

## TOTAL REVOLUTION of PURPOSE

### Session #4: Strength for the Journey

**Session Objective:** Growing to be like Christ is frustrating. It is frustrating because we live in a “Now” world. I am writing this on my laptop on Friday August 15<sup>th</sup>. Last night the power went out across our area. It was interesting for an hour or two, but by later last night, more and more of us grew impatient – what about the food in our fridge?, or the work I have to do tomorrow?, etc. We expect things to work for us and to be available – NOW. But spiritual growth doesn’t work that way. In the Bible, spiritual growth is compared to a seed, or a building or a child growing up. All these things take time. The objective of this session is to help your young people understand that growth is a slow process, but even slow processes can be rewarding!

**Minimum Prep:** Read through this session, and be prepared for the dialogue, which can result with some of the questions.

**Extended Prep:** Remember from last week, that before you even begin you may want to talk about your last week’s experiences...how did students and leaders “put on” their new self and what difference did it make, what frustrations did they experience? This discussion will become a fantastic tool to lead into this week’s discussion. For further preparation of this week - Reading Rick Warren’s book Chapters 23-26 could really assist you in your work and planning. To read more about the ideas from Romans 12:1-2, Dallas Willard has written a very important work entitled, **Renovation of the Heart** which focuses on the idea of transformation by the renewing of the mind. Also – at the end of this session is a chance for you to memorize scripture with your students.

- Another idea comes from Paul Carter. Go to your local gym with a video camera. Get permission from the gym management, and then find a willing interviewee. If you can’t go to a gym, go someplace where you could find a professional musician, or athlete would work too. Ask the question? Were you always this size (this proficient at the piano...etc.)? What steps did you need to take in your life to get to where you are today? (Likely answers are – a lot of practice, or sweat, they should also comment on the need for a system – a program that is consistent, mention of coaches, or personal trainers, or instructors.) Ask the question? Were there any days you just felt like quitting? What did you do...etc. The idea of course is that any great accomplishment requires training, discipline, hard work, coaching, encouragement, stamina, etc.

## Session Outline

### Leader Preamble:

No matter what you do to stop it, you will grow old. From the day you were conceived, it started. For the first twenty-five or so years of your life you grow up, but each day you also grow older. Once you reach twenty-five, from that point forward you will no longer grow up – maybe you will grow out, or even shrink, but you will continue to grow older. It is inevitable. Spiritual growth should be similar. It is a long process and it takes time, but slowly, day-by-day you should be growing older – more mature. But not always. You have met people who are much older than you who you feel like saying to them, “grow up” – they are older, but not more mature.

Read Philippians 2:12-13

### 1. What is the analogy that Paul is using in this verse?

**Leader Say:** *Pretty simple isn't – it is the analogy of working out – of going to the gym. Can someone tell me – how many more muscles does Arnold Schwarzenegger have compared to me? (answer?) Every one of us is born with approximately the same amount of muscle tissue. We all have approximately the same potential for muscle development – but the major difference is in that word –development. Arnold Schwarzenegger has spent hours on many different days developing his muscles to the size they are now – he still has basically the same number of muscles as you and I but he has developed them far more.*

### 2. Lets look at these verses again – the word “work” is used twice. How is it used differently to refer to you and I and to God?

**Leader Say:** *The difference of course is that we are called to “work out”, whereas, God tells us that it is his job to work “in” us. He brings about the internal change, he gives us the potential for unbelievable development, but it remains our responsibility as to how we work it out in our lives.*

### 3. Why do you think Paul says to “continue...with fear and trembling?” What does that tell you about the importance of this task?

**Leader Say:** *To Change your life, you must totally change the way you think.*

Then read Romans 12:1-2

### 4. In these verses what does Paul say about our actions? What does he say about our attitudes?

**Leader Note:** The Bible makes the astonishing claim that we can change our feelings. It even says that we can control our minds. Our minds don't have a "mind of their own" – we are still in control. Often in our world people make the excuse – "I wasn't to blame, I was out of control...I was drunk...I was depressed..." like there was nothing that could be done. Paul in Romans 12:1-2 makes the bold claim that we can experience transformation by focusing on Christ – that we can experience a completely changed mind. He also makes the bold claim that a new way of thinking will lead to a new way of acting – wow – pretty important that our thoughts and feelings come under our control, and even more important, under the control of the Holy Spirit.

**Leader Say:** *Paul tells us to renew our minds. He makes the bold claim that by renewing our mind, we can change the way we think, and therefore the way we live our lives! In other words to change your life, you must change the way you think"*

*One pastor gives this analogy: (Rick Warren)*

*Imagine riding in a speedboat on a lake with an automatic pilot set to go east. If you decide to reverse, and head west, you have two possible ways to change the boat's direction. One way is to grab the steering wheel and physically force it to head in the opposite direction from where the autopilot is programmed to go. By sheer willpower you could overcome the autopilot, but you would feel constant resistance. Your arms would eventually tire of the stress you'd let go of the steering wheel, and the boat would instantly head back east, the way it was internally programmed... There is a better and easier way: Change your autopilot – the way you think!"*

5. **Why do you think that the way you think about things is made out by both the Bible and Rick Warren to be so important?**
6. **Can you think of any areas in your life where you have tried to change the autopilot, only to find yourself getting tired, and returning to "the internal programming?"**

**Leader Note:** answers should include working out, getting up early for devotions, our attitudes etc. (i.e. Thinking positively, etc.)... If you are doing this study in a smaller more intimate same gendered small group, you could move into personal sexuality, masturbation and other areas that would be a challenge for your students.

7. **Why do you think it is so hard to experience change in our lives? What do you think are some of the internal needs that we attempt to fill through our negative thought patterns or actions?**

**8. How do you think you can begin to change the autopilot of your life?****Leader Teach:**

1. Accept the authority of the Holy Spirit and God's word, the Bible. (i.e. I choose to believe that the Holy Spirit is in control, and that the Bible is true and that it will have authority for me in my life.)
2. Assimilate the truth of the character of God, as revealed in the Bible. Fill your mind with the Bible, (receive it, read it, research it, remember it, reflect on it.)
3. Apply the principles of what God says (through the Bible). i.e. Put it into practice.

**9. Do you think that by changing the way you think you can begin to change the way you feel? Why or why not?****10. Someone has said that love is not a feeling...it's a choice. How do you feel about that statement? If this statement is true, what role do feelings play in our decision-making? Can our feelings trick us?****11. Does anyone here compete as an athlete or excel at something that took a lot of practice? (Who? Have them share how). How important has coaching and practicing been in that process? (Very important).**

**Leader Say:** *Just like becoming a great athlete requires a lot of practice, it also requires coaching. A great athlete, musician or artist will tell you how important it is to properly learn the techniques of their skill. It can take years to unlearn a bad golf stroke, or breathing technique. Similarly in our spiritual lives it is going to take time for us to unlearn some bad habits we started to acquire at birth. And in their place, it will take time, practice and coaching to replace those bad habits with right thinking, and right acting. This is the heart of what we are talking about today = it takes time to train yourself in godliness, but we do it, knowing that our work on the outside is really the result of God's work on the inside. We are often worried about how fast we grow, but from the Bible we learn that God is more concerned about how strong we grow!*

**Application:** Read Philippians 4:8

**Leader Say:** *We have a choice! We can choose to grow up to be godly – bringing pleasure to God and experiencing a wonderful friendship with him, or we can choose to simply grow old. Growing in God takes work. Paul said, “work out your salvation” in another place he said, “Train yourself to be godly”. These ideas go against the idea that spirituality is something you simply become. A bodybuilder doesn't simply become a world champion, a great musician doesn't*

*simply become world-renowned. But small consistent steps in our life can be how we work out, what God is working in us. Think with me...how many scripture verses would you know 10 years from now if you learned one a month? The answer is 120. A small act of learning one scripture verse a month can translate into 120 memorized scripture passages by the time a 16 year old is 26. How many 26 year olds do you know who have memorized that many scripture passages?*

*This week, lets work on memorizing a scripture passage that can help us change the autopilot of our lives.... Philippians 4:8*

### 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.

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