

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Small Group Study for Week 2 of Famous Last Words

On the cross Jesus said these words "It is finished." It was his victory cry – He had completely fulfilled the work that God had planned for him. While Jesus could say it is finished, we are a work in progress, we have unfinished business in our lives. That is good news, God is not finished with us yet!

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

2 Corinthians 8:11 Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.

Let's face it. Everyone has something they want to change. But when it comes to change, we have an easy time identifying and wanting it, but making the change is something entirely different. We can get excited about the very thought of change. The thought of changing from not having a driver's license to having a driver's license can be exciting.

The dream of changing from being single to married can be enticing. The idea of changing from dependent to independent, apartment to home or employee to owner can get us excited.

Opener - What are some of the changes in your life that you have been the most excited about?

God is the change agent we all need in our lives. When we open the lid of our lives and invite God in, it's then that he begins to change us from the inside out. That's why we can't change on our own. Without Christ, though, we are just trying, striving and tweaking. And the result is superficial change. We're just rearranging the parts of our lives, hoping for real change. But that superficial change will never bring about the super natural change God has in store for us. It takes the supernatural change through Christ to produce lasting changes.

How has the supernatural change of Christ produced changes in your life?

How does admitting the fact that you can't change on your own contradict our culture's pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mindset?

STINKING THINKING

The Apostle Paul was someone who understood the power of God's change. He was hunting Christians down and persecuting the church when he had a Damascus Road experience. He was power washed by the love, grace and mercy of the Lord. And here is what he wrote after he became a follower of Christ:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2

A lot of people have stinking thinking. Their thinking is all messed up. Romans 12:2 tells me if I uncover and allow God to cover me, my mind can be transformed. I will start thinking right. And when I think right, when I feed on God's Word, then I will start acting right. And when I start acting

right, I will start living and behaving right.

How have you seen changes in your mindset lead to changes in your behavior?

Thinking right ultimately leads to confession and repentance. But remember, it is not powered by our own strength. We do not force the change. We cooperate with the change that occurs when God, the change agent, places the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

HOLY SPIRIT HELP

The only thing that can block the Holy Spirit's power in you and me is you and me. That's it. When we choose to ignore the life-changing power of the spirit of God we will experience the difficulties of trying to do it on our own. And we'll miss the power of true change.

Have you ever been on a Z-pack before? A Z-pack is a round of antibiotics. When you start a Z-pack, you need to finish it. But I have made the mistake before of only taking the first few days. But because I didn't follow through, that infection came back and hit me even harder. If you want to completely knock out the infection, you have to take the full course of antibiotics.

The same is true with change. Don't stop short and just say, "Okay Lord, I will confess. That's enough. I have blown it. I feel sorry that I have messed up."

Take the next step. Go to repentance. Turn from the mistake. But again, don't stop there. Do what God wants you to do. Walk by the Spirit of God and realize that God is changing you.

CREATIVE NOTES FOR LEADERS

ICEBREAKERS

Pictures of Change

Ask your group to bring pictures of when they were a child. Display the pictures and let the group guess who brought each picture.

BRIDGE – Everyone has something they want to change. Seeing pictures of who you were can probably make you remember things you wanted to change.

Signs of Change

Change something about your meeting and see if anyone notices. You could change the order of things you do, change the usual menu, rearrange furniture or meet in an entirely new place.