

This Changes Everything

Session 3: How It Is: Walking In Newness Of Life

What We Want Students to Learn: That we live our lives in accordance with how Jesus has changed us.

Main Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17

Supporting Scripture: James 1:2-4, Ezekiel 36:26

Session Snapshot: How then shall we live? A transformed life in Christ means we aren't bound by the old ways of the world. When Jesus takes our heart of stone and gives us back a heart of flesh, that new heart comes with new purpose: to know Christ and make Him known. Our priorities come into focus and our faith is expressed through our purpose and life. We'll look at what's important to believers and how to live like a Christ-follower who has been fundamentally changed.

Bible Background

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

The Details

Who wrote this book?

The Apostle Paul identified himself as the author of Colossians.

When was it written?

Most people believe Colossians was written sometime between A.D. 61 and 63, during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:17-31).

What was the purpose for its writing?

Ultimately, this letter's purpose is to emphasize the supremacy of Christ over everything. Paul was writing to combat the spread of false teachings among the church at Colossae. The exact heresy being refuted is not certain and may have been a blend of multiple influences. The legalism, mysticism, and asceticism corrupting the pure faith in Colossae were moving attention away from Christ, placing it instead on self-discipline and the awe of other spiritual things.

The Main Point

The main point for this session is that Believers are called to live a life of faith, spurring us on to do good works for the Father as an outpouring of love. As followers of Christ, we are called to a standard of living in freedom from sin. Our lives should reflect the grace and mercy we've been shown through Jesus.

The Takeaway

Students will receive practical applications on how to live their lives as Believers. Scripture is very clear on what we should look like to the world, and that it's not a facade: it's a real positive consequence of having a deep and personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

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 24-29 in the *This Changes Everything* Student Book.
 - This activity will use page 25.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure students have something to write with.
 - If possible, you might want to have something for a small prize (candy, etc.)

FIRST, give your small group a chance to talk about what has happened so far. Then, have a volunteer read the Session 3 intro on page 24 of their Student Books.

NEXT, explain that you'd like to start off your time by talking about how people behave in different countries. Read out the following statements and have students write down on page 22 if they think the statement is true or false. You may want to choose to give the student(s) with the most correct answers a small prize. The answers are included below:

- **It's rude to smell food in Tanzania. (TRUE)**
- **In Thailand, you only use your fork to push your food onto your spoon, never to eat with. (TRUE)**
- **In all places in the world, it's considered offensive to sit in the front seat of a cab. (FALSE. In places like Australia and the Netherlands, it's rude to sit in the back seat of a cab!)**
- **The Nigerian Kogoro tribe prohibits their women from using spoons, so don't ever ask a woman for one. (TRUE)**
- **Always stick your chopsticks in your rice when you're taking a rest during a meal in Japan. (FALSE)**

NEXT, once the winner or winners have been chosen, lead students in a short discussion. Ask:

- **Why do you think it's important to stick to these rules when you're traveling?**
 - Answers will vary, but point out that it's considered polite to do so.
- **What rules do we have here in our country that might be strange to foreigners?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, explain that in this session, students will be learning what it means to live their lives as Christ-followers. And while it may at times look strange to the rest of the world, it doesn't change the fact that, as Christ-followers, this is what we're called to do!

If no one has any questions or further input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your lesson.

Digging In

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize pages 26-27 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, tell your small group that you'll be in the book of Colossians. Colossians was written by the apostle Paul and his assistant, Timothy. Paul wrote a lot of the books in the New Testament, and in all actuality, they were letters to different churches in the area. Say something like:

- **Paul was writing to the believers at the church of Colossae, reminding them what it looks like to be a Christ-follower.**

THEN, direct students' attention to page 26. Have them look up Colossians in their Bibles or Bible apps. When they've found it, read or have a student or students read Colossians 3:12-17. Then lead students through the discussion on page 26 under the "What's the Deal?" header. If they choose, they can write their answers down as you go. Ask:

- **Who are "God's chosen ones, holy and beloved"?**
 - *Answer:* Anyone who is a believer in Christ.
- **What do you think it means to have a "compassionate heart"?**
 - Answers will vary, but ask students to really dig deep here. It's not just about being nice. A fun note here: 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, but again, don't let them get away with an easy answer.
- **What is the difference between humility, meekness, and patience?**
 - Answers will vary, but 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"?**
 - Answers will vary. 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? Make a mention of the fact that this Scripture is intentional in that it specifically says to "bear with one another," not the false teachings or ideologies within the church.
- **What other points jump out in this text for you?**
 - Answers will vary.

When you've finished, say something like:

- **It's easy to look at this list of characteristics and assume that it's a checklist. That if you are patient, kind, humble, meek, compassionate, and loving, you're good to go. But you might notice that Paul doesn't separate these characteristics from Jesus. We aren't putting on these things to be nice or to be good: we're putting them on, Paul says, because we are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved. The reason we put these characteristics on is BECAUSE of Christ, because He has taken away our old selves and given us new selves. These characteristics are an outward expression of our inward change.**

NEXT, ask the following questions:

- **What does your old self look like?**
 - Answers will vary, but point them to the previous scriptures in chapter 3, verses 5-10.
- **Is it possible to have Jesus and not possess these characteristics?**
 - Answers will vary. Ask them why they answered how they did.
- **What do you think Paul means when he says for believers to “do everything in the name of the Lord?”**
 - Answers may vary.
- **Is living a life with the new self easier or harder than living a life with the old self? Why or why not?**
 - Answers may vary.

THEN, when you’ve finished, ask students to turn to James 1:2-4. While they are flipping, give them a little context. James, who was the brother of Jesus, wrote James. It was written to Jewish Christians. Have one of your students read the passage. Ask the following questions:

- **What does James mean by trials?**
 - *Answer:* Any test in life that challenges faith.
- **Why does James want us to “count it joy” when we face challenges?**
 - *Answer:* Because trials are meant to “produce steadfastness.”
- **What does this passage mean by steadfastness?**
 - Answers will vary, but can include patience and dependability.
- **What does this passage in James have to do with the passage that we just read in Colossians, especially Colossians 3:17?**
 - *Answer:* Jesus is calling us to put on the attributes of being a believer (Colossians 3:12-17) in every circumstance, whether it’s a time of peace or a time of trial.

NEXT, ask students about trials that they themselves face. If they are quiet or reluctant to share, open up with a trial that you or your family have encountered. Instruct students to turn to page 24 in their student books under the “Trials and Tribulations” section. Ask them to each recall a hard time they or someone they love has been through. Ask the following questions:

- **Remember James says to count it as “joy.” What do you think joy means?**
 - Answers will vary, but focus on the word “joy.” 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 and happiness?**
 - *Answer:* 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.

FINALLY, remind students that as Christ-followers, we are called to live a transformed life in Christ. This means that we aren’t bound by the old ways of the world. Say something like:

- **When Jesus takes over our heart, He gives us a new heart. This new heart comes with new purpose: to know Christ and make Him known. Our priorities come into focus and our faith is expressed**

through our purpose and life. As we wrap this section up, I want is to look at exactly why and how we can live like a Christ-follower who has been fundamentally changed.

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

Wrapping Up

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize page 28 in the *This Changes Everything* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, ask students to turn to page 28 in their Student Books, and also to find Ezekiel 36:26 and John 10:10 in their Bible or Bible apps. Have one of your students read these verses. Then direct their attention to their Student Book under the “A New Heart and Abundant Life” section. Say something like:

- **When we become Believers, God gives us a new heart, a heart of flesh. We become more like Christ inwardly, and there is an outward expression of that change. In a second, we’re going to split off by ourselves and take stock of our own heart. If you’re a Believer, how has God changed you inwardly? How have you expressed that outwardly? How has He given your trials purpose and meaning? If you’re not a Believer, allow yourself to consider how God might change you, how He might give your trials new purpose. No matter where you fall on the spectrum, Christ is in the business of true joy amidst trouble. He is in the business of changing you from the inside out.**

THEN, have students spread out and answer the prompts laid out on the “A New Heart and Abundant Life” section of their Student Books. When they are finished, ask the following questions:

- **Does anyone want to share what they wrote?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What does abundant life have to do with joy in trials, and the characteristics we discussed from Colossians?**
 - Answers will vary. Help students understand that these are the trademarks of abundant life, and that they all have roots in Jesus.

NEXT, explain to students that you’re going to give them a chance to respond to Jesus’s offer of abundant life. First, say something like:

- **We’ve talked a lot about what a life that is captained by Jesus should look like, and how Believers should respond to the world. And it may seem like Jesus is asking you to follow a checklist to be a Christ-follower. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus is beyond a checklist: He wants to make you new.**

THEN, have a student read the CS Lewis quote in the middle of the page. Explain that this activity is simply a way to think about their response to Jesus’s invitation to build something new in them. Below the quote, there is space for them to write a prayer. Invite them to use this time to think about their lives (whether they are Believers or not). Depending on your exact set-up, you’ll want to make sure that you are able to engage

with students who are making first time decisions for Christ, or have interest in having follow-up discussions afterward. Make sure you have adults ready and able to lead students in these types of discussions.

FINALLY, once students have had a chance to respond to Christ, leave them with a word of encouragement. Remind them that a new life in Christ means a new purpose and a new mission. Say something like:

- **When we become Believers, God takes our heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh. We are a totally new creation. We are not alone in working towards the outward expression of our inward faith. Christ has given us the power to live in the ways He's promised. Our lives reflect the hope of the Gospel to the world.**

Make sure you allow for a final word for those who may have made a first-time decision, or who are willing to engage in further conversation.

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.