

# GRACE TRANSFORMS

WEEK 4

## INFLUENCE

*Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity,<sup>8</sup> and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.*

**Titus 2:7-8 (ESV)**

# SERMON NOTES – INFLUENCE :: 2

TOPIC \_\_\_\_\_

SPEAKER \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

TESTAMENT  OLD  NEW SONGS/HYMNS \_\_\_\_\_

MOOD 😄 😊 😐 😞 😓 😴 \_\_\_\_\_

TODAY I AM GRATEFUL FOR \_\_\_\_\_

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KEY POINTS \_\_\_\_\_ SCRIPTURES \_\_\_\_\_

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NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What stuck out to you as you read this weekend's Scripture passages?

Did these verses raise any questions as you read?

Where do we see Jesus Christ in these verses?

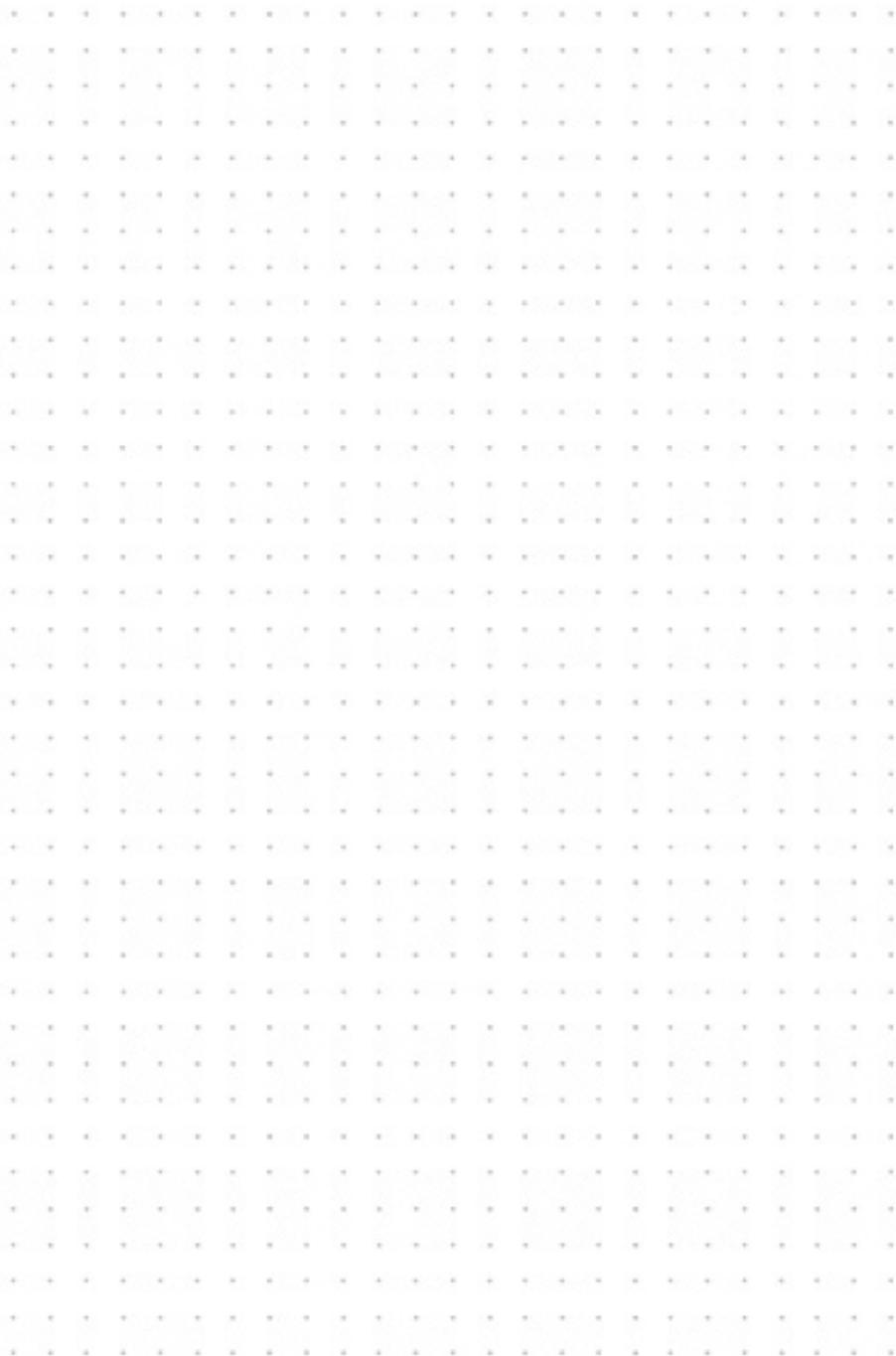
As you read this weekend's Scripture, ask yourself, "Are these verses...

1. teaching me something?"
2. telling me to stop doing something I am doing?"
3. correcting some wrong thinking or behavior?"
4. preparing me to live more effectively for him?"

Write down the name of someone who might benefit from hearing what you've seen in the Bible.

Why is this passage in this particular book of the Bible? What might the Bible lose if this passage was left out? What's the author's main point? *(Try to sum up your answer in one sentence.)*

# JOURNAL



## DAY 16 — INFLUENCE

### Open Hands & Happy Hearts

Acts 2:42-47 / Acts 4:32-36

In Acts, the church was expanding rapidly. The Holy Spirit was alive, active, and the new believers were passionate. We see that their whole lives began to center and gravitate around their belief in the gospel. As they fully devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer, they and their community were radically transformed.

Upon first reading these Scriptures, I only saw the difficulty of what was happening. A life lived surrendered and open handed. Having nothing of our own and sharing everything. But I was reminded of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-26), who went away sad because of the thought of giving up all he had to follow Jesus. I was struck by the notion that he went away sad. The church in Acts was anything but sad. They were receiving their food with glad and generous hearts. They were seeing the power of God at work in their daily lives. And they were filled with awe and experienced the joy of caring for others and being cared for.

A life lived for Jesus looks different and is often difficult, but it produces the kind of life we long for. These believers in Acts had more living generously than they had in keeping it all for themselves.

**NEXT STEP ::** *May we be a people who live life open-handed and devoted fully to the Word, fellowship, shared meals, prayer, and experiencing the amazing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as a result. I'll bet we won't be disappointed, and our community around us will be influenced because of it.*

# REFLECT

*What did you hear?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*What do you think?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*What will you do?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Now talk with God...* \_\_\_\_\_

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## DAY 17 — INFLUENCE

# A Powerful Bible Translation!

### Ephesians 5:1-21

The letter to the Ephesians exhibits a pattern common in the epistles to the churches: the first chapters focus on our identity and calling in Christ and the riches which have been bestowed upon us by His grace. After laying down this basis there comes a transition, where we are exhorted to live in accordance with this calling (Ephesians 4:1). Chapter 5 gives a list of specifics we should examine regarding our lifestyle and behavior.

In our ministry to people from an Islamic background we put extra emphasis on this need for transformation by God's grace and it is a powerful witness to Muslims around them.

A Muslim husband and father shocked his family with his declaration, that he had concluded that Jesus wasn't just a prophet, but the Son of God and Savior of the world. Although his wife was distraught by this decision and was told by relatives to get a divorce from her traitor husband, she decided to give him some time to reconsider and to observe him. She was happy that the physical abuse from him ceased, but one day during a disagreement he lost control of himself and abused her with his words as usual and stomped out of the room. However, he returned a short time later to ask his wife and family to forgive him for his harsh words. His wife was speechless. In Islam, where the honor of a man is paramount, asking for forgiveness is extremely rare – and for a man to ask a woman for forgiveness is unheard of! This deeply touched her and convinced her of the transforming power of grace in Jesus Christ.

We are often the first and most convincing Bible translation which people read! (2 Corinthians 3:3)

**NEXT STEP ::** *Father in heaven, help me to be a good imitator of You today...in my family, my neighborhood, and in my work/business. May the aroma of Christ be a blessing to those that I see and interact with today. Give me boldness in talking about You today!*

*Contributed by Rocco Panepinto, REACH Partner — Germany*

# REFLECT

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## DAY 18 — INFLUENCE

# It's Hard Not To Complain

Philippians 2:14-16

In the movie Sherlock Holmes, Jude Law playing Dr. John Watson, says “I never complain! How am I complaining? When do I ever complain about you practicing the violin at three in the morning, or your mess, your lack of general hygiene, or the fact that you steal my clothes?” Like Watson, we often like to disguise it, but reading between the lines yields the fact that we all still can't resist complaining!

Paul asks the Philippians to do things without grumbling or complaining to show the world that there is something different about believers in Christ. We are a witness to the world, but what kind of witness is up to us. What kind of witness are you?

God changes us from the inside out which results in real change. It's not merely outward but comes from deep within. Whatever our past, God can change us. The Bible says we are new, and the old things have passed away (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are made new and if the temptation arises, God says it is not beyond our ability to conquer. He tells us, “No temptation has overtaken you except something common to mankind so He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God changes us, eases our grumbling nature, and gives us the strength to resist further temptation. His unmerited favor changes us from within—bringing us peace, contentment, making us a witness for Him—and helping us not to complain!

**NEXT STEP ::** *Have you caught yourself complaining or grumbling? How did you feel afterwards? Can you imagine Jesus complaining about something to you?*

*Dear God, I want to be free of grumbling and complaining. I want my character to be a witness to the world that they might see You and desire to accept You into their hearts. Help me to be a light to the world.*

*Contributed by Darryl One, Elder*

# REFLECT

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## DAY 19 — INFLUENCE

### It's No Sin To Be Wealthy

I Timothy 6:17-19

While I was preparing for ministry, I served a small rural church made up of people of modest means. They felt it was sinful to be wealthy, that wealthy people must somehow be dishonest and evil.

This idea is not Scriptural, however. Joseph was wealthy enough to have a sepulcher hewn out of stone. That Lydia dealt in purple suggests she was a person of means. In I Timothy 6:17-19, Paul doesn't scold the wealthy but reminds them of WHO owns the goods and what they are FOR!

The Bible says God provides for us and meets our needs. Psalm 23:1 and Philippians 4:19 assure us that God will supply everything we need according to His riches in Christ Jesus. In Proverbs 30:7-9, Solomon asks God to make him neither rich nor poor so that he will neither steal nor forget God's generosity. The Bible reminds us that faithful stewards needn't worry about their financial welfare, because God will provide. Our job is faithfulness.

Faithfulness sets us free to minister through our resources. Faithfulness makes the tithe much easier. Offerings above the tithe are a joy because we know that God blesses the generous with both happiness from meeting the needs of others, and continued blessing.

Proverbs 19:17 reminds us that when we are generous with the poor it is like lending money to God. Imagine the returns! It is no sin to be wealthy but remember who owns the goods.

**NEXT STEP ::** *God make us faithful stewards of the blessings You provide. Remind us to be generous.*

# REFLECT

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## DAY 20 — INFLUENCE

# Ananias Risked It All For God

Acts 9:1-22

Ananias was a devoted and well-respected Jewish follower of Jesus, who lived in Damascus, Syria. In a vision, Jesus spoke to Ananias and directed him to go and help a man from Tarsus named Saul (the same Saul who had been persecuting Christ followers). Ananias was instructed to go and lay hands on Saul so that the Lord might heal Saul's eyesight (Acts 9:10-12).

What would you do? Would you go, possibly risking your life and family to help such a man?

Ananias was reluctant to meet this enemy of the Christian church (Acts 9:13-14). Notice that Jesus did not assure Ananias that he would be safe if he obeyed. Ananias had an assignment. The Lord had great plans for Saul (later to be known as Paul), including suffering for the sake of the gospel. Imagine if Ananias had said, "Can you find someone else, Lord?"

Ananias risked it all. He put his life in the Lord's hands and obeyed. There will be times, situations, and struggles, where we will be called to put our full trust and faith in the Lord and obey Him. Ananias is an example of how to let our own love of the Lord work through us, despite our fears. God may ask us to be like Ananias in someone else's life by taking a risk and trusting the Lord.

**NEXT STEP ::** *The Lord is still looking for followers of Jesus like Ananias. The Lord is calling all of us to be a part of His kingdom work and to reach those who are far away from Him by telling others of Jesus' love and His sacrifice so that we might find eternal joy in Him (Romans 10:9-13).*

# REFLECT

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