

Leadership Tip!

There's a great Toby Mac song in which he describes performing on stage and sensing God taking over the show, and his response is "Take it away!" In your LIFE Group, when you sense a Holy Spirit moment, don't be afraid to break from the script of the lesson and let God take over. Some of the most transformational experiences happen outside of our own little plans.

The Walking Dead – Encouragement!**STARTER QUESTION:**

Have you ever been literally stuck somewhere (for example, accidentally locked in a room, or unable to move your car in the snow)? Did you receive help in order to become unstuck?

MAIN IDEA:

If you're feeling frustrated with your life and stuck in your circumstances, just "trying harder" is not going to change things and will only add to your frustration. The good news is that God sent the Holy Spirit to help do the hard work of transforming our minds and our lives, and we cooperate by offering ourselves to Jesus.

Why do so many believers think that the key to living the Christian life is using our own strength and judgment to do "the right thing" all the time?

Sometimes it can be hard to admit that we need help. But we are fighting an unwinnable war when we only rely on our human abilities to live out our lives.

(Have someone read this passage out loud):

Romans 7:15-21 (NLT)

I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate... I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind.

We often forget we're in the middle of a war, so we merrily go about our lives and then end up feeling battered, bruised and defeated and can't understand why. It's easy to see how feeling frustrated and stuck can become a pattern. Throw in some condemnation from The Accuser and before you know it you might just want to give up.

Have you ever gotten to the point that you felt so defeated in trying to be a Christian that you walked away from God for a while? (Leaders: be sensitive that this may be a hard topic for some)

Pastor Hank's illustration from Young Frankenstein reminded us that we all have "abnormal" brains. God created us in his own image, and he made us to have the mind of Christ. But there has been a fall, and now our minds have been darkened. We get selfish when we ought to be thinking generous thoughts, and we get hostile when we ought to be filled with feelings of love. Paul puts it like this:

Romans 8:5-7 (NLT)

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

So how do get out of the ruts we occasionally get stuck in and start letting the Holy Spirit be in control of our minds again? By acting on the truths of scripture and offering our bodies as a living sacrifice—over and over again—which sets into triggers God's transforming power in our lives.

Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

Give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice... Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Can you describe a time in your life when your mind was transformed and you had a new attitude about something just because you took action and did something over and over again, even though you didn't feel like it at first? (e.g., an exercise regimen, getting up early for scriptural quiet time, tithing)

Here's a word of caution about the journey to transforming your mind: don't fall back into the trap of "I can do this!" without recognizing and taking advantage of the help that God has sent us.

John 14:16-17 (CEV)

Then I will ask the Father to send you the Holy Spirit who will help you and always be with you. The Spirit will show you what is true... the Spirit, who is with you and will keep on living in you.

Romans 8:9-16 provides us encouragement and reminds us how the Holy Spirit helps us:

1. He keeps me from being **controlled** by my sinful nature (vs.9)
2. He **lives** within me (vs.10a)
3. He gives me **life** (vs.10b)
4. He makes me **right** with God (vs.10c)
5. He keeps me from having to do what my sinful nature **urges** me to do (vs.12)
6. He helps me put to death the **deeds** of my sinful nature (vs.13)
7. He keeps me from being a **slave** of fear (vs.15)
8. He makes me a **child** of God (vs.16)

Which of these promises (can be more than one) resonates with you and where you are in your life right now?

FINAL THOUGHTS:

The call to discipleship, the call to follow Jesus, is not just a call to try very hard to avoid certain behaviors or sins. It is a call to enter into a life of wise training so that our minds, our inner lives, can be renewed and our lives can be transformed. And it will happen. It may take a long time, but if we keep following Jesus as best we can then the day is going to come when our minds are renewed and our lives are transformed.

Close in prayer for those who are feeling stuck or frustrated in their lives, that they would truly sense the victory God has given us and will be encouraged to offer themselves as living sacrifices each day.

FAMILY FOCUS:

Here is a story to reinforce the idea of having the right thoughts and being obedient to the Lord through the Holy Spirit. Read Luke 4:1-13.

Questions for discussion

Tell me about a time when you were really, really hungry.

How badly do you want to eat when you are just starving?

Can you imagine how hungry Jesus must have been after not eating for 40 days?

If you had not eaten for 40 days and you had the power to turn stone into bread, would you?

Jesus had all the power in the world and Satan tempted him to show it off, but Jesus didn't. How did Jesus resist temptation?

How can we use Scripture to help us maintain self-control?

The Bible says Satan tempted Jesus for forty days. During this time, Jesus did not eat. Satan tempted Jesus with food, power and the opportunity to show off His power and to honor Himself instead of God.

When Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus used Bible verses to tell Satan why He wasn't going to do what he asked Him to do. The Bible also tells us Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, which means God helped him be self-controlled. It is the same for you and I. If we try to fight Satan and temptation on our own, it is difficult, and perhaps impossible. If we ask God to fill us with His Holy Spirit to help us fight Satan and temptation, we can be strong and victorious like Jesus.

Here is a practical way to push home the idea of self control. Discussion point: When we lose self-control, we can hurt others; go to a parent, or to God, for help.

This exercise in simple science is designed to help your children understand the importance of dealing with emotions before they get to the point of "boiling over." This project should be done outside or in an area that is easy to clean up.

You will need soda pop in a clear bottle and a suitable place to make a mess.

Shake the bottle of pop up a lot. As you are shaking the pop, explain that life has its shake-ups, too. Life's shake-ups are times when we feel a lot of pressure. For example, perhaps teasing from a sibling shakes you up; maybe it is feeling as though you're not getting your fair share or being treated unjustly. Use examples of things that press your children's buttons.

Next, take the top off the bottle of pop and fizz from the pop will fly everywhere. Explain that when we lack self-control, we are just like the bottle of pop. Just as the pop flying everywhere makes a mess, we make messes when we lack self-control.

Read Galatians 5:13-15 and 25-26 and ask the following questions:

What kind of messes do we get ourselves into?

Is it a mess when we hurt someone's feelings?

What other messes can you think of?

Would you rather live in a family where people encourage each other or devour each other?

When we do not use self-control, we end up "biting and devouring" each other, and "provoking and envying" each other. This is not God's plan for our lives. He would rather see us encouraging and building one another up. When we feel like fizzing all over everyone, it is time to get alone with God for a talk.

Help your children make plans for what they will do when they feel like they are going to lose self-control. Challenge your children to hold one hand in a fist and clamp the other hand over top of it, pretending that it is a bottle of pop ready to explode. In order to "keep the lid on," he/she can't come to a parent who will help them bring their frustration to God. As your children are able, have them go directly to God with their concerns.

Relevant Scripture

Galatians 5:13-15 "You my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."

Galatians 5:25-26 "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."

Hebrews 10:24-25 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us **encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**"

WALKING DEAD
 “Encouragement!”
 June 5, 2016

God’s Game-Changers vs. 5 Debilitating Feelings:

| (Romans 7) We feel... | (Romans 8) God says... | We have... |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Guilty | “No condemnation” (vs.1-4) | Liberty |
| Stuck | “No frustration” (vs.5-17) | <u>Victory</u> |
| Overwhelmed | “No desperation” (vs.18-30) | Expectancy |
| Confused | “No misperception” (vs.28) | <u>Certainty</u> |
| Disconnected | “No separation” (vs.31-39) | Security |

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 Romans 8:5-7
 (NLT)

“So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.”
 Romans 8:8 (NLT)

“I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate... I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind.”

Romans 7:15-21 (NLT)

“Give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice... Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”
 Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

- God Transforms us
- By changing the way we think
- Which is all set into motion when we give our bodies as living sacrifices to God

Jesus: *“Then I will ask the Father to send you the Holy Spirit who will help you and always be with you. The Spirit will show you what is true.. the Spirit, who is with you and will keep on living in you.”*
 John 14:16-17 (CEV)

parakletos: - to come alongside of – to grab hold of the other side and lift...

Encouragement: How the Holy Spirit helps me live the Christian Life (Romans 8:9-16):

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