

Discussion Starter #1: What are some changes a person who truly knows Christ can expect to occur in his/her life?

Discussion Starter #2: What changes have occurred in your life since you came to know Christ?

Key Passage: “But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:20-24)

In Ephesians 4:20-24 Paul describes the change that takes place in a person’s life when they receive Christ and allow Him to take control of their life. In fact, one of the best evidences that you truly know Christ is that God will gradually change and conform you into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). If a person claims to follow Christ, yet they are living exactly as they did before they received Christ, that person needs to examine whether they are truly saved.

1. The changed life starts by learning Christ – that is, personally receiving Christ (v.20).

Paul uses a unique phrase “*learn Christ*” (v.20) to describe what it means to know Christ personally. Learning Christ means more than simply “learning about” Christ and knowing facts about Him; it means to experience Christ in such a personal way that your life is transformed by Him. An encounter with Christ is only the beginning of an eternal relationship with Him. But, if you have not entered into that personal relationship with Christ, you are not a Christian in the true sense of the word.

Discuss: If someone asked, “What do Christians mean when they say they *know* Christ?” how would you respond?

2. The changed life continues by being taught in Christ – that is, learning truth that is inherent in Christ (v.21).

Christ is the main theme of the Bible, so to be taught “*in him, as the truth is in Jesus*” (v.21) entails growing and maturing in your knowledge of all that Christ is: His person, His works, His glory, etc. John tells us that when Christ returns, we will instantly be changed into His likeness (1 John 3:2), but until that time we must be actively engaged in studying and being taught in Him. Peter tells us to “*grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 3:18).

Discuss: What are some truths you’ve have learned about Jesus that you didn’t know when you first became a Christian?

3. The changed life involves putting off your old self – that is, laying aside the old way of life we lived before we knew Christ (v.22).

When Christ died on the cross, we died with Him positionally, and when He rose from the dead, we were raised with Him. So now we are as good as already seated in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:6). But we must live out this truth in our daily life, which involves putting off everything that is associated with the old way we once lived before we knew Christ. Even though we are now in Christ, we still wrestle with the strong tug back toward the old life. But the good news is that we now have the power in Christ to say no to the old self – we do not have to give in to it!

Discuss: What are some practical ways a Christian can put off the old self (v.22)?

4. The changed life requires being renewed in your mind – that is, focusing and refocusing our thoughts on the Lord (v.23).

To live a changed life requires that we think thoughts that are in line with God’s truth as revealed in His Word. Our faith in Christ certainly affects our emotions, but it also affects our mind which affects our will. Any change that bypasses the mind will not last for long.

Discuss: How can a Christian go about being renewed in their mind?

5. The changed life necessitates putting on the new self – that is, putting our new way living for Christ into practice all the time (v.24).

Again, Paul emphasizes that we must make true in our daily experience and in every situation what is true of us positionally in Christ. This changed life is not something we have created by our own power; rather God is the creator the new self (v.24). Paul says the changed life is expressed through “*righteousness*” (right living) (v.24) and “*holiness*” (inner purity) (v.24).

Discuss: What are some practical ways a Christian can put on the new self (v.24)?

Discuss: Look back at the five descriptions that Paul gives of the changed life. Which of the five do feel you are strongest in today? Which of the five do you feel you need most improvement in today?

Discuss: How can living a changed life in Christ affect a marriage? A friendship? Relationships among members in a church?