

Courtesy of Eric Fish <http://erikfish.com/>

[pocket] Disciple guides you through seven experiences with Jesus. Do each experience over drinks or a meal with a group of friends. Following Jesus is best experienced with others.

First Experience [change]

GOAL – Open yourself to the kind of change Jesus spoke of.

“The kingdom of God is near! Change how you think and believe this good news.” – Jesus, Mark 1:14

CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

What are you thankful for this week?

What has been challenging for you recently?

A NEW KIND OF LIFE

Have you ever experienced a confusing or challenging situation when suddenly your perspective starts to change? Where there’s a moment you begin to see clearly and understand what action you should take? Jesus spoke a lot about change. When it comes to our lives, each of us can benefit from a fresh perspective in how we relate to God and the world around us. Whether you’ve been religious your whole life, or whether you’ve never really given much thought to spiritual matters, Jesus says anyone can experience a new kind of life through Him.

So, how can we experience the kind of change Jesus spoke of? What is this “Good News” of God’s Kingdom all about? Let’s start with a story about Jesus and his encounter with someone who was spiritually curious. Read and discuss together as you open your heart to experiencing Jesus in a new and meaningful way.

There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee.² After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. “Rabbi,”

he said, “we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you.”

³ Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

⁴ “What do you mean?” exclaimed Nicodemus. “How can an old man go back into his mother’s womb and be born again?”

⁵ Jesus replied, “I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.⁶ Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.⁷ So don’t be surprised when I say, ‘You must be born again.’⁸ The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.”

⁹ “How are these things possible?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ Jesus replied, “You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don’t understand these things?¹¹ I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won’t believe our testimony.¹² But if you don’t believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things?¹³ No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven.¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:1-17)

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What words or phrases caught your attention?

How did Jesus speak about change in this story?

What Good News do you see?

GOING DEEPER

¹⁰ He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.¹¹ He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.¹³ They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God (John 1:10-13, NLT).

What good news do you see in this passage?

¹⁰ The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life (John 10:10, NLT).

What good news do you see in this passage?

²² We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. ²³ For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard (Romans 3:22-23)

What good news do you see in this passage?

⁵ And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

⁶ When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good.⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.⁹ And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation.¹⁰ For since our friendship with God

was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son.¹¹ So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God (Romans 5:5-11)

What good news do you see in this passage?

⁹ If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved (Romans 10:9-10).

What good news do you see in this passage?

⁴ Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.⁵ 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 (Ephesians 1:4-5).

¹⁰ 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 (Ephesians 2:10).

What good news do you see in these passages?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

As simple as it sounds, this new beginning starts by changing your way of thinking (repenting) and believing the Good News of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Personally. Wholeheartedly. Unashamedly. Jesus is the one who works the change in us—we simply trust him to do it. You can experience it, no matter who you are or what you've done.

Do you want to open yourself to the kind of change Jesus spoke of?

Are you willing to repent and believe the Good News of Jesus?

When Jesus announced the arrival of God's Kingdom, his first instruction was, "Repent and believe this Good News." Repent literally means, "to change the way you think." Repentance is changing the way you think about God and your life—past, present, and future. Similar to how a

caterpillar goes through a metamorphosis as it changes into a butterfly, we can change internally, and become centered on following Jesus.

ACTION

You can pray something like this together: **“Jesus, I want today to be a new beginning for me—a metamorphosis, a change. I’m choosing today to change my way of thinking about you and believe the Good News of your Kingdom. I believe you are the Son of God who came to forgive me, restore my relationship with God the Father, and give me eternal life. Today, I become your disciple. I want to follow you and learn from you. I believe you came to earth, performed miracles, died, and came back to life. Thank you for the gift of eternal life you are giving me today. Thank you for forgiving me and healing me from every wrong thing I’ve ever done or experienced in my past. Thank you for the change you are beginning in me today. Lead me into the kind of life you have ahead for me.”**

If you took this step with Jesus, you made a great decision.

Congratulations! You might jot down the date and any other thoughts you’d like to remember.

GIVE IT AWAY

Sharing with others what you have received from God is the greatest blessing. Who do you know who needs to hear what you learned from God in this conversation?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

To read more on this topic, you can look up:

Luke 24

John 14:1-14

John 17:1-21

Acts 2:32-41

Acts 17:24-31

Romans 5

2 Corinthians 5:18-2

Ephesians 1 and 2

Colossians 1