

FAITH beyond BELIEF

SESSION 7

Sharing Life (20 minutes)

Gather: Greet and check-in with your Life Group partners.

Discuss: Your Life Application Challenges from the past week related to Principle #4 of Prayer Evangelism, “**Proclaim: Announce that the kingdom of God has come near and is available through Jesus Christ.**”

Your *Personal* Life Application Challenge included four parts:

- To strengthen key relationships within your Circles of Influence and continue to implement the principles of Prayer Evangelism.
- To write a two-minute version of your own testimony.
- To practice your testimony so that you can share it confidently, naturally and with flexibility depending on the circumstances.
- To share your testimony as the Lord provides opportunities with the individuals or families from your Circles of Influence with whom you’ve been building relationships.

Your *Group* Life Application Challenge was to take these same personal challenges and apply them to the family or families that you have been impacting as a Life Group.

Please respond to any of the following questions that would be of interest to your Life Group. Read the questions together first.

- In what ways were you able to further implement any of the four steps of Prayer Evangelism within your Circles of Influence this past week?
- Did you have an opportunity to “proclaim that the kingdom of God has come near through Jesus Christ” utilizing the testimony that you prepared and practiced? How did this come about? What was the response?

- What fears did you have to overcome?
- In what ways did you sense the Holy Spirit guiding you this past week as you particularly applied Principle #4 of Prayer Evangelism within your Circles of Influence?
- If time allows, have each person from your Life Group share their “two-minute testimony” with the whole group.

(Did you take on the *Faith Beyond Belief* Optional Challenge to get involved with issues of “systemic poverty” in your community? What did you do? What happened?)

Pray Together: Dear loving and gracious God, we thank you for the blessing of sharing life together for these past seven weeks. We thank you for the many ways that you have helped us stretch and grow in order to experience Faith Beyond Belief. We thank you for the ways that you have been at work transforming our thinking and our living. O Lord, would you please continue to bless those individuals and families in our Circles of Influence with whom we have been implementing the Principles of Prayer Evangelism? We’ve come to love them with the love of Christ and we know that this is just the beginning of what you will do in their lives. And please, God, continue to use us as your partners in transforming our city, region, nation and world. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Transformed Thinking

(30 minutes)

“Transformed Thinking and Transformed Living”

Read: During these days we have dared to ask, “What is the part that we are called to play in the transformation of this world for which our Savior gave his life?” We have discovered that the mandate of scripture is clear. We are to pour-out our lives in love because Jesus first loved us. We are to “Go” to the ends of the earth with the message of Christ beginning with our own families, workplaces, schools and communities. We are to embrace our calling as ministers, especially in the marketplace of daily life. We are to bring the kingdom of God to a dark and hurting world. We are to challenge evil in all its forms and work for the day when there will be “no needy persons among us.” We are to be the Church, not an organization, but a living, breathing organism made up of every disciple of Christ.

And so we have committed ourselves to Faith Beyond Belief. We have declared publicly in worship and privately in Life Group gatherings that we will not settle for a maintenance mentality. We will not settle for a level of faith that is content with the promise of heaven alone. We will not settle for church growth when our greater calling is to grow the kingdom of God. And so we have challenged every “believer” to become a “transformed follower” of Jesus. We have boldly stated:

Faith Beyond Belief = Belief + Trust + Obedience

The 5 Biblical Paradigms of Nation Transformation represent the big changes that need to take place in the way we “believe, think and act” in order for the Church to become a full-partner in bringing transformation to our world.

Fill in the blanks as a reminder of how well you have come to know these paradigms:

1. The Great Commission is about discipling _____, not just _____.
2. The marketplace (the heart of the nation) has already been _____ by Jesus and now must be _____ by his followers.
3. Every Christian is a _____, and labor is _____.
4. Our primary call is to take the kingdom of _____ to where the kingdom of _____ is entrenched in order for Jesus to build his _____.
5. The premier _____ indicator that transformation has taken place is the elimination of _____.

5 Biblical Paradigms of Nation Transformation

Paradigm	Purpose	Shift
Discipling Nations Matthew 28:18-20	Mission	Individual Conversion to Nation Transformation
Reclamation Project II Corinthians 5:17-20	Partnership	Redeem to Reconcile to Reclaim
Marketplace Ministry I Peter 2:4-5,9	Calling	Ordained Clergy to Everyone a Minister
Kingdom Builders Matthew 16:13-20	Strategy	Church Growth to Kingdom Growth
Systemic Poverty Luke 4:18-19	Testimony	Acts of Charity to Prophetic Calling

The chart on the previous page summarizes these “paradigms of transformation.” Take a few minutes and review the “Paradigm, Purpose, and Shift” that is taking place because of this restoration of biblical teaching.

Discuss: Which of these transformation paradigms has required the greatest shift in the way you personally “believe, think and act?” Which of these transformation paradigms has brought the greatest encouragement to your growth as a transformed follower of Jesus?

Read: Friends, these transformation paradigms are challenging the Church to a reformation that is as significant as the one that took place 500 years ago when the light of the Holy Spirit shined on scriptures like *Ephesians 2:8-9*: ***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”***

Now just imagine... for 1500 years those who believed in Jesus lived under the burden that their salvation depended on “good works.” When the truth of God’s Word was brought to light, and the Church of Jesus Christ embraced “salvation by grace through faith,” a fresh wave of the Spirit was released that launched the Church into a whole new era of mission and ministry.

Likewise, many Christians believe that the full implementation of these “transformation paradigms” will release the Church of Jesus Christ, meaning every believer, to fulfill the Great Commission by being instruments of transformation in the world as never before!

Discuss: In your view, which of these paradigm shifts provide the greatest challenge to the Christian Church today? In your local congregation, which of these paradigm shifts do you think will lead to the greatest results for the kingdom of God?

Quote:

“God has ordained that we, His Church, be His instruments to transform the entire world; to disciple, teach and baptize nations. That is a daunting, incomprehensible task unless we understand that God has placed in each of us, and in the world we inhabit, connection points that when properly linked will provide the vehicle for transformation to take place.” (Silvoso, Transformation, p.149)

Read: Are you playing offense or defense when it comes to implementing the transformation paradigms in your daily life? In his book, “Anointed for Business,” Ed Silviso describes four different postures that Christians take toward the marketplace (Regal Books, 2002, summary of pp.123-124):

1. **I am a Christian in the marketplace.** I’m on the defensive. I keep my beliefs to myself. I view my daily work as less significant than what I do at my local church. I’m trying to survive in the workplace and often feel like I’m on the losing end of the battle.
2. **I am a Christian who applies biblical principles in the marketplace.** I’m willing to “go public” with my Christian faith when it isn’t too risky. My business ethics are based on my faith. I hope that others will notice that I’m a Christian but I rarely talk openly about my relationship with Jesus. I guess you could say that I’m settling for a draw.
3. **I do business in the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit.** I’m on the offensive. I understand that “my work is my ministry.” I strive to be a witness within my Circles of Influence and apply the principles of Prayer Evangelism in my workplace. I see God answering my prayers and impacting the lives of my co-workers. I look forward to going to work and am excited about my calling as a marketplace minister.
4. **I am involved in and committed to the transformation of the marketplace.** I’m on the offensive and God is helping me see the bigger picture. Transformation is happening in my workplace. The spiritual climate has changed. Now I’m partnering with other pulpit and marketplace ministers who have a vision to see transformation come to all of our various professions, our city and region, our nation and world. I’m mentoring others. This transformation vision has captured my heart!

Discuss: Which of these postures toward the marketplace describes you today, and perhaps where you’d like to be in the future? What has been your greatest obstacle to moving forward – a lack of understanding – the feeling of being alone – a fear of what others will think – a lack of faith that Jesus can use you – the need for a stronger personal relationship with Christ? How has this Faith Beyond Belief series helped you grow?

Read: The following scriptures remind us of God’s call upon our lives to be partners in transformation. Read them together as a Life Group claiming these awesome promises.

(Jesus said) “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” Mark 11:23-24

(There is power in prayer to move mountains... and transform nations!)

“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” Romans 8:16-17 (The Holy Spirit testifies that we are children of God and partners with Christ.)

“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:3-6 (We are called to a partnership in the Gospel that will continue until the second coming of Christ.)

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.” I Thessalonians 5:23-24 (God is faithful to accomplish transformation in us and through us. He will do it!)

Discuss: In what way do these promises from God’s Word take the pressure off of us to make transformation happen?

Summary:

- The transformation paradigms represent a call to the Christian Church to “fully activate” for the sake of fulfilling the Great Commission.
- Faith Beyond Belief requires that the biblical truth represented by the “5 Paradigms” move from our heads to our hearts.
- If you want to see what you’ve never seen before, you must do what you’ve never done before.
- Only God can bring about lasting transformation through the message of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Transformed Living

(30 minutes)

“Transformed Thinking and Transformed Living”

Read: In order for these major paradigms to shift, so must our lifestyle. If the “5 paradigms” represent the big picture of what must change in the Church and world in order for sustained transformation to take place, then Prayer Evangelism represents the day-by-day implementation by every believer.

During this seven-week journey as a Life Group we’ve been stretched. We’ve been challenged to step outside of our comfort zone. But in the process, we’ve discovered Faith Beyond Belief. We’ve learned that living as transformed followers of Jesus means applying these biblical teachings on a daily basis to every facet of life; family, church, school, workplace and community.

We’ve also discovered that the principles of Prayer Evangelism provide a loving and natural way to reach out to those within our Circles of Influence who may not know Christ. Let’s see how well you remember them. Fill in the blanks!

The principles of Prayer Evangelism from *Luke 10* are:

1. _____: speak peace to people and systems in your sphere of _____ . (*vs. 5-6*)
2. _____: build _____ with those outside the kingdom of God. (*vs. 7-8*)
3. _____: respond to their _____ in the name of Jesus. (*vs. 9a*)
4. _____: announce that the kingdom of God has come _____ and is available to them through _____. (*vs. 9b*)

Discuss: Which of these principles has been the most natural for you to incorporate as a lifestyle? Which of them has been the most challenging?

Read: We’ve learned together that our Circles of Influence are those places where God has us most connected in relationships and activities with others. But praise the Lord; these Circles of Influence also represent natural “connecting points” for implementing a lifestyle of Prayer Evangelism. God wants us to bloom right where we’re planted!

Discuss: Find a partner in your Life Group. Take a few minutes to share with each other how you have seen God work in your “top three” Circles of Influence during these past seven weeks. Think specifically about the individuals and families with whom you’ve made a special effort? What kind of transformation have you seen take place in their lives? What might be next? How can you continue the good work you’ve begun?

The Principles of Prayer Evangelism

Principle	Application	Result
BLESS Luke 10:5-6	speak peace instead of cursing	the spiritual climate is changed
FELLOWSHIP Luke 10:7-8	make friends instead of enemies	trust is developed
MINISTER Luke 10:9a	respond to "felt needs" before "deeper needs"	the love of Jesus is experienced
PROCLAIM Luke 10:9b	share your story and Jesus' story	Christ is received naturally

Discuss: Review the “Principle, Application, and Result” of implementing the 4 steps of Prayer Evangelism from the chart on the previous page.

Read: Like the banks of a mighty river, the “5 Biblical Paradigms of Nation Transformation” and the “Principles of Prayer Evangelism” are helping guide the flow of God’s transforming work in the world today. These river banks provide definition and direction and can serve as a rallying point for many streams of Christianity to flow together.

Kingdom Vision

5 Paradigms: Transformed Thinking

**The transformation of individuals,
families, churches, cities and nations.**

Prayer Evangelism: Transformed Living

When we incorporate these transformation paradigms and principles into our daily lives we experience Transformed Thinking and Transformed Living. God’s Spirit flows into us... and out from us... and there is life! Should we be surprised at this divine transformation strategy?

The Psalmist writes:

“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.” Psalm 46:4

Jesus tells the woman at the well:

“If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” John 4:10

Jesus says:

“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” John 7:37-38

And in the last chapter of the book of Revelation, the Apostle John tells of a river that flows from the throne of God, flanked on both sides by a tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” Revelation 22:1-2

To experience Faith Beyond Belief, to experience the transformation of nations beginning in our family, our church, our workplace and our city, we must “jump in” to God’s river and be carried forward by the flow of the Holy Spirit! Many of you have already taken this leap of faith and it is just the beginning of what God will do!

Discuss: Where in your personal life are you “thirsty” for more of God? What have you “gotten a taste of” during this Life Group experience that has been a blessing to you? Where are you sensing that God might be encouraging you to jump in?

Quote:

“When it comes to reaching cities, God will not favor the charismatics or the conservatives or the mainliners. He will use *the* Church, which is made up of many streams. It is fundamental to know at all times that it will take the whole Church to present the whole gospel to the whole city.” (Silvoso, Prayer Evangelism, p.235)

Summary:

- Prayer Evangelism is where real faith meets real life.
- Transformed Living comes about as we Bless, Fellowship, Minister and Proclaim in Jesus’ name.
- Those within your Circles of Influence long to see Christ in you.
- For a Christian to “go with the flow” means to “jump in” to God’s river and see where the current of transformation takes you.
- By God’s love and amazing grace we are partners in transformation.
- What if your legacy was the demonstration of Faith Beyond Belief?

Life Application Challenges

(20 minutes)

Read: Your *Personal* Life Application Challenge is to continue to live with Faith Beyond Belief, to “do what you’ve never done before in order to see what you’ve never seen before.”

During the past seven weeks you’ve deepened some relationships with people in your Circles of Influence. Continue to pray, bless and speak peace. Continue to go deeper with conversations. Meaningful relationships happen when we reveal ourselves to others and they reveal themselves to us. Continue to respond to felt needs and demonstrate the tangible love of Christ. It takes time and sacrifice to reach out to others but the results are often life-changing. And above all, continue to share both your story and God’s story as the Holy Spirit softens hearts and opens doors. Just step aside and say, “Let me introduce you to my friend, Jesus.”

Your *Group* Life Application Challenge is to pause right now and discuss the following questions:

- What was the impact of reaching out to a family or families from your community as a Life Group?
- What did you learn? What could you have done better?
- Even though this Life Group may be ending, how can you continue to reach out to these families and welcome them more fully into your church and friendship circles?

Also, please discuss together your next steps as a Life Group. Your Life Group Leader will help you. Options can include:

- Continue immediately with some new resources.
- Take a break and then resume with some new resources.
- Launch several new Life Groups out of your existing group.
- Continue your friendships but discontinue meeting as an organized group right now.
- Each of these options can also include changing leaders/hosts, meeting times, location, adding new members, etc. etc. The sky is the limit!

It is hoped that this experience has been an encouragement for you to make a Life Group an ongoing part of your growth in Christ.

Your *Faith Beyond Belief* Optional Challenge is to continue to get involved with others in being a partner in transformation in your city, region and nation. God’s Spirit is moving around the world through prayer movements, marketplace ministry networks, city-reaching prototypes, Kingdom Companies and Transformation Churches.

For more information go to www.transformourworld.org

Quote:

“The best decision you can make today is to invest the rest of your life and the sum of all your resources into discipling nations. Doing so will show your children that life is about God. By charging against formidable and well-armed giants with a compelling vision and absolute faith that God will make possible the impossible, you will give your children a solid foundation to stand on, you will show them how to spread their wings and not be intimidated by adverse winds but to use them for uplift. And above everything else, you will teach them to align their compass with God’s true north.” (Silvoso, Transformation, p.264)

Prayer Support

(15 minutes)

I trust that you have been blessed to be Life Group “prayer partners” during these past weeks. Take a few moments to share a couple of testimonies of answered prayer. Now, close together with a time of prayer and agree to continue to pray for one another in the weeks to come.

Daily Devotions

Read: You are also encouraged to continue with a daily lifestyle of personal Bible study, reflection and prayer. The Bible is your owner's manual, your road map for life. Continue to explore it and ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher. Here are some wonderful passages of scripture to bring this Faith Beyond Belief series to a conclusion.

Day One - I Thessalonians 5:16-28

In what way is Paul's admonition to "pray continually" fulfilled through a lifestyle of Prayer Evangelism? Reflect on the promise, "The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."

Day Two - John 10:1-10

Are you coming to recognize the voice of your Good Shepherd? Are you listening for his guidance? Are you trusting in his protection? Are you coming to discover "life in all its fullness?"

Day Three - Colossians 1:9-14

Which of the qualities in this passage are you most aspiring to as a disciple of Christ? How are you spending your inheritance as a saint in the kingdom of light?

Day Four - Galatians 5:16-26

How are the cares and temptations of the world keeping you from experiencing the fullness of the kingdom of God? What are the blessings that come as we "live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit?"

Day Five - Philippians 3:7-14

Reflect on your profit and loss statement when it comes to knowing Christ. Right now, what are you "pressing on to take hold of?" What must you forget and leave behind?

Day Six - Ephesians 3:14-21

Reflect on the whole family of God in heaven and on earth. How has this Life Group series expanded your understanding of the Church? How has it helped you become more "rooted and established in love?" What would you like God to do immeasurably more of in you?

Day Seven - I Corinthians 2:6-16

Just imagine what God has prepared for you because you love Him. Are you growing in spiritual wisdom? Are you experiencing Transformed Thinking and Transformed Living?

**"Building the Church is what Jesus does;
Taking His kingdom all over the earth
is what He commanded us to do."**

-Ed Silvano

A Transformation Prayer and Declaration

(Leader: declare the phrase! People: enthusiastically repeat the phrase.)

Dear Heavenly Father,

You are so awesome... you are so amazing... we praise you... we give you thanks... you have called us to be partners... in transforming the world... and you have promised... to give us your authority... to give us your presence and peace... to give us every tool and resource... to see your kingdom come... on earth as it is in heaven.

O Lord God... we declare today... that we desire to live with Faith Beyond Belief... we desire to experience Transformed Thinking... we desire to experience Transformed Living... we confess that we often fall short... and we ask your forgiveness today... but we have heard your call... we are your sons and daughters... we are ministers... we are partners in transformation... and there is no turning back.

Help us as your children... and help us as the Church... to jump-in to the river of your Holy Spirit... where we can continue to experience changed lives... so that you can use us... to be instruments of transformation... in the lives of others... and to the ends of the earth.

And so we declare today... in the name of Jesus... that we will never go back to old paradigms and old religion... we will answer the call... to live with Faith Beyond Belief... so that your transforming love... can reclaim every part of this world... for which you gave your life... to the glory of God.

Amen and Amen!