lifetime. It is more like a marathon than a sprint. At times, it can be a slog. Sometimes transformation opportunities come to us uninvited in the form of trials. However, when we lean into following Jesus, transformation facilitates the abundant life (John 10:10).

How do we take our faith from an event to a life-long journey? We find some help in Psalm 84:5,7a where it says: “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage [journey]. They go from strength to strength ...” After we initially accept Jesus’ invitation to follow him, we are to devote the rest of our lives to pilgrimage, to growing in Christlikeness, to the renewing of our minds so that we may discern God’s will for our lives. We become stronger (from strength to strength) in the faith as we journey with Christ.

Alexander Maclaren says of Psalm 84: “To live is to aspire; to cease to aspire is to die.” To aspire is to crave, to pursue, to strive for, to yearn for. As we yearn to be more like Christ and we feel that yearning realized, we find that we yearn for even more. This cycle of yearning is the “with God” life. The good news is that we are not alone to figure it out; with the power that comes from the Holy Spirit’s work within us, we are being transformed into Christ’s image with ever-increasing glory (2 Cor 3:18).

How do we go about this renewing of the mind? How does transformation happen? Perhaps a comparison of rowing and sailing analogies will help us gain a deeper understanding of how transformation works. Imagine that you are equally well-trained in the classroom in rowing and sailing and try your hand at both on the water. With rowing you observe that it is fairly simple to pick up, it totally depends on your power (for better or worse), you can row in any direction you desire, and you cannot cover distance very quickly.

With sailing, you observe that it is much more difficult to master than rowing, the boat is totally dependent on the wind for power, you are somewhat limited in the direction you can navigate by the direction the wind is blowing, and the speed of the boat on the water is in direct relation to the wind speed.

The rowboat is analogous to walking out the Christian life in the flesh; it is easy to walk in the flesh, it depends totally on your power to make changes in your life, you can go in any direction you desire, and the speed of your progress is limited by your own power. The sailboat is analogous to walking in the Spirit; it takes intentional effort to collaborate with the Holy Spirit (the flesh wars against the Spirit), you are totally dependent on the Spirit for the power to change your heart, you can get to places in life where you could never otherwise go, and the speed of change is dependent on the Spirit.

It is not about trying harder (rowing) to live the Christian life; it is about training more (sailing). As we train in righteousness and the spiritual disciplines, we can better position ourselves to take advantage of the times when the “wind” of the Holy Spirit “blows” across our “bow” (John 3:8). We connect; God perfects. By God’s grace, we are empowered to do what we could never do on our own.

Are you ready to set your sail and enjoy the journey? If so, the next six sessions will help you as you set your heart on pilgrimage, renew your mind and train in righteousness.

Who are you becoming?

Discussion Questions (25/15 MIN)

1. **Can you think** about an area of your life that has undergone a small transformation? How about a drastic overhaul? What was memorable about that process?
2. **In the commentary above**, Maclaren suggested that aspiring/yearning is the essence of life. So, what do you yearn for in life? What are some things that matter most to you?
3. **Can you relate** to the Psalmist whose heart is set on the journey with God? Do you yearn for Christ?
4. **What is the relationship** between being transformed and discerning God’s will for your life?
5. **If you knew** that you could make one change in your life and it would yield other important developments, what one change would that be?

Spiritual Formation Exercises (15/14 MIN)

Please pick one exercise (or make up an exercise) that you want to do for the coming week.

1. **Meditation.** Meditate on Psalm 84:5–7. Pray through the passage and consider journaling it. Try to do it several times in the coming week.
2. **Discernment and Action.** Go to whoamibecoming.org > Session 1 > Ask, Seek Knock and read *Discerning God’s Will*. Take some time each day this week to sit quietly with God. Ask Him to speak to you and to be shown two things: “What have I let grow in my life that is replacing my hunger for You?” and “What do I need to do to get back to a place where only You can satisfy me?”
3. **Worship.** Go to whoamibecoming.org > Session 1 > Worship Exercise. Listen to the video.
4. **Reflection.** Take some time this week to ask God to show ways in which He has transformed you over the course of your life and write down what comes to mind.
5. **Bible Journaling.** Go to whoamibecoming.org > Session 1 > Journal Exercise. Listen to the video about journaling the Bible and transformation. Practice journaling the passage for this session.

Prayer Time (10/1 MIN)

Online Resources for this Session

Visit whoamibecoming.org for the **Series Intro** video. On the **Home** page, click on **Session 1** tab for: **Session 1 Intro** video, the **Going Deeper** commentary, **Sermon Video** and **Transformation Story** about going from tragic loss to recovery.