

TRANSFORMED

BEING EVERYTHING GOD WANTS ME TO BE

"Understanding Transformation"

January 15-23, 2012

PRAYER: Begin with a few moments of sharing thanks and praises in prayer.

Leaders, it's your call; you may choose to incorporate more information/scriptures as time allows for your small group lesson. **Reflection:** It's been said that success in your Christian life is to live each day as though Jesus Christ were in your place. We have just one problem with this definition. Most of the time, we want that place! After all, it's ours. Transformation takes time, determination, and endurance. Our desires are good but doing it consistently is sometimes a struggle. If you were asked to run in a marathon with a friend, the idea sounds compelling doesn't it? Experiencing the excitement of being in a marathon, spending quality time with your friend...but when it really comes down to making the decision are you willing to do what it would take beforehand to run the race well. Are you willing to pay the cost of time and training? Are there other priorities that are more important to you? Each day we face the same decision in our spiritual life. If we really want to know Jesus Christ intimately, it takes time, energy, and the decision to let the Holy Spirit be in control of my life. And frankly, aren't there some day when you don't feel like sweating that hard? The only reason we drag out those spiritual running shows one more time is that we've had glimpses of the prize – knowing and experiencing Jesus...that prize motivates us to do the tough training..

Opener:

Think of a season in your life when you felt that you were really growing spiritually. What were some of the ingredients that you felt prompted this growth?

The Bible describes the goal of our lives in various ways: to be transformed into Christ's likeness or to be complete in Christ

Read: 2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17

If that's the goal, what's the process by which we get there? (The writer of Hebrews compares the Christian life to a race...let's explore that concept.)

Read: Hebrews 12:1-3

Discuss:

In this passage, what qualities do a race and the Christian life have in common? (Perseverance and endurance. The commitment to remain under some kind of pressure rather than try to escape it. Endurance produces proven character. Responding to difficulties with persistent faith, not scrambling to get out from under hardships is what produces proven character.)

Salvation is a free gift from God through Jesus Christ. You don't have to earn it; you just believe. Yet a race involves effort.

How do you fit together these two truths – salvation as a gift and the Christian life as a race?

Greek athletes stripped down to nothing for a race so that nothing would hinder them as they ran. (Fortunately today we have spandex!) So in Hebrews when verse 1 says, "throw off everything," it means everything that could potentially hinder us.

Within your life, whether at school or at work, what are some of the sins that can entangle us and keep us from running the race of Christ well? (Even things that aren't sins can be hindrances in your race. Money, career goals, time commitments – anything can be a hindrance if you hold it more dearly than Jesus Christ)

What does "fixing" your eyes on Jesus mean and why would it be so essential? (verse 2) (To look away from one thing and to concentrate on another. The idea is to look away from all other distractions and look solely at Jesus, the one who designed and perfected the race.)

Jesus focused on "the joy set before him." He looked forward to the joy of returning to His Father and the joy of seeing us freed and restored to our Father. We endure the race because of the great reward that is ahead of us – the joy of the Father's embrace.

What joy is set before you when you finish your race? (See, for example, Hebrews 12:22-24; Philippians 3:20-21; Isaiah 25:6-9.)

Plan for Action:

We're not meant to run the race alone. Hebrews 12 encourages believers to endure hardships and keep running the Christian life. Runners would agree that a cheering crowd, the right equipment, and a clear goal help them press through the pain and cross the finish! It's always more motivating to run with a pack of other runners. We need the support, encouragement, and accountability of fellow runners.

We grow in our walk with God when we experience life together with another Christian friend or in a small group.

If you've never spent daily time with God, this is an easy way to begin. Would you consider taking on this habit for the duration of six weeks? If you're already consistent in daily devotions, consider acquiring the habit of Scripture memory. Would you consider accepting the challenge to memorize one verse per week and hide God's Word in your heart?

(If this is something you would like to do...see you small group leader for helps, or call or stop by the church office to receive these.)

How can this group pray for you this week?

To view the complete teaching from the Sunday services go to www.centralcommunity.org/media

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