

Life in Christ

BS #5

Perspective on this Bible study:

Work this through and put it into your own notes so you can teach it. This way you'll think through the flow, questions, etc. Furthermore, if you don't do this, you won't be able to offer personal stories and insight. There are a couple of places to tell your story . . . *you should share from your personal experience as much as possible.*

This lesson is pretty simple. After looking at HOW one comes to Christ, this lesson investigates what actually happens WHEN one becomes a Christian. In the lesson we look at 5 "results" of salvation but note that these 5 "results" do not receive equal treatment: the first one gets lengthy discussion but the fourth one doesn't even have one question asked about it. So, keep that in mind. At the end, we ask people to share which "part" of salvation is most meaningful to them personally. Be sure you leave time for this! It is GOOD for people in the group to verbalize what they are most grateful for about salvation.

The 5 "results" are **I. Forgiveness** Col 1:13, Lk 7:36-50; **II. Adoption** John 1:12; **III. Becoming a new creature** 2 Cor 5:17; **IV. Given God's Spirit** Eph 1:13-14; and **V. Eternal Life** John 5:24.

Also, it would be good to have someone share his or her story if you have someone who is ready. It really helps to have group members get involved in leading the group. But don't ask someone you aren't sure about!

As usual – have an **icebreaker** first.

EXPLORE

Overview and transition to this week:

The last couple of weeks we've talked about the heart of Christianity – the cross. We need Christ because we are hopelessly lost and enemies of God, by nature objects of wrath. We have not honored God or obeyed him. He has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. **When we realize all he's done for us we find him beautiful – he truly is more valuable to us than anything else.**

So far in this group we've talked about why we need Christ and our need to respond in faith. But we haven't talked about what happens when we come to Christ --*what actually happens when we become a Christian?*

Intro/Hook

Q Now if your high school friend e-mailed you and said, "Martha. Tonight I became a Tri-Delt" (or Sigma Chi for guys) what would you say has changed in your friend's life? What is different now that she is a Tri-Delt? (joined a group of friends, will socialize with them, be part of them, live with them, be recognized/known as a Tri-Delt, etc.)

Q Or, what if your roommate came in one night and said, "Tonight I became a communist (or feminist)." What do you think has changed in your friend's life? What is different now that he is a communist? (committed himself to a certain lifestyle, to propagating certain beliefs, he believes a certain way on economics or that state . . .)

Q We have categories for communists and sororities, but what if someone told you: “Tonight I became a Christian.” What does that mean? What is different in your friend’s life now?

(You can probe this question with several follow up questions. If someone says “his or her sins are forgiven” you can respond, “Great. Is that it?” If someone says, “Being a Christian means living a new way” you can respond, “Great. Is the essence of Christianity just a life style?” If someone says, “we become children of God” you can say, “Great. What else changes?” Develop the question as much as you think you need to SET UP the group lesson that follows.)

Refer back to diagram. Becoming a Christian involves trusting Christ or placing our faith in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. But as we’ve said all along, this is simply the beginning of the Christian life. *At that moment God does many things in the young believer. From that moment on the new believer is so blown away by the love and goodness of God that he or she follows Christ the rest of his or her life. In other words, it is important to understand some of the changes that occur in someone’s life when they come to Christ*

There are many, many changes that take place in someone’s life when they become a Christian. You all mentioned several of them just a few minutes ago. Tonight we will look briefly at 5 of them. It’s amazing what God does in a person’s life when they trust Christ!

GOING DEEPER

Have someone read Col 1:13

Q What terms or concepts does Paul use to describe salvation in this verse? (rescue, transfer into another kingdom, redemption, forgiveness). The most major fundamental change that occurs in a person when they come to Christ is that they are forgiven.

1. They are forgiven

Q Do you think about forgiveness much?

Q Why do you think this is the case? (I think most people, myself included, don’t think about it much. Why? Because we judge ourselves by other people and the world’s standards. By these standards we aren’t very guilty. But, if we woke up every morning thinking of the holiness of God, we’d rejoice in being forgiven all the time)

Q In Col 1:13 Paul says that we are “rescued.” Do think about being rescued much? Why do you think this is the case? (same as above. Our perception of ourselves is such that we don’t think we daily need rescuing)

Q Quite often on various TV shows they run rescue footage – floods, capsized boats, earthquakes, etc. The one rescued virtually always has immense gratitude and praise for the rescuers. We probably all

have seen footage of firemen rescuing people the day after 9/11. How do you think your life might be different if you woke up every day thinking, “Man, I’ve been rescued?”

Read Luke 7:36-50

Q What is Jesus’ point in these two stories? (You might have to help them. Help them see the structure – Jesus is anointed by a sinful woman. When questioned by the Pharisees he tells a short story about two men who have their debts canceled. Then he returns to the sinful woman issue. Jesus’ purpose is shown by the content of the short story that he used to make his point. The punch line is in vs. 42. This is reiterated in his summary in vs. 47. Jesus wants to show us that our love for God is tied to how much we recognize and appreciate the forgiveness of our sins. The man forgiven the greatest debt loved his master more. The sinful woman loved Christ more than the Pharisees because she appreciated what Christ had done for her more than the Pharisees)

Q Which phrase can you relate to more? – “forgiven little, loves little” – that is, your sense of being forgiven is little, so your love for God tends to be little, OR, “forgiven much, loves much” -- that is, you are regularly overwhelmed that God would forgive you and consequently, you love God greatly.

**Share your own story! Where are you . . . forgiven much, loves much? Forgiven little, loves little? Be REAL. Show your HEARTFELT appreciation for being forgiven!

Point to diagram. When the Christian life begins the Christian is forgiven. Gratitude for this fuels the Christian life – note Paul in Gal 2:20.

In a couple of weeks we’ll spend a whole week studying more about forgiveness.

Now, let’s hit a couple of other things that change – more briefly.

Have someone read John 1:12

2. They are adopted into God’s family

Q Just curious. Is anyone in here adopted? (Actually, you ALL are! We don’t think this way, but we should)

Q What happens when someone is adopted? (new name, new inheritance, new father, new family, new hope, etc.)

Q How might your life be different if you went around every day conscious of the fact that you were adopted?

(FEEL SPECIAL, KNOWING YOU WERE CHOSEN/ADOPTED, WANTED AND LOVED)

Have someone read 2 Cor 5:17

3. They are made new creatures

Q Paul says, “the old has gone, the new has come.” What do you think he means here? What “olds” have gone? What “news” have come? (obviously this is a wide-open question with many possible answers. Some of the “olds” that are gone would include our love for sin, our hatred toward God, our authority (self/world vs. God’s Word), our hope in ourselves, our addiction to sin, our focus, etc. “News” would include new life, new Spirit, new hope, new focus/purpose in life, new joy, new fruit, new family, etc.)

****Share personal story of old/new!***

Have someone read Eph 1:13-14

4. They are given God’s Spirit to indwell them

We’ll spend a couple of weeks on this later, but for now let’s just note that one of the radical things that changes when someone comes to Christ (point to diagram) is that he or she receives the Spirit of God – the very presence of God – in their life.

Have someone read John 5:24

5. They are given new (and eternal) life

Q What are the verb tenses here? (present)

Q According to this verse, when does a person cross over from death to life? (when they hear his word and believe Christ)

Q So, when do believers receive eternal life? (this is a tad tricky. According to John they receive it when they believe. This also agrees with verses like Romans 5:1. And this is the answer I expect from them.

(Theological Comment: Just so you’ll know: there is also a biblical focus on the hope that is before us – the receiving of eternal life in the future– found in verses like Matthew 19:29. Biblically, eternal life is inaugurated in the present – and fully realized in the future. You will find verses in the Bible that talk about us one day receiving eternal life. And you’ll find verses that say we have eternal life. It is the already/not yet tension found through the NT. Don’t confuse them with this. This is just so you won’t be surprised when you find verses like Matthew 19:29)

Application

Tonight we’ve looked at several changes that occur when someone becomes a Christian – their sins are forgiven, they have are adopted into a new family, they become new creatures, they receive God’s Spirit, and they receive eternal life.

Q Each of us is different, and each of us likely appreciates different aspects of what Christ has done for us. As we’ve talked about these great truths tonight, how would you complete this statement:

“CHRIST . . . I am most grateful to you that you have done _____ for me because I _____”

(Note: you should probably go first to provide an example. Answers will be along this line: “I am most grateful to Christ because he has forgiven me. No one knows my past. No one knows my thoughts. No one knows how undeserving I am. But He does and He has forgiven me.” You want to make this closing be a response to Christ....you can even call it “toasting Christ”)

Announcements