

# 3

# TRANSFORMATION

"we are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory." 2 Cor 3:18

## JOURNALING FOR TRANSFORMATION

### WHAT IS JOURNALING?

In a consumer world it's easy to accumulate experiences, believing that the more we have the better! Yet experiences don't necessarily bring wisdom, nor do they automatically transform us. We need to take all our experiences, thoughts and activities to God to learn from them. Journaling is a way of paying attention to our lives. It seeks to bring together the vast array of events and experiences of our lives into a shape that we can comprehend and consider before the throne of God.

Journaling is an activity where we write a diary or a blog that is only intended to be read by God. We record our honest thoughts and reflections, write out prayers and mark the turning points and significant moments of our life. Very often, our journal entries will begin by writing out a passage from the bible, which forms a springboard over writer's block, emptiness or distraction. The very act of slowing down enough to write something aids us in engaging with God in a genuine way.

Ultimately, Journals are a record of God's faithfulness through our life-journey. We become more aware of his activity, his actions, his sustaining power and his transforming work in our lives because we *take the time* to write them down.

Most often, this becomes a daily discipline, rather than something you would do only in the context of a weekly Home Group.

### EXERCISE

**Read Matthew 5:1-16.** This is a passage with which you will have a growing familiarity—through the sermons and also in these group times. This is deliberate. Rather than learning new things about the Bible, our desire here is to learn new things about how God is applying the Bible to our lives. Our attention is drawn to God and his desire to change us to more like Jesus.

Take 20 minutes of quiet time alone and apart from the rest of your group.

#### **What to do:**

Pray as you read through the passage again and ask that God would show you which of these statements of 'Blessing' need to shape your life. Begin by writing those verses out at the top of your page.

Under this heading, recall the aspects of your life and person that Jesus touches with these particular words. Be as specific as you can.

*During this time you will quite likely wrestle with distractions, interrupting thoughts, or just the 'heaviness of silence'. Some may be tempted to write down tomorrow's shopping list or even begin to prepare something for work. You will soon find out why Journaling is called a 'discipline': give these distractions to God and practice refocussing our attention on the passage.*

*Ps 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. <sup>24</sup> See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Some other questions to ponder and address in your journal:

- How might your life already reflect the blessedness Jesus describes in these Beatitudes?
- In the light of the scripture(s) you chose, what kinds of changes would you like to see in your life? Which specific situations will you be especially relying upon God's strength to see that change?
- What can you do today in response to this scripture?
- How do you feel about 'waiting' for God's blessing, as he promises it will be? How does God's eventual blessing effect your living now? For example, How does ultimately 'inheriting the earth' effect your practice of 'meekness' now?
- How might you creatively respond to these scriptures in a poem, a picture, a song, a collage, a drama, a painting....whatever?
- Compose a prayer to God

### GROUP REFLECTION

- How did you feel that your time with God was impacted by your journaling? What was hard, what was easy?
- How did you deal with distractions?
- What might be the benefits of journaling? When might it not be useful?

Share and pray for one another. If you feel comfortable to do so, pray aloud the prayer you composed in your journal.

### HOMEWORK

Keep a journal for every day of this coming week.

#### **Further ideas:**

- Journals can include a collection of clippings, drawings, collage, articles, poems, quotes etc.
- Journals are a great place to record prayers, prayer requests, and answers to prayer.

### PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK

What do you think might be the difference between Christian meditation and the meditation practiced by Eastern Religions?