

Session 7

No Left Turn

Big Idea: Spiritual transformation occurs as we struggle with our experiences in the light of God’s Word and among community. It’s essential in this process to choose the right turn through humility and dependence on the Holy Spirit rather than the left turn to self-control through willpower.

Friedrich Nietzsche, a nineteenth-century philosopher who was not exactly known for devout faith in God, described the life of faith as “a long obedience in the same direction.” The characters in our story are not finding this long obedience easy. Few of us do. But in this segment they learn the seven critical elements of spiritual transformation and find a few of those elements surprising. Your goal in this session will be to understand these seven elements.

1. According to the video, there are seven elements of spiritual transformation. What are they?

Experience, struggle, Scripture, humility, Holy Spirit, self-control, and community

2. How do the characters’ lives illustrate aspects of the change process?

- Change is worked out in the context of life experience.

Parenting a hostile teenager is forcing both Gerry and Linda to face their desire to control Erik, each other, and themselves.

- The Scriptures enable us to make sense of our experiences and show us how to respond.

Reading Romans 6-8 helped Raz understand why his addiction to pornography was so powerful and how he should address it.

- The tension between our inclinations and the truth of Scripture produces struggle.

Just reading Romans didn’t end the struggle for Raz; he still felt the war between what would give him true life and what seemed for an instance to feel good.

- God will help us if we humble ourselves, but will not help us if we remain arrogant about our strength.

As long as Gerry keeps trying to control his anger at Erik without humbling himself, he’ll keep failing.



The Seven Elements of Spiritual Transformation

- The Holy Spirit enables us to do what we cannot do in our own strength.

The Holy Spirit affected Raz's ethics at work enough to catch Thomas' attention.

- An effective community enables us to keep up the day-in day-out struggle necessary for deep change.

Linda probably wouldn't be able to keep hiding from her family by working if it weren't for the women's lunch group, when the other women ask her questions and encourage her.



3. What is the difference between the left turn and right turn?

The left turn is independent of God and using our own strengths. The right turn is dependent upon God and requires us to be humble and depend on the power of the Holy Spirit. The right turn is the "grace route," and the left turn is the "flesh route."

4. What left turns have you seen Gerry take in his relationship with Erik? Have you seen him take right turns?

Gerry continues to say it won't happen again and that he will get control of himself and not lose it again with Erik. He did cry with Bill and seemed he was at the end of trying to deal with Erik in his own strength.

5. Think of an area of your life in which you need to grow. Where are you in the change process?

- I've just had an experience that points out my need to change.
- I need to find out what the Scripture says about an experience I've just had or am having.
- I know what the Bible says about my situation, but I'm failing to do what the Bible says.
- I am trying to do what is right by my own strength of will.
- I'm struggling to get myself into a place of humility about this issue.
- I've admitted my helplessness to God about this, and I'm asking for the Holy Spirit's help.
- God's Spirit is helping me in this area, but I still have quite a way to go.

If none of these appear to fit your situation, describe it in your own words.

6. The opposite of humility is pride. Pride has several faces. Which of these (if any) are ones you can identify with? Think about which ones you have seen in others.

- A tough, I-can-do-it, I'm-better-than-this stance.
- False humility, where you claim to "give all the glory to God" but are really satisfied with your own performance.
- Self Contempt: "I'm so pathetic. I'll never get this right. Look, I did it again! What an idiot!" (This attitude implies that you can make yourself change if you just beat yourself up hard enough.)
- Despair: "I give up. I'll never change." (This may not look like pride, but it still refuses to trust God's power and goodness.)

7. What is the difference between humility and pride?

Humility admits we need God's power, whereas pride refuses to receive God's power in favor of our own strength.

8. What environment do you have as described by Peterson?

*"A Christian must have an environment where he or she **can go and talk openly about how things are going** in this matter of following Christ. It needs to be a place where one can get personalized attention and give it to others.*

The transformation process we have been describing is characterized by struggle. Nobody can stick it out in an effort of this nature, day after day, year after year, if they attempt to go it alone. Hebrews 3:13 says, 'encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.'

*This passage implies **an intense, daily, accepting environment**, where the experiences we are dealing with can be an open topic of conversation. It implies commitment to one another, being there when the going gets heavy, when a sister or brother is more inclined to choose wrong over right... Honesty, mutual loving support, and intercession for one another are essential ingredients to repair the damage of our lives."*

*Jim Petersen,
Lifestyle Discipleship, pp. 118-119*

Suggested Additional Reading:

Read chapter 8 of *Lifestyle Discipleship*