

Christ Transforms

Big Idea: Jesus' ministry was all about change. We are all stuck in our sin and he came to change that, to bring us from death to life, from slaves to free, from dark to light. He wants to mold us into his own image.

Goals: That each student would...

- Realize that "Christ makes a difference"
- Describe how God has changed their life already
- Understand the end goal that God has for their life- conformed to Christ
- Identify an area of their life that God needs to change
- Consider what things are holding them back from change

Text: II Cor. 5:17

Practical Ideas:

- Pictionary Telephone- Instructions and supplies will be given during the training meal. This game can help connect with the idea of change and transformation.
- Student Spotlight- Pick a simple personal question and have each person in the group answer it.

Discussion:

- Read II Cor. 5:17
- What are some of your favorite stories from the Bible where God changed somebody's life?
- Describe the story of someone that you know where you saw God change their life?
- What is the biggest change you have seen in your life because of Christ (God)?
- Describe a characteristic of your life before it was changed by God?
- How would you describe what God wants you to be like?
- Why do you think change is so hard?
- What is one area of your life that you would like to see God work in this year?
- What do you think God would want our group to look like? What can you do to help make that happen?

Prayer Option:

Spend some time praying for change in each other's lives. Have each person pray specifically for the person to their right, either silent or out loud.

My Story

Big Idea: Groups are all about knowing others and being known. When we share our stories we invite people into our lives. As a group you will be able to see where God has been at work and encourage each other to keep moving and growing.

Goals: That each student would...

- Have a chance to share their story
- Be challenged to listen to and pursue the others in the group
- Recognize places in their life where God has been at work
- Understand that God is still at work in their life.

Text: God's work in kids lives

Leader Reflection:

- When did you first start to recognize that God was at work in your life? What helped you see this?
- How is God using your story to bring glory to Him?

Practical Ideas: (See attached sheet for instructions)

Option#1- Use one of the following methods to give the students a chance to share from their life.

This could spread over the next few weeks of group.

- Family Sculptures
- Life Wire
- My Life In a Bag

Option #2- Do an activity that will help your students get to know each other's names. Here are a couple of options:

- 4 on the couch
- Animal Name Game
- Mafia

Discussion Questions: (follow up questions to stories)

- Describe a time when you felt close to God.
- Who are you most like in your family? How do you see that?
- Who has made a significant impact in your life?
- What is one of your favorite memories growing up?
- If you had the day off of school what would you probably do?

John the Baptist

Big Idea: The purpose of John's life was to point to Christ. Even before he was born he had been chosen to prepare the way for Jesus and he faithfully lived out that mission throughout his life. His life wasn't glamorous (living in the wilderness, thrown in prison, beheaded), but he understood that his life was not about him but for the glory of Christ. The same is true for our lives. The purpose of our lives is to point to God and to bring him all the glory.

Goals: That each student would:

- Recognize the role that John the Baptist played in Christ's story
- Understand that our purpose is to bring glory to God
- Examine and consider the impact of their life (bringing glory to God or themselves)

Text: Luke 1:5-25, 57-66; Mark 1:1-8; Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:19-20; Mark 6:17-29; John 3:22-30

Leader Reflection:

- As you lead your group how can it become more about you than about God?
- What can you do actively to make your life and leadership reflect the statement, "He must become greater, I must become less." –John 3:30

Practical Ideas:

- Have everyone write down 1 year, 5 year and 10 year goals. Compare them with the statement "He must become greater, I must become less." Consider what is our motivation for these goals and what are we aiming at?

Discussion:

- Begin by reading through John's story (Luke 1:5-25,57-66; Mark 1:1-8; Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:19-20; Mark 6:17-29)
- What are some unique things about John's story?
- (Pick a part of the story) What would you be feeling if you were in his shoes?
- What was the purpose of John's life? What was the mission that God gave him even before he was born?
- John's life was not about him it was meant to point to Christ. Read John 3:22-30
- How did John's life live out the statement, "He must become greater, I must become less"?
- Does your life point to Christ? Give an example of where it does and where it doesn't.
- Do you think it would be hard to live out John's statement of "He must become greater, I must become less"? Why or why not?
- Describe a place in your life where you are stealing the glory from God and making it more about you.
- How could you use your life/talents/time to make God famous? What is something you could do this week?

Mary and Joseph

Big Idea: God gave Mary and Joseph a difficult challenge. By trusting and obeying God they would have to risk their families, their reputations and even their lives. They were faithful though and God used them to be the earthly parents of His son Jesus. When God calls us to do difficult things we need to be willing to trust Him and to faithfully obey.

Goals: That each student would:

- Understand the risks and challenges that Mary and Joseph faced
- Recognize the trust and faithful obedience demonstrated by Mary and Joseph
- Reflect on the results of faithful obedience in our lives
- Consider what risks may hold them back from obeying
- Be challenged to trust God and obey in their own lives

Text: Luke 1:26-56; Matt 1:18-25

Leader Reflection:

- Describe a time when you wondered if it was worth it to obey God.
- Who is someone in your life that you have seen demonstrate trust and faithful obedience?

Practical Ideas:

- Watch “The Nativity Story” and read the above texts as well as Luke 2. Compare the differences. What does this movie help you to understand better?

Discussion:

- Read Luke 1:26-56
- What do you think was going through Mary’s mind when the angel talked to her?
- What was her final response to the angel? What did this show about her heart?
- Do you think it would have been hard for you to trust like she did?
- Read Matt. 1:18-25
- What do you think was going through Joseph’s mind when he heard that Mary was pregnant?
- When the angel came and talked to Joseph how did he respond? What did that show about his heart?
- Do you think it would have been hard for you to trust like he did?
- What would have happened if either Mary or Joseph had decided not to trust and obey God?
- What happened because they did?
- Describe something difficult that you have had to do to trust and obey God?
- What are some things that can hold you back from choosing to obey God?
- How can we grow our trust in God? How can we practice obedience?

Peter

Big Idea: Peter's life had a lot of ups and downs. He was one of the 12 chosen disciples, but when Jesus was in his darkest hour, Peter denied him. But God does not deal with our failures as we would expect. Jesus comes back to Peter and offers him a second chance. God loves us in the midst of our brokenness and offers us the opportunity to come back from our mistakes and still be used by Him.

Goals: That each student would:

- See Peter's failure as a disciple and Christ's response to his failure
- See an example of God's grace
- Reflect on some of the failures from their own life
- Understand how God treats their failures
- Be challenged to run to God with their failures and accept his grace

Text: Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15-19 (this last passage takes place after Jesus has been resurrected)

Leader Reflection:

- How do you tend to feel/react when you know that you have failed God?
- Describe a time when you have been surprised by God's grace in your life.

Discussion:

- Read Mark 14:27-31 and Luke 22:54-62
- Do you think Peter truly believed in who Christ was before that he wouldn't deny Christ? What changed between then and now?
- What do you think Peter was feeling when he realized that he had done just what Christ predicted?
- Have you ever turned your back on God like this? What did you feel in that moment?
- How would you expect someone to react after being betrayed like Jesus was?
- God doesn't deal with our failures like we would expect. Read John 21:15-19.
- Why do you think Peter was hurt that Jesus asked him the question three times? Hint...How many times did Peter deny Christ?
- What does Jesus call Peter to do after each response?
- Instead of giving up on Peter, Jesus offers him a second chance to be faithful and follow Him. Later in Acts we read about Peter being used in amazing ways to build the church and point people to Christ.
- Describe a time when you have been surprised by God's grace.
- How can we run to God in the midst of our failures? Why is this difficult?

Rich Young Ruler

Big Idea: The Rich Young Ruler wanted eternal life with God, but wasn't willing to sacrifice. Jesus was showing him that God was not the most important thing in his life. If we are going to follow Christ then He must be central. Whatever sacrifice this requires we must be willing to make it, and any sacrifice for God is well worth it.

Goals: That each student would:

- Reflect on *and* understand the Rich Young Rulers struggle with Jesus' challenge
- See their own hearts in the Rich Young Rulers' struggle
- Be challenged to make/keep Christ central in their lives
- Understand that sacrifice demonstrates our commitment to Christ and our trust in Him

Text: Mark 10:17-22 (also Matt. 19:16-22 and Luke 18:18-23)

Leader Reflection:

- Where is it difficult for you to be willing to sacrifice for God? How is trust a part of that struggle?
- Why is it such a moment by moment struggle to keep God most important? How does this play out in your life?

Practical Ideas:

- Read through all three of the gospel accounts of this story and note the differences.
- Rewrite this story as if it were directed at your own struggle. (i.e. friends, sports, music...etc)

Discussion:

- Read Mark 10:17-22
- Do you think this man truly wanted to follow Christ? Why or Why not?
- What was most important in this young man's life? How can you see that?
- What is the lesson that Jesus draws out from this for the disciples in the next few verses?
- How have you seen yourself respond the way that the Rich Young Ruler did? Describe a time when you made something else more important than God?
- What are some things in your life that compete with God to be number one in your life?
- What does it look like if Christ is the most important thing in your life?
- What things can you do to fight to keep God number one in your life?
- Practicing sacrifice is a great way to test our hearts and demonstrate that God is most important. This may mean purposefully giving up money, time, possessions, comfort, or attention. It is not that these things are bad, but our willingness to let go shows that we believe God is more important.
- How can you practice sacrifice in your own life?

Thomas

Big Idea: Jesus met Thomas in the middle of his doubts. He came to him and was not angry or shaming. He just wanted Thomas to believe. God can handle our doubts as well. We should never let our doubts keep us from God. Instead we should bring our doubts to Him so that he can show us He is the One True God.

Goals: That each student would:

- See how Jesus handled Thomas' doubts
- Understand that they can bring their doubts to God without shame
- Reflect on some of the doubts that they may have about their faith
- Engage with the group as they look to God and the Bible for answers to their doubts

Text: John 20:24-29

Leader Reflection:

- What are some of the doubts that you have wrestled with?
- How do you tend to engage with people who are wrestling with doubts?

Practical Ideas:

- A week or two before, have the students write some doubts and questions that they have about Christianity and the Bible. Choose a couple to do a little research so that you can discuss them as a group and find some answers and encouragement.

Discussion:

- Read John 20:24-29
- Why do you think Thomas had trouble believing? Do you think you would have believed?
- How did Jesus answer Thomas? Act it out. What was Jesus' tone? Facial expression?
- How do you think God reacts when we are struggling with doubts?
- How did Thomas respond when Jesus showed himself to Thomas?
- What do you think Jesus would have done if Thomas still doubted after he appeared? Why would this have been different?
- God meets us in our doubts if we come to Him searching for answers. He may not give us all the details we want, but He will show us what we need to know. However, if we refuse to accept the answers that He gives we show that we are not really looking for the truth, but rather an excuse to go our own way.
- What are some doubts that you have struggled/are struggling with?
- What does it look like to bring those doubts to God? How do we find His answers?

Woman at the Well

Big Idea: When Jesus met the woman at the well he knew that she was searching for something in life. Nothing she had found could truly satisfy her and she always ended up thirsty again. Jesus helped her to see that He was the only thing that would truly satisfy. The same is true for us. We were created for a relationship with God and it is only through Jesus that we can be satisfied by Living Water to never thirst again.

Goals: That each student would:

- Understand that only God can satisfy because salvation is only found in Christ
- Have a clear understanding of the Gospel
- Express where they are at in their faith journey
- Consider what other things they may be looking for to satisfy their “thirst”
- Be called to take a step in following God through Christ

Text: John 4:1-26, 39-42

Leader Reflection:

- How can you see yourself in the woman at the well? What were you chasing after?
- When did you first start to discover that only God satisfies? How did that happen?

Practical Ideas:

- Explain the Bridge Illustration and have every person decide where to put themselves on the bridge and why.
- Bring in some drinks that the students can only have after the discussion is done. Use this to help draw out the ideas of thirst and satisfying.

Discussion:

- Where do you tend to look for satisfaction outside of God?
- What makes it hard for you to believe that only God can satisfy?
- Go back to the story of the woman at the well and think down the road 10 years...Describe her life with Christ and without Christ.
- What about you? Describe your life in 10 years with and without Christ. Which do you think you would be satisfied with?
- Have you ever accepted Christ’s gift of salvation? If so, tell how you came to that decision. If not, is there anything holding you back from making that decision?
- The closer we are to God the more we will be satisfied in Him. Do you feel like you are moving closer to God or further away? Why?
- What would the next step in your life look like to move closer to God and become fully satisfied in Him?

Zacchaeus

Big Idea: Zacchaeus' life took a U-turn when he met Christ. In response to God's grace Zacchaeus turned away from his sin and changed his life. This is how we are called to deal with the sin in our lives; to turn our backs on sin and obey. In addition we are called to show God's love and grace to those who seem the furthest from God since God's whole mission is to save sinners who need His grace. As we can see from the life of Zacchaeus God can turn any life around.

Goals: That each student would:

- Recognize the repentance that Zacchaeus demonstrated
- Understand what true repentance looks like (a 180 degree turn)
- Consider areas of their life that may require repentance or more complete repentance
- Be challenged to take God's grace to the lost around them

Text: Luke 19:1-10

Leader Reflection:

- How/where do you see incomplete repentance in your own life?
- Describe a time when God helped you to see your sin for what it truly was.

Discussion:

- Read Luke 19:1-10.
- Zacchaeus was obviously very eager to see Jesus. What do you think was driving him? What do you think he was hoping for?
- How did the people respond when Jesus pursued Zacchaeus? Have you ever responded like that?
- What did Zacchaeus get that these people had missed?
- What kind of person would Zacchaeus be comparable to today? What kind of person would people be surprised to see Jesus with?
- Where do you see yourself holding back from reaching out to lost people?
- What did Zacchaeus' response in vs. 8 show about his heart?
- What if Zacchaeus had said, "OK Lord, from now on I will try to do better?" How would that have been different?
- Zacchaeus' response shows full repentance (180 turn). He demonstrated it through his actions.
- How do you sometimes show a partial repentance? What might that look like?
- What are some areas in your life where you need to make a full 180?