

GROWTH GROUP GUIDES

WEEK 4 | A CANNONBALL OF TRANSFORMATION

MAIN IDEA FOR THOUGHT

God is asking us to allow Him to transform us into His image as we do a Cannonball, and that requires us to humble ourselves before Him as we jump into the water. As you reflect on generosity, where do you see your surrender leading to?

Watch Week 4 Video

OPENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Who is your favorite Super Hero that transforms and why? (Batman, Superman, Wonder Twins, Iron Man, etc...)
- 2) The idea of transformation sometimes seems rather grandiose—as if God needs to radically change who we currently are in order for us to be more like Him. The idea of a miraculous transformation sounds fun! The truth is that sometimes transformation is big, but other times it comes through multiple small changes within us over time. Does this idea of small changes resonate with you? Do you feel like you have already been transformed once, or do you believe that you are still being transformed day by day?
- 3) What does transformation look like as it relates to our giving?
- 4) Is it easier for you to focus on other areas of transformation outside of your finances? What is the most difficult area for you to allow God to begin to bring change?

Further Discussion from Scripture

Read each Scripture passage below and discuss the questions as a group. You may want to have each group member journal their answer first in the lines provided below before discussing together, as a means of encouraging all to participate more deeply.

Some of our money practices are sinful, but they are redeemable

ROMANS 6:3-14

So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving? I should hope not! If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land! That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country. Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life—no longer at sin's every beck and call! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did. That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life.

Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, you've been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.

Sin is any choice made in fear or selfishness that diverts me from a path of surrender to the Holy Spirit. This scripture encourages us to allow God to call out who we are in Christ now, a new creation. We can drop all areas of our life that are sinful and walk in the freedom and transformation given to us in Jesus. In order for us to truly be transformed in our generosity and giving as we jump into this Cannonball Adventure God has for us, we must first recognize there are ways we spend our money that are not honoring to the one who gave it to us. Is there a pattern you have either in your spending or your saving that comes from a place that isn't reflecting the freedom described in this scripture passage? What transformation do you need to ask God to make in you in this area?

Generosity has the power to transform how we relate to others and how others relate to God

ACTS 2:42-47

That day about three thousand took him at his word, were baptized and were signed up. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers. Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met. They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

Generosity has the power to transform how we relate to others and how others relate to God. This passage is potentially one of the most profound and transformative points in Scripture in sharing with us what a church community could potentially look like. What would be the impact of literally a whole community of believers - i.e. all of our EastLake Network churches—doing Cannonballs together? As you hear Paul talk about these behaviors of the Early Church—how generous they were, how devoted they were, and how transformative their generosity was - what thoughts and aspirations come to mind for you? Are there some goals you want to make around living generously in response to this?

When we are new in Christ, we no longer live for ourselves; we live for Him

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

Since we know what it means to fear the Lord, we try to help people accept the truth about us. God knows what we really are, and I hope that in your hearts you know, too. We are not trying to prove ourselves to you again, but we are telling you about ourselves so you will be proud of us. Then you will have an answer for those who are proud about things that can be seen rather than what is in the heart. If we are out of our minds, it is for God. If we have our right minds, it is for you. The love of Christ controls us, because we know that One died for all, so all have died. Christ died for all so that those who live would not continue to live for themselves. He died for them and was raised from the dead so that they would live for him. From this time on we do not think of anyone as the world does. In the past we thought of Christ as the world thinks, but we no longer think of him in that way. If anyone belongs to Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have gone; everything is made new! All this is from God. Through Christ, God made peace between us and himself, and God gave us the work of telling everyone about the peace we can have with him. God was in Christ, making peace between the world and himself. In Christ, God did not hold the world guilty of its sins. And he gave us this message of peace. So we have been sent to speak for Christ. It is as if God is calling to you through us. We speak for Christ when we beg you to be at peace with God. Christ had no sin, but God made him become sin so that in Christ we could become right with God.

When we are new in Christ, we no longer live for ourselves; we live for Him. When we jump off of that edge of the pool and into the water, we are changed. There is hope in this truth, as well as a challenge. Are you living in Christ, or might you need to renew your commitment to Him? Is the old self truly gone? Do you find yourself connecting with more of your true self covered in love? If Christ's love truly compels us, we will respond accordingly out of our devotion to Him. Falling more in love with Him makes us more generous. Is this true of your life? How or how not?

Have you ever thought of your generosity and more specifically your giving as having the ability to actually transform you; to keep you centered and grounded in what you value? If you were to make a significant Cannonball commitment in your giving, how would that transform and change other things that you currently spend your money on? How might that transform you spiritually?

Closing Prayer

God, give us the desire to allow you to transform our lives. Thank you for the gift of Jesus and the new creation we have become by saying yes to Him. Help that gift of love to spread to all areas of our lives as together we take this Cannonball leap full of adventure and surrender. ■