

Key words: body image, discipleship, death, renewal, rest.

Welcome (10 min)

Who can still remember the memory verses from last week? (Rom 5: 5, Romans 5: 1-5).

Over the past few weeks you have been introduced to the following:

- Centering Prayer (20 Minutes)
- Centering Exercises (Onion, Cathedral, Jesus Prayer)
- Prayer of Examen
- Imaginative Reading of Scripture

Share your experiences of using these practicing to enter into **silence** and **waiting** in your own quiet times?

What aspect about “Transforming the Body” most challenged you on Sunday?

Worship and Centering (15 min)

Read aloud Jesus words in Matthew 11: 28-30:

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

- Individually spend 10 minutes following the 5 Step Examen (attached).
- End the Silence with the Lord’s Prayer
- Those who are willing can share their consolations and desolations
- Surrender all the activities of the day to God in a short prayer.

Word¹

Read aloud: Matthew 6: 25-34

Dallas Willard¹ writes that for most people the body runs their life. *“Contrary to the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:25, life is, for them, not more than food, nor the body more than clothing their time and energy is almost wholly, if not entirely, devoted to how their body looks, smells, and feels, and to how it can be secured and used to meet ego needs such as admiration, sexual gratification, and power over others.”*

- Do you agree? In what ways does the church today live contrary to Jesus words?
- What is your view on beauty?
- What is your view on aging and death?

“The frenzy over physical attractiveness that we see all around us today and the despair over its loss—eventually, in aging and death, for everyone—are the main characteristics of the contemporary climate of life. But that only illustrates, once more, that to be carnally minded—that is, obsessed with the merely natural—is death indeed”

- Frankly and honestly discuss this statement.
- Willard says that once we have surrendered the body to God we don’t have to worry about sickness, repulsiveness, aging or death because God is in charge and we no longer idolise the body. Jesus says: “do not worry”. Have you completely surrendered your body to God?
- What are your fears about attractiveness, sickness, aging and death?

Works

- Pray for one another regarding the fears mentioned above.
- Commit to the exercise of *Releasing the Body to God* described below.
- Commit to “Taming the Tongue” (James 3) in the week by choosing 4 experiments attached.
- Honour the Sabbath. Plan time to be 'unproductive' in the presence of God. Plan to enjoy the Goodness of God's creation like the lilies of the field and the birds of the air.

¹ Dallas Willard in *RENOVATION OF THE HEART Putting on the Character of Christ*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2002.

Releasing Our Bodies to God (An exercise to practise in private)

Read

1 Cor. 6:19-20 *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price.*

Rom 12:1 *I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Surrender²

Lie on the floor, face up and surrender each body part to God. Ask God to take charge of your body and use it for His purposes. If you are aware of illness or disease in one or other area of the body take time to surrender also your pain and sickness to God.

Do not rush but give plenty of time to this exercise.

Close with the Covenant Prayer.

Praise

Praise God as energetically and enthusiastically as possible. For example you might read out aloud Psalms 145 while dancing or walking.

Share

Share what you have done with a prayer partner, pastor or Christian friend and ask them to bless it.

² This exercise is recommended by Dallas Willard in *RENOVATION OF THE HEART Putting on the Character of Christ*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2002.

Experiments in Connecting with God from Johnson, Jan. *Invitation to the Jesus Life: Experiments in Christlikeness*. NavPress, 2014.

EXPERIMENTS IN CONNECTING WITH GOD

(Spiritual Practices to Consider)

To EXPERIENCE God's wordless presence

Listening prayer: Wake up early, before it is light, and sit in the silent darkness. Enjoy these secret moments with God.

Meditation: Read John 8:1-11 and enter into the passage. How do you feel during the silence when Jesus squats and writes in the sand? Do you want him to speak, or do you think his behavior is exactly on target?

Practicing the presence of God: Don't listen to music in the car or as you ride the bus. Just enjoy the silent companionship of God.

Study: Explore the times when God is silent (see 1 Kings 19:12, NRSV; Matthew 15:23; John 19:19) or when silence is recommended (see Psalm 4:4; 46:10; Ecclesiastes 3:7; Isaiah 53:7; Habakkuk 2:20; Zephaniah 1:7).

Study: Note the times Jesus was silent during his trials (see Matthew 26:63; Mark 14:61; Luke 23:9; John 19:9) and note the times he spoke up (see Matthew 27:14; Mark 15:5; John 18:36). Why do

you think he chose to be silent at certain times and vocal in others? Did it have anything to do with the person asking the questions? What do you think Jesus was up to?

To BECOME one who offers the holy silence and simple speech of Jesus to others

Associating with the lowly: While serving someone needy, talk less and love more.

Chastity: As you converse, take note of any ways you use others or manipulate conversations to feel special.

Confession: Ask God to reveal to you what motives drive the instances when you speak unnecessarily. Confess these and ask God for a next step.

Fellowship and prayer: Before having lunch with friends or going to a party, ask God to help you bless others.

Guidance: Talk with someone who practices simplicity of speech. Ask how the person is helped by this.

Listening prayer: Ask God, *How are you drawing me to care for others with my words?*

Practicing the presence of God: When someone speaks to you, don't respond with the first thing that comes to mind. Pause and ask God to show you how to respond to that person.

Recollection: Before you go to sleep tonight, consider what you have said today. Did you really mean it? What motives lay behind those words?

Sacrifice: Now and then, don't tell a joke you really want to tell. See how that feels.

Service: Consider some of your present ways of serving. Is there a way to do so with more presence and fewer words?

Simplicity: If you're writing a note to someone, see how few words you can use.

Silence: Spend some time in extended silence. If you are planning to attend a retreat with others, ask the leader if all of you can practice community silence for at least thirty minutes.

Submission: What person needs for you to be quiet and listen deeply to him or her today?

Welcoming strangers: When you meet someone new, don't try to impress the person with who you are. Focus on getting to know him or her.

Worship: Enjoy simple songs such as "Taize" or children's choruses. Pause between and sit with them.