



Changing to become more like Jesus

Leader's version

For an hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – ask everyone how they are and how they feel about studying the Bible today.

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 Is there an area of your life that you find difficult to surrender to Jesus? What would need to happen for things to start to change?

Questions 1-3 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. Let the group work in pairs.

*1. **SDL** In what ways is salvation described? What change does this reflect in a person?

| | The Bible's description | Meaning |
|----------------------|--|--|
| 2 Corinthians 5 v 17 | <i>We are new creations</i> | <i>The old me has gone, I have been made new in Christ</i> |
| John 3 v 3 | <i>We are born again</i> | <i>We are spiritually reborn; we have a new life in Christ</i> |
| Romans 6 v 11 | <i>We are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus</i> | <i>We are spiritually alive, having previously been spiritually dead</i> |

*2. **SDL** Read Philippians 1 v 6. What is the 'good work' that God has begun in a believer?

Salvation

What do you think it means to say that God will 'carry it on to completion'?

God will carry on this work in our hearts and lives 'until the day of Christ Jesus' – until Jesus comes back, at which time the process of change will suddenly be complete. The Bible's word for this process of change is 'sanctification'. This refers to the process of being changed to become more like Christ in character, attitude, behaviour etc.

From this verse, who is doing the work of change in a believer?

God

*3. **SDL** Read 2 Timothy 2 v 22. In this verse, who is responsible for change in the behaviour of a believer?

The believer himself. God will not change us against our will.

*4. Read Romans 6 v 11-14. How should a believer live, knowing that they are spiritually alive?

We should count ourselves dead to sin. We should not let sin reign in us or obey the evil desires of sin; we should be actively avoiding sin.

*5. What are we told not to do, and why? (v13)

We should not use our bodies as 'instruments of wickedness', because we have been brought from death to life by Christ.

Being a Christian doesn't prevent us from sinning, but it makes us more aware of our sin and God gives us the strength to fight temptation. Remind them that our thoughts and attitudes need just as much attention as our actions.

6. What should we be doing with our bodies (v13), and what does this mean?

Offer yourself to God as 'an instrument of righteousness'. This means living for God and trying to live in obedience to Him in every area of life.

*7. Read Romans 6 v 14. What is grace and what does it mean to live 'under grace'?

Grace is the undeserved gift of forgiveness in Christ, and all that comes with that (being made right with God, eternal life etc).

When we trust and believe in Jesus, we live 'under grace'. Sin was previously our 'master', grace is our new 'master'. (Paul is using the imagery of master and slave, since this was commonplace in Roman society and everyone understood it).

8. Does the law (10 commandments) stop you from sinning?

No! The law (10 C's or the UK law) has no intrinsic power to stop us sinning. The 10 C's just show us that we are not good enough for God (because we can't keep them).

*9. Read Romans 6 v 15-18. Do Christians have permission to sin on the basis that we know we will be forgiven?

No. We are described as slaves to obedience; we have chosen a new master, Christ, and we are to be faithful to Him.

10. Read v17 again. What is the difference between obeying God from your heart and obeying His law in order to impress Him?

When we trust in Jesus, our heart is changed and change in behaviour stems from that. This is lasting change, out of love for God, knowing that we are already fully accepted in Christ.

When we obey God in order to impress Him, our behaviour may change but we do not become righteous.

*11. Read John 14 v 23-24. What is the connection between loving Jesus and obeying his teaching? Why is this the case?

If someone loves Jesus, he will obey Him, because he wants to live in a way that honours and pleases Him.

If we don't obey Jesus, it reflects our lack of love for Him.

*12. **STICKERS** How much does your behaviour reflect your love for Jesus?

No-one ever said being a Christian was easy! Do this exercise anonymously.

13. **STICKERS** On the basis of your answer to the last question, how do you think things might need to change in your life?

Keep it anonymous.

***Explain:** being a Christian doesn't stop with knowing you're forgiven and have eternal life. It's a life-long journey of growing to know Jesus Christ better. As we get to know God better and surrender everything to Him, our lives start to change under His influence. As we know God more, we grow to love Him more, and as we love Him more, we let Him have access to more areas of our lives. This means that He works in us to change us for the better! Thus, 'if anyone loves me,' says Jesus, 'he will obey my teaching.'

14. Read 2 Corinthians 5 v 17 again. What does 'the old has gone' mean? What, specifically, does it mean for your life?

The unforgiven man, who was separated from God, has gone, because he has been made right with God by the death and resurrection of Jesus on his behalf. We have changed inside. This will work itself out in how we think, behave, react etc.

Encourage the group to think of specific things in their lives that have gone now that they are believers (if they are believers).

15. What does 'the new has come' mean? What, specifically, does it mean in your life?

Try to identify positive changes in thoughts, behaviour, attitudes etc. since they put their faith in Jesus.

*16. Read Matthew 7 v 24-27. What is the difference between the two houses? (v25 & 27)

The houses are the same! The difference is the foundation – one is built on rock and stands up against the storm, the other is built on sand and falls down in the storm. The houses represent the lives of the two men, which may look the same but have different foundations.

The 'storm' is not the trials of life. If you look at the words used in the preceding passages, Jesus is talking about judgment, so He is in this parable too. v13 – destruction, v19 – fire, v23 – 'I never knew you', v27 – fell with a great crash.

*17. What's the difference between the two men and who they represent in the parable (v24 & 26)? Which do you think you are and why?

The wise man represents someone who hears Jesus' words and puts them into practice, the foolish man represents someone who hears Jesus' teaching but ignores it.

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Think about the wise and foolish men again. Are there any areas of your life where you know Jesus is talking to you about changes He'd like you to make, but you're not listening?

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Is there an area of your life in which you really want to be more obedient to God? Have you asked Him to help you to trust Him with this and will you allow Him to change you?

Check out – ask how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

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