



Week 4 Small Group: The Power of a Fresh Start: I have new Possibilities!

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, we must admit that all too often our minds are closed to new ways of thinking and living. I ask that your Spirit opens my mind and my heart to the perspectives and possibilities you create through your Word and the power of your work. AMEN.

BREAKING THE ICE:

As we go through life, we encounter situations or proposals where we at first think, “No way. That’s not possible.” Perhaps we continue in that way of thinking or something occurs that leads us to consider the possibility.

- a. What was a situation in life where you initially thought, “That’s not possible!” or “There’s no way that is going to happen.” Did you eventually change your opinion? What led to the change?
- b. Personal growth advocates talk about being open-minded and closed-minded. Perhaps you have heard these phrases, perhaps not. How would you define each type of person? Where on the spectrum would you place your self (open or closed minded)?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD: What does the Bible say about being open and closed minded?

Read Proverbs 18:13,15

13 He who answers before listening— that is his folly and his shame.

14 The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.

1. In his book *Principles*, Ray Dalio, self-made billionaire and founder of the largest hedge fund in the world, lays out seven powerful ways you can tell the difference between open and closed-minded people. One of those ways is the willingness to listen. He says, “Closed-minded people block others from speaking. Open-minded people are always more interested in listening than in speaking.” This wisdom is a reflection of King Solomon’s advice in Proverbs 18:13 & 15. What value have you found in seeking to listen before speaking?

2. In this past Sunday's message, Jesus was in the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-22). The people listened to his teaching and were amazed at the authority with which he taught. This interaction reinforces the importance of taking time to listen to Jesus to hear his Word and wisdom. What differences in life have you noticed when you take time to listen to God's Word (or read it) versus times in life where you didn't take as much time to listen to (or read) God's Word?

Read Romans 12:1-5

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 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.

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. 4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

3. The mindset of the world is a strong pull even for Christians. Can you think of mindsets that the world holds that are contrary to what you know the Word of God speaks?
4. When we live under the mercy of God, all of our being is offered to him, including our mind. In many ways we are to become "closed minded" to the patterns of this world and "open-minded" to the things of God. What makes this challenging? What are the blessings that come when we listen to the Spirit of God and he renews our mind with the things of God?
5. Christians can be accused of being "closed-minded." What do you think of this accusation? How might you respond if someone makes this charge in general or specifically to you?
6. Another principle that Ray Dalio puts forward is that closed-minded people lack a deep sense of humility while open minded people are humble to consider they may be wrong. Humility is a Christian virtue worked by God's Spirit. (It is always interesting when the secular world notices the value of Christian virtues.) What happens to our mindset when pride prevails over a spirit of humility?
7. The Apostle Paul encourages a humility toward one another in the body of Christ. What do we miss out on from fellow members of Christ's family if our mind is closed (pride) toward others and their gifts, insights, or thoughts? What blessings do we experience individually and as a church when we operate with a sense of humility?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:8

8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Read Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

8. When we consider our life in Christ and the new possibilities that open up to us, they are connected not only to taking time to listen to the Word of God, but also recognizing the power and strength that we have through the Spirit of God to do the things of God and resist the things not of God. What in these passages encourage you most as you consider both the opportunity and challenge to live the life to which God has called you?
9. The love of Christ is ultimately what opens our minds, hearts, and lives to new possibilities. What new possibilities open in your life as you ground yourself in the love of Christ?
10. Ephesians 3:20 is hard to fathom. Have you ever limited possibilities because you have doubted God's ability to do more than you ask or imagine? What possibilities open up when this truth of Ephesians 3:20-21 becomes real in us?

NEXT STEPS:

Journal (or discussion) questions:

- a. Am I open or closed minded? What possibilities am I missing by being closed minded?
- b. Read a verse of the Bible (or short section) and ask, "Lord let me listen to this Word from you. Open my mind to the truth it gives and the possibilities it opens." Write down the truths that God opens to you.

CLOSING PRAYER: (Invite all participates to share a prayer)

Spirit of God, thank you for preserving the wisdom and truth of God in the pages of Scripture. Forgive me for carrying a spirit of pride and arrogance that closes me off to your work. Work your power in me to keep my spirit humble and always open to your truth for my mind, heart, and life. In Jesus' name, AMEN.