



Session 4: Transformers



Our focus is not to ‘convert’ people – that’s the work of the Spirit.

But we are called to be ‘salt and light’ and to ‘live like stars in a dark world’ and to communicate what God has done. We are called to be mission-minded. In this session we’ll look at our part in the work of bringing people into the Kingdom of God.

Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren’t able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

Read

Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our ‘Setting the Scene’ section.

As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

Ephesians 3.1-13

Christ Jesus made me his prisoner, so that I could help you Gentiles. You have surely heard about God’s kindness in choosing me to help you. In fact, this letter tells you a little about how God has shown me his mysterious ways.

As you read the letter, you will also find out how well I really do understand the mystery about Christ. No one knew about this mystery until God’s Spirit told it to his holy apostles and prophets. And the mystery is this: Because of Christ Jesus, the good news has given the Gentiles a share in the promises that God gave to the Jews. God has also let the Gentiles be part of the same body.

God treated me with kindness. His power worked in me, and it became my job to spread the good news. I am the least important of all God’s people. But God was kind and chose me to tell the Gentiles that because of Christ there are blessings that cannot be measured. God, who created everything, wanted me to help everyone understand the mysterious plan that had always been hidden in his mind. Then God would use the church to show the powers and authorities in the spiritual world that he has many different kinds of wisdom.

God did this according to his eternal plan. And he was able to do what he had planned because of all that Christ Jesus our Lord had done. Christ now gives us courage and confidence, so that we can come to God by faith. That’s why you should not be discouraged when I suffer for you. After all, it will bring honour to you.

Setting the scene:

- Paul writes this letter from prison where he probably also wrote his other letters – Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.
- He writes to remind the Ephesians that it was God’s plan to bring men and women of every background together in Christ. Including Gentiles and Jews who were keeping themselves aloof from one another.
- Before Christ came, God’s promises had been understood to be focussed towards the Jews. Paul was commissioned to take the message of salvation to the Gentiles and so a new phase of God’s plan begins.
- Paul’s view of salvation is much bigger than individualistic conversion to Christ. The focus is on a new humanity being adopted into God’s family – reconciled to God and to one another. The Gospel is good news of a new people as well as new life.

Reflect

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. How committed are you to telling others about Jesus?

Q2. 'People don't have time for the church, but are still interested in Jesus.' Do you agree?

Respond

Transformers challenge: As a group, create a challenge that will help you to be mission-minded ambassadors for God this week, or choose from the following:

Challenge ideas:

1. God's story

The Bible urges us to have an answer for anyone who asks us about our faith. Spend some time this week reflecting on the Gospel of Christ by reading about Peter on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.14–36. As you read the story reflect on the following questions:

- Who was Jesus?
- What did he do?
- What is the proof?
- What were the results?

As you consider your answers to these questions, clarify in your mind what you would say to anyone who asks you about your faith and the person of Jesus Christ.

2. Just do it

Sometimes we just need to go for it and be bold, trusting that the Holy Spirit is with us. The Bible talks about being as 'harmless as doves and wise as serpents'. A serpent never chases their prey, but strikes at the right time. As you converse with people this week, be aware that the Spirit might be prompting you to share your faith. If so, go for it.

3. Mission field

As a group, come up with a plan to become more mission focussed. You might want to plan an event or series of events for your church and focus on inviting your friends. Perhaps invite a speaker to come and tell their story. You might simply want to arrange a series of social events connecting your friends to Christians at your church. You could check out cvmen.org.uk (men), activateyourlife.org.uk (women), studentalpha.org or *The Natural Evangelism Course* at canonjjohn.com for inspiration.

'I look on all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation.'

John Wesley

Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group as you look to connect faith and culture this week.