

Transformed: Being Known in a Faith Community

Session Aim

The focus of this session is on the relationship between our transformation in Christ and our involvement and role in a Christian faith community. Every Christian should be concerned about what level of involvement is necessary to make certain that spiritual growth occurs continuously. Transformation is not only an individual challenge; transformation occurs best in the context of a support group. (Think about AA and NA.) To grow in the likeness of Jesus demands a spiritual support group. This lesson discusses how the faith community can help bring about transformation.

Preparation

Talk to five people who are actively involved in church. Choose people whom you admire for their Christian walk and involvement. (These can be from your small group or from other groups; from this church or Christians who are involved in other congregations.) Ask them about the connection between individual faith and their church involvement. Ask them about the spiritually transformative experiences of their lives. Make a list of the responses you receive to share with the group during discussion.

Bible Text

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Introduction

Understanding our shared identity in the church is crucial for a healthy community transformation process. We must understand how a Christian community develops before we can experience a growing sense of community. Transformation depends on the relationships that come from our being known and valued in a faith community.

To experience intimate community in the biblical sense, we must learn to reveal ourselves to others—to honestly, freely, and thoughtfully tell our stories. It is easy to live isolated, anonymous lives. We may feel it is not worth the effort to be vulnerable in short-lived relationships. We must keep intentionally investing in significant relationships. This includes holding values in common and practicing a lifestyle we believe is noble. This lifestyle is a commitment to let God continue to form us spiritually.

Welcome/Icebreakers

“Life Story” is a group exercise that is tremendously effective in building community and enhancing self-understanding. “Life Story” asks you to think about the most formative relationships and experiences of your life. As people share their stories with each other, a deep level of trust and commitment grows. Please note that you are encouraged to participate only as you are comfortable in telling the stories of your life.

What is the most life-changing thing that has ever happened to you? Was the change good or bad?

What single event had the greatest positive spiritual impact on your life?

What event led to doubting God? To trusting God?

What event or events have been important to including you in the church?

Worship

The group may want to spend a brief time in singing, prayer, and Scripture reading. Suggested theme: how our lives are shared in fellowship and encouragement.

Suggested approach: let individual group members choose a song (first verses) or a Scripture to share; let group members participate in developing a prayer list.

Bible Study

Read 2 Cor. 5:11-21.

What concepts in this text suggest “togetherness”?

What verses from this text suggest the church as “support group”?

Find verses that tell us that what one person does has an impact on the faith of others.

To what extent are you aware of having a ministry of reconciliation?

--I try to help people find reconciliation frequently

--I don't think much about the conflicts other people have with one another or with God

--I think about reconciliation mostly in the context of church

--I don't understand what this ministry is about

Application

What one thing would you most like to see as part of the church experience to help us build faith and know one another? Share this idea with the group as appropriate.

Think about the “life stories” you heard earlier. Share one or two of the ideas that impressed you the most.

How could we use such stories to share faith with one another and with those about us?

Conclusion [continued from previous lesson]

Think of one factor that inhibits your Christian faith or testimony, and resolve to work on it. (Share it with one other person and pray together about it if possible.)

Try to be especially aware that you are called to be an “ambassador” wherever you go.