

WARM UP

1. What is one thing you really love doing, and why?
2. What does it cost you to do what you love doing? And how are you managing that cost?

WORD

SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 40: 28-31 (NLT)

²⁸ *Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.* ²⁹ *He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.* ³⁰ *Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion.* ³¹ **But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.**

Here's our current Situation: We are all running the race of life; and, it is no simple walk in the park. This race will challenge us, reward us, and sometimes even make us want to give up. Much like the scripture above says "even youths become weak and tired." The object of our desires, devotion and faith will determine if we run life's marathon well or not. In this Sunday+, we will look at how our desire, faith, and devotion in God can be renewed.

Verse 31 above gives us a clue: "But those who trust in the LORD." Other English translations use "wait" on the LORD. The Hebrew word translated trust *qavah* has the root meaning of twisting or winding a strand of cord or rope, or more simply put: to bind together. Those who bind themselves together with the Lord will find new strength. How do we do that?

1.) SURRENDER

Romans 12: 1

NIVUK: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercies, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

NLT: *And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.*

NKJV: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*

For our relationship with God to be renewed, we must be completely honest and admit who or what is number one in our lives (a significant someone, our job, a hobby, a sport, a child, ourselves, food, the list could go on). Romans 12 verse 1 encourages hearers to surrender—yes, give up—their lives as living sacrifices to God “because of all he has done for” us (NLT).

Surrender sometimes requires us to turn away from wrongdoing. Other times it requires us to turn away from good things that we do with wrong (or not godly) motives. We need to continually remind ourselves of what the LORD has done for us and ask Him to help us fall in love with Jesus again (or for the first time). Only God can bring renewal in our lives, and it starts by surrendering to Him. Then comes...

2.) TRANSFORMATION

Romans 12: 2

NIVUK: *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.*

NLT: *Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

NKJV: *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Transformation happens when our mind is renewed. How do we align our way of thinking to God's? How do we let God change the way we think (like the NLT puts it)? We spend time with God. We learn how He thinks; we learn who He is.

Those who spend time with God, in His presence in view of all he has done (Rom 12:1) do not stay the same. When we draw close to God in response to what He's already done for us, we get the opportunity to learn about His will for us which is good, acceptable, and perfect. We cannot transform on our own or because of our own effort. This is another reason for us to spend time with God in prayer and by reading His Word, which is God's self-revelation (how He chose to reveal Himself to humanity). God is the only one who can truly transform us.

3.) DAILY RELIANCE – *We rely on Him daily*

John 15: 5 (Jesus Speaking)

⁵ *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."*

It is easy to drift away from God and rely on our own efforts. Today's lesson is not a message of "try harder." This is a message for us to daily come to God and rely on Him to help us to run the race well. We cannot renew and/or transform on our own or without first surrendering our whole self and life to God because of what He voluntarily did for us (He died for us).

Only God brings lasting change in our lives. If we submit to God daily, we will realize that everything we have chased cannot compare to knowing God and being in His presence. It is God who gives lasting joy, peace and satisfaction. We could be going through the most miserable of situations, but because we know the Creator who has unceasing love, we have hope that He will be glorified in our suffering. Why? Because He has suffered with us and as us.

It is God who gives us the love to love Him and tell others about Him. Without Him, we are only empty and nothing (John 15:5's ending). Surrendering ourselves daily to God as a living sacrifice because He first loved us, and learning from Him and His Word positions us in His presence where He can transform us and renewing our thinking.

APPLICATION

1. What are the key components to experiencing spiritual renewal?
2. Can you share some evidence that your life has been transformed by God's gospel? (How has God transformed you and your thinking?)
3. What are some things, people, activities, or parts of yourself that God wants you to surrender to his care, and why?
4. What is one thing that you learnt through today's lesson?

PRAYER

1. Father, we ask you to renew our relationship with You. Give us more desire to know You.
2. Lord, we want to repent before you. Impresses on each of our consciences something wrong you wish to right. (pause for a moment to let God speak to each person's heart). Lord, we ask for forgiveness for what you've revealed.
3. Holy Spirit, help us walk in Your love that fuels our desire to obey You. God do a deep work in each of our hearts to bring lasting change (transformation).
4. Lord Jesus, draw us closer to You every day—individually and as a group. We surrender ourselves afresh (or for the first time) to You. Have Your Way. Teach us what it means to be living sacrifices. Grow us as Your people.