

INTRO

Can you remember what you were like before you were a Christian? Some people have a dramatic story of not being a Christian – and then being a Christian. Other people gradually move closer to God. Both kinds of stories are amazing!

If you are a Christian, Jesus has begun a new work to change you to be more like him. God calls you a 'new creation'. Think of the Apostle Paul before he met with God and was changed from a murderer to an apostle. Now that is definitely a dramatic story!

In 1 Timothy 1:16, Paul says about himself that he was the worst of all sinners but God changed him.

1 Timothy 1:16 – 'But since I was worse than anyone else, God had mercy on me and let me be an example of the endless patience of Christ Jesus.'

NEW CREATION – 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

When we ask Jesus to change us, he takes our life and he changes us. Inside the deep part of us (called our 'spirit') God changes us. On the inside, we change to be like another creation.

'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!' (NIV)

'What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!' (NLT)

So when we become a Christian, God first changes us on the inside (our 'spirit') and then over time that change on the inside becomes more and more obvious on the outside. This is what the Bible calls being changed into the image of God. A bit like a photo, God puts his 'image' into us and then works that image 'out of us' to create an amazing God-like photo!

THE CHANGE FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW

Read Galatians 5:19-26.

As you read through these verses, get someone to act out all of these words as they are spoken – for example 'being drunk' your actor acts drunk. Don't go too far (!!) but it just adds an interesting twist so people can 'see' and hear the Bible!

Galatians 5:19-26

'When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin.'

Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.'

If you are a Christian, it's important to recognise that God is working in your life. He's already changed you in your Spirit but then he brings what he's done in you – out of you. But we can help God by letting him help us.

It's a bit like if someone is doing a tug of war. On your team is a really big guy. You can do one of three things: you can work with him, you can do nothing and let him do the work or you could even tug the rope the wrong way. When we talk about letting God work in our life, we're talking about being on the same 'tug-of-war' team as God and tugging the rope to help!

We do this by letting God shape us, by looking at our life to see how we are doing and by asking the Holy Spirit to show you areas where you need to change (Psalm 139.23). We can also thank God for what he's done for us and what he's going to do!

Titus 3:4-5

'God our Saviour showed us how good and kind he is. He saved us because of his mercy, and not because of any good things that we have done.'

WHO YOU ARE

As a Christian, it's good to know who you are because of what Jesus has done for you. Jesus has paid a great price for you – his blood, shed on the Cross. Goods are only worth what someone would pay for them. Jesus could not have paid a higher price for you – he gave his life so he could help you to be all that he made you to be.

1 Corinthians 6.19-20 – '...So you do not belong to yourselves. You were bought by God for a price. So honour God with your bodies'

1 John 3.1 – 'The Father has loved us so much that we are called children of God. And we really are his children'

Matt 12:46-50 – 'Anyone who obeys my Father in heaven is my sister and brother or father and mother.'

GOD'S HELP

Remember, that God has made us a new creation and that are to go on allowing Jesus to shape us and change us into his likeness (his 'image'). When we look at Jesus and the things he has called us to and look at ourselves and the ways we mess up, it can seem a bit hard to think we'll ever change or move forward with God.

But Jesus helps us...

Jesus showed us a great example and he is now able to really help us. Jesus also sent his Holy Spirit and gave us his Word to help, guide, encourage and correct us. (2 Timothy 3.16).

The Holy Spirit lives on the 'spirit' part of us and doesn't make us do anything – but he helps us to want to be more like Jesus. He also does amazing things for us and through us!

Hebrews 2:18

'Because he (Jesus) himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.'

Isaiah 41:10

'Don't be afraid. I am with you. Don't tremble with fear. I am your God. I will make you strong, as I protect you with my arm and give you victories.'

Joshua 1:9

'I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid and discouraged! I am the Lord your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go.'

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR 'NEW CREATION' PEOPLE!

Just before Roy Castle died of cancer (a famous TV presenter, musician and Christian in the UK), he had a vision of heaven. God showed him a beautiful garden in heaven. He said to his wife, 'hey I thought I was a good gardener but the garden in this vision was amazing with the most beautiful colours..'

Sometimes when we look around we see so much bad stuff and so much evil it can feel like we can't do anything to help. Then sometimes we lose hope and feel a bit down and unhappy. But God always wants to encourage us. One way that God does this is to give us the best life now – but also we know that one day we will be in heaven with God. Heaven is not going to be boring – it is going to be beyond your wildest dreams in a good way!

It's good to know that when we become a 'new creation' (when we say yes to Jesus) that we have a hope and we have a future – heaven. But what will heaven be like?

If you want some idea of heaven, look back to the Garden of Eden..

Genesis 1 – Perfection. Man and woman made in the image of God; all kinds of beautiful trees and fruit; rivers; precious stones, pure gold, rare perfumes; every kind of animal; a perfect place with man and woman in perfect harmony with God.

Or look forward to the future..

Revelation 21 – New heaven and a new earth; no tears; no death; no suffering; no crying; no pain; everything will be made new.

Can you imagine all this? Hopefully this will encourage you! God is at work in you to help you be like him, to be all that he made you to be, to do all that he made you to do and give you a future in heaven. With such good news, what's not to like? Why not share this good news with the people around you in your life too!