EXTRA! Ideas for Adults – Set Apart: A Life Lived for God – Session 4

**Date: August 6, 2023**

**Set Apart in the Way We Think**

**The Point: Living for Christ changes the way we think.**

**Get Into the Study**

*As you discuss the opening question, share the following.*

Medical professionals in Europe are beginning to change their minds about the idea of helping children make gender transitions. Western nations have adopted laws over the past fifteen years allowing doctors to help minors attempt to alter their gender identity through medication and surgery. But now some doctors and scientists are saying, “Not so fast.” A July letter to *The Wall Street Journal* signed by twenty-one clinicians in nine European countries took issue with the claim that “gender-affirming care improves the well-being of transgender and gender-diverse people.”

“Every systematic review of evidence to date … has found the evidence for mental-health benefits of hormonal interventions for minors to be of low or very low certainty,” the researchers wrote. “By contrast, the risks are significant and include sterility, lifelong dependence on medication and the anguish of regret. For this reason, more and more European countries and international professional organizations now recommend psychotherapy rather than hormones and surgeries as the first line of treatment for gender-dysphoric youth.”

Sweden, Finland, and England all have limited access to hormone therapy for adolescents, reversing course from laws adopted over the past two decades. Indeed, everyone’s thinking, including the medical establishment’s, sometimes changes for the better.

* <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trans-gender-affirming-care-transition-hormone-surgery-evidence-c1961e27>
* <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/science/articles/finland-youth-gender-medicine>

**Study the Bible**

*Share the following after discussing Question 3.*

Changing our habits may not be as formulaic as once thought. In the 1960s, American plastic surgeon Maxwell Maltz famously said it takes twenty-one days to form a habit—a figure oft-cited in writings on spiritual disciplines. A 2021 study concluded that fifty-nine days is the average. Now, research published in May in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* concluded there is no magic number of days to create a habit.

“You may have heard that it takes about twenty-one days to form a habit, but that estimate was not based on any science,” said study coauthor Colin Creamer of the California Institute of Technology. “Our work supports the idea that the speed of habit formation differs according to the behavior in question and a variety of other factors.”

The new study used sophisticated computer systems to monitor tens of thousands of people who either were going to the gym or washing their hands for hospital jobs. Unlike previous habit research, this study relied on monitoring actual behavior rather than asking people to fill out surveys.

For those seeking to change spiritual habits and thinking, this research underscores the need for perseverance. Sometimes we just don’t know how long it will take to form the mind of Christ.

* <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hecparis/2023/06/08/new-scientific-evidence-points-to-wide-discrepancies-in-the-time-you-need-to-build-habits/?sh=408de8c47dea>
* <https://www.caltech.edu/about/news/no-magic-number-for-time-it-takes-to-form-habits>

*The week’s writer for Extra is David Roach. David is pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Saraland, Alabama. He and his wife Erin have three children.*

**Live It Out [Option from Adult Leader Guide, p. 122]**

Play [this worship song](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItiNS7BYBD0&t=216s&ab_channel=TommyWalkerMinistries) that helps inspire group members to sacrificial living and right thinking.

**Additional Questions**

**Icebreaker**

* Is it better to fit in with the crowd or to stand out from the crowd?
* Have you ever met a famous person who turned out to be very different than you thought they would be?
* When have you been surprised to have changed your mind about something?
* When have you learned something that changed your your way of thinking?
* What was something you believed as a kid that you later realized wasn't true?

**Romans 12:1-2**

* What does it look like practically to offer ourselves to be used by God?
* In what ways does following Christ make us counter-cultural today?
* What habits do we need to practice in order to change our thinking?
* What does a life transformed by Christ look like?
* What can we do to focus our thoughts on God?

**Romans 12:3-5**

* How does God's grace affect the way we see one another?
* What role do you see faith playing in how we see ourselves?
* How can we keep ourselves from thinking too highly of ourselves or too lowly?
* How can serving others help us grow in our love of Christ?

**Romans 12:9-13**

* Why can it be hard to be patient when we are suffering affliction?
* Why are patience and persistence necessary to demonstrate love for others?
* How do you think rejoicing in hope and being patient in tribulation display your love for God?
* How does our love of God inform our love others?
* In what ways do these verses represent a different way of thinking from what is typical in our culture?

**For Those in Your Group**

Send the following link to your group members as either a teaser before the group meets or as a follow-up thought:

[When Pride Becomes Your Own Worst Enemy](https://lynnhpryor.com/2023/07/24/when-pride-becomes-your-own-worst-enemy/)

**Magazine Article**

This article complements the study. Share this link with your group members.

* HomeLife - [Fear of the Lord](https://biblestudiesforlife.lifeway.com/set-apart-a-life-lived-for-god-session-4-searching-for-heroes/)