

Main Passage: Romans 6:1-4

Supporting Passage: 2 Corinthians 5:17

Purpose: To understand that the foundation of discipleship is being totally transformed by our faith in Jesus.

Session Snapshot: Before we can talk about the definition of a disciple, which is the goal behind Be Disciples, we have to talk about the foundational truth that all disciples must have in common: disciples must be transformed by Jesus. As much as any writer in the New Testament, Paul used this language of transformation. In this first lesson, you'll look at Paul's words in Romans 6 about the transformation that happens when we're reborn as new believers in Jesus.

GETTING STARTED

Kick off your time together by introducing a new theme.

FIRST, explain to your group that they will be beginning a video series that looks at one aspect of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. This series will unpack the truth that to be a disciple, Christ must first transform us. Transformation through faith in the person and work of Jesus is the essential foundational component of discipleship. This 5-week study will guide men to understand exactly what this means.

If this is your first session as a group, consider introducing yourself, if necessary, and having the men in your group introduce themselves. If you want to pass around a contact sheet or do any other first-session "housekeeping tasks," this is the time to do it.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, as this is the first session, explain to the group how your time together will work. Explain that you will watch a video that is usually about 15 minutes long, followed by a short discussion of the video. Then, you'll spend a few minutes in Bible study, followed by a closing activity. Consider encouraging men to take notes as they watch the video. (Remember, a participant guide is available to you if you would like to distribute it to your group.)

THEN, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **Has your faith in Christ transformed you? In a minute or less, tell the story of how you came to saving faith in Christ.**

- Isn't it interesting that before they were known as Christians, those who believed in Jesus were known as disciples? How has the modern church seemed to reverse the order of these labels?
- Rick quoted author Dallas Willard when he said that we are guilty of selling the power of the Gospel too low. How have you seen people in the church do this very thing?
- Rick says that you can't say you've been transformed by Jesus and remain the way you were before Jesus. How have you seen this truth at work in your own life?
- How do we make sense of the fact that we still sin even though we've been transformed through faith in Christ?
- Rick asked, "Can you look into your life and see, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Jesus has totally transformed you?" How would you answer this question? Does any aspect of your life give you pause about the change Jesus had made in your life?

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **The most important thing we can do is know whether the foundation of our faith is where it should be. That's our goal as we move forward with our session.**

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at what it means to be transformed by our faith in Jesus Christ. As Rick stated in the video, there is nothing as transformative as the Gospel. In this session, you're going to begin to examine where we see this truth in Scripture.

One of our goals as we encounter God in His Word is to grow in our knowledge of the Bible. A major part of understanding the Bible is understanding the context in which we encounter a passage. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** Paul is the author of Romans.
- **Time frame:** Romans was probably written from Corinth in the winter of 56-57 AD.
- **Purpose:** Since the church in Rome had not received comprehensive theological teaching on salvation and other implications of following Christ, Paul wrote Romans to ensure a good understanding of such things. In addition, since many Jewish Christians were rejecting some of the new Gentile converts, it was essential that a level playing field be given to all Believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.

THEN, instruct your group to turn to Romans 6 if they haven't already. Explain that you're about to pick up right after Paul has finished a really powerful passage on life in Christ. Say something like:

- **Paul was comparing Adam and Jesus, more specifically, how through Adam, sin and death were passed along to all people, and through Christ, grace and life were made available to all who would believe. Paul calls the salvation Jesus offers us a "free gift" and goes further to say that Jesus' obedient death on the cross paved the way for justification to all who would come to Him in faith. Paul then talks about God's amazing grace and how limitless it is. But lest anyone misunderstand him, Paul begins chapter six by making a clarifying statement. That's where we will pick up.**

Read or have a volunteer read Romans 6:1-4. When they've finished, lead your group in a brief discussion. Ask something like the following:

- **In verse 1, Paul addresses a common misconception about the Gospel. What is the argument Paul is speaking against?**
 - *Answer:* Paul is speaking out against people, most likely his opponents, who said that his gospel couldn't be true because it would lead people to sin more. The idea is, of course, that the more a person sins, the more they "unlock" God's grace.
- **Paul answers this misconception in verse 2. But in doing so, he also makes an important statement about the identities of those who have been reborn by their faith in Christ. Let's unpack these one by one. First, how does Paul push back against those who said that our sin unlocks more of God's grace?**
 - *Answer:* Paul says that the fact that we who have been born again through faith in Jesus have "died to sin." It's impossible for us to live in it.
- **But, this statement also speaks to our identity in Christ. Just listen to the question Paul asks: "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" How does this question speak to our transformation as Christians?**
 - Answers will vary. But the simple truth is that our relationship with sin is forever changed by faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We cannot still "live" in sin if Jesus has saved us.

Explain that in verses three and four, Paul sees baptism as a metaphor of sorts, a word picture. In our current church culture, different denominations have different methods by which they baptize members. Some use immersion, others sprinkle. This isn't the place to debate the merits of the various methods. But when Paul was writing this, there was only one method of baptism practiced by the church: immersion. Say something like:

- **So for Paul, baptism by immersion painted a picture: when the person was lowered under the water, it was a picture of them dying and being buried. When they came out of the water, it was a picture of their resurrection from death to a new life. That is what Paul is picturing in verses three and four.**

NEXT, continue your discussion. Ask:

- **Scripture is extremely clear: baptism doesn't save someone from the penalty of their sins. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus. But again, Paul uses baptism to symbolize the change in us made possible by the Gospel. In verse 4, Paul paints a picture of the transformation that occurs when we come to saving faith. How does he describe this change?**
 - *Answer:* It is as if our old, sinful life was buried just like Jesus was. And just like Jesus rose from the dead, when we come to saving faith in Christ, we are given new life.
- **Paul uses this language a lot in his writings. In 2nd Corinthians 5:17, Paul says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." As we think about this new life as the foundation of our discipleship, how do we think about our old self and the old life God saved us from?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Paul says the old "us" is dead. In its place is something new. And yet, why is it so tempting for us as Christians to live as if we're still dragging around the carcass of our old selves? Why do we struggle so with our sinful nature?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **But the truth is that the old, sinful life we were saved from doesn't have power over us anymore. We have been set free from it. We are raised, as Paul says, to walk in the newness of life. We are new creations. How does this give you hope to live the life you long to live as a Christ-follower?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, remind men that the most important thing we can do is ask ourselves, “how does this teaching change me as a man”? Say something like:

- **As we begin this journey of discovering what it truly looks like to live as a disciple of Jesus, we have to make sure our foundation is good. How are we doing as Christians when it comes to living the transformed life? That’s what we’re going to close with.**

Ask if there are any questions and if there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group’s attention on the takeaways from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Ask for volunteers to share what THEY think the main application is of the passage you’ve just studied. You may ask something like:

- **How do we apply this call to live the new life of our transformation in Christ as 21st-century Christian men?**

Allow men to share their responses and discuss them as a group. If you choose, supplement their responses with the following takeaways:

- **Do you have any habits -- any practices, or attitudes -- that are holdovers from the old, dead life that God has saved you from?**
 - In other words, do you have any sin habits you are holding on to? What will it take for you to finally surrender those? As Paul said, “How can we who died to sin still live in it?”
- **Do you have questions about your transformed life?**
 - Maybe this lesson led you to ask the tough questions about your standing with God. There are many men in our churches today who have never truly surrendered their life to the lordship of Jesus. They have never made a faith declaration of faith in Christ and been truly transformed by the Holy Spirit. If this is you, or you have questions, don’t miss the chance to talk to someone in your church about this decision. It’s the most important decision you’ll ever make.
- **Maybe you’re walking in the newness of your life in Christ, but there are some aspects of your life where the “new” has worn off.**
 - What can you do to breathe new life back into your spiritual habits, your relationship with God, and your stewardship of those people whom God has given you influence over?

FINALLY, encourage men to continue to marinate on these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them and respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.