

This Changes Everything

Session 2: How It Changed: The Revolutionary Power Of The Gospel

What We Want Students to Learn: That through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God made it possible for us to be once-and-for-all set free from the consequences of sin.

Main Scripture: Ephesians 1:7-10

Supplemental Scripture: Galatians 4:4-7; Romans 10:9-13

Session Snapshot: When Adam and Eve sinned, it didn't catch God off-guard or by surprise. God has always had a plan in motion, and it looks like this: you are loved. God has fought for you. And when Jesus comes into your life, you move from being a slave to the world and its emptiness to an heir with Him. When you come to saving faith in Jesus, you are adopted into grace through Jesus' death and resurrection: the old is gone and the new has come.

Bible Background

The Bible Background is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.

Teacher Prep Video

Each Small Group Leader's Guide comes with a *Teacher Prep Video*. These are simply short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

Your teacher prep videos are located in your download, under Small Group Lesson Plans. There is a sub-folder titled "Teacher Prep Videos" that will have a document for you. On the document, you should be able to click the link designated for the lesson you are currently on.

The Details

Who wrote this book?

The Apostle Paul wrote the letters to the Ephesians. Of course we know Paul as the one-time chief enemy of the Church. After his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul would go on to have a position of great importance in the early Church and beyond. He wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament.

When was it written?

Ephesians was probably written by Paul from prison in the latter years of his life, sometime around 60 or 61 AD.

What was the purpose for its writing?

Paul had a very close relationship with the church in Ephesus. It seems as if the motivation for the letter was simply that the church would know how he was faring in his imprisonment. But, true to form, Paul couldn't help but teach. The letter covers general teaching on the work of Christ to redeem believers, unity among believers, and how believers are supposed to conduct themselves.

The Main Point

The main point for this session is to help students see that Jesus was God's plan to free humankind from the consequences of sin. We want students to grasp the separation sin caused, and to see Jesus as the only means through which that separation is done away with. Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, sin and death were defeated. And it is possible, by God's grace through saving faith in Christ, to be freed from slavery from sin, and to in turn be welcomed into God's family as children.

The Takeaway

The takeaway for this lesson is to make sure students know where they are with God. The goal is for them to have a moment to evaluate their relationship with Jesus, and to have room to make whatever decision they need to make. For some, this will be a first time decision to follow Jesus. For others, this will be affirming a commitment they have already made, one that guides their daily lives. Others may want to reaffirm their commitment to Christ after realizing they have not been as committed to following Him as they could be. Still, others may not make a decision to follow after Christ at this time, but hopefully spend time considering what a saving relationship with Christ looks like. This lesson aims to provide room for each of these responses.

Lesson Plan

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: an introductory activity called *Getting Started*; the Bible study section called *Digging In*; and an application-focused segment called *Wrapping Up*.

Getting Started

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This lesson will utilize pages 16-21 in the *This Changes Everything* Student Book.
 - This activity will use page 17.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, encourage students to think of their favorite movie or book. Explain that if you wanted to, you could most likely point out a turning point in the movie or book, the point where everything changes. Explain to students that the same is true in our lives as well. There are simply moments where everything changes.

NEXT, instruct your students to turn to page 17 in their Student Books. Point out that there are five scenarios on the page, each describing a moment where everything changed. Explain to students that you want to have a little fun with these. Inform students that you'll take turns reading these and having students come up with the rest of the story, i.e., what happened after the moment that changed everything. Challenge students to be as creative as possible. Nothing is too outrageous. Have fun with this.

THEN, when you have finished, lead students in a short discussion. Ask something like:

- **While these might have been a little far-fetched, they may have hit close to home for some of us. Does anyone have a scenario they might want to share that felt a little like one of these? What was your moment that changed everything?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **We've all had cringe-worthy moments. We "make it or break it" by how we react in one of these moments. Who can tell me what I mean when I say that?**

- Answers will vary. But help students understand that the way we react in one of these turning point moments really impacts whether the story turns into a good one or a bad one. We can react the wrong way and make an embarrassing moment worse. Or we can play it cool, have a good laugh, and come out looking not-so-bad.

FINALLY, read or have a student read the session intro on page 16. When you've finished, ask if anyone has any thoughts or questions, then transition to the *Digging In* portion of your lesson.

Digging In

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize pages 18-19 in the *This Changes Everything* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - You'll want to make sure students have something to write with, and a Bible or Bible app.

FIRST, spend a moment reviewing what you learned in your first session. Ask students what stood out to them, or what they remember most. Use the bullet points below if you need help.

- **You looked at the origin story of humankind: how a loving God created humanity, how He provided for us in every way, and how the betrayal in the Garden separated us.**
- **You compared humankind's sinfulness vs. God's holiness on a big-picture level, and talked about how it relates to us personally.**
- **You talked about the posture to take concerning our sin, specifically, the idea of being brokenhearted by it.**

THEN, direct students' attention to the top of page 18, to the arrow connecting "God" and "People." Explain that this simple diagram is designed to show the relationship between God and humankind before sin. Ask for a few volunteers to think about what they know of the relationship God had with Adam and Eve in the Garden before sin entered the picture. Make sure you point out that God had a very real relationship with Adam and Eve. He was present in the Garden with them, personally. They talked. It was complete connection.

Then instruct students to draw a line on their page that represents a separation between God and people. Explain that this is what sin did to God and His creation. Before moving on, make sure you're all on the same page. Lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **Take a moment and write down how you would define sin in your own words.**
 - Answers will vary. Essentially sin is missing the mark. It's falling short of the standard of God's Word and His ways. It is rebellion. It is disobedience. And so on.
- **What are the consequences of sin?**
 - Answers will vary. Help students see that sin can negatively impact our daily lives. It also leads to spiritual death. But as much as anything, sin truly does create separation between God and us.
- **Now, consider question for a bit, maybe one you have never thought of before: Why are there consequences for our sin? Why couldn't God just ignore it?**
 - *Answer:* Allow students to think about this for a moment. Help them see that at His core, God is perfect in all His ways. That means He is perfectly holy. Because of this, our sin prohibits us from being able to be in relationship with God. His holiness means He literally can't tolerate our sin. He is also perfectly just. He must punish sin perfectly. If He allowed sin to go unpunished,

He wouldn't be perfect in His execution of justice. But there's also the idea that God is literally the one who gave all things life. He created us. And part of this creation is that we would live according to His ways. When we sin, we're in rebellion to the life-giver. He is perfectly within His rights to require death for punishment of sin.

Make sure students grasp the importance of this argument. Say something like:

- **We talked about some of this in our first session, but it's an important reminder. The biggest issue with the sin barrier between God and us? There is nothing we can do on our own to break it down. We're helpless to do anything in our power to minimize, reduce, or remove the barrier. But what we're going to see in this session is that God not only knew this, but went to amazing lengths to do what we couldn't do: provide a way for this barrier to be broken down.**

NEXT, explain that before you dig into what the Bible has to say about God's plan, you need to lay the groundwork first. There are some important concepts you need to make sure everyone is on the same page for. Specifically, you need to define three key words. Students will notice the words at the bottom of page 15. Work with students to define the words, first by asking for their definitions, then guiding them to define them correctly using the following answers:

- **Redeem:** To atone or make amends for; specifically, to save from sin.
- **Forgive:** To stop feeling anger or animosity toward someone; to cancel a debt.
- **Unite:** To bring together for a common purpose; to come together for a common goal.

THEN, instruct students to turn to page 19. Read or have a student read Ephesians 1:7-10. When you have finished, lead students in a short discussion. (Questions are listed in the book as a help for students.) Ask:

- **Look at verse 7. You just defined the word "redeem." Why did we need redeeming?**
 - *Answer:* Our sin had condemned us. Our sin earned for us death and separation from God.
- **What did Jesus redeem us from?**
 - *Answer:* The consequences of sin. We can be free from sin's power over us by trusting in Jesus for our salvation.
- **How did He do it?**
 - *Answer:* Jesus served as a sacrifice in our place by dying on the cross (that's what Paul means when he said "through his blood"). His life paid the penalty our sin deserved.
- **Verses 8-10 tell us that this was God's plan all along. What does verse 10 tell us is the purpose of God's plan to redeem us through Jesus' sacrifice?**
 - *Answer:* Part of the purpose for Jesus' death on the cross was to remove the penalty of sin in order that we might all be united with God, and with other Christ-followers.

Help students see exactly what is going on. Say something like:

- **The picture Paul is painting here is that our sins were literally carried away by Jesus. It's as if they never happened. Jesus' blood was paid in ransom, just like someone in the Roman world would have purchased the freedom of a slave. There were tens of millions of slaves in the Roman Empire. They were bought and sold like property. But sometimes, people would buy a slave and set him or her free. This is what Jesus did for us. Let's look at this concept from a little different angle to really drive the point home.**

NEXT, instruct students to look further down the page. Read or have a student read Galatians 4:4-7. Then, ask:

- **Verse 5 tells us of another purpose of God's plan to redeem us. What is it?**

- *Answer:* To adopt us as sons. Help your female students understand that Paul isn't speaking so much about gender here as he is about role. The picture Paul is painting is one where, through faith in Jesus, we are brought into the family of God with the rights and privileges of sons. Keep in mind that in the 1st century Jewish culture, the inheritance of a father's estate went through the sons. So Paul is talking more about the role God adopts us into. For God's sons and daughters, being adopted into God's family is about our place as His beloved children.
- **What does this say about God's great love for you?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **How does the fact that you can be adopted as a child of God change the way you see Jesus, and your faith in general?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

FINALLY, Help students understand that the wonderful news of the Gospel is that the power of sin can be undone. The separation and pain caused by sin and its effects is destroyed through the power of Jesus' death and resurrection. Say something like:

- **If we want to see our lives dramatically changed, there is an opportunity for us to do so. We simply have to respond to Jesus. Let's wrap up our time together by focusing on this truth.**

Transition to the *Wrapping Up* portion of the lesson.

Wrapping Up

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize page 20 in the *This Changes Everything* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, instruct students to turn to page 20. Read or have a student read Romans 10:9-13. When you are finished, explain to students what Paul is saying here. Say something like:

- **What we see here is the truth of the Gospel laid out for us in a pretty simple form. We know the consequences of sin disappear in our life. It's not by working hard. It's not by trying our best. It's by simple faith in Jesus. When place our trust in Jesus, believing He was who He said He was and that He did what He came to do, we are given salvation. Jesus' death counts on our behalf. God sees us as forgiven because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. And all it takes is faith in Christ.**

Explain to students that verses 11-13 paint a beautiful picture of assurance. When we come to faith in Jesus, we can know for sure that we are indeed saved. God doesn't give anyone preferential treatment, and salvation is for all who will believe. We simply must decide what we will do with Jesus.

THEN, make sure students are aware of the three ways to respond to Jesus as listed on page 24. Direct their attention to the three prompts there. Encourage students to find some space to get by themselves and to pro-

cess these questions, alone with God. Make yourself and any other adult volunteers available for any student who has questions.

FINALLY, once you have allowed students a chance to respond, make sure you follow up and process any decisions that were made in a way that is suitable for your group's personality and needs. Help students to understand the gravity of the change the Gospel necessitates in the lives of Believers. Say something like:

- **God gives us the amazing, wonderful, world-changing power of the Gospel freely. It is a gift. Given by a God who loves His children more than words can do justice to. God sought us out even when we were sinners. He sent Jesus so that we might know a relationship with Him. He did this because He loves us. Plain and simple. The truth is that the Gospel does indeed change everything about our lives. And it is an amazing change.**

Ask students if they have any questions or additional comments. Inform students of the devotions located on pages 38-45 in their Student Books. Provide them with a schedule or some structure as to when you would like for them to work through them.

If there are no more questions, close in prayer for your group.