

Changed 1.

- 1) What's a habit that you've changed or wish you could change?
- 2) What's something that has happened to you, that changed your life over the past 3 years?

All of us have changed. We are not solid, unmoving people. No, we're constantly moving and shaping and forming into slightly and sometimes massively different people. We're moving targets. "Oh, he's changed," or "she's not who she used to be" are common phrases to hear in casual conversation. Change is a fact of life. How you change, that's really up to one person: You.

The bible book Ephesians is really just a letter written to a changed and changing group of people. What makes the letter so powerful is why that group of people changed. They changed because they started following Jesus. To use the words Ephesians uses: They became adopted sons and daughters of God. There is probably nothing that forms who we are more than our family and the Ephesians just got a new family.

As you study this letter consider a few things: Following Jesus should change you. People changed by Jesus change the world around them. They make a difference. Change is a process we're always going through. You cannot go from A to Z in a week. It's a lifelong process.

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

"This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.

Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our

freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him."

3) What makes someTHING valuable?

4) Do you think of yourself as valuable? What makes someONE valuable?

5) Have you ever had someone invest in you (time, money, attention)? How did that change you?

6) Ephesians says that you were purchased and adopted at the high price of Jesus' blood. When you consider that, how does that modify the way you view yourself?

7) Is there anything else in these verses that sticks out to you?

Break

8) What's a change that's happened in someone else that you've been grateful for?

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

"Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly,

asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself."

9) Why does Paul (the author of this letter) thank God continuously for the Ephesians?

10) Have you ever said or thought, "They'll never change" or "I'll never change"? Why?

11) Change can be hard. Thankfully, when we follow Jesus, He's the one making the change possible. What hope do these verses give you?

12) According to Ephesians, what is the church? What's it filled with? What does that mean for you if you follow Jesus?

Reflection: Find something old this week that has been turned into something new. Think of the ways God has been doing that in you.

Prayer