

ENEMIES NO MORE

SESSION 5

Knocking Down the Dividing Walls of Hostility
Generational

Sharing Life

(20 minutes)

Gather: Greet and check-in with your Life Group partners. Intentionally take a different seat this week. (You will learn why later!)

Discuss: Your *Personal* Life Application Challenge for the past week was to fully commit yourself to the “good habit” of Daily Devotions and Prayer. How many days were you able to meet this challenge? Is there one obstacle that trips you up most often? Share and strategize together about ways to overcome!

Is the discipline of Daily Devotions new for you, or has scripture reading, reflection and prayer been a consistent part of your Christian life? Describe the journey, both the blessings and the challenges.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul says,

“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” Romans 10:17

You are encouraged to keep at it! Just as it takes a lot of effort to break our bad habits, it takes time, patience and persistence to develop a good habit like Daily Devotions and prayer.

Your *Group* Life Application Challenge was to demonstrate the love of Christ to others through **“intentional acts of kindness.”**

Turn back in your notes to page 76 in Session 4. Takes turns sharing the highlights of this experience with your Life Group friends.

How were these **“intentional acts of kindness”** received by those who were the beneficiaries? What was their response? Did any one ask why you were doing it? What did you tell them?

What would happen in your relationships, church and community if you continued to demonstrate “**intentional acts of kindness**” as a way of life?

How did this exercise help break down some **relational** “*dividing walls of hostility?*”

Your *City-Transformation* Life Application Challenge was to make a contact with someone you know who is in a leadership position in your city and express your appreciation and encouragement.

Again, take turns sharing what you did to complete this challenge, along with the response you received and the impact it made.

Were you conscious of implementing the principles of Prayer Evangelism during this process? Any further insights? We will be digging deeper into the Principles of Prayer Evangelism in today’s session as related to families.

Pray Together: Dear God, we gather again today with great expectation of the work of your Holy Spirit among us. You have promised that “***where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.***” We are at least two or three, so we say, “Come, Lord Jesus!” Be our most honored guest. Be our teacher. Continue to show us how we can be used to knock down the “*dividing walls of hostility*” that exist in our families, cities and nations. We pray for healing and wholeness for those who are hurting. We pray for comfort and strength for those who are grieving. We pray for peace and joy for those who are troubled. And now, we dedicate this session of Enemies No More to your praise and honor and glory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Transformed Thinking

(30 minutes)

Read: Paul continues the theme of “mutual submission” by moving from the topic of marriage to the family. In *Ephesians 6:1-4*, he says:

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ – which is the first commandment with a promise – ‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

It is not surprising that Paul would call upon one of the Ten Commandments to remind the youth of his day to obey and respect their parents. This premise was well understood. The surprise is that he calls upon parents to likewise respect their children. Once again, Paul’s application of the Gospel message is radical in its goal of breaking down even **generational “dividing walls of hostility.”**

There was a cultural context to his message to the Ephesians. Women and children in this first-century Roman world were treated like property and considered to be of little value, with the notable exception of male sons. Any expression of a father’s love for his children would have been unheard of, much less this strange concept of mutual honor and respect.

A father had complete legal authority over his offspring, even the power of life and death itself. When a child was born it was placed at its father’s feet. If he picked it up, it was brought into the home and allowed to live. If he walked away, it was simply disposed of – much as aborted babies are in many societies today.

Weak or deformed babies were killed. Healthy, but unwanted children, were taken to the town square to be sold to someone who would raise them to be slaves or prostitutes. This may sound barbaric, but consider that most children found in foster homes or placed for adoption today are simply unwanted. Similarly, a growing and heartbreaking issue in our world is “human trafficking” and the “sex trade.”

Now imagine Paul’s words reaching the ears of the Ephesians for the very first time declaring the infinite value of every human being! Mutual submission... love, honor and respect among husbands and wives, parents and children? This was radical stuff! It still is!

Discuss: Many factors are cited for contributing today to the **generational “dividing walls of hostility”** that appear to be widening the gap between parents and children, old and young. Share your perceptions regarding the contributing factors identified in the following chart. Discuss them and write down some of their impacts on families today:

<u>Contributing Factors</u>	<u>Impact on Families</u>
high divorce rate	
erosion of morals and standards	
secular education system	
pace of life	
spiritual warfare	
technological advances	
longer life	
changing definition of family	
economic pressures	
other...	

Read: From the beginning of time, God has placed a high priority on the value of family. When God chose to establish a covenant (promise) relationship with the Hebrew people, it was so that *“all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 12:3 (NASB)*

The heart of God’s truth was one of revelation about himself:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” Deut 6:4

A response of faith demanded full commitment:

“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” Deuteronomy 6:5

The first step in passing along this truth was to teach it to the children:

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:6-9

As you can see, from the very beginning it was God’s plan to pass along the faith from one generation to the next by making his Word a part of every aspect of daily life... and his primary vehicle was the family!

Discuss: Is your family heritage one of faith, or did you come into the “family of God” through other influences? Is there a person in your family who has had a special impact on your Christian life? If you are a parent, how important do you view the task of “faith development” in your children?

Read: Let’s return to our text from *Ephesians 6:1-4* and break it down!

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” (6:1)

The word for “*children*” here refers to all offspring regardless of their age. To be “*obedient*” to one’s parents is viewed as a necessary part of being “obedient” to the Lord. The phrase “*in the Lord*” means in proper alignment with God’s purposes. The phrase “*for this is right*” means that obedience to parents is not a decision subject to debate or feelings or circumstances. It’s a “God says so!” (Exception: If our parents ask us to do something that is obviously contrary to God’s will.)

Discuss: Were you an obedient child? Children never stop being children and parents never stop being parents! What role does “obedience” still play in our relationships as older parents or adult children?

Read:

“Honor your father and mother’ – which is the first commandment with a promise – ‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’” (6:2-3)

This paraphrase of the Fourth Commandment from *Exodus 20:12* is the first of the Ten Commandments having to do with human relationships. Blessing was conveyed by the “laying on of hands” from a father to the first-born son. Of necessity, therefore, was proper honor and respect of one’s parents, because with this blessing came a good and long life. This blessing would benefit the whole family.

Discuss: Why do you think that the key word in this commandment is “honor?” Describe what “honor” means to you. If we are going to break down **generational** “*dividing walls of hostility*,” why is it important that we honor our elders in the faith?

Read:

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (6:4)

The word used for “*fathers*” here is translated in another passage as “*parents*.” To “*exasperate*” means to provoke your children to the point of total frustration. This usually involves a repeated pattern of disrespectful and even abusive behavior that leads to deep-seated resentment, anger and frustration, finally boiling over in outward hostility.

How's that for a *“dividing wall!”*

Instead, parents are called upon by God to bring up their children in the *“training and instruction of the Lord.”* This involves modeling a righteous life which includes teaching from God's Word, a commitment to prayer and a demonstration of faith in action. What a difference!

The famous Proverb instructs parents:

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”
Proverbs 22:6

Even Jesus demonstrated obedience to his earthly parents and grew from a child into a man under their teaching and example:

“Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Luke 2:51-52

Jesus grew physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. We all need to grow-up in these ways. Good parents will help their children grow and mature in a way that is pleasing to God.

Discuss: Below is a list of ways that parents can *“exasperate”* their children. Discuss them and circle those that you are willing to confess.

- by being over-protective
- by showing favoritism
- by repeatedly making unreasonable demands
- by pushing achievement to the point of perfectionism
- by constantly criticizing and critiquing
- by pushing them beyond age-appropriateness
- by using love as a tool of reward or punishment
- by physical or verbal abuse
- by making them feel they are a burden or unwanted
- by “saying” but not “doing”
- by neglecting to share spiritual truth

Listen to the confession of one Christian father.

Quote:

“My family’s all grown and the kids are all gone. But if I had to do it all over again, this is what I would do. I would love my wife more in front of my children. I would laugh with my children more – at our mistakes and our joys. I would listen more, even to the littlest child. I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection. I would pray differently for my family; instead of focusing on them, I’d focus on me. I would do more things together with my children. I would encourage them more and bestow more praise. I would pay more attention to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness. And then, finally, if I had to do it all over again, I would share God more intimately with my family; every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary day I would use to direct them to God.” (MacArthur, John, “New Testament Commentary on Ephesians,” Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL, 1986. p. 319.)

Transformation Church Insights:

- The biblical concept of “mutual submission” (*Eph. 5:21*) applies to marriage, family and every relationship in life.
- When children and youth are obedient to their parents it becomes a witness of their obedience to the Lord.
- There are many factors that contribute to the **generational “dividing walls of hostility”** between parents and children/youth, old and young.
- These **“dividing walls”** can be knocked down by love, honor and respect.
- A primary calling of parents is the faith development of their children.

Transformed Living

(40 minutes)

Read: Families come in all shapes and sizes today! Every family has a unique set of gifts and a different set of challenges. One thing we know for sure is that no two families are exactly alike. Whatever the present configuration may be of your family, you can be confident that it is intended to be an extension of the unity and purpose we see in the heavenly family; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Think about this with me. Just as we confess our faith in a God expressed through the three persons of the Trinity, God has established the human family in such a way that it would similarly reflect both unity and diversity. The persons that make up your family are not all the same, and yet they are called to come together in the kind of intimate unity that reflects glory back to God.

Discuss: When you think about your family, who do you include? What makes your family unique?

Read: God's goal for your family is the same as it is for his whole family in heaven and on earth. He desires that your family would:

“... grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Eph. 3:18b-19

And then, filled with the Spirit, He wants your family to be faithful witnesses and bring the message of transformation to your personal Circles of Influence, your city, nation and to the ends of the earth. God promises to do:

“... immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.” Eph 3:20

Now, having introduced the Principles of Prayer Evangelism in Session 2 of Enemies No More, we are going to go deeper and discover how our homes and families can literally become “**transformation training centers**” for life.

In **Luke 10:1-9**, Jesus sent out his disciples ahead of him to all the towns and villages that he was about to visit. As our families walk out the door each day to go to school, work, church, sports and other activities, we must practice these same principles in order to be effective representatives for Jesus.

Parents, you are about to discover a simple, practical and yet profound way for you to fulfill Paul's admonition to bring your children up:

"... in the training and instruction of the Lord." Eph. 6:4b

Let's read together once again our foundational text for Prayer Evangelism from *Luke 10:1-9*. Keep your eyes open for God to show you something new!

"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ² He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

⁵ When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' ⁶ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not it will return to you. ⁷ Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. ⁸ When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'"

Discuss: When the disciples were sent out two-by-two like *"lambs among wolves"* they were instructed to travel light. However, in what ways were they carrying with them Jesus' message, authority and strategy?

Read: The first characteristic of a home that is serving as a "transformation training center" for life is: **"Transformed families speak peace to one another."**

In Luke 10:5-6, Jesus says, "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you."

The Prayer Evangelism principle is: **Bless: Speak peace to people and systems in your sphere of influence.** If we are going to be effective witnesses for Christ, we must first learn to speak peace to one another in our homes and families. In other words, we need to learn to "bless" rather than "curse." What do we mean by cursing? Our homes are sometimes filled with fathers, mothers and children that literally curse at one another, using terrible language to vent their anger and frustration. Sometimes there is even physical abuse, which is something that should never happen in a family. But more often than not, the cursing comes in the form of criticisms, put-downs, complaining, negativity and fighting. The home becomes a "war zone" rather than a safe place... and the weapons are words!

Blessings and curses have profound meaning in the Bible. To bless someone implies asking for the blessing of God to come upon them. When someone sneezes and we say, "God bless you," we don't think that much about it. But in a biblical sense, to bless someone is to speak the "peace of God" over them. It is to say, "God, please meet their deepest needs and anoint them with your power."

The Bible says that marriage and family are a blessing from God. In Jewish families, fathers would often lay their hands on their children and give them a blessing. In the same way, a Christian home is meant to be a place of peace and blessing... a sanctuary filled with love, safety and security for everyone that enters. That's why we are to "speak peace" and "bless" one another in our families.

Discuss: What is the temperature in your home right now? Not Celsius or Fahrenheit, but what is the atmosphere like in your family? Circle words that apply:

**hot, cold, warm, tense, loving, silent, angry,
affectionate, loud, lonely, hospitable, fake,
friendly, judgmental, authentic, enthusiastic,
bored, supportive, crowded, joyful, spiritual,
cooperative, understanding, apathetic**

Choose a couple of the words you circled to share with your Life Group.

Read: In the Law of Moses, the Torah, the first five books of the Bible... blessing was considered the outcome of a faithful and obedient relationship with God. Curses were the result of sin... brought on by people's actions or the actions of others.

"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse – the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known." Deuteronomy 11:26-28

The scripture even says that "blessings and curses" carry implications for generations to come:

"I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, (curses) but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me (blessings) and keep my commandments." Exodus 20:5b-6

Discuss: Give examples of "generational curses" and "generational blessings." How can "generational curses" be broken? How can "generational blessings" be continued? Why is having a personal relationship of faith in Jesus Christ the first step in breaking any "generational curse," for example, one of neglect or abuse or alcoholism?

Read: When Jesus entered the room where his disciples were hiding out on the evening of Easter Sunday, the first thing he said to them was **"Peace be with you."** *John 20:19* When you walk into the door of your home, do you speak peace? Do you bring home a blessing or a curse for your husband or wife, son or daughter, brother or sister?

What does this concept of “blessing” really mean for our families? Friends, you bless and speak peace when you express your love, when you bring encouragement, when you share support, when you try to be positive, when you build one another up. It takes patience and even work.

This is why I believe that the family is a “transformation training center” for life. If we can learn to speak peace and bless one another in our homes with our own families, we will be prepared to speak peace in our churches, schools, workplaces and communities.

Jesus taught a new ethic which was conveyed in the life of the early Church:

“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.” I Peter 3:9

This is why we take every opportunity to speak peace... even to our enemies. I encourage you today to change the climate in your household. Turn down the thermostat of “mean talk” and “put-downs” and begin to intentionally practice these Christ-like qualities of “blessing and peace.” Your home will become a happier place.

Discuss: Take a moment and write down one specific way that you will “speak peace” and “bless” those in your family this week, then share your idea with your Life Group:

Read: The second characteristic of a home that is functioning as a “transformation training center” for life is: **“Transformed families build deep relationships.”**

Continuing our Prayer Evangelism text from **Luke 10:7-8**, Jesus’ instructions to his disciples were:

“Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you.”

The Prayer Evangelism principle is: **Fellowship: Build relationships with those outside the kingdom of God.** Our Christian witness is much more effective when we really get to know people and understand what makes them tick. So Jesus said, “Don’t be so quick to leave. Stay awhile. Enjoy eating and drinking together.” We call it fellowship. It’s important in the church. It’s important for our witness to others. And it’s one of the beautiful things about family. God has given us years together in our families so that we can practice the art of building deep relationships.

Developing strong communication is a key! There can be a great deal of loneliness in families when love is not expressed on a regular basis. Many husbands and wives today are living like two ships passing in the night... a grunt, a toot, an occasional wave, but no real communication.

And many families are so caught up in the rat race of life that communication between parents and kids is often limited to two and three word sentences... **“good game, do your homework, I told you ‘no,’ don’t bother me now, eat your supper, do your chores, no more video games, get ready for school, go to bed, hurry up, why can’t you listen.”** We could just as well “text” as talk, and in some families, this is the preferred method of communication!

However, transformed families make intentional time to build deep relationships with one another and grow together. This requires communication that goes deeper than a phrase here or a command there. A group of young teens was asked, “What advice would you like to give to your parents?” Here are some of their answers.

- listen more
- don’t yell when you ask for help
- keep praying
- talk to me more
- stop asking what’s wrong
- stay calm
- don’t wear your pants up too high
- treat us the way you want to be treated
- be more understanding
- less gross dinners
- don’t be overprotective
- listen to our questions
- never have another kid

Amidst the humor, I hear our youth asking their parents for more communication, not less. But you see, it’s the tone, the mutual respect, the quality and the content of the conversation that needs to be taken to a higher level. This takes time and intention. It involves open-ended, age appropriate questions that can lead to some good discussion along the way.

Parents, you can say things like:

- I’d love to hear about your day.
- How are you feeling about that math class now?
- What part of the tournament this weekend was the toughest... or the most fun?
- I really appreciate it when you pick up your toys like that.
- What’s got you worried today? How can I help?
- Tell me about your friends and what you like about them the most?
- How do you think our family could best share our household tasks?
- What is something I could pray about for you today?
- What do you think are the qualities that you would like to find some day in a boy-friend/girlfriend, husband/wife?
- I love you so much!

Discuss: How does the daily “pace” of your family life affect your opportunities to communicate with one another? Which activities seem to support the building of deep relationships in your family? Which activities seem to inhibit that development? Is there one area you would especially like to change in the way your family has been spending its time?

Quote:

“You can run the rat race your whole life, but the best you’ll ever end up is head rat!” (Dick Lowey, Young Life Leader, Minneapolis, Minnesota)

Read: Back to Luke 10! The first part of verse 9 is a very short statement that packs a powerful punch. Jesus’ next piece of instruction to his disciples is simply, **“Heal the sick who are there...”**

Hidden in these words is the third principle of Prayer Evangelism. **Minister: Respond to their felt needs in the name of Jesus.** This verse also describes another important characteristic needed to make your home a “transformation training center” for life. **“Transformed families serve one another.”**

Jesus was first and foremost a servant. In *Luke 20:28b*, the Gospel writer says that Jesus came **“... to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** The great miracles he performed were often a response to the “felt needs” of the people Jesus encountered. By first demonstrating the love of God, he opened their hearts to receive the greater miracle of forgiveness from sin and a transformed life.

Have you noticed? There is a progression to these instructions that Jesus gave his disciples. First he said, “Speak Peace.” Then he said, “Build relationships.” And here he says, “Respond to their felt needs.” **A “felt need” is the need that is presenting itself in a person’s life right now.** When we respond to someone’s “felt need” we are showing them the unconditional love of Jesus. We are demonstrating that we are willing to meet them where they are at. It’s not about pushing our agenda. It’s about responding to theirs. And what happens in someone’s heart when another person responds to their needs? It softens. It opens up. Relationships are formed. Trust builds. Faith and life can be shared!

Discuss: Look at this list of issues and challenges that are often faced by individuals and families in the world today. Identify some of the “felt needs” and the “deeper needs” in each case. There are no right answers. Use your imagination and experience to think about each situation and discuss some of the possibilities with your Life Group.

Issues/Challenges	Felt Needs	Deeper Needs
Hunger		
Sickness		
Loneliness		
Unemployment		
Anxiety		
Addiction		
Apathy		

Read: This Prayer Evangelism principle of responding to “felt needs” can be most effectively practiced in the “transformation training center” of the home because transformed families serve one another.

Remember our teaching on “mutual submission?” It’s all about serving one another by following the example of Jesus himself. It’s all about responding to both “felt needs” and “deeper needs.” Why not start with our families? This attitude quickly moves the discussion from “Am I getting my needs met?” to “How can I meet the needs of those in my family?”

If you want to experience a radical shift in the love and satisfaction quotient of your family, begin to serve one another with the love of Jesus. It will change everything!

In *Philippians 2:3-5*, Paul wrote:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

So how could you begin to respond to the “felt needs” of your family members in some new ways? What would Jesus do? Have you even noticed their needs lately? Have you thought to ask them... your mom or dad, your brother or sister, your son or daughter?

What if you sat down and had a “family conference” and really talked about some things together? What if mom and dad said, “Kids, we’re trying to become the best parents ever! What do we have to do to win the prize?” Once you get past the talk of no curfew, a new car and a large cash allowance, it might be very interesting to hear what is shared.

And what if a teenage son or daughter said, “Mom and dad, we don’t always say it, but ‘We love you.’ What can we do as part of this family to respond to some of your needs and help you out too?” Right after mom and dad pick themselves up off the floor, there could be some very interesting conversation that would take place.

And what if that cute little four-year-old brother or sister said, “Are we done with the meeting yet? I want to play with my toys!” Well, you could count on that happening! But again, you might be surprised. ***“From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise...”***

Psalm 8:2a

Discuss: What do you think would happen in your family if you really began to model these biblical principles of “speaking peace,” “building deep relationships” and “responding to each other’s needs?” Would your family become more loving or less? Would it become more peaceful or less? Would it become more fulfilling or less? Would your family be a more effective witness or less?

Which outcome would you like to see? More, more, more! Or less, less, less! I encourage you to do it because Jesus wants your home to be a “transformation training center” in order to prepare your family to fulfill its mission to the world! Praise the Lord!

Read: The fourth principle of Prayer Evangelism is found in the second half of *Luke 10:9*. There it says:

“... tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’”

Proclaim: Announce that the kingdom of God has come near and is available to them through Jesus Christ. To announce the kingdom of God is to share the Good News of Jesus in a way that is relevant and clear. When you have the presence of Jesus in your heart, and then in your home and family, I want you to know that the kingdom of God **is** near you! What ever opportunity or challenge you are facing, God is for you! God is with you! God is in you! Every day, every hour and every moment, because Jesus has come near you!

That’s why the fourth characteristic of a home that is functioning as a “transformation training center” for life is: **“Transformed families talk about Jesus together.”**

Practically speaking, this means that transformed families are places where faith is talked about openly, where the Bible is read and discussed often, where decisions are made with prayer and where Jesus is a normal part of the everyday conversation. It is a home where faith and life are never separated.

Again, a group of teens was asked this question, “How could your parents help you grow in your relationship with Jesus?” Here are some of their responses:

- talk more about it with me
- pray more together
- read the Bible more
- more time together discussing our faith
- by being supportive
- by going to church together
- by telling me more about the stories and people in the Bible

You might say, “These sure aren’t comments that my teenager would make!” However, parents are discovering that there is a great hunger for spiritual truth in the children and youth of today, especially when faith is shared lovingly and honestly. Parents, I strongly encourage you to talk to your children and teens about Jesus and realize that you don’t have to have all the answers.

The Bible challenges parents to raise their kids

“... in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Eph. 6:4b

Have we abdicated our calling as our children’s spiritual mentors and completely turned them over to the church, school, computer or their friends? The home and the family were meant to be the primary spiritual training ground for the next generation. Only then will they be equipped to talk about Jesus when they are “out in the real world” at school, work, on the sports

team, out on a date or taking a religion or philosophy class at the university. **The family is desperately needed today to become a “transformation training center” for life!**

As we relate these amazing principles of Prayer Evangelism to our family life, we can enthusiastically conclude:

- **Transformed families speak peace to one another.**
- **Transformed families build deep relationships.**
- **Transformed families serve one another.**
- **Transformed families talk about Jesus together.**

I encourage you today, whatever the shape or size of your family, whatever gifts you have or whatever challenges you may be facing, to recommit your family to these principles, and God will continue to transform your personal life, marriage and family to his glory. And down will come the **generational “dividing walls of hostility!”**

Be encouraged by a verse at the very end of the Old Testament that declares that the Word of the Lord will **“turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers...” Malachi 4:6** God’s purpose is love and unity for your family!

Discuss: Which of these four characteristics of a “transformation training center” for life does your family most need to apply? Ask God to show you the next steps!

Quote:

“We have only one life to live. We must provide our young ones with feet to stand on, wings to fly with and a compass to guide them. Of these three, *the compass is the most important one* – and it is always set to its ‘true north’ by the decisions *you* make. The best decision you can make today is to invest the rest of your life and the sum of all your resources into discipling nations. Doing so will show your children that life is about God.” (Silvoso, Transformation, p.264)

Transformation Church Insights:

- Every family is unique and important to God.
- The unity in our earthly families is to be a reflection of the unity of the heavenly family; Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- Generational curses can be broken in Jesus’ name and turned into generational blessings that give glory to God.
- The Principles of Prayer Evangelism from **Luke 10** provide a template for turning our homes and families into “transformation training centers” for life.

Life Application Challenges

(10 minutes)

Read: Once again, take a few minutes to read over your Life Application Challenges together as a Life Group. You are encouraged to implement these challenges throughout the week and report back at the beginning of Session 6.

Your *Personal* Life Application Challenge this week is to initiate at least one meaningful conversation (five minutes or more) with someone who is not from your generation. For many of you this will mean reaching-out to someone from your church, school, work, neighborhood or community.

The obvious statement is that care must be given to the location and appropriateness of the conversation. Use common sense and spiritual wisdom in terms of who you talk to, when and where. Talking to somebody of your same gender will usually be the most appropriate. If your conversation is with a child, you should visit with them in the “presence of” and with the “permission of” their parents. Tell mom and dad what you’re up to... and they will probably appreciate the genuine interest you have in affirming and encouraging their child.

In most cases for our Life Groups, the scenario will involve an adult reaching-out across generational lines to talk to a youth. This conversation could take place during an open fellowship time at church, after a youth group meeting when kids are just hanging out, in an appropriate setting at work, at a youth sporting event or some other public gathering. If you yourself are a teen or a young adult, your conversation could be with someone from your parents’ or grandparents’ generation.

The point is to knock down some **generational “dividing walls”** by having conversations that demonstrate sincere interest in what’s going on in the other person’s life. This is why you were asked to sit in a different seat for your Life Group meeting. Once and awhile we need to be intentional about stepping out of our comfort zones and getting to know someone from another generation, background or life experience. Have fun!

Afterwards, take some notes on your conversation(s):

My conversation took place with _____

I discovered that

My conversation took place with _____

I discovered that

Your *Group Life Application Challenge* this week is to plan a fun event for your Life Group. This can be for the individuals and couples in your group or you can make it a family event. If you want, you can use it as an outreach event and invite others too. Get creative!

Successful Life Groups, like families, require that relationships go deep. The second principle of Prayer Evangelism is to “Build Relationships.” This includes getting together to pray, study, serve and grow. It should also include “playing together” by just connecting for fun and fellowship. There will be a level of relationship building that happens in these settings that is different than your weekly Life Group sessions.

So talk it over right now and consider some options. Try to pick something that is affordable and easy for everyone. It doesn’t have to be this week, but get it on the calendar.

Ideas:

Logistics:

Your *City-Transformation Life Application Challenge* is to strategically implement the principles of Prayer Evangelism in your home. Why? Because if you can practice “**speaking peace and blessing, building relationships, responding to felt needs and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus**” within your home and family, you will be far better equipped to impact your community!

Choose several of the practical suggestions given during the Transformed Living section of today’s session and lovingly implement them with your spouse or children.

You can decide whether or not to tell them what you’re doing and why. How about just letting them notice the difference? If things have been real tense or troubled in your family, give this new approach time to work. Be patient and persistent in loving like Jesus loved and the results will come.

Take notes here if you wish:

Prayer Support

(15 minutes)

Every week you will be encouraged to take a few moments to share personal prayer requests within your group. Go ahead and do that now. You may write them down here:

Now, close with a group prayer for these needs and continue to include them in your prayers throughout the week.

Details

(5 minutes)

Finalize any details with your Host/Leader and Life Group members. Remember to share responsibilities, especially refreshments and childcare as needed.

Our next Life Group Session is:

Date:

Location:

Time:

Remember to bring:

Memory Verse Challenge

Ephesians 6:1-4

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
‘Honor your father and mother’ – which is the first commandment with a
promise – ‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on
the earth.’ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead,
bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”*

Daily Devotions

Read: You are encouraged to continue to build the “good habit” of Daily Devotions including Bible study, reflection and prayer. Join King David who declares, *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:105* As you go deeper in applying the transformation “paradigms and principles” that are a part of this Enemies No More series, a foundation of prayer and God’s Word is essential! Below you will find some passages of scripture for each day of the coming week, starting with Day One tomorrow. Read the scripture. Reflect on the questions. Pray as God leads you. Be blessed!

Day One – Luke 15:11-32

What were the three points of the “prodigal son’s” speech? How did his father receive him? How can faithfulness and obedience sometimes result in our feeling cheated? In what way was the little brother “dead” to the father but now “alive?”

Day Two – Acts 20:13-38

What are Paul’s two primary messages for the elders in Ephesus? Hint: vs. 24 and v. 31. Why was Paul always quick to point out that he supplied his own needs and even paid the way for his team? Do you sense genuine love between Paul and his colleagues from Ephesus? Why?

Day Three – Colossians 1:1-14

Reflect on those that have ministered to you and helped you grow in your faith. What do you especially appreciate about them? Who has “heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love...?” vs. 4 What is the word on the street about you? In what ways are you seeking to “live a life worthy of the Lord?” vs.10

Day Four – I Peter 5:1-11

What are some of the qualities of a godly “elder?” Who is the “chief shepherd?” Why are submissiveness and humility especially important qualities for young leaders? Compare vs. 9 to Ephesians 6:10-14

Day Five – I Corinthians 4:14-21

What is the danger of opening your life to thousands of spiritual influences, but not being able to identify your spiritual father? On what basis does Paul declare, “Imitate me?” vs. 16. Didn’t he tell us to “imitate God” in Ephesians 5:1-2? What does Paul mean when he says, “The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power?” vs.21

Day Six – II Timothy 3:1-9

Based on Paul’s assessment 2,000 years ago, are we living in the “last days?” In what way does disobedience to our parents reveal a deeper spiritual need? Reflect on examples in the Church today of “having the form of godliness but denying its power.”

Day Seven – Your Life Group meets today!

