

Main Passage: Ephesians 4:17-24

Purpose: To understand that one aspect of being transformed by faith in Christ is cultivating a mindset that sees all things through the lens of faith.

Session Snapshot: We are radically transformed into a new creation when we come to saving faith in Christ. Part of this transformation is the process of learning to see the world around us through the lens of our faith. We can't stay in the old mindset of our dead life before we surrendered our lives to Jesus. We must strive to grow a mindset influenced by our identities as God's children.

GETTING STARTED

Kick off your time together by checking in and/or reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, remind your group that this is week 2 of their video series examining the truth that all disciples have been transformed by Jesus. This is part of a larger Bible study curriculum, *Be Disciples*, that helps men define exactly what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

THEN, if you want to start with asking men for prayer requests, checking in on how their weeks have gone, or any other housekeeping tasks, do so. If you have men present in this session who were not in your first session, consider re-introducing yourself and, if necessary, having the men in your group do the same.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, as this is only the second session, remind the group that you will watch a video that will be about 15 minutes long, followed by a short discussion of the video. Then, you'll spend a few minutes in Bible study, followed by a closing activity. Consider encouraging men to take notes as they watch the video.

THEN, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **When we claim to be disciples of Christ, it's a "game-changer" from a cultural perspective. Why do people react differently when we say we're "disciples of Jesus" or "Christ-followers" instead of merely saying we're Christians?**
- **How has being reborn through faith in Jesus transformed the way you look at the world around you?**
- **Jesus transforms more than just how we see the world. He transforms the way we see spiritual growth. Can you remember how you approached growing in Christ during a season of your life when**

you were not as serious about spiritual maturity as you are now? What was your attitude like? What has changed?

- How has Jesus transformed the way you view your finances and your attitude toward material things?
- Are you comfortable with asking the question, “How does my life compare to those who do not know Jesus at all? Is my life clearly distinguishable? Or would it be hard to tell the difference between us?” Why did you answer the way you did?

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **We're about to see in greater depth what Paul means when he talked about the renewal that Jesus makes possible in our lives. We're going to learn that we partner with God in walking out a life that is lived in obedience to His will and example. Let's get started with our Bible study.**

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at how our lives have been radically transformed by Jesus. A major part of understanding the Bible is understanding the context in which you encounter a passage. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** The Apostle Paul wrote the letters to the Ephesians. Of course, we know Paul as the one-time chief enemy of the Church. After his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul would go on to have a position of great importance in the early Church and beyond. He wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament.
- **Time frame:** Ephesians was probably written by Paul from prison in the latter years of his life, sometime around 60 or 61 AD.
- **Purpose:** Paul had a very close relationship with the church in Ephesus. It seems as if the motivation for the letter was simply that the church would know how he was faring in his imprisonment. But, true to form, Paul couldn't help but teach. The letter covers general teaching on the work of Christ to redeem believers, unity among believers, and how believers are supposed to conduct themselves.

Explain that where you pick up in Ephesians 4, Paul has just finished challenging the Ephesians to see themselves as a unified body, united together under the banner of the Gospel of Christ. Paul then enters a section where he speaks in greater depth to what this life in Christ looks like practically. Then, read or have a volunteer read Ephesians 4:17–24. When you've finished, lead your group in a discussion. Ask something like:

- **Rick alluded to this in his video, but Paul is comparing two different categories of people. Who is Paul comparing in these verses?**
 - *Answer:* Those who have come to saving faith in Jesus and those who have not. Paul is talking to a group of both Jews and Gentiles who have accepted Christ as Savior. When he says for them not to walk as the Gentiles do, he is referring to non-believers.
- **Define the word futility.**
 - *Answer:* The Greek word Paul used here means “ineffectiveness or falseness” and may also be translated as “vain or worthless.”
- **So, what is Paul saying about the “minds” of Gentiles? Hint: It has nothing to do with their intelligence.**

- *Answer:* Paul is referring to the mindset of a person who is unwilling to see Jesus as Lord. While they may be intelligent, they have a darkened understanding of the reality of the world they live in and the spiritual world that surrounds them.
- **Paul links the heart and the mind of these non-believers in verse 18. They can't understand the world because they are unwilling to consider that Jesus might be exactly who He claimed to be. What does this lead to?**
 - *Answer:* Verses 18 and 19: "alienated from the life of God," "ignorance," a callousness of their hearts, and a surrender to "sensuality" and "impurity."
- **Like in our lesson last week, Paul identifies these habits as belonging to the "old self," the "former manner of life" that we died to when we came to saving faith in Jesus. In verses 23 and 24, Paul gives us a blueprint for resisting this old way of living. What does he say we should do?**
 - *Answer:* To be renewed in the spirit of our minds and to put on the new self.

THEN, explain that you want to camp out on this idea of renewing the spirit of your minds for just a moment. Say something like:

- **The Greek word Paul uses for renewing implies an ongoing task. So it's not a one-time thing. And when Paul says that we are to be renewed in the *spirit* of our minds, he's not talking about the Holy Spirit. The NIV translates the Greek word for "spirit" as "attitude." While technically a less accurate translation, it's a bit more helpful in understanding what Paul is getting at. Paul is saying that our initial conversion by faith in Christ changes our status in God's eyes instantaneously. We go from being sinful outcasts, rebels, and enemies of God to being holy saints, adopted into God's family with our debts paid in full. All of this is accomplished through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. But while we are instantly changed in God's eyes, we begin a process of becoming more like Christ each day. This is called sanctification. So the process of renewing our minds is something we partner with the Holy Spirit to accomplish.**

Ask:

- **In your own words, how do you understand this to go? What is the process for how we continuously and intentionally shape our understanding so that we view the world around us and our place in it through the lens of our faith? What does this look like?**
 - Answers will vary. It's OK to let folks share and not feel like you have to tie this up in a neat little package. You're about to flesh this out a little more in the *Accepting the Challenge* section.

FINALLY, let the conversation go for a bit, then explain that you're going to end your time by focusing on the practical application of this. Ask if there are any questions about what you have discussed so far, then move to *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group's attention on the takeaways from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Consider starting this portion of your session by asking your group what they think are the main application points from your session. Allow discussion to go until there are no more suggestions.

Then, if necessary, supplement your discussion with the following application points. Say something like:

- **When it comes to regularly renewing our minds in order to become men who rightly view all things through the lens of faith, we have to be extremely intentional about what we consume.**
 - How does the media you watch, read, or listen to lead you to a more Christ-centered view of the world? How does it do the opposite, distracting you or, worse, leading away from a Christ-centered view of the world?
- **What does this idea of renewal of your mind have to do with your spiritual disciplines?**
 - Can you be someone continually renewing their mind if you don't have a regular practice of meeting God in the Bible? Or of praying? Or of worship?
 - How are your spiritual habits? Is it time to take an honest look at how committed you are to staying connected to God?
- **In the video, Rick said something interesting. He said that if we have not been transformed by Jesus, it's not because Jesus does not have the ability to do so, because, of course, He does. If we claim to be a Christian and yet can honestly say that our lives have not been transformed by a relationship with Jesus, there must be something inherently wrong with our relationship with Him.**
 - As you hear this, do you have any questions about the nature of your salvation?

If it feels appropriate, allow some discussion about the kind of processing they find themselves doing.

FINALLY, encourage men to continue to marinate on these points in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.