

renewing the mind

introduction

FACILITATOR: *This meeting is the first in a 4 pack on transformation. Romans 12:1-2 speaks of the renewing of the mind. We need to recognize that behind our actions and bad habits is an underlying value system that has often never been truly transformed. There are many Christians trying to live out a Christian life while deep in their head and heart they still have a value system of the world and this produces conflict. In these following 4 meetings, we want to have a look at these underlying issues. The aim of this cell is to realize how our thinking affects our behavior and how God wants to change our values so our lifestyle changes.*

1: transforming our value systems

welcome

CELL: What are your core values, the ones that would remain even if much of your life changed? Take time to reflect and write down at least two core values. List two specific actions under each value that would help you reach that value goal, then share together.

worship

CELL: Think about the core values in God. Thank him for the ones that mean most to you as you consider your relationship with him.

word

FACILITATOR: *Habit patterns good and bad...*

Do you have a habit pattern that you want to change - one that does not strengthen your Christian life? Why don't we take a moment for each one of us to think if there is a habit pattern we'd like to change. Go around the group and be open and honest of how you could get free from some of the bad habit patterns you have just thought about.

CELL: What causes bad habits?

FACILITATOR: *Our values, environment and background form the context in which we make our decisions and actions. Our actions then form our habits which in turn shapes our character.*

Discuss as a group whether you think this is true and whether our choices are influenced by our underlying value systems. If this is the case then how can we change?

CELL: Read Romans 12:1-2 together.

In groups of two or three, discuss the implications of these verses on our value systems.

FACILITATOR: *The renewal of the mind and transformation have two ingredients for the Christian: one is repentance, the second forgiveness.*

As Christians, through what Christ has done for us on the cross, we have access to forgiveness for the bad decisions and choices we have made. Often we relate to this side of God's love and the transformation process very easily. This is what God can do. But there is an aspect of transformation we must take responsibility for. We need the renewal of our minds, which is the changing of our value systems through repentance. The Greek word for repentance is 'metanoia' and it means to change the mind, which must include the changing of our value systems.

CELL: Are there those in the group willing to share an area of their lives where they know they have been forgiven but have never really been free? Share now.

Everyone has these areas, talk about them in small groups. Try to identify some of the underlying values that might need to be changed so that the person can walk in freedom.

CELL: James 5:16 talks about confessing our sins to one another, praying and receiving God's healing. Spend time with friends of the same sex confessing and repenting of sin that God has highlighted and receiving his healing and forgiveness. Worldly value systems won't change overnight and need the support and help of others to break. Continue to pray for one another that during the next three weeks you will be challenged and set free from worldly values.

witness

CELL: Take time to review your goals for this term. How you have come along as a cell evangelistically and what would you like to do? There may be new people in your cell who need to start identifying particular friends now and thinking who they would like to see becoming a Christian. Finish by praying together for these areas.

what now?

CELL: Take your list of core values from earlier and put into practice the specific actions itemized. If you desire those things to truly be a core value, your actions will reflect the change.

2: love

introduction

FACILITATOR: *At our last meeting, we began to look at the area of the renewing of the mind and how values under gird our thinking and actions. The Christian transformation process means that we not only have to know God's love and forgiveness, but we need to identify the values we have picked up from our background and through our choices that are not godly and change them. In this session, therefore, we want to look at the issue of love.*

welcome

CELL: Who has most made you feel loved and why? Who has most made you feel unloved and why? (This may well require time to pray and minister to people.)

worship

CELL: Focus on the love of God, who he is, what he has done. Speak or sing out your adoration of him. Allow God's love to touch you, particularly if you struggle to experience God's love.

word

FACILITATOR: *Let us highlight the idea of love by looking first at the area of romantic love. Have someone read this story aloud to the group.*

Story 1: Henry was walking in town one day when he spots a television crew filming what was obviously an advertisement for TV. He went to watch. In the scene were two beautifully dressed young women sitting having coffee. Off to one side were two very well dressed young men in suits. A man jumped out with his clapperboard and the first of the two men walked past the two women. They looked extremely bored and carried on drinking their coffee. After a few moments the man jumped out with his clapperboard and said, 'Action, take two' and the second of the two men walked in front of the two women. What a difference! Their mouths fell open, and the coffee poured into the saucer. They were clearly being depicted as falling incredibly in love with this young man. Henry asked the filmmaker what the film was about. "It's a wool advertisement" said the filmmaker. It took Henry a while to think this through, but then he realized the first of the young men was wearing a mixed polyester suit and the second was wearing an all wool suit. The picture here is 'wear the right clothes, get the right women'.

CELL: Discuss and answer the following questions.

A silly story, but what does it show about how the world views romantic love?

What other examples from a TV series, film or advertisements would help you to think about this?

Now discuss what you think should be the foundation of Christian romantic love.

What would be some of the distinctive values underlying it?

Coming away from the romantic area, what is the nature of, and what are the values behind, Christian love?

FACILITATOR: *Read John 3:16.*

Go around the group and each pick two things from this verse that speaks to you about the nature of Christian love.

CELL: How do these things contrast with the world's picture of love?

Being honest and real, how do these things contrast with the way we love?

FACILITATOR: *Highlight the idea of Christian love by reading story 2.*

Story 2: Henry was working one day in a Christian caring center when a little boy came in and ran up to Henry to be loved and hugged. Henry had come from a very sheltered background and had never really come across people in pain and difficulty, and as this little boy came towards him, the smell of

urine and excrement hit Henry hard. This little boy was stinking, his hair was alive with lice and excrement was smeared all over him. Henry took a step backwards and instead of being the brave Christian, he found himself a failure. That evening in deep despair, he thought about the nature of Christian love and realized his feelings had let him down. He had no feelings for this little boy, no rush of emotion, but in prayer and meditation, he realized that Christian love is about choice and sacrifice. The next day, Henry was again in the center, and the boy ran in again. Henry knew what he must do. As the little boy ran toward him, Henry scooped him up in his arms and held him close, even though he knew he might smell of the little boy for many days. He had realized that love is about sacrifice and action. This is the Jesus way.

CELL: Who in the cell knows that their love has been influenced by the world's model based on appearances, feelings and emotions, and mutuality? Repent of our selfishness. Pray for one another for a renewal of the mind and take on board the value system of God's love that is about who people are on the inside and sacrificial love.

witness

CELL: Use this time to identify who is in your sphere of influence (ex. people on your campus, people in societies, roommates, people with whom you socialize, etc.). Where could God be using you?

what now?

CELL: Do you struggle loving the unlovely? Identify those you would consider to be the "unlovely" in your life. Spend specific time in prayer this week asking the Lord to grow your capacity to love these individuals.

Commit to memory Roman 12:1-2.

3: identity

introduction

FACILITATOR: *In this meeting, we will continue the theme of the renewing of the mind - the changing of our value systems. We want to look at the area of identity. Many Christian counselors and leaders have often remarked that after many years of trying to help people, they come down to two crucial issues where people have a wrong set of values that can really damage them. The first is their picture of God, the second is how they see themselves, and what values under gird the picture they have of themselves.*

If you go into any American church and ask how many people suffer from a negative self-image, you will be amazed to find that over 50% of the group will put their hands up. The reality is that 50% of the group are being robbed of having a positive picture of themselves. This has implications. Often if we think badly about ourselves we will find it very hard to be effective in the Christian life, so in this meeting we want to explore Romans 12:1-2 in terms of the renewal of our identity.

welcome

FACILITATOR: *Play the game "Who am I?"*

Give clues about a person in the Bible. Prepare four clues for each person ahead of time. Read the clues one at a time. Whenever a person in the group thinks he know who the person is, he should raise his hand, or shout out the answer. If he is wrong, he is out of the game until the group starts trying to guess another person. You may choose to play in teams.

Finish the game with the following clues:

- I am a child of God
- If I confess that Jesus is Lord, I will be saved
- Jesus died for my sins
- I am co-heir with Jesus

This will lead into discussing our self-image of who we are in Christ.

worship

FACILITATOR: *See if there is any way that you can incorporate creation in your worship. Perhaps you could go outside into a garden or park and use what you see there, or a science student could talk about some of the things they study that make them praise God, or maybe simply have everyone answer which aspect of God's creation inspires them. (i.e. the awesomeness of the ocean, the majesty of mountains...). Whatever you do, it is good to remember how we hear God through what he has made. (You could link this to Bible passages that talk about creation's worship. (ex. Is 42:10-13)*

word

FACILITATOR: *Discuss as a group what gives people identity in the world. On a big piece of paper, make a list of what makes people feel worthwhile.*

CELL: Do those things give us real identity, are they real answers? What gives us identity as Christians?

FACILITATOR: *In the early days of plastic surgery, a well-known plastic surgeon discovered that if he changed a feature on a woman's face, it did not only have a physical impact, it had an emotional impact as well. The personalities of these women were changed. Often they felt far more positive, far more significant, and their lives were radically better. In his work over a number of years, in some cases when people came to him for help, instead of offering them surgery, he would offer them a course on how to think more positively about themselves and how to see themselves in a different way. He found that many people experienced deep emotional change without the necessity of surgery. They began to see themselves as being beautiful, significant and important. This had a deep impact on them.*

CELL: Read 2 Cor. 5:14-21 together.

In groups of two or three discuss what this means for us and then take a moment to consider the implication of the following 3 things:

1. Christ died for all. What does that say of our value?
2. 'Behold I make all things new. The old has gone, the new has come.' What does that say about us?
3. 'We are ambassadors for Christ.' What does that say of our importance in the purposes of God?

FACILITATOR: *Because of the nature of the subject, it is important to spend a good amount of time at the end praying for one another in small groups for anything that may have been stirred up while talking about identity. Give people an opportunity to express how they feel about this issue and what needs praying for in their lives with regards to a poor self image. Pray that they will begin to see a new identity in Christ.*

witness

CELL: Think of the different things that people on your campus put their identity in which lead to insecurity. What could you be doing to help? How can you be demonstrating the true security of a relationship with God through Jesus?

what now?

CELL: Do a topical Bible study on who you are in Christ. Make a list of the positives and display it in a place where you will see it every day. When you start to feel insignificant, read that list and praise God for all of the blessings He has given you.

Encourage others this week with a word or note or phone call. They are important to God, also.

4: security

introduction

FACILITATOR: *In the last 3 sessions, we have been looking at key issues that affect our value systems and who we are. In this last one we want to look at the area of security. In our world today people put a great deal of their security in the things, possessions, and status symbols of the world. Unfortunately, many of us as Christians, as we go on in life, also end up with the same status symbols and we seek to get our security from the same things: the difference between the world and us is very small. The aim of this cell is to see a renewed value system impact the area of our security.*

welcome

CELL: Growing up, what were we encouraged to place our security in? Are these securities appropriate for Christians, as well?

worship

FACILITATOR: *Part of your worship could include taking a financial offering to symbolize exchanging our security and dependence on money to being in God.*

Sing a song or play one from a CD that speaks of surrendering ourselves and all we are and all we owe to God.

word

FACILITATOR: *Read the following scriptures as a group and then discuss based on the questions.*

CELL: Read Luke 12:16-21.

Do you think this attitude is still true today?

In general terms, do we as individuals get our security from the things that we earn and the things we own, our success, our bank accounts, etc.?

CELL: Read Mt.6:19-21.

What effect does having (or not having) material wealth have on our attitudes?

Where do we get our real security? Jesus said in Luke 9:24 "whoever would save their life will lose it". What answer does this give?

FACILITATOR: *It's important to realize here that we are talking about a complete reversal of the expectations of today's culture. When we have placed our lives into the hands of God and we no longer have self at the center then actually we are free from the security problems of this world. This then sets us free. We can have a lifelong generosity when it comes to possessions and things because we realize that our ultimate security is not in what we have.*

CELL: What does this mean for us? How should this affect us practically?

FACILITATOR: *We have looked together at four topics under this heading of Renewing the Mind: Transforming our Value Systems, Love, Identity and Security. This subject is very important for us in our Christian discipleship and it would be great to take time to go over the last few weeks again.*

CELL: What values have we learned from these meetings? What can I learn now that I will need to remember in the future when I have left college?

Pray for one another, that we will learn what it means to have renewed minds and that God will help us to stay distinct from the cultural expectations around us, fulfilling our calling to be salt and light.

witness

CELL: Spend time again praying for your friends and contacts. What things or areas specifically do you see them placing their securities? Pray that they would see the fullness of the security offered through Christ.

what now?

CELL: This week, take an inventory of your securities – what you rely on to make you feel safe. You may need to reevaluate the priorities of where you put your investments - money, time, and talents. Choose to invest in what will last for eternity. If you still have questions about what is an appropriate investment, talk with your group facilitator.