

LIFE Group Leader Handout

February 23, 2020

To Die Is Gain

Rev. Rafael Restrepo

Scripture--Various

Philippians 1:21--

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Romans 15:9--

...and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."

Hebrews 10:32-34--

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

Luke 21:16-18--

You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. 17 You will be hated by all for my name's sake. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Main Idea--Run toward danger not comfort, and pay whatever price the Master appoints.

Are you a candidate for martyrdom?

A sure promise—

- Jesus never lies Matthew 24:14
- Payment has been issued for the lost—Revelation 5:9
- All for his name's sake—Romans 15:9

Payment is Suffering

In the west, we move toward comfort and ease, away from trouble and harm. Hebrews 13:13

The prize is sufficient: Hebrews 10:32-34, Psalm 63:3, Luke 21:16-18

Application—

- What did God awaken in your heart as you heard this message?
- How big an issue is a craving for comfort in your life at this point in time?
- What actions have you already taken? Have you identified "next steps"?

Are the People in Your Group Being Informed or Transformed?

By Dan Lentz

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like." James 1:22-24

I can look into God's Word many times during the week, in fact, we look into the Word at most of our group times together. However, I often just settle for the information the Word provides me rather than the transformation that it offers. I feel good and think I am progressing in spiritual maturity when I know a lot of Biblical information, but these things will only be forgotten if I don't become transformed into Christlikeness as a result.

How do you know if people in your group are being transformed rather than just informed? As you look at the lives of people with whom you are in community, ask, "Is there more Christlikeness at a heart level today than six months or a year ago?" Some practical ways to evaluate our journey toward Christlikeness is to look at the characteristics of Jesus in the New Testament and ask some useful questions:

- Are we becoming more or less judgmental than we were a year ago?
(As soon as we start to pursue Christlikeness, do we wonder why others aren't as Christlike as we are?)
- Are we becoming more approachable, or less?
(In Jesus' day, lepers and prostitutes and tax collectors were especially careful to steer clear of rabbis, who were considered especially close to God. Rabbis had the mistaken notion that their spirituality required them to distance themselves from people. Jesus was the most approachable person they had ever seen. His spirituality attracted people to Him. Is it attracting people to you and your group?)
- Are we growing tired of pursuing spiritual growth or are we energized and fulfilled by that pursuit?
(The pursuit of righteousness is always exhausting when it seeks a distorted goal with distorted effort. The temptation is to throw our own effort into religious duty rather than letting the love, joy, and peace of God to rule in our minds.)
- Are we measuring our spiritual life in only superficial ways?
(Do I tend to judge my spiritual progress more by how routinely I have prayed, completed my Bible study, and attended church, or do I judge my spiritual progress by if I love a difficult individual more than I did last year at this time?)

Getting started on the process of transformation

It is important as group leaders not only to evaluate transformation, but to implement strategies that facilitate transformation. The process of being transformed into doers of the Word and not just hearers can seem overwhelming. On any given week, I may be involved in a small group and a worship service and personal devotions. I hear three or more calls to make drastic changes like improving my parenting practices, addressing the plight of the poor, and overcoming my tendency toward worry. Just looking into the mirror of truth about these issues in my life is going to make me feel pretty defeated and possibly guilty for not experiencing transformation in all these areas.

So, it is important to develop a strategy that allows God to work His transformation process in our life. One useful strategy in your group time is to ask 'So what?' questions regularly and systematically, but ask 'Now what?' questions sparingly, yet with focus and detail when you do ask it.

'So what?' invites group members to think about the implications of what they are studying. 'Now what?' asks them to take action individually or together, to do something concrete about those implications.

A 'So what?' question might ask, "What do you conclude about God's nature by the way Jesus responded to the Samaritan woman at the well (a person of another race and gender)?"

A 'Now what?' question might ask, "What will I do to become significantly more compassionate toward other people by this time next year?"

There is nothing more exciting than when you can look back and see this kind of life change occurring in the lives of those in your group. Just remember that transformation carries a promise from James 1:25, *"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it-he will be blessed in what he does."*