

SMALL GROUP

THREE

INTRO

When you're a believer in Christ, your life looks different from the rest of the world. The things that are important to the world (things like status, power, and wealth) aren't necessarily your focus.

Scripture gives us a very clear picture of how our lives should look when they have been transformed by Jesus. This new existence is defined by knowing Christ (who He is, what He's about, and what He asks of us), and making Him known to everyone around us. We get a spotlight on our priorities and our faith that is expressed through our purpose and life.

Does your life look this way? Has your normal, everyday existence been radically changed by the Gospel?

Let's jump in and look at what's important to believers and how to live like a Christ-follower who has been fundamentally changed.

TRUE OR FALSE

There are some crazy customs in this world! Which ones below are true and which ones are false?



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GETTING STARTED

SCENARIO #1

It's rude to smell food in Tanzania. **True**

SCENARIO #2

In Thailand, you only use your fork to push your food onto your spoon, never to eat with. **True**

SCENARIO #3

In all places in the world, it's considered offensive to sit in the front seat of a cab. **False**

SCENARIO #4

The Nigerian Kogoro tribe prohibits their women from using spoons, so don't ever ask a woman for one. **True**

SCENARIO #5

Always stick your chopsticks in your rice when you're taking a rest during a meal in Japan. **False**

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DIGGING IN

WHAT'S THE DEAL?

Work with your group to discover how the Gospel impacts your life today.

"12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful." - Colossians 3:12-15

- Who are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved?

Anyone who is a believer in Christ.

- What do you think it means to have a compassionate heart?

The King James version translates "compassionate heart" to "bowels of mercy," or feeling merciful in your guts. Mention that in a world of mercilessness, we are called to be tender. It's the opposite of the way the world thinks we should operate.

- What do you think it means to be kind?

Answers will vary.

- What is the difference between humility, meekness, and patience?

Make the point that humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. Meekness is not a doormat, but a door holder. And patience is enduring hardships with joy.

- What do you think it means to bear with one another?

In follow-up to this question, ask students if they can think of examples where they did not "bear with one another"? Why was it difficult?

- What other points jump out in this text for you?

Answer will vary.

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

Think of a situation that you or someone you are close to has been through a difficult time. Write down the event that happened. How did you or they react? Why did that stick with you?

Answers will vary.

NOW ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- Remember James says to count it as "joy." What do you think joy means?

Joy is about hope. We may not FEEL joyful when tragedy strikes (parents divorce, friends abandon us, we don't make the team), but when we keep Christ as our center, we know that His ways are better, He is giving us a higher purpose, and we can trust that there is a plan in motion. We do not grieve (for any circumstance) like those without any hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

- Is joy different than happiness?

Answers will vary.

- Why do you think it's important for believers to know the difference between joy

If they struggle to answer this question, have them turn to John 16:33. Help them to understand that Jesus never told us we would have a problem-free life. But that with Christ, our troubles have purpose, and we can live with the understanding that joy in Christ is greater than all trials we may face.

- How will this new definition of "counting it joy" change the way you encounter hardship?

Answers will vary.

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WRAPPING UP

A NEW HEART AND ABUNDANT LIFE

Answer the questions below. You don't have to share them if you don't want to, so be open and honest with yourself.

- How has (or how could) God changed you inwardly?

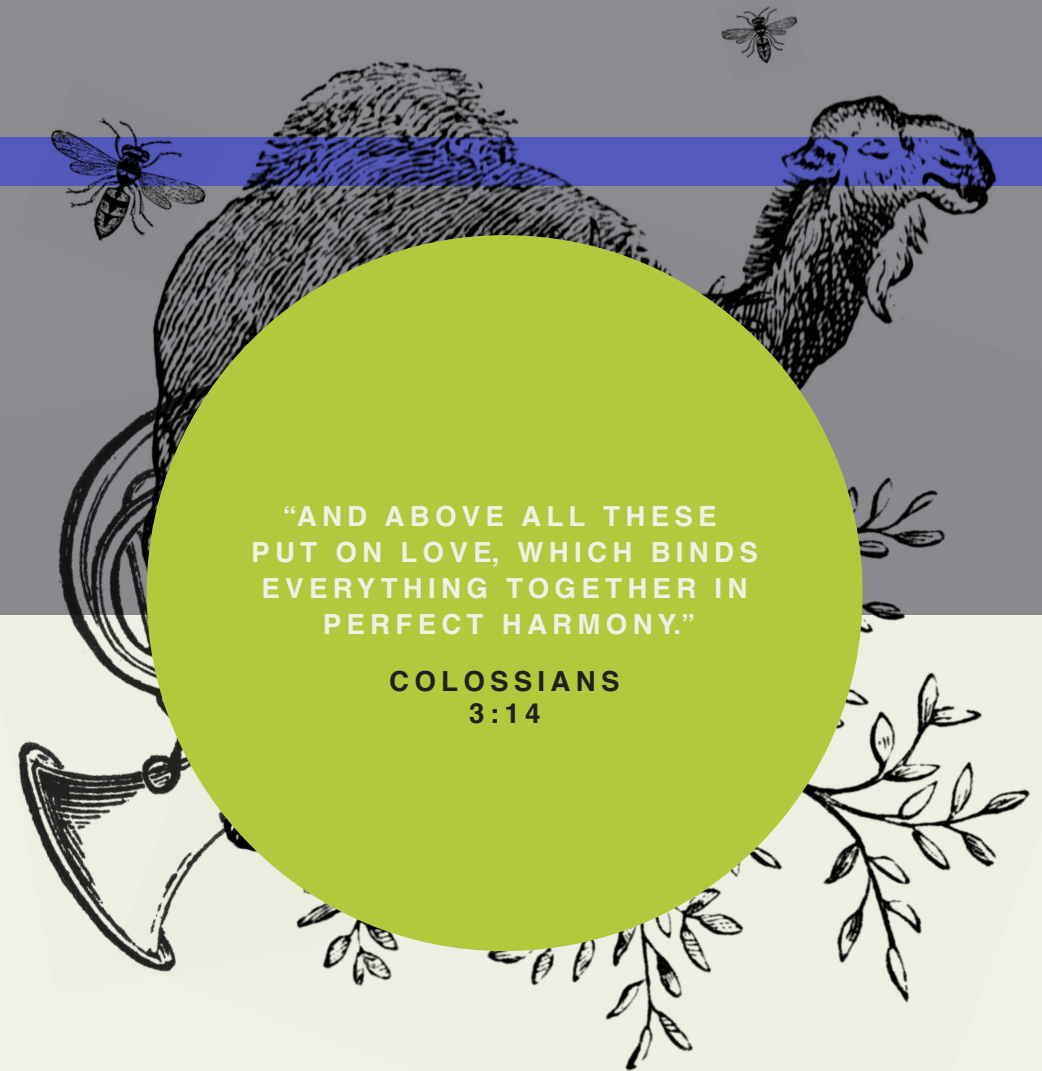
Answers will vary, here and following.

- How have you expressed that outwardly?
- How might God give your future trials and hardships in life new purpose with Him?

"Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself."

C.S. LEWIS

Take some time to write out a prayer, engaging with Him as He asks to come inside and transform your heart (or continue the work He's already begun).



**“AND ABOVE ALL THESE
PUT ON LOVE, WHICH BINDS
EVERYTHING TOGETHER IN
PERFECT HARMONY.”**

**COLOSSIANS
3:14**