

Group Discussion Guide: Renovation of the Heart

Session 3: The Transformation of the Whole Person

Goal of Series: To become a loving person just like Jesus; loving God and others

Imagine a Renovated Inner World

Steve begins by mentioning that life in Jesus is about becoming like Jesus- a person of love. How do the following scriptures support that idea:

Luke 10:27, Matthew 5:39, Matthew 6:25-31, Galatians 55:22-23

As we come to Christ (**Matthew 11. 28-30**), repent, believe, and follow him by apprenticing (discipleship) to take up his offer of a better life (**John 10:10**), **we become transformed into people of love.**

Of the various ways (see below) in which we are transformed (from within) to be people of love, which area of heart change most excites you? Which one do you struggle with now?

Some Key Areas of Heart Transformation – Becoming a Loving Person Like Christ

- **The "Un-offendable" Life:** Reaching a state where your ego is "dead," so a stolen parking spot or a criticism has no power to ruin your day.
- **The End of Anxiety:** Being so convinced of the Father's care (Matthew 6) that worry feels foreign.
- **The Death of Contempt:** No longer trying "not to be mean," but instead seeing enemies as people for whom Christ died.
- **Mercy as a Reflex:** Having the emotional space to show mercy because you aren't preoccupied with how *you* were wronged.
- **Non-Judgmental Spirit:** You stop looking for the "speck" in your neighbor's eye and focus on the "log" in your own.
- **Growing in purity of heart:** Honoring others in your thoughts and treating them with dignity, not as sex objects.
- **Self-Correction:** Stop critiquing the flaws of others and start addressing your own.
- **Growing in Consistency:** Prove your faith through active obedience rather than just religious talk.
- **Infectious Character.** Being "salt and light" to others would not be a have to, or something we force ourselves to fulfill, but a **natural byproduct** of a loving heart.

The Christ-Life Vision: Beyond "Coping" Christianity vs Following and Becoming Like Jesus

Some people approach Christianity to "cope" with life—getting saved and hoping God blesses their efforts to get through the week, and heaven at the end of life. This approach is self-centred. It is not about seeking an intimate relationship with him NOW nor dying to self-control to follow him (**Read Matt. 16:24-26**). Though we may pray a prayer to accept Jesus and believe in him, following him daily (living life as he would live it if he were in our shoes -loving God and others) as our loving leader and king is the issue, Why do some people accept Christ but don't want much to do with him? If they don't become like Jesus (bear fruit or characteristics of Jesus) what danger are they blind too for their distorted understanding of Christianity (**Read Matt. 7:19-21 and John 15:2**)?

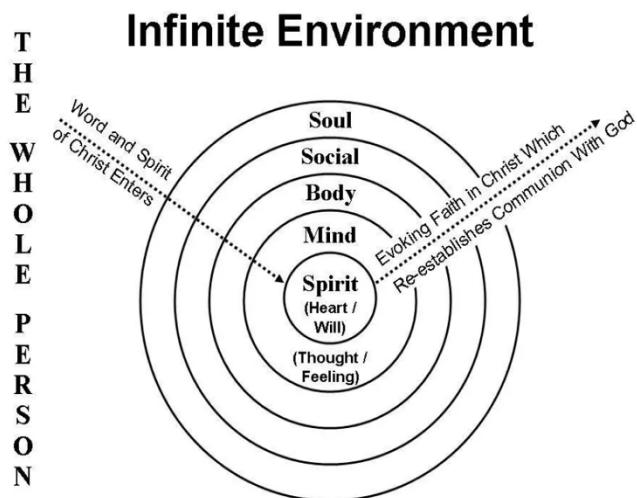
True Christlikeness is the "Renovation of the Heart." It's the shift from a me-centred faith to becoming a "little Christ"—a person whose very nature is increasingly defined by the fruit of the Spirit (Read **Galatians 5:22-23**). How is "simply believing and hoping for blessings" different from "putting on the character of Christ" (commanded by God)? What do those who add Jesus "on the side" miss out on becoming?

Steve mentions that Dallas Willard has noted that sometimes in our desire to address sin in our lives we try certain fixes to deal with sin. But they fail.

- **1. We focus on the "Don'ts":** If you spend all your energy trying "not to sin," your mind is still preoccupied with sin. You become a "miserable saint" who is technically obedient but internally full of contempt.
- **2. We ignore the Body:** Most sins are habits stored in our nervous system. You cannot "willpower" your way out of a reflex; you must **train** the body through spiritual disciplines (silence, solitude) so that a new, Christlike reflex can grow.
- **3. We "Try Harder" (Willpower):** This fails because the will is the smallest part of the person. Trying to use your "will" to stop an ingrained habit is like trying to stop a waterfall with a toothpick. You eventually run out of "willpower energy," and the old habits (the "Body" dimension) take back over. Good intentions are not enough ("The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41)).
- **4. Promise Making (The "Vow" Cycle):** We tell God, "I'll never do that again." This fails because it focuses on the *past* failure rather than the *present* presence of God. It keeps us trapped in a cycle of shame, which drains the very energy we need to change.
- **5. Memorizing Scripture as a "Spell":** Simply putting information in your head doesn't change your heart. If you memorize "Do not worry" but your **Mind** is still filled with a "mental movie" of God as a distant, angry judge, the information will never reach your **Feelings** or **Actions**.
- **6. Reading "How-To" Books on Sin:** This is often just "sin management." It focuses your attention on *the sin* rather than on the beauty of God. Willard noted that whatever we focus on, we become; focusing on "not sinning" ironically keeps us preoccupied with sin.

Do you agree that we often try the above and fail?

Dallas Willard writes that a person is made up of six inter-related or interactive dimensions. For us to become like Christ, each part must be transformed. To be transformed, we must understand how we are made. Spiritual progress isn't just a "feeling"; it involves the renovation of the **six dimensions** of our being:



The Six Dimensions of Personhood

1. **Our Thought Life/Mind/Spirit** (images, concepts, judgments, interferences): What we think or dwell on and the emotions that follow.
2. **Our Feelings (Sensations, Emotion; part of mind)** feelings flow from our thoughts & interpretation of experiences
3. **Spirit (Choice, Will/Decisions, Character):** Where we make choices and set our intentions.
4. **The Body:** Our physical habits, reflexes, and nervous system.
5. **The Social Context:** Our relationships and how we interact with our neighbours.

6. **The Soul:** The "integrator" that ties all these parts together into one person.

Discussion Questions

- We often try to change our "Heart" while ignoring our "Body" (habits) or "Social Context" (friends). Why does "sin management" or focusing on changing sinful habits or attitudes usually fail if we don't address all six dimensions?
- Which of these six dimensions feels the most "cluttered" or in need of renovation for you right now?

IV. Application: Read and discuss the following Scriptures and how they relate to change:

Mark 12:30-31 (notice at least four components of the person that Jesus mentions), Matthew 26:41, Philippians 2: 2-13, 1 Timothy 4: 7-8 (training; disciplined process of developing a Christlike-character).

This week's challenge: Identify one "reflex" (anxiety, anger, judgment) that showed up today. Instead of just feeling guilty, ask: *"Which of my six dimensions is driving this reflex, and how can I invite the Holy Spirit to renovate it?"*

Next week: Help is on the way! We will begin to train our whole person toward Christlikeness.