

GROWTH & HEALING

SEVEN STEPS

A Weekly Guide For
Small Groups

by David Stiles

WEEK
3

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Week 3 – Discover New Life

The Mystery

For Christians there is a *mystery* that is disclosed in the Bible. As Paul says, it is “the *mystery* that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.” (Col. 1:26)

And here’s the mystery that was disclosed, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col.1:27). Or as Peter says, “You have been born anew” (I Peter 1:23). Christians, then, can experience a transformed life because they have the spirit of God within them.

The Lie

The myth, or lie that many people believe is that “I’ll never change.”

<p style="text-align: center;">Lie #3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“I’ll never change.”</p>
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You may have heard others say, as the musician Bruce Hornsby does in his song *The Way It Is*:

- “That’s just the way it is, some things will never change.”

Or,

- “I’ll change when my circumstances do.”

How would you complete the sentence,

“I won’t change because _____.”

The Truth

The truth, however, is that if we have trusted Christ to forgive our sins and have asked Him to be the Lord of our lives, we can be transformed by Him.

Week 3

Paul says that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 6:17).

According to Scripture, with God’s help we can:

- know God as a friend
- have “the fruit” of being connected with Him
- be free from the bonds of sin
- be incorporated into the Body of Christ
- be filled with the Holy Spirit who will give us insight and wisdom

Let’s look at each of these in detail:

Knowing God

Jesus said, “Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, famously, “Our Father who art in Heaven...”.

Jesus taught us that God is our father. We can come to him in prayer with our needs and concerns. He said,

- “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”
(Matthew 7:11)

Paul encouraged Christians to “grow in their knowledge of God.” (Col. 1:10) and said that we “did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you have received a Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Father”. (Romans 8:15)

Question for Discussion:

- How would you like to grow in your knowledge of God?

Friendship with God

As God’s new creations, Christians not only can know about God, but can know Him closely, as a friend. J.I. Packer calls it “truly staggering” that “God’s purpose in revelation is to make friends with us.” Packer continues, “That God made man to be His friend appears from the third chapter of Genesis, where we find God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, looking for Adam to join Him and share His company (Gen. 3:8). That, despite sin, God still wants human friends appears from Christ’s statement

Week 3

that God seeks true worshippers (John 4:23); for worship, the acknowledging of worth, is an activity of friendship at its highest.”

Question for Discussion:

- How would you like to grow in your friendship with God?

The Fruit

Because Christians are connected to Christ, our lives will begin to demonstrate this fact. Paul (in Galatians 5:22) describes this as the “Fruit of the Spirit” which he says is:

- love
- joy
- peace
- patience
- kindness
- goodness
- faithfulness
- gentleness
- self-control

Later, Paul tells Christians to, “clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience...and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” (Col. 3:12-14)

The Christian life then, is a life that has been and is being transformed; one that is no longer self-focused but one that is marked by love.

Jesus told his followers to “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.” (Luke 6:27)

Question for Discussion:

- Look at the list of the “fruit of the spirit”. Which area would you like to grow in? Why?

Freedom in Christ

As new creations, Christians will also experience freedom; freedom to live for Christ, freedom to be who God made us to be, and freedom from life-controlling issues as we are being “changed into his likeness”. (2 Cor. 3:18)

Week 3

Paul said that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17) and as G.K. Chesterton has written, “Christianity is a sword which separates and sets free.”

Richard Lovelace explains, “You are delivered from the bondages of sin through the power of the indwelling Christ...The power of sin to rule our lives has been *destroyed* in the cross of Christ; we have died with Christ, and have been raised up together with him in newness of him.”

Questions for Discussion:

- How have you experienced freedom in Christ?
- How would you like to grow in the freedom that Christ offers?

Step Three

That takes us to the third step in our journey to spiritual growth and personal healing, which is simply called, “Discover new life in Christ”.

<p style="text-align: center;">Step #3: Discover new life in Christ.</p>

We see from Scripture the thought, “I’ll never change” is a lie.

Part of the Body of Christ

As God’s new creation, Christians are *not* called to this spiritual journey on their own. Rather, they are called to be part of “the body of Christ” (the church) here on earth. In the Bible, Paul used the Greek word *koinonia* (fellowship) to describe the close relationship that exists between Christians and Christ as well as the type of relationship that can exist among Christians.

For Paul, the life of a Christian, then, is one of interdependence.

- “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (I Cor. 12:27)

Paul encouraged Christians to care for one another:

Week 3

- “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, honor one another among yourselves.” (Romans 12:10)
- “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” (Ephesians 4:2)
- “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” (I Corinthians 1:10)
- “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Gal. 6:2)

Questions for Discussion:

- How could you help others “in Christ”?

Filled with the Holy Spirit

You may wonder, “How can I do this? How can I live an unselfish life and live for God?”

The answer, we learn in Scripture is that it is not by our own efforts, but through the Holy Spirit.

In John 16, we read that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit because He was physically leaving the earth. The word Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit is *paraclete* which can be translated as our “Counselor”, “Advocate” and “Comforter” to help Christians and to reveal God’s truth.

In the Book of Acts, we can see that the first Christians were filled and “baptized” by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, however, was not just for the early Church. All Christians, we learn, are filled with the Holy Spirit and are to be “controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit.” (Romans 8:9)

The Holy Spirit “bears witness” to the Scriptures, helping us see the truthfulness of God’s written word. With the help of the Holy Spirit we can also focus on the presence of Christ today and see His work in our lives.

The Spirit will help us grow as God’s “new creation” and enable us to know God more through worship, prayer, reading and studying Scripture.

Week 3

If you're stuck on this step:

If you find that you're having difficulty in this area, the following prayer might reflect your thoughts and hopes.

Prayer

Lord, because I have trusted you to be my Lord and Savior, I know from Scripture that I am now a new creation. I ask that You would help me discover new life in You. Help me as I grow to know You as a friend. Help work in me the outward "fruit of the Spirit", and help me to grow in my relationship with others in Your church. Amen.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What about new life in Christ is encouraging to you?

2. Read the following words that describe who and what God is:
 - love
 - good
 - generous
 - kind
 - forgiving
 - trustworthy
 - compassionate
 - just
 - holy
 - all knowing
 - faithful
 - our creator
 - our sustainer
 - in control
 - unchanging
 - Jesus
 - the Holy Spirit

In what ways would you like to grow in your understanding of God?

Week 3

3. Read these Christian character traits. Which one or two would you like to grow in? Why?

Accountable	Hospitable	Persevering
Authentic	Humble	Prayerful
Caring	Identifies with Jesus	Pursues Excellence
Compassionate	In fellowship	Puts God first
Consistent	Integrity	Reliable
Content	Impartial	Repentant
Courageous	Joyful	Respectful
Dependable	Keeps Commitments	Sacrificial
Depends on God	Kind	Studies Scripture
Does not love money or possessions	Lacks bitterness	Self-controlled
Fair	Lacks envy	Selfless
Faithful	Lacks self-righteousness	Straightforward
Follower of God	Listens to God's word	Supportive
Full of Faith	Loving	Teachable
Generous	Loyal	Thankful
Gentle	Mature	Transparent
Helpful	Obedient	Trustworthy
Holy	Open to being changed by God's Word	Willing to Serve
Honest	Patient	Wise
Hopeful	Peaceful	Work ethic

