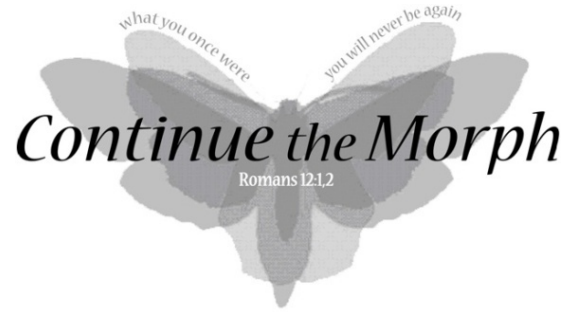


Lesson # 10

Sunday, November 20, 2011



***“Are you training or trying?”***

**Romans 12: 2; I Timothy 4:7; I Corinthians 9:25**

Every year, our valley is invaded by an elite group of athletes that arrives to compete in the Subaru Ironman Triathlon. This grueling event of swimming, biking and running attracts a lot of visitors who come to cheer on family and friends. It is inspiring to watch people swim 3.86 kms, bike 180 kms and then run 42.2 kms. There is something moving about watching people test themselves against these distances and succeed. Perhaps that is why, every year, the day after the event, people line up to register for the next year’s triathlon.

The reality though is that the inspiration lasts only so long and needs to be replaced by something more determined.

Imagine with me that two people signed up this last August to compete in Iron Man 2012. One of them immediately contacted a trainer, started running, took some swimming lessons to improve their style and began to log their hours in preparation for next year’s event. The other decided that they will just show up next year and try to do their best. Now in your opinion, who has the best chance of succeeding?

As someone who has been studying transformation for the last ten weeks, you know that the journey of morphing is every bit as life-changing and challenging as competing in the Iron Man. It calls for a total reorientation to the journey of change and a refocusing on what we are really trying to do. That is why, as we close this study on transformation, we conclude with what may very well be the most important question of all: ***Are you trying to morph or training to morph?***

***Discuss together as a group:***

- Have you ever been inspired to really change some part of your life? What did you do as a result of your inspiration?
- How important is inspiration to you in any journey of change?
- In your opinion, is there a difference between *trying* to change and *training* to change? Could you explain it?

## Going Deeper:

### Read Romans 12:2

- When you hear the phrase, *“But be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* what does that mean to you? How connected is our mind with our journey of transformation?
- Have you ever felt that your “mind” (thoughts, impressions and predispositions) was working against your faith?
- Do you believe that your mind is renewed instantly through a miraculous touch from God or slowly over time as we pursue our morph?
- In your experience, is renewing your mind easy to do or challenging?
- If someone asked you for advice on how they could renew their mind, what would you tell them?

**Reminder: *The Bible reminds us both negatively and positively that our thoughts really do matter, especially in our journey of transformation.***

### Read: I Timothy 4:7-10

- Paul urges his protégé Timothy to avoid some things; why do you think he did that?
- Would you give that advice to someone? Why or why not?
- What did he ask Timothy to do instead?
- In your opinion, do the concepts of godliness and training naturally go together?
- Why is godliness important from God’s perspective? ( V 8)
- What does it mean to put your hope in something?
- What have you put your hope in?

### Read I Corinthians 9:24-27

**Background: Paul is using the Greek games (Olympics) that the Corinthians were very familiar with as background to help them recognize some very important truths.**

- What principle is Paul advocating in verse 24? Have you ever tried to communicate this truth to someone else? What was the context and how did you do it?
- If someone was going into the games, they went into strict training to prepare and Paul used that commonly understood practice to make a point. What was his point?
- In verse 26, Paul illustrates his point; could you come up with other illustrations rather than athletics?
- Why does Paul urge his readers (and us) to take seriously the need to train?
- Do these truths apply to the journey of training your mind? Can you share your thoughts with the group?

## **Transformed Through Ancient Practices**

For thousands of years now, people of faith have understood that there are certain practices that aid their journey of renewal and transformation. In some traditions, they are called spiritual disciplines; in others they are called practices of spiritual formation. There are many practices and disciplines that aid us in the renewing of our minds. In your experience, which ones have worked best for you?

***Five ancient practices that help us train for godliness and renew our minds:***

### ***Hear God's Word:***

- Do you listen to the word of God on CD, MP3, or even read it aloud yourself? If so, how does hearing the word affect you? If not, are you willing to start?

### ***Read God's Word:***

- Do you read the Bible on a regular basis? If so, can you share with the group what it means to you? If not, are there reasons why you haven't been reading it?

### ***Study God's Word:***

- Have you studied the Bible? If so, can you share with the group something you learned by studying it? If not, what keeps you from studying it? Are you willing to start so that your mind can be renewed?

### ***Memorize God's Word:***

- Have you memorized any passages of the Bible? Could you recite that verse or passage for the group? Have there been times when the passage you memorized became really meaningful to you?

### ***Mediate on God's Word:***

- Please note that Biblical meditation is radically different than all Eastern meditation practices. With Eastern meditation, the goal is to strive to empty yourself, while the goal of Biblical meditation is to fill yourself with God's word.
- Have you ever meditated on a Biblical passage? What was your experience and how did God use it in your life?

## **Responding to the Truth**

The mercies of God and the freedom that are ours in Christ are an extravagant gift of grace. Are we willing to respond to them by training ourselves to renew our minds? Are we willing to start somewhere in the journey of transformation and begin to *train* and not *try* to renew our minds?

## **Prayer Time**

As a group, praise the Lord for his mercies, grace and the freedom that are ours in Christ! Pray that we would grow in our desire to train ourselves and be renewed in our minds. May the coming year bring levels of transformation we have never experienced before!

**Foundational Truth: II Timothy 2: 15** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.