

RE-TURN

Sermon by Todd Lester

September 13, 2015

RETURN TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Romans 12:2 (NIV) Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

THE RETURN TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Luke 15:11-24

1. GET _____ WITH MY LIFE (Luke 15:13,14,17)

Jeremiah 29:13 If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.

2. OWN UP TO MY _____ (Luke 15:17-18)

Isaiah 59:2 It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, He has turned away and will not listen anymore.

Isaiah 1:18 Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves.

1 Corinthians 11:28 You should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup.

3. _____ MYSELF (Luke 15:12, 20-22)

Luke 15:19 "Please take me on as a hired servant."

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV) And we all are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

Romans 12:1 (NIV) In view of God's mercy ... offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.

4. LIFT UP MY _____ (Luke 15:23-24)

Psalms 68:4 (ESV) Sing to God, sing praises to His name; lift up a song to Him ... His name is the Lord.

Psalms 13:6 I will sing to the Lord because He is good to me.

My Summer was Like...

Pick one or 2 pictures/descriptions that helps to illustrate what happened during the past summer. Include also how God impacted you during the last several months.



Greek Tragedy



Episode of
3 Stooges



Soap Opera



Action Adventure



Bible Epic



Late Night News



Fireworks Display



Professional Wrestling
Match



Boring Lecture



Fairy Tale

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Icebreaker/Introduction

The 'My Summer was Like' activity is a vehicle to get group members sharing about their summer (assuming this is your first meeting back in the fall).

Read Luke 15:11-24

Ask if there was anything from this week's message that stood out – either a point that was made that really resonated with them, or perhaps a question or difficulty that came up for them.

THE RETURN TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Todd gave some examples of people from Scripture who underwent a spiritual transformation. Can you remember these (Paul, Isaiah, Moses) and can you think of some other examples – either from Scripture, or history, or today?

Todd said that spiritual transformation is about how to get close to God, stay close to God, or get close again. Share about a time when you have felt especially close to God.

Todd reminded us that the way we think determines how we feel, which determines how we act. That is, the thoughts come first and so in order to change something we don't start with trying to change our actions but with changing our thoughts. Do you agree with this?

1. GET FED UP WITH MY LIFE

Focuses on Luke 15:13, 14, 17

Todd said that God will sometimes allow a little rain to fall in our lives, or will send storms. Discuss God's role in the difficulties we face at times – does He allow them or actually send them?

Is there an aspect of your spiritual life that you are 'fed up' with?

The prodigal son found out that "Life without the father is hard" – is 'life with the father easy'? (thinking of course about the bigger picture – is life with God 'easier'?)

2. OWN UP TO MY SIN

Focuses on Luke 15:17-18

Todd reminded us that when we love something more than God it is called an idol. What are some common idols?

Todd challenged us to set a goal of doing a regular (monthly?) Spiritual Checkup. Have you done one recently or regularly? What are some practical and specific things that you feel should be included in this kind of checkup? (an Annual Spiritual Checkup pdf is included with this week's resources)

Consider discussing [Isaiah 59:2](#) – do you find this verse challenging or difficult? Should it be understood as a biblical principle or applied to the context of Israel's unfaithfulness?

3. OFFER UP MYSELF

Focuses on Luke 15:12, 19, 20, 22

Read [2 Corinthians 3:18 \(ESV\)](#) – Todd reminded us that transformation is a process (it's not instant or automatic) but that it starts with a decision. In what ways do you need to offer up yourself to God afresh?

Can you identify with the comparison of transformation to the stages of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly (some steps can be ugly but the end result is beautiful)?

What is your reaction to the father's response to his son's return? (ie. does his lavishness of physical, financial rewards complicate the story in any way for you?)

Todd said we weren't made for the 'good life' but for the 'better life'. Compare/contrast what each of these has to offer.

4. LIFT UP MY PRAISE

Focuses on Luke 15:23-24

Todd focused on singing as a response of praise, but what are some other ways that we can 'lift up our praise'?

What are some ways that you have seen music to have power or influence in your life or in the lives of others?

In what ways has music brought you closer to God?

Todd set a second challenge before us to sing the songs on Sunday mornings. Is this an easy or difficult task for you? Are there other ways to bring more praise (or music) into your life?

Consider closing by singing a song or 2 of worship.

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RETURN TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Romans 12:2 (NIV) Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

WHY ARE GOALS IMPORTANT TO CHANGING MY LIFE?

Luke 15:11-24

1. GET FED UP WITH MY LIFE

Luke 15:13,14,17 He wasted all his money in wild living ... his money ran out ... he began to starve ... he finally came to his senses.

Jeremiah 29:13 If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.

2. OWN UP TO MY SIN

Luke 15:17-18 When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you.'"

Isaiah 59:2 It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, He has turned away and will not listen anymore.

Isaiah 1:18 Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves.

1 Corinthians 11:28 You should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup.

3. OFFER UP MYSELF

Luke 15:12 "I want my share of your estate now before you die."

Luke 15:19 "Please take me on as a hired servant."

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV) And we all are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

Romans 12:1 (NIV) In view of God's mercy ... offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.

Luke 15:20, 22 So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him...his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet.'

4. LIFT UP MY PRAISE

Luke 15:23-24 "We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found." So the party began.

Psalms 68:4 (ESV) Sing to God, sing praises to His name; lift up a song to Him ... His name is the Lord.

Psalms 13:6 I will sing to the Lord because He is good to me.



C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

Discipleship of Heart and Mind

Annual Spiritual Checkup

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:37-40

Each year many of us will go through a physical check-up, perhaps do a financial check up at year’s end or at tax time, and perhaps do a performance review at our workplace. But how often do we take time to review our spiritual life?

Those who are *saved* by grace are called to *grow* in grace (2 Pet. 3.18). As disciples of Jesus, we are to live a life of love – love for God and love for our neighbor, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Too often, in the busyness of our day-to-day lives, we let other priorities crowd out the two highest priorities Jesus gave us. The following questions are designed to help you examine your spiritual life over the past year and to prayerfully seek God’s help in areas where you desire to grow in the New Year.

Loving God with all your heart, soul and mind.

1. How is my personal relationship with God?
 - Do I have a growing desire to spend more time with God? Am I spending appropriate time praying, reading and meditating on the word?
 - Am I growing in my desire to obey and please God? Do I obey out of gratitude for God’s love? Or from guilt or fear?
 - Have I fully surrendered to the Holy Spirit? Do I ask God to fill me each day with the Holy Spirit?
 - Are there areas I am holding back from God? Which ones? Why?
 - Am I more aware of the sins in my life? Do I repent on a daily basis and receive forgiveness and cleansing from God. Have I fully, truthfully repented of all past and current sins?
2. Am I actively serving God?
 - Volunteering at church?
 - Praying regularly for the pastor, staff, missionaries and volunteers?
 - Am I seeking to make others feel welcome in my church?
 - Doing my job with excellence?
 - Reaching out to those around me?
3. Am I growing in my desire and actions to give sacrificially to God’s work in the church, in caring for the poor, and in other ministries? Am I teaching my children about sacrificial giving and putting God before materialistic desires?
4. Am I living in humility before God, my family, friends and co-workers?

5. Is there evidence of grace growing in my life? Do I thank God every day for his love, grace and mercy and saving me from what I deserve? Am I seeing evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in my life (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control)? Am I learning to see others through the mind of Christ? Am I treating others with the same grace God has shown me?

Loving Your Neighbor

6. Am I loving my family as I should?
 - Husbands, are you loving your wives? How, specifically?
 - Wives, are you respecting your husbands? How, specifically?
 - Parents - are we teaching our children the Bible, how to pray, and how to please God?
 - Children, are you honoring your parents? How, specifically?
 - Am I managing my time in a way that reflects God's priorities and honors my family relationships? What specific changes are needed?
 - Are there any outside influences that are harming my family relationships? If so, what will I do about them?
7. Am I forgiving others? Is there anyone among my family, friends, neighbors or co-workers that I refuse to forgive? Do I fully trust that God has forgiven my sins?
8. Am I growing in fellowship with other believers?
 - Am I part of a small group? Is it making a difference in the lives of participants?
 - Do I have a godly mentor to help me grow in my walk with Christ?
 - Am I mentoring/discipling a newer believer?
9. Have I personally witnessed to anyone in the past year? In my neighborhood? In my workplace? Am I prepared to share my testimony? To share the Gospel?
 - Am I fervently praying for and planning opportunities to witness in this coming year?
 - Am I being salt and light in my neighborhood, workplace and social groups? How, specifically?
10. Am I focusing part of my time and money to help the poor and disadvantaged? Am I teaching my children about the importance of helping the poor? How?

Jesus says that if we love him, we will obey him (Jn. 14.15), and he calls us to grow in grace and love. Do you have a plan for growing in your love for God and love for your neighbor for this next year? Will you prayerfully prepare one before the end of the year? To help you grow in these areas, you'll find a variety of resources on our website (www.cslewisinstitute.org).