

TOTAL REVOLUTION of PURPOSE

Revolutionary Purpose #3 – Becoming More Like Christ

Session Intro:

The word disciple has many nuances, but basically it means “follower” or “learner”. A disciple is someone who follows and learns from someone else. You will notice that often we use phrases like “follower of Jesus” or “disciple” rather than the term Christian. This is because the term Christian has so often become a political term or a term of negativity. But also because a follower of Jesus or disciple are action words...they inform us that we are to be actively moving towards Christ – becoming more like Christ! This process, which we learn about in scripture, is called “sanctification”. We learn that our God is wonderful enough to work this process out in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, sanctification – or the transformation of the person is something that God does, and we participate with Him. He is in the business of revolution – of transformation. A follower of Jesus will not be the same person for long – they shouldn’t be – they should be renewed, transformed! Towards the end of this session we use a very powerful metaphor – regarding feeding and starving. A story is told, and then the challenge is made to “feed the new self” and “starve the beast” – think of ways you could develop this further – a rap, a sign...a new slogan for the next week “starve the beast...”?

Session Objective: The goal in this session is to help young people discover that as followers of Jesus Christ, they have the opportunity to “put on” a new self, to live with a new heart, and to be a new creation. Often times young people read these scripture verses, but cannot see how they relate to their lives. Hopefully as a result of this session, they will have a tangible plan, guided by the Holy Spirit, for Christ-like living.

Minimum Prep: Read through this session and work through the questions with your young people. You may not have the time or resources to have an interactive prayer time at the end, in which case, rap up your discussion in prayer yourself.

Extended Prep: Read the chapters relevant to this discussion in Rick Warren’s book, and think through your prayer time at the end of this study. How can you honour the decisions the young people have made? How can you encourage each one of them? How can you help them to encourage one another? Is there some follow up that you will want to do next week in response to your “week’s assignment”?

How can you reinforce the ideas of feeding and starving? Food? A rap song? A limerick competition? Lots of neat ideas would work!

Session Outline

Leader Preamble:

In 2002, two people were shot inside the Los Angeles airport, obviously creating a security uproar, particularly because it was soon after the events of 9/11 (2001). People began to demand better security, and called for metal detectors and screens at the doors into the airport. But one astute security officer at the airport commented on the demands as follows: “the problem is not our security. If we move the detectors and screens to the doors, people will shoot one another outside our doors.” He understood that security cannot be assured through all kinds of safety measures. He understood that making one area safe, simply removes the problem to another area. What this security guard may not have realized is the depth of truth within his statement. The problem is not security; the problem is the heart of all humanity.

In Jeremiah 17:9 The Bible says, “the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”

- 1. Do you agree with the statement “the problem is not security; the problem is our hearts?” Why or why not?**
- 2. If it is true, as the Bible says, that “the heart is deceitful (which means full of lies) and beyond cure? What hope is there for our society in self help books, or “homeland security?**
- 3. A common theme in our society, particularly in music and art is the phrase, “follow your heart.” What is the problem with that statement? What would happen if every one of us decided to follow our hearts? Can you give an example from your own life?**

Read Ezekiel 36:24-28

- 4. According to this passage, what is God’s solution for the problem of our corrupt hearts?**
- 5. According to this passage what does the “new heart” do in us and for us?**

Leader Note: There are a number of things that we learn from this passage. You may know that this passage is a central part of what theologians call, “the new covenant”. At this point God makes a new covenant with His people because the Old Covenant had been shattered by their sinfulness, idolatry and

hard heartedness. The culmination of the New Covenant is the death and resurrection of Christ. In this act, God secures for his people a New Covenant that is eternal – we come into the presence of God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Some of the things listed in Ezekiel 36 are: gives us a soft heart, gives us the Holy Spirit. He moves us to do his will (i.e. Moves from an 'ought to' towards a 'want to'), we inherit God's blessings.

Because of the revolution within, following God's ways is not just a duty, but becomes our heart's truest and deepest delight. As we begin to seek God – to ask God, "what is it you want for my life?" we discover that our heart's desires become the purest and the best things in the universe.

Read Romans 8:29 from The Message version:

"God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his son...we see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him."

6. What do you learn from this verse? What is God's intent for our lives?

Read Ephesians 4:22-24

- 1. According to verse 22 what was happening inside your "old self"?**
- 2. According to verse 23 and 24 what is happening in your new self?**
- 3. Do you think your old self is completely wiped away when you come to faith in Christ, or does some of it still remain?**
- 4. How do you think we can embrace our "new self" and find newness in the attitudes of our minds, and "put on" our new self?**

Leader Note: There is a major theological discussion inherent in this question. Some have argued as can be seen in II Corinthians 5:17 that we are a new creation and the old is gone, the new has replaced it completely. Yet in other places, like Romans 7, Paul says of himself that he still "struggles with sin". The "truth is in the tension". We are new creations in Christ, but Ephesians 4 gives us a hint when it uses the phrase "put on". We must "put on" our new selves. Like choosing to wear armour, we must choose to walk in the new life that God provides for us. We still have the opportunity to choose to accept the new heart, and our new attitudes and desires, or to choose to feed our old way of life.

Leader Say: *There is an old parable that tells of two forces raging within the person. The one force is an eagle – wanting everything that is good and noble. Flying high above the distractions of this world, the eagle in us calls us to a higher goal, to live on the mountaintops and in the clean crisp air only found in higher living. But the other force within us is the wolf. The wolf is hungry, and prowls around looking to devour wickedness and enjoy the fruits of sin. Which force will win out? The one I feed.*

- 5. According to this parable, what will make the difference between the eagle winning out or the wolf?**

Leader Note: Easy, the one I feed will win!

- 6. In your life, can you think of behaviours or attitudes that you need to starve? Can you think of attitudes or behaviours you want to feed?**
- 7. *What do you think would happen in your life over the next week if you were to decide to feed your “new self” and starve the “old self”? What are some things that would be tangibly different in your life this next week?***

Application: This question naturally leads us into a prayer time, or another type of response. If we were to choose to put on our new selves, things would be very different in our lives this next week. How the students respond to their parents, to their classmates, to their teachers. How they treat their friends, and their own body. The decisions they make, the entertainment that they choose to select...it is all impacted by the putting on of their new selves. If you have the time you may want to work with them on this, walking in Christ has tangible effects in our lives – there are things we choose to start doing, and things we choose to stop doing. This is not to become legalism, that would simply be another “ought to” – but a young person may be led by the Holy Spirit to decide that it is difficult or impossible for him to put on his new self and continue to be absorbed by Grand Auto Theft III. Similarly it may be impossible for a young person to decide to put on her new self and not include excluded people into her relational network.

Why not have the students break into groups of 3-4 (if they are not already in a small group doing this study). Have each of them write out 3-4 things that they can clearly see would be different in their lives if they were to feed the new self and starve the beast. Then have them pray for each other, for those areas of their lives that they would like to see transformation this next week.

Challenge the students to encourage each other through the week. At the end of the prayer time, say something like:

“Why don’t the three or four of you exchange phone numbers. Through this week I challenge you to call one another, simply to encourage each other to feed the new self and starve the beast. Sometimes it takes two or three people to beat off an animal...it is like that in our own lives, we need the support of friends if we want to begin to feed the new self and starve the old self”

Comments and Feedback

Leader Note: This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.