

Future HS | Old Self vs New Self

Beyond

Series Description:

Life is full of next steps you can't see yet — decisions, losses, callings, and seasons that feel uncertain. Beyond helps students step into the unseen future God is inviting them toward by anchoring them in Scripture and practical rhythms. Rooted in passages like James, Romans, 1 Peter, John, and Jeremiah, this series shows that hardship doesn't cancel God's plan — it refines faith, builds character, and produces hope. Each session moves from honest theology (God's sovereignty over the future; suffering as sanctifying) to short, usable practices (prayer, confession, faithful rhythms, community) so students learn to move forward even when the next thing is invisible. The goal is to turn anxious wondering into steady, forward-looking faith: students who expect God to be at work in today, who live toward his promises, and who practice spiritual habits that shape how they step into tomorrow.

Core Theology Insights:

Sovereignty, Sanctification, Incarnational Presence, Redemption, Active Faith

Emphasized Relationships:

God, Self, Others

Response:

Hopeful, persevering faith that moves toward God's promises.



Title

"Old Self vs New Self"

Scripture

2 Corinthians 5:17

Bottom Line

God doesn't just save you from something — He makes you into someone new.

Memory Verse

"But we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." – Romans 5: 3b-5

25 min

Teaching

5 min

Introduction (ME)

What You Need

No supplies needed

5 min

Tension (WE)

Leader Note:

Before you read or teach this section, share a short, honest story from your own life about a time you were carrying too much (stress, family pressure, anxiety, grief, burnout) and finally admitted you needed help. The goal is to model vulnerability and show students that even leaders hit a point where they can't hold everything alone. Keep it real and age-appropriate.

After you share, you can say something like, "Here's an example of the kind of story I mean," and then use or adapt the story below. The following story is pulled from this week's video. You can also choose to play the video provided.

Every single year, professional sports teams spend millions of dollars drafting rookies. They scout them, interview them, test them, and then hand them contracts worth more money than most of us will ever see. The moment a rookie joins a professional team, the coaches don't say, "Great job newbie, just keep playing exactly like you did in high school." Actually, they do the opposite.

They tell them things like: "That worked before, but it won't work here." "You can't train like that anymore." "You can't react like that anymore." "You can't live like that anymore."

You've got the same athlete. Same talent. Same body. But they expect a different way of thinking, training, and living.

Why? Because stepping into a new level requires leaving the old version behind.

A lot of rookies don't fail because they aren't talented enough. They fail because they can't let go of the old habits that helped them survive at a lower level. The ego, selfishness, shortcuts. The "I've always done it this way" mindset.

Now pause for a second. That same tension shows up in real life all the time. Especially right now, when you're on the cusp of full-blown adulthood.

There's a version of you that knows how to keep acting like a kid. And there's a grown-up version of you that God is calling you to become. There's an *old self* that reacts, protects, proves, and grabs attention. And there's a *new self* that's growing, learning, and becoming more like Jesus.

Today, we're going to talk about what the Bible says happens when someone is *in Christ*.

They're *made new*.

Here's the problem, though. Most of us live stuck in between those two versions of ourselves. We know there's an "old me" that keeps showing

What You Need

No supplies needed

5 min

Truth (GOD)**What You Need**

No supplies needed

up, and we know there's a "new me" we're supposed to be growing into, but the gap between them feels frustratingly familiar.

You've probably felt this. You say you want to change, but then you react the same way. You say you're done with certain habits, but you fall back into them. You tell yourself, "I'm not doing that again," and then ... you do. And after a while, it starts to feel like maybe this is just who you are. High school makes that tension worse. Your reputation sticks. Labels get assigned. The comments start showing up. And even if you want to grow and change, it can feel like everyone around you is still treating you like the old version.

So the thoughts creep in. Maybe I'll always struggle with this. Maybe God's tired of me. Maybe I believe in Jesus, but I'm still basically the same person. Maybe "new life" sounds good on paper, but real change feels out of reach.

The most dangerous part? When you start believing that your old self is your real self, you stop expecting transformation. You settle for behavior management instead of heart change. You try harder, feel guilty, promise better, repeat. And eventually, you wonder if Christianity is just about trying to be less bad instead of actually becoming someone new.

That tension matters. Because if Jesus doesn't actually make people new, then faith is just self-improvement with Bible verses. But if He does, then your past doesn't get the final word. And that's exactly what we need to talk about next.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV), Paul writes: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."*

I don't want us to skim over this verse. Let's lean into every part because Paul is not being poetic. He's being definitive.

First, Paul says, *"If anyone."*

Not if you grew up in church. Not if you've never messed up. Not if you've got your act together. *Anyone.* No one is disqualified from being made new.

Then he says, *"in Christ."*

That matters because this isn't about trying harder or fixing yourself. A new identity doesn't come from effort. It comes from a relationship. Being *"in Christ"* means your life is connected to His life. Like stepping into a new pair of shoes, they're a part of you. Where you are, they are. What's true of Him starts becoming true of you.

Next, Paul says, *"new creation."*

Not improved. Not upgraded. Not *"same you with better habits."* New creation means something brand new has begun. God isn't just cleaning up your past. He's doing a work of re-creation on the inside.

And then Paul says, *"The old has passed away; the new has come."*

That doesn't mean old habits instantly disappear or that struggle is gone forever. It means the old self no longer owns you. Old patterns might still try to speak, but they don't get the final word. Your past might explain you, but it doesn't define you.

Here's what that means practically. When you're in Christ, your identity changes and the behavior follows. You don't become new because you

5 min

Application (YOU)

What You Need

No supplies needed

start acting better. You are *made new*. And now start learning to live differently because God has given you the grace to do so. Throughout the Bible, this is how God works. The old self is laid down, and something new is raised up. It's death and resurrection language. The old life doesn't get polished. It gets replaced. And the new life grows as you learn to walk in it.

If you believe your old self is your real self, you'll keep living like it. If you believe your past defines you, you'll keep repeating it. But if you believe what Scripture says, that in Christ you are made new, then shame loses its grip, and habits stop having the final word.

The gospel is not "try harder to stop being bad." The gospel is "you are no longer who you were, so learn to live like who you are now."

That's the truth. And once you understand it, it changes how you fight old habits, how you handle shame, and how you see yourself when you mess up.

So if this is true, if Jesus actually makes people new, then here's the question that matters most: Which version of you is calling the shots right now?

Because even though the old self no longer owns you, it still tries to talk like it does. Old habits don't disappear overnight. Old reactions still show up. Old thought patterns still try to take over. And the moment you forget who you are in Christ, the old self steps right back into the driver's seat. This struggle is actually a spiritual one. Galatians 5:17 (ESV) says: *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*

Your old self, your flesh, is fighting against your new self, your spirit! If you have a phone, open your Notes app. If you don't, grab a paper and pencil, or just do this in your head.

Title one section: OLD SELF. Under that, write a few things that honestly describe patterns or attitudes you know don't look like Jesus. Not to shame yourself. Just to name them. Things like anger, selfishness, pride, insecurity, lying, needing attention, people-pleasing, bitterness, lust, jealousy, or whatever feels real for you.

Now title another section: NEW SELF. At the very top of that list, write these two words: "In Christ."

Because your new self doesn't start with what you do. It starts with who you are connected to.

Under that, write what Scripture says is true of you because of Jesus. Forgiven. Loved. Free. Growing. Chosen. Made new. Not finished yet, but no longer who you were.

Here's why this matters. When you mess up, the old self wants to say, "See? This is who you really are." But the truth says, "That's who you were, not who you are in Christ."

Friends, you *can't know these promises* if you don't read and know the BIBLE. Living as your new self has to mean prioritizing God's Word *every day*.

Living as a new creation doesn't mean you never struggle. It means you stop letting struggle define you.

5 min

Landing (ME)

What You Need

No supplies needed

So this week, when you feel pulled back into old patterns, don't just feel guilty. Pause. Remember. Open your Bible. Put God's promises in the note you made. And choose to live out of your new identity instead of your old habits.

Because Jesus didn't just forgive your past. He rewrote your future. And the more you live from who you are in Him, the more your life starts to reflect it.

You don't have to become someone new. In Christ, you already are.

The rookie athletes we talked about at the beginning, the ones who actually succeed, aren't the most talented. They're the ones who are willing to let go of who they used to be so they can grow into who they're becoming.

They don't stop being themselves. They stop living like the old version of themselves.

And that's exactly what Jesus does with us. He doesn't just save you from something. He makes you into someone new.

You're not defined by your worst moment. You're not trapped by your old habits. You're not stuck being the person you were last year, last month, or even last night. If you are in Christ, something new has already begun. That doesn't mean you'll never mess up again. It means failure doesn't get the final word. Grace does.

So when the old self shows up, and it will, you don't have to listen to it like it's in charge anymore. You remind yourself who you are in Christ.

You choose to live from your new identity, not your old patterns.

Because God didn't rescue you just to leave you halfway changed. He finished the work that started it all at the cross. And He's still working in you right now.

Let's pray.

Jesus, thank You that You don't leave us stuck in who we were. Thank You that in You we are made new. Help us recognize when the old self tries to take over, and give us the courage to live out of our new identity in You. Teach us to understand and love Your Word, so that we can daily return to it. We trust You with who we're becoming. Amen.

32 min

Groups

2 min

Think About This

What You Need

No supplies needed

The goal this week is to help students see that "in Christ" is not just a church phrase, it is a new identity. Their old patterns are real, but they are not final. In Jesus, they are already made new, and now they are learning to live like who they are.

Leader Tips

- This topic pokes at shame, regret, and "old self" patterns. Some students will joke their way through it. Others will go quiet. Both can be defense mechanisms. Your job is to create a calm, safe space where:
 - No one is pressured to confess details in front of the group.
 - Students are invited to name patterns (anger, hiding, people-pleasing) without having to share every story.
 - You gently separate *identity* from *behavior*: "That was something you did, not who you are in Christ."
 - You model the language of "old self vs new self" without sounding fake or hyper-spiritual.

If something serious comes up (self-harm, abuse, suicidal thoughts, current dangerous behavior), listen, thank them for sharing, and follow your church's safety / reporting process after group.

10 min

Discussion Questions (Core Questions)

What You Need

No supplies needed

(These hit the heart of the week's content.)

Quick check-in:

"On a scale of 1–10, how 'old self' did this week feel? 1 = 'totally holy, practically a monk,' 10 = 'I forgot I was a Christian by Tuesday.' Share your number and one sentence about why you picked it."

1. Start with a fast round of **"Would You Rather: Old Self Edition."** Ask a few of these and let students answer by pointing, standing, or raising hands:
 - Clap back immediately and regret it later OR stay quiet but replay the argument in your head for three days?
 - Ghost someone to avoid conflict OR say what you're thinking and accidentally start drama?
 - Pretend you don't care at all OR care way too much and hate that you do?

After a few rounds, ask: "Which one felt the most like you and why?"
2. When life gets stressful, are you more likely to talk it out, distract yourself, or pretend you're fine? Share a simple, non-embarrassing example from school, sports, or home.
3. What's one "old self" reaction you see a lot in people our age? Something like sarcasm, ghosting, flexing, shutting down, chasing attention, or always needing to be right.
4. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) out loud. When you hear "the old has gone, the new is here," what's your honest first reaction:
 - "That sounds awesome,"
 - "That sounds fake,"
 - "I want that but I don't feel it,"
 - or something else?
5. What's one situation where it feels hardest to believe you could actually be different: with family, friends, dating, school pressure, online, or with yourself?
6. If your "old self" had a catchphrase, what would it be? And if your "new self in Christ" had a catchphrase, what do you wish it would be?
7. Would you rather have people remember who you *used* to be forever, or risk changing and have people say "you're different now"? Why?

10 min

Discussion Questions (Dive Deep)

What You Need

No supplies needed

(These dig into the Bible, context, and theology in student language.)

1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) again slowly. Which word or phrase stands out most to you right now: "anyone," "in Christ," "new creation," "old has gone," or "new is here"? Why that one?
2. In real life, not just in church language, what do you think it means to be a "new creation"? What would someone actually notice if that was true about you?
3. If we are a "new creation" in Christ, why do you think we still struggle with old habits and sin? How does that tension show up in your week?
4. Talk about the difference between *shame* and *conviction*:
 - Shame says, "I am bad."
 - Conviction says, "I did something wrong."
How does knowing the difference help you respond when you mess up?
5. The teaching said your "old self" doesn't own you anymore, even though it still tries to talk. What's one old pattern (no details needed) that tries to convince you "this is just who you are"?
6. The lesson used two lists: OLD SELF and NEW SELF, with "In Christ" at the top of the new self list. If you made those lists privately, what are some words that might show up under each? Which "new self" word do you most want to believe is true of you?
7. How can regularly reading the Bible help you remember your *new* identity instead of only your *old* habits? What's one small, realistic way to actually start that this week?

10 min

Discussion Questions (Culture Questions)

What You Need

No supplies needed

(These connect the topic to real life and the world students live in.)

1. Our culture often says, "Just be your authentic self." How is that message both helpful *and* potentially dangerous if your "authentic self" is full of hurt, bad habits, or sin?
2. How do labels from school, social media, or your past ("the funny one," "the quiet one," "the troublemaker," "the church kid") fight against the identity Jesus gives you as a new creation?
3. When you try to change or grow, what does culture often do: cheer for you, drag up your past, ignore it, or assume it won't last? How does that impact your desire to actually live as someone new?
4. Have you ever seen someone genuinely change over time? How did people around them respond? Did they believe it, question it, or try to pull them back into who they used to be?
5. Online, how easy is it for someone's "old self" moment (a post, a comment, a screenshot) to define them forever? How is that different from the way Jesus treats our past?
6. Think about your week ahead. Where are you most likely to feel pulled back into "old self" mode (group chat, practice, certain class, certain person)? What's one practical thing you can do in that exact space to live more like your "new creation" identity?
7. If you believed, deep down, that in Christ you are already new and not defined by your worst moments, what is one thing you would do differently this week?

Resources

Teaching Outline

What You Need

No supplies needed

HS LESSON OUTLINE / Beyond / WK 3 2 Corinthians 5:17

Bottom Line: God is making you new

INTRO (ME)

- Pro sports rookies get drafted
- Same athlete, new expectations
- Old habits won't work at a new level.
- Many fail because they won't let go of the old.
- Parallel to life and faith
- Old self vs new self tension
- In Christ = stepping into something new

TENSION (WE)

- We live stuck between old and new.
- Want change but repeat patterns
- Habits, reactions, cycles feel familiar.
- High school labels make change harder.
- Thoughts creep in:
 - Maybe this is just who I am
 - Maybe God's tired of me
- Faith becomes behavior management.
- If Jesus doesn't make us new, faith is just self-help.

TRUTH (GOD)

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- "If anyone" = no disqualifications
-

"In Christ" = relationship, not effort

- "New creation" = not improved, made new
- Old self loses authority.
- Old habits may speak, but don't own you.
- Identity changes first, behavior follows
- Gospel = new life, not just better behavior
- Shame loses power when identity is secure.

APPLICATION (YOU)

- Question: Which self is leading right now?
- Old self still tries to drive
- Galatians 5:17 tension (flesh vs Spirit)
- Exercise:
 - OLD SELF: name real patterns
 - NEW SELF: start with "In Christ"
- New identity defined by Scripture
- When you mess up:
 - Pause
 - Remember who you are
 - Return to God's Word
- Live from identity, not guilt

LANDING (ME)

- Successful rookies release old versions.
- Jesus doesn't just forgive, He transforms.
- Past doesn't get final word.
- Failure doesn't define you, grace does.
- You don't become new, in Christ, you already are.

God is still working