



YOU CAN CHANGE... ONE STEP AT A TIME

All true believers in Jesus will admit that they need to grow in Christ-likeness. Believers know that they have received a spiritual new birth (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 John 5:1) and are new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). They also know that, in spite of personal imperfections, they are securely enveloped in the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:9) and accepted by God only through the sacrifice of Jesus on their behalf (Titus 3:4-7). Resting on this foundational position of being “in Christ” (Romans 8:1), each believer is empowered by the Holy Spirit to grow in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18) by lovingly obeying God’s Word (John 14:15). This life-long process of spiritual growth, which is God at work within us (Philippians 2:13), moves a believer away from inherent self-centeredness to greater Christ-likeness in every aspect of life (Luke 9:23-24; Romans 6:22, 8:29; Ephesians 4:15-16).

Note: All verses referenced in this study are printed after its conclusion.

God, in His grace and power, mercifully completes some transforming changes in a believer’s life without any effort on the part of a believer. The most obvious example of this is one’s spiritual new birth. On the other hand, there are numerous guidelines and commands in the Bible for a believer to follow in order to be more like Christ (2 Timothy 3:16-17). These steps of biblical obedience produce lasting results only when a believer abides in Christ (John 15:5, 7; 10).

If you are a believer, the question is, “Do you really want to grow in Christ?” If your answer is an unqualified “yes” but you don’t know where to start or how to continue, consider the following practical and simple plan to make specific changes in your life. Take it one step at a time.

- Prayerfully consider what sins (stumbling block, persistent failure, self-centered characteristic) that God would have you overcome. This is what God’s Word tells you to “put off.” Next, consider what God wants you to start thinking, speaking, or doing instead. This is what the Bible tells you to “put on.” *If you are unsure of how to do this scriptural examination, a good starting point is 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, and a helpful exercise related to this passage is: [Are You a Loving Person? – The Love Test](#).*
- Get a pen/pencil and paper/card. Write down what you should stop doing (“put-off”) and what God wants you to do instead (“put-on”).
- Use a concordance or Bible dictionary – ask fellow believers for help if needed – and write down as many Scripture references as you can which deal with a specific sin that you are to “put off.” *For example, if you record “anger” as an area God wants to change in your life, you could note Ephesians 4:31 and James 1:19.*
- Then, write down the verse reference(s) that tell(s) what Scripture wants you to do (“put on”) instead. You will often find a Christ-like alternative (the “put-on”) to a specific sin (the “put-off”) in the same verse or passage in which a particular sin is mentioned. *For example, Ephesians 4:29 says “let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth” and then tells what to do instead, which is to speak “only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”*

Finally, read through the verse(s) you found and choose one that you can memorize. Write out the verse and carry it with you (in your purse or pocket) and review it throughout the day. Especially if you are tempted to sin, take out your card and recite your verse instead. See [The Easy Way to Memorize Scripture](#).

It would be helpful to share what you are working on with your spouse, parents, or a close friend. Ask them to hold you accountable to memorize the verse(s). It is important to link verses and their memorization to the change process to help you stay rooted in God’s Word and not follow your self-oriented thoughts and feelings (Isaiah 55:6-9; Psalm 119:11). When you memorize verses, you will also have the Word instantly available to help you rely on God’s strength (Colossians 1:11-12) and to find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Isaiah 55:6-9, Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Psalm 119:11, I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Colossians 1:11-12, May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Hebrews 4:16, Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The power of God's Word is available, so trust it to accomplish its purpose (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Psalm 19:7-11, Psalm 119:165).

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is breathed out (inspired) by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent (complete), equipped for every good work.

Psalm 19:7-11, The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul, the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸ the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹ the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. ¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Psalm 119:165, Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.

Here are some scriptural helps (certainly non-exhaustive) that address some character qualities that need to change in order for greater Christ-likeness to become evident.

- Anger – Ephesians 4:26, 31-32; James 1:19-20; Proverbs 15:1; 22:24; 29:11; 30:33; 1 Corinthians 13:5
- Stealing – Exodus 20:15; Matthew 19:18; Romans 13:9; Ephesians 4:28
- Cursing – Ephesians 4:29; James 1:19, 26; Proverbs 10:19; 21:23
- Lying – Ephesians 4:25; Proverbs 19:5, 9; Colossians 3:9
- Gossip – Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 11:13; 16:28; 20:19; 26:20; 2 Corinthians 12:20
- Bitterness (lack of forgiveness) – Matthew 5:23-24; Romans 12:18; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-13; 1 Peter 3:8-9
- Hatred – Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:35
- Greed – 1 Timothy 6:17; Psalms 24:1; Proverbs 3:9-10; Luke 12:33; 2 Corinthians 9:6-12
- Pride – Matthew 20:26-28; Philippians 2:3-4; 1 Peter 5:5-6
- Grumbling – Philippians 2:14; 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 18; Ephesians 5:20
- Worry – Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7
- Thought Life – Philippians 4:8-9; Colossians 3:2
- Addictive, detrimental habits – Romans 6:13; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 5:18

While you are to obey God's Word in order to grow in Christ (Philippians 2:12), always remember that it is God who transforms and conforms us to the likeness of His Son, Jesus (Philippians 2:13).

Philippians 2:12-13, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Verses referenced in the text of this article are listed below.

John 3:3, Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

1 Peter 1:3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1 John 5:1, Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:21, For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Philippians 3:9, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

Titus 3:4-7, But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Romans 8:1, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18, Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

John 14:15, If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Philippians 2:13, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Luke 9:23-24, And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”

Romans 6:22, But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

Romans 8:29, For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Ephesians 4:15-16, Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

John 15:7, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

John 15:10, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.”

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Other studies related to the subject of biblical change are:

[*Your Way or God’s Way ... Your Choice*](#)

[*The Habit that Makes You a People Helper*](#)

[*A Prayer Pattern to Help Structure Your Life*](#)

[*Is Dying to Self Really Necessary?*](#)

[*What Do You Believe? ... No, Really*](#)