

Changed 2.

- 1) What's something you've recently changed in your life that you wish you would have changed a long time ago?
- 2) Have you ever renovated something? What was that like?

Just like it's true that everyone is always changing, it's also true that because you've changed, you've created a life with its very own history. The easy way to say it is: You've got a past. Everyone does. Whatever you think of your past, if at some point in it you decided to follow Jesus, then your history has a stark shift that took place in it. At that point in your life you were transferred to a different kingdom. You were transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. You have always had the freedom of choice, but without choosing Jesus, none of your decisions could ever lead to life.

So, while you were always changing, none of your choices could ever change you how Jesus has. Once you take the leap, you are given a constant opportunity to allow Jesus to form you more and more into His likeness.

That's why, while many people become Christians and rightfully expect to spend eternity with God, not every Christian has allowed Jesus to change and shape them into the fullest and most mature version of themselves. That takes a constant willingness.

If you want to experience the life God has for you to its fullest extent, then you will need to allow Jesus to change you (Because that's how it works: Jesus changes us when we let Him; we don't change us).

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

"Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature.

By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from

the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

- 3) What does the phrase, 'the past is in the past' mean to you?
- 4) How does Jesus make the statement in question 3 more true than it would be without Him?
- 5) Why is it important that we can't take credit for being saved?
- 6) God calls you and all of us together (the church) His masterpiece. He says He's created us anew. If you follow Jesus, what have you noticed is 'new' about you?
- 7) What good things do you think God has in mind for you?

Break

- 8) What's something you've lost hope will happen in your future?

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

"Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. In those days you were living apart from Christ.

You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. For Christ himself has brought peace to us.

He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit."

9) What is life like without hope?

10) Jesus made two groups into one. He brought peace. How has Jesus changed your relationships? Have you made peace with anyone because of how Jesus has changed you?

11) When you think of citizenship, do you consider it more of a right or a privilege? How does that change the way you think of your citizenship in God's kingdom?

12) How has living with hope in what Jesus has done shaped you recently?

Reflection: Think of an old relationship that you wish was better. What would it take to bring peace to that relationship? Are you willing to follow Jesus and do something about it?

Prayer