
Following Jesus -- Course A

Instructions:

Please take all courses in order as listed on our home page (the computer will ask!). If you have not done all the lessons of previous courses, please [click here to go to the beginning](#).

If you have not already done so, save this lesson to your computer using the "save" feature of your browser or PDF reader. Then print out the lesson (or at least open it in your browser or PDF reader **offline** – not on the Internet). Read the lesson and **study in your Bible the passages indicated >>> Scripture <<<**. Following each passage, study each question that has a number enclosed in asterisks (*1*, *2*, etc.), and **write down your answers on paper**. Some questions include more than one number because they have more than one blank to fill in. ("Think" questions should be carefully considered for your own benefit, but your answers will not be submitted to us.) Please take your time, study each passage carefully, answer the questions honestly, and consider the applications to your own life (John 12:48; 2 Tim. 2:15).

When you have studied the whole lesson and written down answers to all the indicated questions, return to the menu for this course on our web site at www.BibleStudyLessons.com and click on the link for the **answer quiz** for this lesson (or simply click on the link at the end of this lesson). Follow the directions to submit your answers to us and receive your grade. You will then be given an opportunity to see the correct answers to the questions. Please save this lesson and the correct answers for future reference.

Then move on to the next lesson or the next course in order. **Please study all lessons in all courses in order as listed in the menus on our web site.**

Thank you for your interest, and God bless your study of His word.

How to Change Yourself Following Jesus, Course A, Lesson 1

Introduction:

Have you ever had difficulty trying to change a habit? Humans are creatures of habit. We tend to continue acting as we have in the past. Like a river flowing through a canyon, the longer a habit continues, the more deeply it becomes ingrained, and the harder it is to change. This is true of all habits, good or bad.

The importance of a habit depends on its consequences. Heroin use, for example, has far more serious consequences than biting fingernails. The most significant habits are those that have eternal consequences.

Ephesians 4:22–24 shows that major changes must occur when we are converted. Old practices and attitudes must be replaced by new ones. We must learn good habits like Bible study, prayer, attending church meetings, giving, teaching others, etc. We must also eliminate bad habits like foul language, uncontrolled temper, gambling, drugs, drinking, gossip, lying, pornography, sexual promiscuity, etc.

We need to know, not just **what** changes to make, but **how** to make them. Change does not come easily. Since the Scriptures provide us to all good works (2 Timothy 3:16,17), they give all the guidance we need. Let us study 12 specific, practical steps the Bible gives to show us how to change to become what God wants.

Step 1: Change Your Purpose in Life.

Why is motivation important? Is a sound sleeper more likely to get up in the middle of the night if the house is on fire or if he remembers he did not brush his teeth? Christians have some of the strongest possible motives for changing. Consider some:

Love and dedication to God

>>> Read 1 John 4:9,10,19; 5:3. <<<

1 How did God show His love for us? Answer: God sent _____ to save us from our sins.

2&3 How should we show our love for God (5:3)? Answer: This is the love of God that we _____ His _____.

>>> Read 2 Corinthians 8:5. <<<

4 How did the Macedonians give? (a) they gave only their money, (b) they first gave themselves to the Lord, (c) they were stingy. Answer: _____.

Think: Why is it hard to change a specific action if we are not totally dedicated to God's service?

If you are having difficulty changing yourself, learn to appreciate God's blessings and mercy. (See also Rom. 12:1,2; Ecc. 12:13; Matt. 6:33; 16:24; 1 John 2:15–17; Matt. 10:34–37; 22:37–40; John 14:15.)

Imitation of Christ

People are often motivated by a desire to be like some "hero."

>>> Read Luke 6:40. <<<

5 What is the goal of a disciple? (a) to get rich, (b) to become famous, (c) to become like Jesus, (d) to be a party animal. Answer: _____.

The life most worth imitating is that of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21,22). As we face each decision in life, we should ask, "What would Jesus do?" (See also Gal. 2:20; Matt. 16:24; Col. 3:10).

Desire for eternal life, not eternal punishment

>>> Read 1 Corinthians 9:24,25. <<<

6 What comparison is made between athletes and Christians? Answer: Athletes control themselves to obtain a corruptible (perishable) _____, but Christians seek an incorruptible (imperishable) one.

Think: Why would a lack of motivation keep people from changing to please God? (See also James 1:12; Rev. 2:10; Col. 3:1–10; 2 Peter 1:10,11; 2 Thess. 1:8–10.)

When we lack motivation to change, let us think about God's love for us, think about the importance of being like Christ, and think about our eternal destiny.

Step 2: Believe You Can Change with God's Help.

>>> Read Proverbs 4:23. <<<

7&8 Why is the condition of your heart important? Answer: Out of the _____ come the issues of _____.

Think: What ultimately determines the way you act? (Cf. Matt. 15:18,19; 12:34–37.)

>>> Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. <<<

9 What can we know about temptation? (a) there is always a way of escape, (b) sometimes you just have to sin, (c) some people never face temptation, (d) temptation is always easy to overcome. Answer: _____.

Think: What is meant by "God is faithful." Can people and circumstances force you to do evil? Is there ever a valid excuse for sin?

>>> Read Philippians 4:13. <<<

10 How can we do "all things" that God requires of us? Answer: We can do all things through _____ who strengthens us.

Think: Does God promise that our own strength alone can keep us faithful? What may happen if we trust our own power instead of Christ's?

How should we respond to people who say, "I just can't change. It's too late. Besides, I'm only human." If a person thinks this way, will they be likely to succeed in serving God?

No matter how strong a temptation you face, no matter how long you have practiced a sin, if God says to change, you can change. (See also Eph. 6:10–18; 3:20,21; 2 Cor. 9:8; Josh. 1:5–9.)

Step 3: Study the Bible about Your Habit.

>>> Read Joshua 1:8. <<<

11 To succeed in God's work, what did Joshua need to do? Answer: He should _____ on God's word and observe to do it.

>>> Read Deuteronomy 6:6–9. <<<

12 When should God's word be discussed? (a) while sitting, (b) while walking, (c) while lying down and rising, (d) all of the preceding. Answer: _____.

If you want to change to please God, where would be some good places to put copies of Scriptures to remind you about God's will?

>>> Read Matthew 4:1–11. <<<

13 How did Jesus deal with every temptation from Satan? Answer: Jesus handled every temptation by saying, "It is _____."

Practical application: List verses about your habits, then memorize them so they will strengthen you when you are tempted. Quote them to yourself and to those who tempt you. (See also Psalm 1:2; 119:11; Prov. 3:5,6; 2 Tim. 3:16,17; Eph. 6:17; Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12.)

Step 4: Repent of Sin.

>>> Read Acts 8:22. <<<

14&15 What should disciples do when we commit sin? Answer: We should _____ of our wickedness and _____ to God.

Think: What is repentance? (See Matt. 21:28,29; Acts 17:30; 11:23.)

>>> Read Proverbs 28:13. <<<

16 What should we do about sin? (a) confess and forsake it, (b) hide it, (c) blame somebody else, (d) find a preacher who accepts it. Answer: _____.

Think: Is it enough just to be sorry for our sins? What else is needed? (See 2 Cor. 7:10.)

Most achievements in life require about 10% ability and 90% just plain determination and hard work. In spiritual matters, God has granted every accountable person the ability to please Him; so we are completely able to change. God provides everything we need. The decision is ours.

We will never change until we make up our minds to diligently pursue the means God provides. The decision to do this is repentance, and no one will change to please God without it.

Step 5: Develop a Plan of Action.

>>> Read Proverbs 14:22. <<<

17 What should we devise? (a) evil, (b) good (c) a way to heaven. Answer: _____.

Think: Name some works that God made plans for (see Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:7–9; 3:10,11; Heb. 8:5; Gen. 12:1–7). Likewise, God's servants need to have a plan to succeed in His service (Luke 14:26–33; Dan. 1:8; Psalm 17:3; Acts 11:23; 2 Cor. 9:7).

Think: Name some other important endeavors which require planning in order to succeed.

Practical application: To change your life, you need a specific, practical checklist of steps you will take to change. Analyze the circumstances or causes that lead you to fail to do right, then plan how to avoid those causes. It may help to write your plan down and modify it as needed.

Many people fail to change to please God because they never planned to succeed. They did not plan to fail; they just failed to plan!

Step 6: Pray Regularly.

Prayer is essential in two ways.

A child of God should pray for forgiveness.

A person who is not yet a child of God needs to believe in Jesus, repent of sins, confess Christ, and be baptized to be forgiven of sins (Mark 16:16; Rom. 10:9,10; Acts 2:38; 22:16). If he sins afterward, he needs to repent and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:8–10; Prov. 28:13; Matt. 6:12).

Then he should pray for God's help to change.

>>> **Read Matthew 6:13.** <<<

18 What should we ask God to do? (Cf. Matt. 26:41.) Answer: We should pray, " _____ us from evil."

Practical application: Tell God exactly what your problem is. Pray often and regularly (1 Thess. 5:17; Col. 4:2). Pray especially at the moment when you face temptation (Matt. 26:36–46). God has promised that, if you ask His help, He will hear and answer (1 Peter 5:7; Phil. 4:6,7; Eph. 6:11,13,18).

Step 7: Seek Help from Other Christians.

>>> **Read James 5:16.** <<<

19 What should Christians do for one another? Answer: We should _____ our trespasses to one another.

Think: Name some ways mature Christians can help us when we are fighting a difficult habit. (Cf. Gal. 6:2; Matt. 5:23,24)

Note: Public church meetings are especially designed to give encouragement (Heb. 10:24,25; 3:12,13; Eph. 4:15,16). We need to attend regularly for many reasons, but especially we need encouragement as we try to become what God wants us to be.

Step 8: Diligently Practice What Is Right.

We have discussed several steps to prepare us for change, but none of them can substitute for hard work. All the good attitudes in the world will not get the job done until we follow through with action.

>>> **Read 1 Corinthians 15:58.** <<<

20 In what kind of work should we be steadfast? Answer: We should be steadfast in (give ourselves fully to) the work of the _____.

>>> **Read James 1:22–25.** <<<

21 Whom will God bless? (a) those who just hear His word, (b) those who just believe, (c) those who hear and do, (d) everyone. Answer: _____.

Think: How are habits formed (for example, riding a bicycle or driving a car)? Do new practices always feel comfortable at first?

We change only when we compel ourselves to do what we know is right, then repeat it until it becomes "second nature." God does not promise that change will be easy, but He promises that it is possible if we diligently obey His word. (See also Rom. 6:1–23; Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46.)

Step 9: Substitute Good Habits for Bad Ones.

>>> Read Ephesians 4:22–32. <<<

22,23,&24 Listed below are several practices we must put off. For each one, tell what must be put on in its place.

** Put off lying (v25), but instead speak _____.

** Put off stealing (v28), but instead labor, working with your _____.

** Put off corrupt, unwholesome speech (v29), but instead say what is good or helpful for _____.

>>> Read Matthew 12:43–45. <<<

25 Why did the demon (and others) come back into this man? Answer: It came back because his "house" was _____, swept, and put in order.

Think: Name some other examples of bad habits we should eliminate to be Christians. Then name good habits we can replace them with.

"Nature hates a vacuum." Remove the air from a bottle, and it will try to get back in. Fill the bottle with something solid, and the air stays out. So your life cannot stay a spiritual void. It will fill with good or evil. Replace bad habits with good, and the bad is less likely to return.

Step 10: Avoid Temptation.

>>> Read Matthew 6:13. <<<

26 What should we pray regarding temptation? Answer: We should pray that we will not be led into _____.

Think: If we pray this prayer, then how should we act toward people, places, and situations that tempt us?

>>> Read 1 Corinthians 15:33. <<<

27 What is the effect of keeping evil company? (a) it corrupts good habits, (b) it has no effect, (c) it makes us happy, (d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

Note: "Do not be deceived." How are people often deceived regarding companionships?

Think: Name some habits that are often begun and continued because of "peer pressure." Breaking such habits by themselves is hard enough, but it is far more difficult when "friends" urge us to continue them. (See Rom. 13:14; 1 Peter 4:3,4; Prov. 13:20; Ex. 23:2.)

>>> Read Psalm 26:5. <<<

28 What should we hate? Answer: We should hate the congregation (assembly) of _____.

Think: What is the application to people who say, "I won't drink (or gamble, etc.). I'll just go to the tavern (or casino) to be with my friends"? (Cf. 2 Cor. 6:14–18; Eph. 5:11.)

You cannot change a bad habit while continuing to run with the "crowd" that caused the habit. Changing the habit will require changing your friends, because the "friends" are part of the habit!

Step 11: Face One Day at a Time.

Often people quit trying to serve God because they are overwhelmed by the sacrifices required to live the rest of their lives for God. Consider:

>>> **Read Matthew 6:33,34.** <<<

29 Why should we not worry about tomorrow's troubles? Answer: Because sufficient for today is its own _____.

Practical application: Ask yourself this: "Can I practice what is right today – just today?" Of course you can. So when you get up each morning, promise yourself and God, "I will live today for God." Don't worry about handling tomorrow. If it comes, you can handle it the same way you will handle today.

Two men were climbing a steep path up a tall mountain. One looked to the top and asked, "How will we ever make it?" The other replied, "One step at a time." And that is the only way for you to change yourself.

Step 12: Be Patient.

>>> **Read Romans 2:7.** <<<

30 How do we receive eternal life? Answer: By continuing patiently in _____.

>>> **Read Galatians 6:9.** <<<

31 What must we do to reap eternal life? Answer: We must not _____ in doing good.

>>> **Read 2 Peter 3:18.** <<<

32&33 In what should we grow? Answer: Grow in the _____ and _____ of Jesus Christ.

Note the emphasis on growth and patience. You are born again as a baby and gradually grow up in Christ. You may look at mature Christians and think, "Why can't I be like them?" But they probably took years to mature. Developing good habits takes time. Do not be impatient with yourself. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:58.)

Sin should never be excused. But some habits and desires are deeply ingrained. If you fall, you should repent, and ask God's forgiveness. But get up and go on. Do not give up. (See 1 John 1:8–2:2.)

Children may not notice much change as they grow from day to day, but photographs from years ago will show amazing differences. So you may get discouraged with your service to God today compared to yesterday. But if you diligently apply the steps taught in God's word, after 5, 10, or 20 years you will

see significant changes compared to where you began.

Conclusion

By using the means God provides, you can change to be what He wants. He gives motivation, guidance, and encouragement. All that is left is for you to determine to follow His will and then diligently act on that decision. He provides the tools. You must use them. What choice will you make?

Personal application questions:

(These questions are for you to ponder. Your answers will help us understand your thinking, however they will not affect your "score.")

34 Do you have changes you need to make in your life to please God? _____

35 What do you believe should be your greatest priority in life? _____

36 Are you convinced a person can truly change to become pleasing to God if he/she will diligently practice the principles taught in this lesson? _____

37 Are you willing to make a diligent effort to apply these principles in your own life? _____

When you have carefully studied this lesson and written down answers to all the questions, click on this link to submit your answers.

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