

FAITH beyond BELIEF

SESSION 1

Sharing Life

(20 minutes)

Gather: Get acquainted with your Cell Group members! Please take turns sharing briefly:

- your name
- family information
- where you live
- what you do for work or how you spend your time
- one reason why you are excited to be a part of this Cell Group.

Discuss: What words or phrases come to mind when you hear the word Transformation?
Write down some of the group responses.

What is unique about a biblical understanding of transformation?

Read: As you begin this journey together, remember that you are not alone. You will have the support of your pastor, church family and Cell Group. Most importantly, you will have the support of a God who loves you and wants the very best for your life.

So are you ready to “do what you’ve never done before in order to see what you’ve never seen before?” Join your hearts together wherever this challenge finds you today and share as a group in this prayer of dedication.

Pray Together: Dear God, thanks for this beautiful world you’ve given us and everything in it. We know that you love it all, and that Jesus died for it all. Would you please show us how to love it too? During these next weeks we want to hear your voice and learn from your Word. We want to grow together and accomplish your purposes. Stretch us, Lord. Continue to transform us by your grace. Help us to move beyond church as usual in order to experience Faith Beyond Belief. Transform our thinking. Transform our living. And please, Lord, use us as your partners to help transform this world that you love. We ask for these blessings in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Transformed Thinking

(30 minutes)

Introduction: During this Faith Beyond Belief series we will be considering “5 Biblical Paradigms of Nation Transformation.” They will be the topic of each Sunday sermon and will be reviewed at the beginning of each Cell Group session.

These paradigms are biblical themes found throughout the Bible that have been ignored, misunderstood or misapplied by the Church. They represent a necessary “paradigm shift” in the way we believe, think and act as individuals and as the Church in order for sustained transformation to take place in our world.

These paradigms are taught by Ed Silvoso in his book, “Transformation” (Regal Books, 2007). The “5 Biblical Paradigms of Nation Transformation” that we will be considering are:

1. The Great Commission is about discipling nations, not just individuals.
2. The marketplace (the heart of the nation) has already been redeemed by Jesus and now must be reclaimed by His followers.
3. Every Christian is a minister, and labor is worship.
4. Our primary call is to take the kingdom of God to where the kingdom of darkness is entrenched in order for Jesus to build His Church.
5. The premier social indicator that transformation has taken place is the elimination of systemic poverty.

Discuss: A “paradigm shift” is like putting on a new set of glasses that allows you to see what you haven’t seen before. What “paradigm shift” took place in the “believing, thinking and acting” of the Christian Church during the Protestant Reformation of the 1500’s? What was the result? Can you think of other “paradigm shifts” in the life of the Christian Church that have led to a recovery of biblical principles?

Read:

Transformation Paradigm #1

“The Great Commission is about discipling nations, not just individuals.”

The Great Commission from **Matthew 28:18-20**:

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”

Discuss: Who gave the Great Commission? What is a disciple? Is this a message for every Christian? What action steps are included in the Great Commission? What “power” and “comfort” are given to help us accomplish it?

Reflect: The Great Commission tells us to “**Go**” in Jesus’ name. The Christian Church is a missionary enterprise, beginning locally and extending globally. In **Acts 1:8**, Jesus broke it down into an action plan that starts first in your own city, then your region, then your nation and then to the nations of the world. He said,

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Write down your personal application of these instructions.

My Jerusalem (city) is:

My Judea (region) is:

My Samaria (nation) is:

My “ends of the earth” is:

Share several responses in your group.

Reflect: The Great Commission also tells us “how” to go. First, we “**baptize**” in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This implies everything we have traditionally associated with evangelism; including bringing people into the family of God through the proclamation of the Gospel and a response of faith in Jesus Christ. While there are various teachings on baptism within the Christian Church, baptism is always associated with forgiveness, belonging and the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Second, we “**teach**” everything that Jesus taught. This implies ongoing biblical instruction and real-life application to help new believers become transformed followers of Christ. When this process of growth takes place the Great Commission becomes cyclical. Faithful disciples continue to “win,” “consolidate,” “disciple” and “send” reaching many others.

Discuss: What might happen in our nation if every Christian began to apply the full meaning of “**Go, Baptize, and Teach?**”

Quote:

“The expression ‘discipling nations’ is at first hard to grasp, but basically it means teaching a nation what Jesus taught us for the purpose of causing it to embrace the goodness of God and to reflect the character of Christ.”

(Silvoso, Transformation, p.123)

Reflect: Is there evidence that nations can be discipled? Note the early biblical evidence of wide-spread impact:

“You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching...” Acts 5:28
(a city is reached by Peter and the Apostles.)

“This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord.” Acts 19:10
(a large region is reached through the ministry of Paul.)

“So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.” Romans 15:19b
(Paul had saturated those areas from Jerusalem to Italy with the full Gospel.)

“But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain.” Romans 15:23-24a. (Paul sets his sights on another nation.)

“The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it... the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.” Revelation 21:24, 26 (The end-times procession includes nations.)

Discuss: What tends to happen in the life of the local church when we limit the implication of the Great Commission to the salvation of individuals? Describe some of the different parts of a nation that also need transformation? How does Paradigm #1 broaden your thinking about the Great Commission?

Quote:

“To disciple someone means to turn that person into a follower of the teachings you espouse. In the case of a nation, it means to impact its life so that it will conform to a set of specific values and develop a corresponding behavior... the issue is not whether a nation can be discipled, because it happens all the time and it will continue to happen. The question is, can a nation be impacted in such a way that it will become a disciple of Jesus? Can His teachings impregnate its people and its institutions so that the nation will reflect the character of Christ?”

(Silvoso, Transformation, p.42)

Summary:

- The Great Commission is given to every believer by Jesus.
- We are told to “Go, Baptize and Teach” with the power and presence of Christ.
- There is biblical evidence for the discipling of nations.
- A discipled nation will reflect the character and values of Christ.
- One day the glory and honor of discipled nations will parade before the Lord!

Life Application Challenges

(20 minutes)

Your first **Personal Life Application Challenge** is to obey the Great Commission of Jesus to disciple the nations by committing yourself to “win,” “consolidate,” “disciple” and “send” as you have identified in your Jerusalem (city), your Judea (region), your Samaria (nation) and your “ends of the earth.” Pray a prayer of commitment that God will use you to reach out and influence the people around you right where you stay, work or study.

Your first **Group Life Application Challenge** is to pray for each person in your Cell Group. You see, by making this Cell Group commitment to one another you have just created a Circle of Influence. The relationships you will establish with one another have the potential to be life-transforming. So, now that you have met one another and shared together in this first session, commit to praying for one another by name each day. You’ll be amazed at what God will do in your life and in the lives of your Cell Group partners.

Prayer Support

(15 minutes)

Every week you will be encouraged to take a few moments to share personal prayer requests within your group. Go ahead and do that now. You may write them down here:

Now, close with a group prayer for these needs and continue to include them in your prayers throughout the week.

Details

(5 minutes)

Take a few extra minutes to write Cell Group member information into the front of this book including names, preferred phone numbers and email addresses. (Option: The Cell Group Leader may gather this information and provide it to the group members.)

Our next Cell Group Session is:

Date:

Location:

Time:

Remember to bring:

Daily Devotions

It is important for your Christian growth to cultivate a daily routine of personal Bible study, reflection and prayer. The best and most optimal results of transformation will be yours by giving your mind and spirit as much fuel as possible. Below you will find some passages of scripture for each day of the coming week starting with Day One tomorrow. These passages connect with the Faith Beyond Belief session you have just completed.

Establish a time for these daily devotions that is consistent and workable with your lifestyle. What will work best for you; morning, noon, or evening? Begin your devotional time with prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate your reading of God's Word. Read the scripture, perhaps more than once. Reflect on the questions and others that will come to your mind. Consider applications to your daily life.

Then, take a longer time in prayer. Come before the Lord with confession, praise and thanks-giving. Pray for your Circles of Influence. Pray for other needs in your life. Take time to listen as well. **Psalm 46:10** says, **"Be still and know that I am God."** The time frame for these daily devotions may vary from 10 or 15 minutes to an hour or more as your prayer life deepens. Be disciplined, but let the Lord lead. Know that others are praying for you as well.

Day One – I Corinthians 1:18-31

What "paradigm shift" is described in these verses? Is it still needed today? Why is "Christ crucified" a message for every person? For every nation? What evidence is there in this text that you are included in God's plan of transformation?

Day Two – II Timothy 3:14-17

How have the scriptures helped make you more wise? Are you willing to believe verses 16 and 17 as truth for your life... and claim their promises as you share in this Faith Beyond Belief series?

Day Three – Matthew 7:24-29

What pressures have been beating against you lately? Does your foundation feel like rock or sand? Why is it important to not only hear Jesus' words but put them into practice?

Day Four – James 5:13-20

When you encounter trouble, is your first reaction to worry or pray? Why do we pray "in the name of the Lord?" Why is there a special blessing when believers pray together in unity? How could your prayers be more powerful and effective?

Day Five – Matthew 11:25-30

Why does God take “good pleasure” in revealing spiritual truth to those with child-like faith? What part of your life feels “weary and burdened” right now? How can you respond to Jesus’ invitation to “come to Him, learn from Him, and find rest in Him?”

Day Six – Matthew 6:25-34

Reflect on the magnificent ways that God cares for His creation. On what basis does Jesus say, “Do not worry?” How might you “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” for every aspect of your life today?

Day Seven – Your Cell Group meets again!