

## **Navigating Life's Conflicts Transformationally**

Recapping over the past weeks, we have agreed that conflicts are simply part of life, and can actually work positively for us through the 'creative tensions' they generate within us. We also saw that this is part of the way God has constituted us to function as human being created in his image. God calls us into a new relationship with himself, which brings us into a new position from where we gain a new perspective – 'his perspective' of who we are and what we are about.

Within this new perspective, we saw that God engages with us simultaneously in three dimensions, involving:

- A Gift – a spiritual new birth, or spiritual reboot
- A Goal – the inspiring future goal of ultimate conformity of even our bodies to the image of Christ
- A Task – our collaborative engagement in mind renewal, realigning our thinking to God's word through the power of the Holy Spirit, moving us toward the goal of full conformity to the image of Christ.

We also saw the fundamental importance of mind-renewal as integral to this process because of the central function of the human brain in our creation as embodied spirits. The significance of this perspective resides in the understanding that our 'mind' – our God-given organ of thought, language, and imagination – actually emerges organically out of the functions of our brains, which can only be described as the pinnacle of God's creative genius in our world.

Today we are going to look at some practical processes that we can engage with that will equip us to effectively collaborate with the way God has wired our brain to operate and bring renewal within our thinking and glory to God in the process.

### **A Basic Overview of Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy Model**

Thoughts/Beliefs → Feelings → Behaviours

- Tell the story of the balaclava-clad man at the front door!!!

Our feelings and behaviours come out of our belief systems – so the corollary is that if we want to change our feelings or behaviours, we must first change our thinking!!!

I have discovered that unless I identify the 'false belief' or 'assumption' – the underlying thought that is driving any bad behaviour – I will not be successful at achieving lasting change.

- Tell story of my previous addiction to pornography – the back story as an apprentice and how I discovered my false assumption.

We must develop the art of 'personal critical reflection' – Our 'feelings' and 'behaviours' are like the gauges on the dashboard of our life; they are meant to alert us to what is going on internally!! We need to ask ourselves:

- Why am I reacting so angrily, or feeling so negative?
- Why am I finding it so hard to forgive that person, or just say sorry?

- Why do I get offended so easily?
- Why am I struggling to overcome that habit?
- Why am I resisting change so much?

We all need to be willing to acknowledge that we all probably have some 'false beliefs' that drive our unhelpful behaviours. It's only as we are willing to hold our behaviours and feelings up against the Word of God, that the Holy Spirit can begin to identify our false beliefs, and start to empower us to acknowledge them, repent of them, and begin to break their hold over our lives.

Remember, if our thinking doesn't change, nothing changes!!!

This is the key to overcoming the blockages our false beliefs create within us, and thereby stepping into the continuing realm of transformational living with Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## A Mind Renewal Process

Acknowledgements to Dr N. Bruce Litchfield

The Event:

### i) Acknowledge the Old Thought Pattern

- Painful feelings
- Inappropriate behaviour
- Identify the false belief/thoughts

### ii) Dispute the Old Belief

- |   |        |      |
|---|--------|------|
| - Is it fact? (reality, truth)                                | Yes/No | Why? |
| - Is it nurturing me?   | Yes/No | Why? |
| - Is it helping me meet my goals?                             | Yes/No | Why? |
| - Is it keeping me out of inappropriate conflict with others? | Yes/No | Why? |

*(If three are answered in the negative it is an irrational belief)*

### iii) Acknowledge Renewed Belief

- The new reality – truth combined with repentance and forgiveness

### iv) Put Off the Old

*<sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; (Eph 4:22-23)*

### v) Put On the New

*<sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph 4:24)*

- Right beliefs/thoughts
- Right behaviour
- Right feelings

It is true to say that this approach will require some persistence in practice before it begins to become a regular part of how you handle your personal challenges – but don't allow that to stop you from starting!!!

## **Learning to Navigate Life's Conflict Transformationally**

Transformation is a three-dimensional process involving a gift, a goal and a task

- The Gift is the supernatural presence and power of the Holy Spirit in new birth
- The Goal is the supernatural formation of Christ's character within us, and fulfilled in our resurrection
- The Task is our commitment to intentionally align our thinking through the power of the Holy Spirit to that of Christ's Word; it is the Truth that sets us free, empowering us to identify and eradicate the 'false beliefs' that trap us in unhelpful feelings and behaviours, which in turn stop us from being effective in his Kingdom, and stifle supernatural living!!!

How do I do that, you ask?

- Feed yourself daily in God's Word – reading, meditating on it, and applying by SOAPing!!!
- Learn how to pray in God's presence – that requires a disciplined time commitment on your part
- Build genuine relationships of accountability
- Start telling others about what Jesus has done in your life!!!

Paul identifies God's ultimate goal for each of his followers who have accepted his Son's offer of saving grace in this way in Romans 8:28-29:

*<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.*