



## Week Two | Small Group Guide



# Transform Our Hearts

**Review:** In week one, we considered how God uses circumstances to transform His people. Using theme verses for Transform from Isaiah 43:13-21, we answered the question, Why Transform? God has been faithful in the past. He uses circumstances to challenge us to put away idols and false gods, and to honor Him in front of the whole world. When we honor Him, He will do something new and we will live our best possible life.

If, last week, you identified an aspect or situation you'd like transformed, did you see God at work in that area? Or where did you see Him?

Where would you like to see Him at work?

## Week 2

**Opening:** What do you think about the frequent counsel we hear in movies and on TV "just follow your heart"? What is helpful about those words and what may not be so helpful about this advice?

**Overview:** In the first section, we will see the consequences of the heart's tendency toward mischief, and yet, how a transformed heart is capable of tremendous good. In the second section, we will see an awesome benefit of faith in Jesus: We will understand the world from God's point of view, see His glory and share it with the world.

## The Heart of the Matter

Even more complex than the physical blood-pumping muscle in the chest, the heart, is the biblical use of the word "heart." Heart refers to the innermost part of our being, the center for decision making and emotion. It is an internal mystery and a battleground. Consider these references to the heart in the Bible:

- ❑ The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).
- ❑ We are instructed to love and serve the Lord God with all our hearts (will) (Matthew 22:37-39).

### TRANSFORMER Fans:

Which Autobot Transformer character has the most heart?

How does this impact his/her/its actions?

Do any of the Decepticons question their motives or destructive tendencies?

With which Transformer Autobot or Decepticon do you most closely identify?

Why?

- ❑ By hiding God's Word in the heart, His Word advises our decision-making (Proverbs 3:4-5).
- ❑ We judge by appearances, the Lord looks at the heart, the interior character (1 Samuel 16:7).
- ❑ We speak out of the overflow of our hearts (Matthew 12:34b).
- ❑ For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft... (Mark 7:21).
- ❑ With our hearts we feel love, know seasons of joy and sadness, and every human emotion.
- ❑ And, the most wonderful promise about the heart – its Architect designed it to be His home (John 15). We are most home when He resides in us.

With as background:

*Read Genesis 6:5-8 & 9b*


*The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. <sup>6</sup>So the Lord was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. <sup>7</sup>And the Lord said, "I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them."<sup>8</sup> But Noah found favor with the Lord. <sup>9</sup>This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. (NLT).*

The Lord saw that everything people thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. The NIV accurately focuses the problem in the human heart, "Every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time." What an incredible word picture!

In the days of Noah, the hearts of humanity had turned wicked, against God and godliness. This deeply troubled God's heart. The place He created to be His home had become completely and utterly evil. So, He decided to eliminate humanity and non-aquatic animals. He chose to start over with one man whose heart was still right with God. That man was Noah. "It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith." (Hebrews 11:7 NLT).

Some of the language in the passage and description above is difficult to understand. Did God really regret creating humankind? Or, is He using human language to express a divine emotion we can't fully comprehend? These are questions for heaven.

As Holy Love, God can judge without contradicting His love and He can love without contradicting His holiness. Doesn't that puzzle your gray matter? Noah and the ark foreshadowed the Holy Love active in the life of Jesus. God the Father sent one who could provide a way through the flood, Noah, and now he has sent another, His one and only Son, to provide a way through the next judgment, hell and eternal separation from Him. As the ark carried Noah's family through the flood, so Jesus is our ark. He carries us through God's judgment. To allow sin to go unpunished would violate His holiness. When Jesus accepted



our punishment, the Father maintained His holiness, and He fulfilled the demands of the Old Testament sacrificial system with a once-for-all perfect sacrifice.

God also expressed the full extent of His love. Jesus didn't stay dead: He was resurrected. New life and eternal life become possible! Now, Jesus intercedes on our behalf, and by our faith, like Noah's, we are made right and kept in a right relationship with God. All this complexity happens in the simplicity of our confession of faith, "For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved." (Romans 10:10 NLT).

Note the wording, "believe in your heart." This is the heart of the matter! With a Romans 10:10 heart-derived confession, the most incredible and miraculous thing happens: Through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are made new. This IS NOT transformation – that will be explained in a moment. Believing in the heart brings new life through Jesus Christ. "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT).

Transformation begins when we accept Him as Savior, and continues as we let Him abide or take up residence in our hearts as Lord. This **IS** transformation: Our hearts, His home. "My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So, I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20 NLT). Thus, when you believe in Jesus and make Him Lord of your life, you are made new and He lives in you. To transform, describes an ongoing process of giving Him room to occupy the desires and decisions of our heart.

## Section 1 - Discussion Questions

1. Heart – what did you learn about the heart of the matter in this discussion?
2. Which of the bulleted points about "heart" encouraged or discouraged you?
3. My heart, His home. These paragraphs describe the complex nature of our relationship with God. How do you react to or make sense of the tension in these paragraphs – hearts inclined to evil, yet hearts being made new?
4. Did the comparison between Noah and the ark and Jesus on the cross give you any new insights about salvation and hope?



## Unveiling the Heart

*Read 2 Corinthians 3:13-18*

*We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away. But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ. Yes, even today when they read Moses' writings, their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand.*

*But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. All of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image. (NLT).*


While on their journey from slavery in Egypt to the promised land, Moses went up on Mount Sinai to meet with God. God gave Moses “the words of the covenant – the Ten Commandments” (Exodus 34:28). Moses wrote these words on hard, stone tablets, not once but twice. (Check that out on your own.) When Moses came down from the mountain the second time, his face shone with the radiance of God’s glory. To calm the fear of the people, Moses would cover his face with a veil, and the people would come near to Moses to hear the God-given ten commandments. Moses had absorbed the glory, light and truth of God. The people of his day couldn’t handle that much godly aura.

The people were unwilling to change their ways, so much so that they would not even look at the fading glory of God on the face of Moses. For doing so would remind them the words etched in stone were more than just words; they revealed the nature of their hearts and the holiness of God.

Paul, in the above scripture, picks up this veiled-heart theme. He says, those of us who have turned to the Lord, have had the veil removed, said plainly, our eyes have been opened to the truth. Jesus, the way, truth and life (John 14:6), the one full glory of God, and by the power of the Holy Spirit has softened our hearts and minds and has opened our eyes. “And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.” (John 1:14b NLT). This is amazing grace.

This passage as translated in the New International Version says, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (v. 18). If we desire for the Lord to transform our hearts, the veil must first be lifted by believing in Christ.

It is possible to modify our behaviors without ever transforming our hearts. The Pharisees were very good at behavior modification in order to obey every letter of the law given to Moses. When Jesus looked into their hearts, He said to them, “you are white-washed tombs full of dead men’s bones.” Behavior modification is not heart transformation.



Transformation, then, is not following a list of dos and don'ts. Transformation is not working harder or being more disciplined.

Transformation IS availability.

Spending time with God is why Moses glowed. So, hang out with God. Hang around encouraging believers. Hang out in the Word. Believe every bit of the truth revealed in the Word about your identity in Christ. The “work” is availability and surrender. God does the work in us as “the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.”


Two factors complicate our transformation: the physical body including the heart and the enemy of our souls. The fallen flesh likes the things of the old nature and puts up a fight. The flesh wants to be lord of your life. Our physical brains and bodies (flesh) like habits and routine, whether good or bad. Eating, sleeping, physical activity, thought processes, addictions, and attitudes have default settings in each of us, embedded in us by our sin nature. We fight change and hang onto old and sinful habits.

The second factor involves the enemy of our soul. Even though the devil no longer has any power over your new life in Christ, he keeps waging war like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Stop and let this truth sink in: He tempts us through our senses—eyes, ears, smell, taste, and touch, yet the enemy of our souls has no power over our new selves. The new, unveiled, truth-seeing, God-focused heart, empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit, beats to new rhythms and a new identity. This truth alone is transformative. Still the enemy fights.

A brief prayer: “Lord, my heart’s desire, this side of heaven, is for a pure and focused heart. Help me win the daily battle that seeks to split my allegiances between You and the things and temptations of this world. May believers trust me enough to walk with them, encouraging them to remain available to You. We can transform our hearts and honor you only, as You, Lord, abide with us. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.”

## Section 2 - Discussion Questions

1. Talk about how the body and the enemy fight against our transformation. Warren Wiersbe said it this way, “*The Christian life is not a playground; it is a battleground, and we must be on our guard at all times.*”—from *The Bumps Are What You Climb On*. How do you react to Wiersbe’s comment?
2. “Being transformed is not about what we do, it is about who we are in Christ, a new creation.” What do you think this means?

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3. Groupthink – what are ways to keep the truth about our identity in front of us?
  
  4. Who will you let ask you this week “how’s it going with question 3”?
  
  5. What from this week’s message adds to this conversation?

**WEEK 2 Survey on the  
WRCC app or website**

*Survey results will help in planning future small group materials. Printed copies are available.*

*EACH week is new content.*

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