

**Campus Church of Christ Jail Ministry**  
**Teacher's Guide**  
**Series 1: Lesson #10**  
**"You Were Created to Become Like Christ", Part B**  
(from *The Purpose Driven Life*<sup>1</sup>)

(all **green** text is for the teacher)

**Preparation:**

Read the sections for Days 24-25 in *The Purpose Driven Life*.

1. Review the scripture references in the lesson and related passages in your Bible; there are too many to use in the class, so be selective.
2. Read through the teacher's version of the lesson; make notes / changes as desired.
3. Pick up the following from the Jail Ministry Table:
  1. attendance/prayer request sheets
  2. enough copies of lesson handout for the inmates in your pod (Remember, **don't** staple the pages.)
    - correspondence courses to give out to inmates who desire one
4. Other optional materials to bring:
  - White board marker and eraser
  - Sharpened pencils for inmates to use (be sure to collect all of them before they leave the room)

**Before and as students arrive:**

1. Welcome students and distribute student handouts
2. Make sure that any inmates who don't have a Bible know that they can fill out an inmate request form to get one that is provided to the jail by the church.
3. Pass the attendance roster / prayer request sheets around.
4. Always extend a greeting of encouragement and hope as inmates are arriving.
5. Open the class / lesson with a prayer.

**Focus points for this Lesson:**

(Main points to emphasize through the lesson and to summarize in conclusion. If white board and marker are available, as you conclude and summarize each point, write it on the board.

- The Truth of God's Word transforms us.
- The Spirit of God uses His Word to mold us into the image of Christ.
- To be healthy spiritually we must constantly "feed" on His Word.
- Feeding on His Word is called abiding. This includes three activities:
  1. We must accept the Bible as the ultimate authority in our lives.
  2. We must receive it, read it, research it, remember it and reflect on it.
  3. We must put what we learn in the Bible into practice in our lives.
- God has a purpose behind every problem in our lives. Our problems may be:
  1. Trials, designed by God to draw us near Him.
  2. Temptations, designed by the Devil to draw us away from God.
  3. Trespases, caused by the hurtful sins of others.
  4. Troubles, usually caused by our own sins.
- Everything that happens in our lives is *God-filtered*, and He uses it for our good.
- Everything that happens in our lives is permitted by God to help mold us into the image of Christ.

## “Created to Become Like Christ”

### Introduction

Do you remember in the last lesson we studied, that God wants to transform us into the image of Christ in much the same way He transforms a caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly? Do you recall learning that God has a part and we have a part in helping this transformation take place? Today we will learn how the truth of God’s Living Word, the Bible, can shape us into the character of Christ. We will also study how troubles in our lives can influence the change from a me-centered life to a God-centered life.

Our part in letting God transform us into the image of His son has several steps. Think of it as “the five R’s”! We must first (hold up one finger) receive God’s Word with an open attitude and heart and then (hold up second finger) read the Bible regularly. Next we must learn to really (hold up third finger) research, or study, what He is saying to us. After that we should start (hold up fourth finger) remembering, or memorizing, scripture so that it will take root in our hearts. Then we can (hold up fifth finger) reflect on it even when we don’t have a Bible handy.

Just as we need physical food to grow from babies into healthy adults, so do we need spiritual food to grow into spiritual adulthood. This lesson will teach us what it means to “feed” on the Word of Truth (the Bible) in order to fulfill God’s purpose for us to grow to look like Christ.

Babies first drink milk and later eat solid food as they grow into adulthood. Today’s lesson will show us how, as baby Christians, we will go through similar stages of “eating.”

To grow up, and be healthy spiritually, we must *abide* in God’s Word. This means that we accept His authority as the compass-point for our lives, that we fill our minds with it, (rather than just “snacking” on it), and that we put what we learn into practice in our lives.

In this lesson we will learn how God also uses life’s troubles, as strange as it first sounds, to help us develop the character of Christ. Although we mentioned this in the last lesson, in this one we will expand that idea.

God uses our problems to draw us closer to Him. They would not happen without His permission. Every problem we face has spiritual significance and is a character-building opportunity.

As we grow spiritually we will learn more and more how to respond to our problems as Jesus would, understanding they are truly for our own good. Soon we will even learn to rejoice, not *for* our problems, but while we are *in* them because we understand that there is a higher purpose and we trust God to keep His word!

We will be growing up spiritually when we refuse to give up, knowing we will achieve an eternal reward!

## **(Day 24)**

### **GOD WANTS US TO BE TRANSFORMED BY TRUTH**

(You also may want to review the Key Points Summary on the student handout before beginning this discussion, but the introductory remarks do offer a brief review of lesson 9, as well as an overview of lesson 10.)

We will grow spiritually when we allow the truth of God's word to replace lies we might have believed in our old lives.

*God's...gracious Word can make you into what He wants you to be and give you everything you could possibly need. Acts 20:32 (Msg.)*

God's Word is not like any other word. Everything exists, including us, because God spoke it into being. (**Genesis 1:26-27**) It is alive! God said, "*The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. John 6:63 (NASB)*" We also read, in **James 1:18**, these words, *God decided to give us life through the word of truth so we might be the most important of all the things He made.*

We should never take God's Word for granted, rather considering it to be as important as our daily food. It creates faith, frightens the Devil, produces change, builds character, transforms our circumstances, helps us to overcome adversity and brings wonderful joy! Job, an Old Testament character who was patient in many afflictions, said, *I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread. Job 23:12 (NIV)*

God's word is a spiritual four-course meal. Various Bible verses call it our milk, our bread, our solid food, and sweet dessert. If we don't want to suffer spiritual anorexia, we must "eat" of it daily. The Bible says, *Crave spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation. 1 Peter 2:2 (NIV)*

**Key Point: The truth of God's Word transforms us.**

### **Abiding in God's Word**

This feeding on the Word of God is called *abiding*. *If you abide in my Word then you are truly disciples of Mine. John 8:28 (NASB)* Abiding in Him includes 3 activities, and we will study each one. Try to write these down in your notes as we go along. There is space on the last page for notes.

1. Accepting the authority of Jesus.
2. Filling our minds with the Word.
3. Applying what we learn in our lives.

There are many influences or excuses for how we make our decisions besides looking to God. Often we rely on our culture for answers. This could include family, friends, what we see on TV, hear on the radio, read in magazines, etc. We look at what "everyone else is doing", and that is how we make our own decisions. Sometimes we've just been doing something a certain way for as long as we can remember so our decisions are based on tradition - "We've always done it like this." Sometimes we say, "It just feels right," or "It seems logical." Then we're letting emotions and rationalization guide our decisions. However, as we grow spiritually by feeding on His Word, we abide more and more in God and **accept His authority when making our decisions**. Before doing anything, we learn to ask, "What does the Bible say about this?" and "What is God's will regarding this?" God's way is perfect, and it will never lead us astray.

**2 Timothy 3:16(CEV):** *Everything in the scriptures is God's word. All of it is useful for teaching and helping people and for correcting them and showing them how to live.*

**Can you think of a time when you or someone you know used one of these excuses – culture, traditions, emotions, rationalization – as the basis for a decision that went in the wrong direction? What happened?** (Discussion and sharing: Without forcing the issue, perhaps you could gently lead them from thinking of "someone else" to sharing personal experiences that may have resulted in their being where they find themselves now.)

**Abiding in God's Word means that I must fill my mind with its truth.**

We can remember this as the "**Five R's**" mentioned in the introductory remarks: Try to fill in your blanks with the answers as we discuss them.

- (1) **Receiving** God's Word means that we have an open mind as we study the Bible. In the parable in **Matthew 13** the seeds represent God's Word, and the three types of ground represent three types of minds that received God's Word. It says that some seed fell on shallow soil, representing a superficial mind. Some fell on hard ground or on a closed mind. Other seed fell among weeds or on a distracted mind. The good soil represents a receptive mind and the result is that the seed grew and reproduced there. *Consider carefully how you listen*, we are warned in **Luke 8:18(NIV)**. We MUST be open to receiving God's Word.
- (2) **Reading** God's word for ourselves is a wonderful opportunity. For almost 2000 years only priests could read the Word. It helps keep us in God's voice range! If we read it 15 minutes each day, we can read it completely in one year. If we read instead of watching an hour of TV, we can read it all the way through four times a year! Having a reading schedule can help us stay on target. (To help you with this, we have provided a daily Bible reading plan at the end of your lesson packet.) Even the Kings of Old Testament Israel were told to keep a copy of the Word nearby. (See **Deuteronomy 17:19**)

- (3) **Researching**, or studying, the Bible is another way to abide in the Word. This means to take reading a step further. Studying the Bible means that we are actively involved in reading; we are thinking about what we are reading; asking questions as we read and jotting down the questions or other thoughts as we study. Remember in school when the teacher instructed to ask questions like Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? while reading in order to better comprehend the material? Just as asking those questions made us better students of literature or history back then, so does asking them make us better Bible students today! (See **James 1:25**)
- (4) **Remembering** is the fourth way we can fill our minds with the Bible. Memory is like a muscle in that the more we use it, the stronger it becomes. Reciting scripture *aloud*, or putting it on cards beside our beds so that we can say it over and over, will help us remember God's word. Jesus used memorized scripture to scare the devil away when He was tempted. (See **Matthew 4**) You can too!
- (5) **Reflection** is the last of the five R's. It means just to sit and think about God's Word, or meditate on it. This involves focused thinking, like we do when we worry. That is negative focus. If we want to focus positively, we can focus on the Word instead of our problems. We can think about Jesus, and we can remember King David, an Old Testament King. He was called *a man after God's own heart* (**Acts 13:22**), even though he had once killed a man after having an affair with the man's wife and getting her pregnant! (**2 Samuel 11**) (Nothing about sin is ever really new, is it?!) David repented of his sins, and he liked to reflect on God's word. In **Psalm 119:97** (NCV), David said, *How I love your teachings! I think about them all day long.*

**What a great God we have who loves us in spite of our past! Would anyone like to share how this verse is encouraging?** (Discussion. Lead back to the fact He spoke us into existence, made us in His image and forgives us when we ask, helping us "get past" our past mistakes to be molded more and more into the character of Jesus!)

**To abide in Christ, we must apply to our life what we have learned from receiving, reading, researching, remembering, and reflecting on His Word.**

The hardest step of all is to apply what we learn to our lives, but God says that we should become *doers*, not just *hearers* of the Word in **James 1:22 (KJV)**. Even the devil has no problem with this Bible study if all we ever do is discuss these ways of God, but never act on them! It can be hard, even painful, to make these changes, but the Bible says that we will be wise people when we apply His principles.

It is a great idea to write out an action plan of several ways we intend to be doers and not just hearers. An action plan should be *personal* (meaning it is just for me), *practical* (meaning it is possible for me to accomplish) and *provable* (meaning there is a deadline to compare where I am now to where I was when I started and to chart my improvement). Take the time now to jot down the three "P words" to help you form your *own* action plan. (Allow time for this.)

**A famous man, D.L. Moody, once said, "The Bible was not given to us to increase our knowledge but to change our lives." Based on our study tonight, what do you think this means?** (Lead them to see that this is the same thing as "application of what is learned." Lead in get them to brainstorm positive ways our lives CAN change with this in mind.)

**Verse to remember: John 8:31-32**

*If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed: and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.*

**From what things might one be set free?** (Responses and discussion: answers might include drug and/or alcohol addiction, anger, depression, etc.)

**Additional scriptures:**

Proverbs 30:5

1 Peter 2:2

John 13:17

John 17:17

Matthew 4:4

Timothy 3:17

Hebrew 4:12

Acts 7:38

1 Peter 1:23

1 Corinthians 3:2

Psalms 19:103

**(DAY 25)**

**WE WERE MADE TO BE TRANSFORMED BY TROUBLE**

Have you ever had troubles? Of course you have! It seems strange, but God has a purpose behind every one of them, using them to mold our character into one like Christ IF we will allow Him. (Emphasize that God has given us free will, so this is a choice we can make or not make.)

**Not all of our problems are big, but all of our problems are significant as a part of God's growing us up in Him.**

No one is immune to pain and heartache. Life really is just a series of problems. Some think that Christians do not or should not have trials. Think about this, "Even God's own son had BIG problems!" It was God's will that He should go through every problem and every sin struggle that humans suffer. That helps Him understand us. He was perfect, and we are not, but it is comforting to know that

my Savior understands my pain because He experienced the same problems. Even though He didn't have to do it, He went through his struggles to redeem each one of us. Having struggles is a part of living. Peter lets us know that having problems is normal. *Don't be bewildered or surprised when you go through fiery trials ahead, for this is no strange, unusual thing that is going to happen to you. 1 Peter 4:12 (LB)*

**Does this scripture surprise you? Can you think of some ways that people you have known have gotten stronger while going through hard time? How about you?** (Answer and discussion. This concept may be foreign to your students. Perhaps they thought accepting Christ might diminish suffering. This is a good time to, once again, reinforce the idea that suffering is easier to bear because God walks us through it right by our side and uses this means to grow us to spiritual maturity.)

The following passage in the Bible puts this idea into a heavenly perspective. *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)*

**Why do you think that the Apostle Paul, who suffered greatly in this life, would refer to his/our problems as only "light and momentary"?** (Discussion: If necessary lead the class to an understanding that Paul had a concept of the "big picture". He understood that this life and its troubles are just a moment in eternity.)

When we understand "the big picture" concept of life and eternity, we can better understand how God uses our problems to draw us closer to Him and to help us depend on Him, our Daddy - God, rather than on ourselves. In our darkest days, when we are sad and afraid, in pain or feeling abandoned, we can turn to God for help. In suffering, many first find God, because they are out of other options.

God could keep problems from happening, but He doesn't do that. Some great Bible examples of this concept are: Joseph, who He didn't keep out of jail ([Genesis 39:20-22](#)); Daniel, who had to face lions in their den. ([Daniel 6: 16-23](#)); Paul, who was shipwrecked three times. ([2 Corinthians 11:25](#)); and three Hebrew young men who were put into a fiery furnace. ([Daniel 3:1-26](#)) All were closer to God after these experiences. Time doesn't allow us to study their stories now, but they are listed on your study sheet. Hopefully you'll be encouraged by studying these stories this week!

Paul said, *We felt we were doomed to die and saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was for good, for then we put everything into the hands of God, who alone could save us. 2 Corinthians 1:9 (LB)*

**Have you ever felt totally powerless in a situation? Of course! We all have! Would anyone like to share a specific story?** (Allow time to discuss and end by adding the thought, "Isn't it great that in times like these we have an all-powerful God on our side, just waiting for us to ask Him for His help?")

No matter what the cause, none of our problems could happen without God's permission. The devil loves to cause us harm, but God can flip that and turn it into good! Rick Warren writes, "Accidents are just **incidents** in God's good plan for you." (pg. 195) God knew about every day of our lives before we were born, but He still allows us to make the choices and to take the consequences for wrong choices as well as the troubles that will build our character. (**Psalm 139:16**) The next part of our lesson shows us why everything that happens to us has a spiritual significance.

### **Understanding Romans 8:28 (NLT)**

*We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.*

Many people quote this verse, but they misunderstand its meaning. It does not mean that those of us who love God will have things work out like we want them to and that we will be happy all the time while here on earth. Let's dissect this passage piece by piece and see if we can discern its true message.

*We know* (absolutely understand, that God controls the universe) *that God causes* (our world has a Master plan, has a designer who never makes a mistake) *everything* (That's right, absolutely everything, no matter how bad we may think it is, even as bad as His own Son being crucified on a cross.) *to work together* (Our creator causes all the events of our life, not viewed separately, but working together, to be for our good. Just as each ingredient used in cake-baking is not tasty by itself, but the finished product is good, so is life in Christ when looked at as a whole, rather than as each separate and unique experience. Think about this! Tasted by itself, baking soda or baking powder is bitter. If it is not added to the cake, however, the cake would not rise into a lovely and delicious dessert. Similarly, without the bitter times in life we might not rise above them to taste and appreciate the sweet times. God is shaping our character during these tough times.) *for the good* (If we name our worst memory or fear, sin or mistake, we can be assured that God will make something good from it. Again, there's a lot of evil in life, but God flips it, looking at the good on the other side of anguish. Can you imagine how frustrating this must be to Satan? Some great Bible examples of this are the lives of Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba. The location of their stories in the Bible is on your study guide. At this time we will just mention that Tamar sexually seduced her own father-in-law, Rahab was a prostitute, and Bathsheba committed adultery with David. Nevertheless, each was listed in Jesus' family tree. What better examples for us to learn that the purpose God has for each of us is greater than our past sins or hurts?) *of those who love God* (This is the part of the verse many forget to read. The promises in this verse are for believers, those who really love God.) *and are called according to His purpose* (One of God's purposes for us, as we have learned in this part of our study, is to grow to look like Jesus. Our purpose must be God's purpose. Our will must be God's will, just like Jesus when, before He was crucified, said, "Father, Your will be done.")

So, in order to have the assurance of Romans 8:28-29, we must be **learning to respond to life as Jesus would**. This is quite a challenge! It is not a “given” that bad will turn into good, even for believers. It has everything to do with our attitudes toward the problem. As Rick Warren says, “Many people grow bitter, rather than better” (pg. 197) when hard times come. We must look to Jesus and try to approach these trials as He did:

- (1) We must **remember that God’s plan is good!** We must focus on His plan rather than our pain. *The plans I have for you (are) plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)* Two Biblical characters illustrate this, Joseph and Hezekiah. Hopefully you’ll want to know more about their stories as you study the “taking it further” exercises on your take home sheets.

Joseph’s brothers were afraid of him when he came to power in Egypt, because they had sold him into slavery. Later he said, *“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.” Genesis 50:20 (NIV)*

Hezekiah cried out to God because of a serious illness, but later he said, *‘It was for my own good that I had such hard times.’ Isaiah 38:17 (CEV)*

We must always remember that our troubles are temporary, but our reward for faithfulness is eternal.

- (2) **We should rejoice and give thanks**, not for our struggles but while we are *in* them! Only God could make such a thing possible, and only Jesus could do this so perfectly. *Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you. 1Thessalonians 5:13* He will come near us and help us endure trials, and we can rejoice in God’s power to do so. *Rejoice in the Lord always [Philippians 4:4 (NIV)]* means to be appreciative of His faithfulness to help us, not to be thankful we’re having troubles.
- (3) **Refuse to give up!** We must be both patient and persistent, recognizing that character-building in us takes time. When we have learned to say, “What do You want me to learn, rather than saying, “Why me?” we will be well on our way to spiritual maturity.

**Which of these three things that will help us respond to life like Jesus did do you feel is the most difficult to do?** (Repeat 1-3 above, allow discussion and recognize that all three need to become a part of our new lives, but we will grow at varying speeds and order, according to our individual personalities and life events.)

**Key Point: There is a purpose behind every problem.**

### **Question to Consider:**

**What problem in my own life has caused the greatest growth in me?**

(Teacher may want to share from personal experience and then allow discussion if students chose to share. If no response, ask them to be ready to answer this question privately on their own worksheet.)

### **Verse to remember: Romans 8:28 (NIV)**

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.*

### **Additional Scriptures:**

John 16:33

Psalms 34:18

Jeremiah 38:6

Psalms 139:16

Matthew 6:10

Matthew 1:1-16

Romans 5:3-4

1 Peter 1:7a

James 1:3

Hebrews 5:8-9

Hebrews 12:2a

Hebrews 11:26

1 Thessalonians 5:18

### **Conclusion:**

God uses both truth and trouble to transform us, His dear spiritual children, into the likeness of His precious Son.

To be transformed by truth, we must fill our lives with His Holy Word. As we receive it, read, research, remember, and reflect on it, we grow from spiritual babies into spiritual maturity. This is called *abiding*.

We must be doers, not just hearers, if we expect to grow up to be like Jesus. We should make an action plan for growth that is personal, practical, and provable! A good plan involves writing down our goals. As we make decisions, we should always ask, "What does God's Word say I should do?" or "Is this what Jesus would do?"

We have learned that God has a purpose behind every plan of man. Trials, temptations, trespasses, and troubles will come to all, even to Christians. All is permitted by God in order that we may become more like Jesus. He will be right beside us all the way. This plan of His to mold us into His Son's image will not be finished until we get to heaven. **James 1:12** gives us some encouragement for the difficult times in our life. *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

### **Closing the lesson / class:**

Close the lesson with a **prayer**

Offer the booklet, "**Am I Saved?**" to any who may want a copy.

Offer **correspondence course packets** to those who desire them.

Let inmates know that **if they desire to be baptized**, they should fill out an inmate request form on which they should indicate that they wish to be baptized by someone from Snellville Church of Christ. Invite them if there is time to stay and talk with you about this after the others leave.

### **Reference:**

<sup>1</sup>Warren, Rick. ***The Purpose Driven Life***. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

<sup>2</sup>Warren Rick. ***The Purpose Driven Life Prayer Journal***. Inspirio, 2002