

WARM UP

1. What was one of your nicknames growing up? Or what is one of your current nicknames? How did you get it?
2. What's your favourite brand and why? (clothing, technology, shoes, food, any brand).
3. Can you describe a time when you mis-judged someone? (You first thought they were a particular way, but then you learned they were not how you originally thought).

WORD

"Do not conform any longer 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—he good, pleasing, and perfect will." – Romans 12:2

Transformation rarely happens in isolation. The scripture above tells us transformation happens when we renew our mind. What are we putting into our minds and renewing it with? Perhaps with what people say, what entertainment says, the media, pop-culture, what our work places or schools, family, or leaders say; what does the music we listen to say to our minds? This lesson will explore how to overcome labels that get placed upon us, whether from ourselves or others.

1: Make a Choice

"...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." – Joshua 24:15

God has given us an amazing gift: free will. Because we have free will, we can either willingly choose to follow God, or we can choose to go about life apart from His will. The evening Jesus was arrested, he prayed:

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Luke 22:42

Do we have the courage to imitate Jesus, pray for God's will, and choose to believe what He says? Making a choice of who we will listen to exercises our self-will. Will we choose to keep the labels we've created for ourselves or labels that others gave us (like nicknames whether positive or negative)? This brings us to point 2 on how to overcome labels:

2: Identify the lies of labels and their source

"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful humans is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." – Romans 8:5-7

It is often enticing to follow what the majority says and does; yet the majority is not always right. In fact the world's ideals are often inconsistent and change quickly, just like what is "in". If the world says something about us, but it is opposite of what God's word says about us, then the world is lying. We can identify the lies of labels as our knowledge and understanding of God's word grows. The Apostle Paul encourages us:

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” – 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

3: Draw our identity from God and His will.

*“For you are all **sons and daughters of God** through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have **put on Christ**. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” – Galatians 3:26-28*

Labels may describe our past, but we will overcome them because our identity in Christ defines who we are and our future. We are adopted into God’s family by believing in Jesus and following in His ways. We are invited to:

*“Be very careful, then, how [we] live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but **understand what the Lord’s will is.**” – Ephesians 5:15-17*

How do we know God’s will? We return to our opening scripture:

*“**Do not conform** any longer 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**—he good, pleasing, and perfect will.” – Romans 12:2*

We choose not to conform to the pattern of the world which labels us with lies, and we renew our minds with the things God says, choosing to believe what He says is true, and not believing the lies of labels. Thankfully, God has allowed His word to be preserved through the years, so we can know His story, know Him, and know what he says about His children. And, God has granted us access to Himself through the Holy Spirit, who can guide and teach us what Jesus taught, so we can follow him daily.

APPLICATION

1. What labels try to define you? Where/who do they come from? Do you agree they are true?
2. What can you do for the next week to renew your mind? What/who might you stop listening to?
3. If God’s will is for us to obey Him, what’s something you believe He wants you to obey Him in?

Prayer

- Thank God for His Word. Pray that you would know and love God more every day as you meditate on and obey His Word, following Jesus’s example.
- Pray that you would not conform to the patterns and labels of this world. Ask God to help you renew your mind so you can see things as He does, know His will, & become more like Jesus each day.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to remind you of who you are so you can take false labels and thoughts captive to obey Jesus.

(Apart from that, please remember to always pray for each other and any church/ministry needs)