

RENEW



heart • soul • mind • strength



RENEW: Mind

Large Group Talk 2

Objective: This lesson is designed to teach students how to use their minds to love God and love others more wholly. Students often take their minds and thoughts for granted, allowing only feelings or experiences to inform their love of God. But God invites us to love him with our intellects and imaginations, using wisdom and discernment to follow him with our whole beings. When students begin to use their whole minds to love and follow God, it opens up the possibility to love themselves and others. The objective of this lesson is to equip students with Scripture and tools to use their minds in their pursuit of Christ.

Recap of RENEW Your Heart

Say Something Like: *We are looking at how God renews our heart, mind, strength, and soul so we can love him and know him intimately. At our last session, we looked at the desires and passions of the heart and how God wants us to love him on the inside, not just to look good on the outside. In this session, we will see what true intelligence looks like after Christ renews our minds.*

Introduction

Ask: *Who is the smartest person you know? Who do you think was the smartest person who ever lived?*

Say Something Like: *Maybe the smartest person you know is a teacher or a parent or grandparent. And we could all make proposals about the smartest person who ever lived—Einstein, Plato, or maybe Dr. Who. Let me suggest someone else who should top our lists of smart people: Jesus. He was the creator of our minds, the inventor of intelligence, and the one who thought the ability to think into existence. If he is the one who created the brain and all its capacities to think, imagine, wonder, and question, that gives him the trump card for being the smartest person ever. If you look at all of the discussions Jesus had with people trying to trip him up, you'll discover something amazing: Jesus never lost an argument. He always had the right answer to the most difficult questions other people could think of. We're going to look at a passage in the Bible about what it looks like to be smart like Jesus, as well as using our minds to love Jesus and other people.*

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Read Ephesians 4:17-24:

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 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; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Say Something Like: *The apostle Paul is encouraging the Ephesian church—and us—to let God transform the way we think, to renew our minds. Following Jesus (the smartest person ever) requires rethinking our thinking, using our whole minds to follow and love him well, and giving him our complete attention.*

Illustration Option 1: Show the YouTube video “Awareness Test.” (youtu.be/Ahg6qcgoay4). See how many people can count the number of passes from the white team, and how many spotted the visitor in the midst of the video—just don’t give away the surprise!

Illustration Option 2: Show the students a series of Magic Eye 3D pictures on the screen. (Find an example here: www.magiceye.com). See how many students can spot the images.

Say Something Like: *It’s so easy to miss something you’re not looking for. When we’re paying attention to the wrong things, when our thoughts are distracted or uninformed about the ways of Jesus, it not only affects our attitudes, it also affects our actions. So how can we have new minds and new thoughts? What does it look like to be renewed in our minds to follow Christ?*

Teaching: Mind

1. Take off Your Old Mind of Ignorance

Say Something Like: *In Ephesians 4:17-18, Paul says that Gentiles who aren’t following Jesus are futile in their thinking and darkened in their understanding. To put it bluntly, they’re stupid! But he’s talking about great philosophers, people known for their intelligence. How could he call them unwise? Verse 19 explains. By looking at their actions—their impurity and greed—it’s obvious that they may know all the right answers, but they don’t know how to apply them. They have book smarts, but they have no street smarts. And who is really wiser:*

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someone who can answer all the questions on a test or someone who can do all the right things in the real world?

As we learn to fully follow Jesus, we must acknowledge the lies we've been following and give up our sinful habits and thoughts. That requires some honest self-reflection. Are you willing to acknowledge that the way you have been thinking may be misguided or just plain wrong? Are you willing to admit that, even if you know all the right church-y answers, you may not be living them out in your life? Paul encouraged the Ephesians to give up "the futility of their thinking" to live like Jesus who perfectly acted out the truths he knew. We have to do the same thing!

Object Lesson: Before the lesson, get a full catcher's outfit for baseball or goalie gear for hockey. Have one student come up as a volunteer. Ask them to begin dressing in the full gear. Add a backpack full of heavy items (books, rocks, or bricks), then finish off their new outfit by blindfolding them. When they are weighed down and looking pretty silly, ask them to follow you around the room. (Be sure not to lead them near something they might trip on!) They'll stumble around or perhaps stay frozen in place.

Say Something Like: *This is what we're trying to do when we're carrying around lies and unhealthy habits in our minds—we are following Christ weighed down and blinded. Paul calls it "darkened in their understanding." So, how can we find freedom?*

2. Get Help from Christ

Say Something Like: *When we acknowledge that our ways of thinking and understanding aren't the best, we have to ask Christ for help. It's not enough for us to do it ourselves; if we could, we wouldn't need a savior! Prayerfully acknowledge that you can't do it on your own and Jesus will begin reshaping and renewing your mind to be more like his. Christ promises to give us a new mind, a new heart, and a new self. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul declares that in Christ we are a "new creation"—everything about us is made new, transformed to be more like Jesus. We don't have to be defined by our old patterns of thinking or lack of understanding. Our minds can be renewed to obey Christ and to be open to his ways.*

Paul says that we have been taught the "truth that is in Jesus." So, what is truth? It's a big question for many of us, especially in our culture, where many think that your truth and my truth are different ways of understanding the world. But the Bible is clear: there's only one truth, and it is found in Jesus Christ. When we acknowledge that Jesus is the source of truth and reality, we can find freedom and a renewed mind.

Discuss: Share a story about when you realized something you believed in was actually just made up (e.g., Santa Claus). Then ask if anyone has a similar story to share.

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Say Something Like: *Have you ever had someone you trusted lie to you? Maybe a friend said they'd stick by you, but then abandoned you when you needed them. Maybe a parent made a promise they didn't keep. Perhaps someone told you a half-truth or didn't give you all the information. They didn't outright lie; they just didn't tell the whole story. It's one of the worst feelings imaginable when you realize you've been deceived.*

Paul says that we are giving up our "deceitful desires" for the reality that is found in Jesus. To be renewed in our minds means giving up the lies and half-truths we may have believed about ourselves, other people, and the world around us.

3. Put on the New Mindset

Say Something Like: *Being renewed requires more than simply acknowledging our inabilities and asking Jesus to transform our minds. We have to replace them with something: the new mind of Christ, his attitude of righteousness. In the book of Philippians, Paul encourages us,*

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

We've already recognized that we can't have this attitude without Christ's help. Yet this doesn't mean we sit around and do nothing. Instead, we begin to practice having the same mindset as Christ through his power and wisdom.

This is no easy task, but the good news is that we have a lot of resources around us to help us get to know the mindset of Christ we're trying to reflect. We can start by searching the Bible to understand God's wisdom for us. (Did you know the book of Proverbs was written by one of the wisest men who ever lived?) We can also get to know more of Christ's mindset by reading about him in the Gospels—the first four books of the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell the story of Jesus' life on earth. Finally, we're surrounded by great people who know Jesus and his mindset because they have been following him closely for years. During the course of this event, you have probably come in contact with a lot of them. Take note of these people, ask them questions when you don't understand something, ask them for help or for mentoring—most of them would be thrilled to help you get to know Jesus' mindset better.

Illustration: *Have you ever seen or heard of the movie *The Truman Show*? It's about a guy, played by Jim Carrey, who grows up as the star of a television show about his life. Everything around him—his town, his wife, his friends, his parents—are all part of the show, but he knows nothing about it. Over time, he begins to figure out that something isn't quite right, and ultimately he discovers that his entire life has been fake, a performance for others' entertainment. After discovering the truth, he's given a choice: does he stay in a comfortable life where everything revolves around him? Or does he strike out on his own into the real*

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world, leaving behind his former ways of existence? It's the same question Jesus offers us: will we cling to old ways of thinking and living, the lies we've always believed about how the world works, or will we be transformed by the renewal of our minds? The wisest decision is to trust God with the outcomes, placing our whole lives into his capable hands. (You can find a clip of Truman's decision here: www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/truman-show/trumans-choice.)

Putting It All Together:

Say Something Like: *We have to take off our old mental habits and understandings that lead to impurity and greed, but we cannot do it on our own. We need a savior, someone greater and wiser than us to give us a new mind and a new attitude. Thankfully, we have such a savior in Christ. We can offer him our minds and allow him to reshape our imaginations and intellects. May you give up your unhealthy mental habits, offering them to Christ as an act of repentance and finding renewed life in him! Only then will you become truly wise by not only talking the talk, but also walking the walk.*

[Speaker Note: The following questions will be discussed in the following Small Group Lesson.]

Question 1: Think of the sports gear illustration. What is one unhealthy mental habit or way of thinking that keeps holding you back from fully following Jesus?

Question 2: What might be one way you can begin practicing the renewal of your mind in Christ? Come up with one or two actions you can begin to do this week.

Looking Forward: Let the students know that the next lesson will look at what it means to love God with all their strength. Make sure to give them any instructions they might need to go from here.

**LeaderTreks recommends watching all video clips and visiting all websites in this lesson before sharing them with students. These links are optional and not required in order to lead an effective large group talk. Websites often change, and links may not always have the same result. LeaderTreks will do its best to keep them updated and fresh; however, in the event that they do not function properly, we cannot retain responsibility.*

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