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The Life You've Always Wanted Participant's Guide

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It's "Morphing" Time

SESSION ONE

The good news as Jesus preached it is that now it is possible for ordinary men and women to live in the presence and under the power of God. . . . It is not about the minimal entrance requirements for getting into heaven when you die. It is about the glorious redemption of human life—your life. It's morphing time.

—John Ortberg

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1. To be *transformed* means to be changed, and transformation is taking place all around us all the time. What examples of transformation—of any sort—come to mind?
2. What is required for transformations such as those you have mentioned to occur?
3. Although we use the term *spiritual transformation*, we often use it casually without giving it much thought. Describe what *spiritual transformation* means to you.
4. What do you consider to be the indicators of spiritual transformation? How can we tell if another person has experienced a spiritual transformation?

VIDEO OBSERVATIONS

Life: disappointment and hope

We shall "morph" indeed

Pseudo-transformation

Trying harder versus training wisely

VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

1. What is the hope of the Christian gospel as John Ortberg describes it?
2. An important concept in *The Life You've Always Wanted* is that we are always being transformed; we are always changing for better or for worse. This happens physically and, although it's less obvious, spiritually. How might some of our daily practices cause us to be “formed” spiritually in one direction or another?
3. Why did Jesus so strongly challenge pseudo-transformation and the rabbis' “boundary markers” regarding dietary laws, the Sabbath, and circumcision?
4. In what ways does pseudo-transformation creep into churches today, and what are its damaging effects? Can you identify any “boundary markers” in your church?

LARGE GROUP EXPLORATION

Pseudo-Transformation vs. Morphing

When our lives are not marked by genuine, God-directed spiritual change, we tend to look for substitute ways to distinguish ourselves from those we consider to be less spiritual. We adopt boundary markers—highly visible, relatively superficial practices intended to quickly separate the “insiders” from the “outsiders.” These boundary markers may include conformity to specified forms of dress and speech, adherence to certain rules of behavior, participation in prescribed activities, and so on. They provide a false sense of security and superiority.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day focused a great deal of their attention on boundary markers. Many of their conflicts with Jesus occurred because Jesus took a radically different approach to assessing spirituality. Instead of focusing on visible indicators of spiritual transformation, Jesus focused on what was happening in the heart. His concern was whether or not people were being transformed and growing in their love of God and love of people. His concern was whether or not they were “morphing” into the masterpieces God created them to be.

Let's consider these opposing perspectives on spiritual transformation.

1. Read Matthew 12:1–2; 15:1–2; Luke 18:11–12. Note the types of spiritual behaviors the religious leaders of Jesus' day considered important. What was Jesus' assessment of their spirituality? (See Mark 7:5–8.)

2. What did Jesus say that no doubt shocked the religious leaders? (Read Matthew 21:28–32.)

3. Instead of focusing on external religious practices, what did Jesus emphasize? (Read Luke 10:25–28; John 13:34–35.)

4. What is the evidence of true spiritual transformation in our lives? (Read 1 Corinthians 13:1–7.)

5. Now let's consider "morphing." The word *morph* comes from the Greek word *morphoo*, which means "the inward and real formation of the essential nature of a person." The term was used to describe the formation and growth of an embryo in a mother's body.

The kind of spiritual transformation God wants each of us to experience is a complete "remaking" of our nature. He wants us to see, feel, think, and do what Jesus would if he were in our unique place. What makes such a transformation possible, and why is it important? (See Romans 6:3–14; 2 Corinthians 5:17–20; Ephesians 2:10.)

6. Another form of the word *morph* is used in the phrase “until Christ is formed in you” in Galatians 4:19. This word, *summorphizo*, means “to have the same form as another, to shape a thing into a durable likeness.”

Our spiritual growth is to be a molding process, a process whereby we are shaped in the image of Christ. Notice what the following verses reveal about the process of spiritual growth God accomplishes within each Christian.

a. Galatians 4:19

b. Colossians 3:5–10

c. 2 Corinthians 3:18

7. In Romans 12:2, Paul used the word *metamorphoo*, from which we get the English word *metamorphosis*. The emphasis is that we don't simply learn to *do* things in a new way, we *become* the kind of people who *are* that way. How does this transformation come about?