Lesson

1 Becoming Christ's Follower

The Purpose of our Lives

Two men were having a discussion. One of them said, "I believe that God Almighty created me to obey his commands. He sent the prophets to show me the Straight Path. If I follow that path then hopefully God will forgive my sins and let me into paradise. That is the purpose of my life."

The other man replied, "I too want to obey God's commands. But I am not afraid he will send me to the hell-fire. He has already forgiven my sins and has promised to welcome me in heaven. So, on this earth I am glad to know him personally, feel his love and love him too. I want to live for him, every moment of every day. This is the purpose of my life."

To think about: Do you agree with the first man or the second man? Or maybe you have another purpose? What is the purpose of <u>your</u> life?

1 When we think about our lives it can become a burden for us. We get weighed down by our troubles in the present and our worries about the future. In the Holy Gospel (*Injil*) the Lord Jesus Christ made a wonderful promise which is for all of us:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
(Matthew 11:28)

Think of Jesus Christ saying these words to you personally! Keep repeating them until you can say them from memory. Then fill in the gaps below:

"Come to me, all you who are _____ and _____, and I will give you rest."

2 The Lord Jesus Christ spoke these words when he came into the world. He called people to himself: "come, follow **me**". Some of them responded with gladness and became his followers. Others rejected him. Christ is alive today and he still makes the same invitation to us. What is this invitation? "Come, _____ me".

Becoming Jesus Christ's Follower

3 Let's learn how to become Christ's follower. We can follow the example of a fisherman named Simon Peter who was one of Christ's first followers. Let's read about this in the Holy Bible:

"One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch'. Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets'.

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break... When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken... Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid: from now on you will fish for people'. So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him."

(Luke 5:1-11 in the Holy Bible)

After you have read the whole passage, tick (✓) this box ☐ and continue.

4 It seems that Simon Peter took *four steps* to become Jesus' follower. By these same four steps people today become followers of the Lord Jesus. Let's learn about them now.

First Step: Turn away from Sin

When Simon saw the miracle of the fish, his eyes were opened. He recognized the Lord Jesus' holiness, and by contrast his own shame. What did he say to Jesus? "Go away from me, Lord; I am a _____" *(see the passage above, in the last paragraph)*

5 Simon realized he was a 'sinful man'. Probably he had never murdered anyone, or committed adultery. But Jesus could see right inside his heart. Simon could not hide from the Lord Jesus his shameful secrets or his evil thoughts.

What about you? What are your hidden secrets, which would make you die of embarrassment if they were announced aloud from the loudspeaker in your local mosque? Maybe you can hide these secrets from your neighbours and family, but you can't hide them from Jesus Christ. He can see every hidden evil in your life as clearly as a doctor can see, in an X-ray, every hidden bone of your body!

Pause now, and ask Jesus Christ to show you the dark corners of your life.

6 Truly every person is stained by sin. As the poet Omar Khayyam (1048-1131) said,

"Tell me who has not sinned in this world
Tell me where are those who have not sinned,
I wrong you and you wrong me
So tell me what is the difference between you and me."

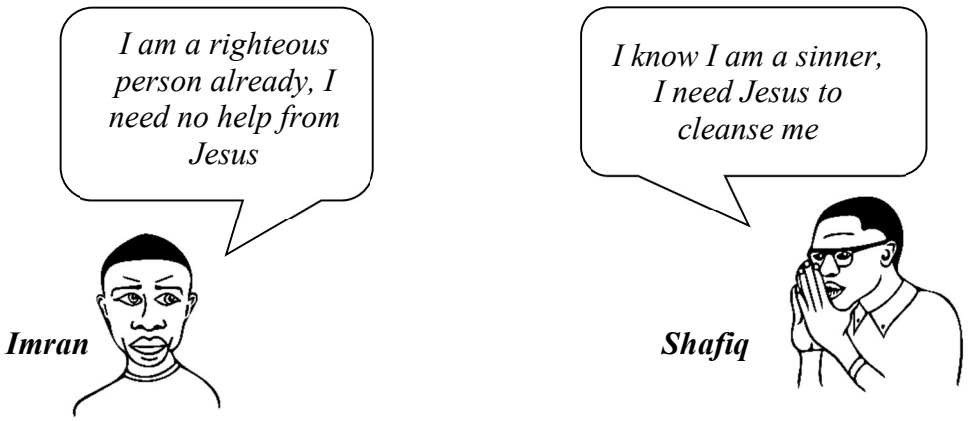
Can anyone hide his or her sins from God? [Yes / No] *(circle the correct answer)*

7 You were previously taught that God loves those who make themselves pure and hates those who do wrong. But did Jesus the Pure One hate the impure Simon? Astonishingly, he did not! What did Jesus say to Simon? *(see the passage in question 3 and tick the correct answer:)*

___ a) 'Go away from me'
___ b) 'Don't be afraid'

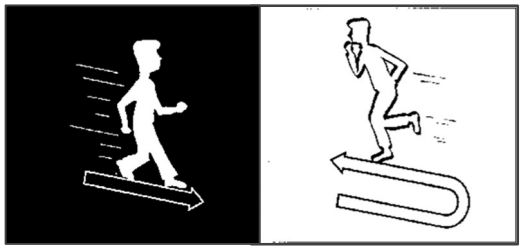
8 How relieved Simon was to hear Jesus say 'don't be afraid'! If you, like Simon, realize you are an impure sinner, then take heart. Jesus the Messiah gave his own life as a sacrifice for you, as Appendix 2 makes clear. He is ready to forgive you and wash you completely clean!

But are you ready to receive his generous gift? Look at these two contrasting people:



Which kind of person will Jesus Christ wash clean: a proud person like Imran or a humble one like Shafiq? _____

9 The Lord Jesus said 'I have come to call... *'sinners to repentance' (Luke 5:32)*. 'Repentance' means turning around to go in the opposite direction. Look at these two men:



1. **2.**

a) Which of these men has repented, 1. or 2.? ____

b) Which of them is continuing in his old ways, 1. or 2.? _____

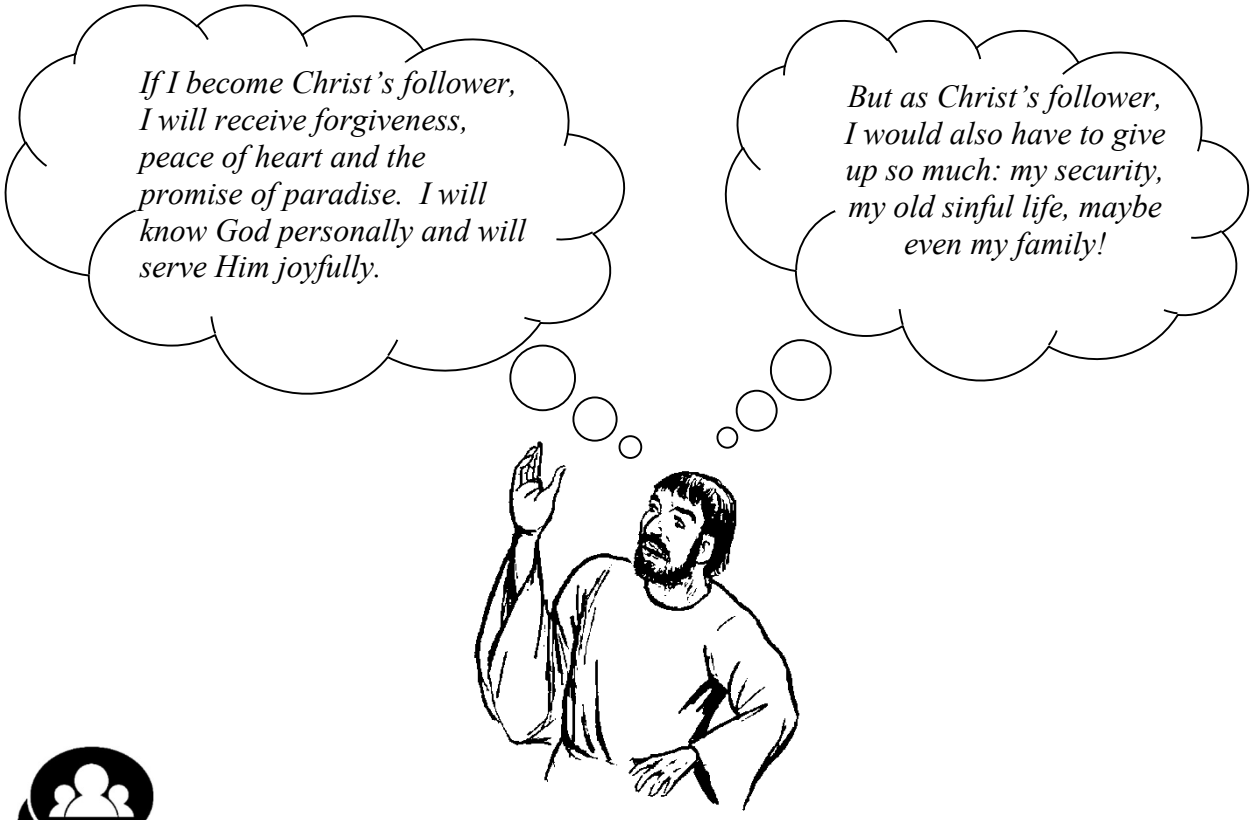
10 'To repent' is more than merely to regret our sins. It means completely to <u>turn away from sin</u>, like man 2 in the picture. Therefore, what is the evidence of real repentance? *(tick one answer)*

___ a) to feel no regret for your sin-stained life
___ b) to regret your sins but not to change your lifestyle
___ c) to completely turn away from sin and change your lifestyle

11 What was the first step Simon took to become Jesus' follower? Turn away from _____.

Second Step: Understand the Cost

12 The next step for Simon was to <u>understand the cost</u> of becoming Christ's follower. Simon faced a hard choice. He was probably caught between two thoughts:



What did Simon understand? The _____ of becoming Christ's follower.

13 Jesus Christ told this parable about how much it might cost to become his follower:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45-46)

As Jesus' follower, what are the most costly things you might have to give up? Tick one or more of the following: *(your own answer)*

___ a) your reputation in the community
___ b) your employment or business
___ c) your family
___ d) your property or inheritance
___ e) other *(write it here)* _____

14 But 'the pearl of great value' is worth it! And whatever sacrifice we made for Christ's sake, remember that he made an even bigger sacrifice for us on the cross!

"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)

So, who paid the greater price: we or Christ? _____

In lessons 9 and 10 we will learn how Jesus Christ helps us to face persecution.

Third Step: Entrust yourself to Christ

15 To become Christ's follower, Simon had firstly to turn away from sin, and secondly to understand the cost. Then he came to the third step: "Entrust yourself to Christ".

In point 3, read again the last sentence in the passage. What did Simon and his companions do in response to Jesus' call? *(fill the blank spaces)*

"They pulled their boats up on shore, _____ everything and _____ him."

16 Simon entrusted himself completely to his new master Jesus.

How do we entrust ourselves to someone in everyday life? Here are some examples:

- ✓ ***A tired child*** entrusts himself to his father when he jumps into his arms to be carried.
- ✓ ***A patient*** entrusts himself to the doctor when he takes the medicine.
- ✓ ***A passenger*** entrusts himself to the bus driver at the start of a dangerous journey.

Just like the child, the patient or the passenger, we entrust ourselves to Jesus when we place ourselves in his hands. We trust him to protect and guide us. We obey him as our master.

What is the third step in becoming Christ's follower?

1. Turn away from sin
2. Understand the cost
3. _____ yourself to Christ

17 After entrusting himself to Jesus Christ, Simon Peter travelled with him for the next three years. He shared in his master's joys and sorrows. He saw Jesus heal sick people and even raise the dead! He learned to love people as Jesus loved people. Gradually the apprentice Simon became more and more like his teacher Jesus. Later he was better known by his second name Peter.

How did Simon Peter become Christ's follower? *(tick the better answer)*

___ a) By entrusting himself to Christ
___ b) By reciting a new creed (*kalima* or *shahada*)

18 As you know, an apprentice learns from his master by watching and copying what he does. This is how Simon Peter developed as Jesus' apprentice or 'disciple'.

We too become like apprentices when we follow Jesus our master. Even though we cannot see him with our physical eyes, we learn to copy what he does and we become like him. We have the honour of sharing in his work.

What is the third step in becoming Christ's disciple? _____ yourself to Christ

Fourth Step: Join Christ's Community

19 When Simon obeyed Jesus' call, he was not alone. He joined Christ's community. Together Christ's disciples lived as one group and shared their lives. They were from different tribes and different social levels. But they learned to love each other.

This was not easy. Sometimes they had arguments. But they solved their disputes and forgave each other. Simon Peter learned that all those who belong to Christ must also join his _____.

Joining Christ's community is essential for every believer!
We will learn more in lesson 7.

20 Jesus Christ called Simon Peter to be his follower. What four steps did this involve?

1. _____ from sin
2. _____ the cost
3. _____ yourself to Christ
4. _____ Christ's community

Share with each other which of the three stages below best fits you.

Finally, what does today's lesson mean for you personally?

- ***Maybe you are already Christ's follower?*** If so, this course will help you to keep growing in Christ.
- ***Maybe you are ready to become Christ's follower now?*** Then talk in private with your advisor, and he or she will help you to take this step.
- ***Maybe you want more time to think about this important step?*** That's fine, but don't delay the decision forever, for one day it may be too late. Keep studying this course if you wish, but you will gain more benefit from it after you decide to follow Christ.

PRACTICAL TASK

This week, find a place alone and think seriously about these questions:
Are you already Christ's follower? Or are you ready to become his follower?
Or do you want more time to think about it?

Now do the Review.

REVIEW

1. What wonderful invitation of Jesus Christ did you memorize from Matthew 11:28? *(see point 1 if you can't remember)*

"Come to me, all you _____."

2. Name four steps in becoming Christ's follower:

1. _____ from _____
2. _____ the _____
3. _____ yourself to _____
4. _____ Christ's _____

Lesson

2 New Life in Christ

A person who becomes Christ's follower does not merely recite a new creed. Rather, he or she receives a brand new life in Christ! This includes:

A. A new identity
B. A new birth
C. A new nature

1 Let's learn about this wonderful new life from a part of the Holy Bible called 'The First Letter of Peter', or 1 Peter for short. Simon Peter, about whom we learned in lesson 1, wrote this letter under God's guidance. The letter begins like this:

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:1)

What title does Peter have here? *(tick the correct answer)*

___ a) disciple ___ b) apostle ___ c) prophet

2 In the Holy Bible, the word 'apostle' means a person who is sent with a special task (not someone to whom a holy book descends). The Lord Jesus chose twelve men, trained them and sent them out with a special task. That is why they are called 'apostles'. Their leader was the apostle Peter.

Which part of God's Word will we study in this course? The first letter of the apostle _____

3 The first verse of 1 Peter tells us who wrote this letter under God's guidance. It also tells us who received the letter. They were followers of Christ living in the country we now call Turkey. In this verse they are called "God's chosen people" (*New Living Translation*).

Pause and thank God for making us his chosen people!

4 The same verse also calls them "foreigners" (*NLT*). Maybe you live far from your homeland. Or maybe you still live in your country but you are separated from your family because they rejected you. This is a very hard experience!

But in God's sight, what new identity do we have? We are 'God's chosen _____'

A) Our New Identity

5 Yes, we are 'God's chosen people'! Our old community may reject us, but

"if God is for us, who can be against us?... Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?" (Romans 8:31, 33). *"Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?"* (Luke 18:7)

As Christ's followers, what is our new identity? (*tick the correct answer*)

___ a) God's chosen people ___ b) infidels ___ c) apostates

6 The next verse says *"God the Father knew you and chose you long ago"* (1 Peter 1:2, *NLT*)

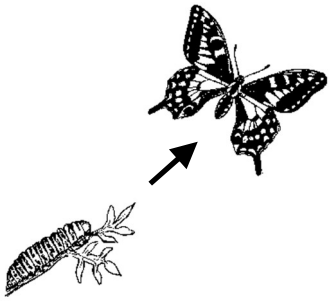
The story is told about a boy who had lost his real parents. Another couple brought him up as their own adopted son. One day other boys were mocking him about this. He replied, "No, I feel more honoured than you. Your fathers did not choose you but my father chose me as his very own!"

What an honour it is to be chosen by God! Did we deserve this by our good deeds?
[Yes / No]

7 God chose us because he loves us, not because we deserved it. It is also true that we chose to follow God through Jesus Christ. Somehow God's choice and our choice work together.

What is our new identity in Christ? We are God's _____ people.

B) Our New Birth



8 You know the difference between a worm and a caterpillar. Although they look rather similar, there is actually a huge difference between them. A worm crawls around without any change until it dies. But a caterpillar goes through a marvellous change. Instead of dying, what does it become? *(see the picture)*
_____

9 Isn't it a marvel that the ugly caterpillar, which merely crawled along a leaf, is changed into a beautiful butterfly which soars in the sky? It is like going through a completely 'new birth' to become a new creature.

What change takes place in the caterpillar? A kind of 'new _____'

10 Have you become a follower of Jesus Christ? When you look in the mirror you see the same person as you were before, on the outside. But in fact, the change inside you is as great as a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. This amazing change through Christ is called 'new birth'.

Which people experience this new birth? *(tick one)*
___ a) all those who live in our country
___ b) all those who personally entrust themselves to Christ
___ c) all those who were born in a Christian family

11 The next verse of 1 Peter tells us about this new birth:

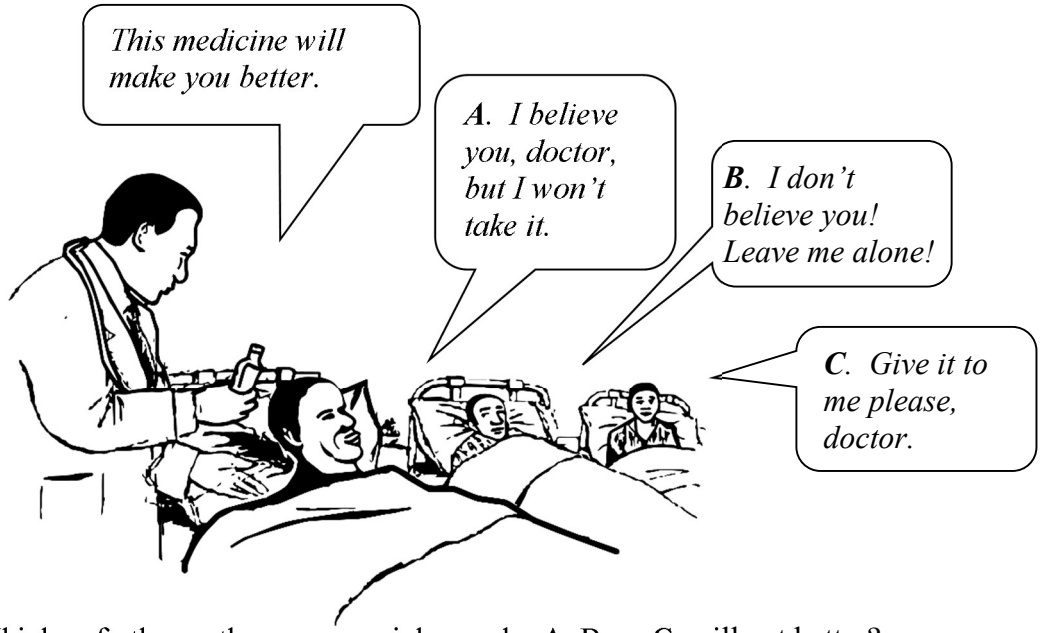
"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"
(1 Peter 1:3)

According to this verse, who has given us this new birth?
___ a) **God**, in his great mercy
___ b) **we,** by our good deeds
___ c) **a holy man**, by his prayers for us

Have you experienced this New Birth?

12 God offers this new birth to everyone, but not everyone receives it.

Look at what the doctor says to the three patients, and their replies:



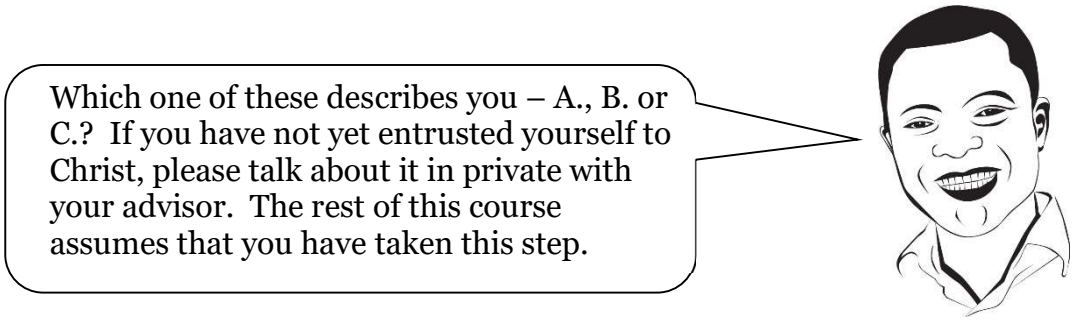
Which of these three sick people, A. B. or C. will get better? _____

13 In the same way, which of the three people below will receive new birth in Christ? *(tick one)*

___ a) The one who says, "I believe your teaching, O Christ, but I am afraid to receive you into my life"

___ b) The one who says, "I do not believe you"

___ c) The one who says, "I believe you, Lord Jesus. Now I entrust myself to you. Please come into my life".



C) Our New Nature

14 We have learned about our 'new identity' and 'new birth' as Christ's followers. Jesus Christ also gives us a 'new nature', which is his own nature in us.

Many people from the same previous religion as you have become Christ's followers. Here some of them describe the positive changes he has made in their lives: (*names adapted*)

Talib:	"Life in Christ is an exciting and soul-satisfying life"
Hassan:	"Jesus gave me joy and peace"
Said:	"My tension and worry disappeared"

Shaheeda:	"My burdens and fears have gone"
Fatuma:	"I know that God accepts me just as I am"
Ahmad:	"The colour of my past was black and its smell was of alcohol, women and sin. The colour of my present is light, covered with joy and peace"

(from 'Jesus More than a Prophet' by Ralph Wotton)

These are all real people. What difference came in their lives? *(tick one)*

___ a) Jesus Christ gave them a new nature with many positive changes
___ b) Their lives became worse than before
___ c) They were left unchanged in their old nature

15 Jesus Christ gave his new nature to all these his followers. Like them, we too will experience new <u>feelings</u> of joy and peace. But our feelings are not the most important thing. More important are the changes Jesus brings to our <u>character</u>. Here are some more true examples: (*names adapted*)

Hassan:	"Jesus enabled me to break my smoking habit"
Jamal:	"Jesus changed my old attitude of pride"
Razzaq:	"My stammer and inferiority complex disappeared"
Said:	"I stopped being a troublemaker"
Shamim:	"I became more interested in other people"
Faisal:	"The spirit of service has taken the place of pride and conceit in my life"
Rashid:	"I learned to rely on the Lord in my business and to work with honesty"
Mariam:	"I long to bring others to know Christ's love"

(from 'Jesus More than a Prophet' by Ralph Wotton)

What actual changes has Christ brought in your own life? Write your ideas, and be ready to share them in the discussion time: _____

_____

_____

16 If you have not immediately experienced all the above changes, don't worry. They will come gradually as you grow in Christ. It takes many years for a baby to grow into an adult, and in the same way it takes many years after receiving 'new birth' to become spiritually mature.

But because Jesus lives in you, which 'nature' should be seen more and more in you?

___ a) your old sinful nature ___ b) your new nature in Christ

Our Spiritual Battle

17 Even though we already have a new nature in Christ, we must also fight a kind of spiritual war against our old nature - every day for the rest of our lives! God's Word gives us this command:

"Now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have <u>taken off</u> your old self [nature] with its practices and have <u>put on</u> the new self [nature], which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." (Colossians 3:5,7-10)

According to the above verses, *(put a circle round the correct answers)*

a) which nature have we 'taken off'? [old nature / new nature]
b) which nature have we 'put on'? [old nature / new nature]

Discuss how putting off the old nature and putting on the new one has been a struggle for you. Share your own struggles.

18 The pictures below show Christ's followers doing different things. In the blank space by each name, write 'old' if the person is behaving according to their old nature, or 'new' for their new nature:

Person a): _____ nature
Person b): _____ nature
Person c): _____ nature
Person d): _____ nature

19 Every day our new nature, which is Jesus' nature put into us, fights against our old sinful nature. A simple farmer once described this struggle like this: "I feel as if two goats are fighting in my life, a black one and a white one." His listener asked him, "So which goat wins?" He replied, "Whichever one I feed the most"!

Think about the farmer's parable. The black goat represents our old nature and the white goat our new nature. Which one is winning in your life these days? Why? Be ready for the discussion time.

From today's lesson, let's remember three great privileges we have in Christ:

- We have a <u>new identity</u> as God's chosen people
- We have gone through a <u>new birth</u>, like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly
- With Christ's help, our <u>new nature</u> gradually replaces our old sinful nature

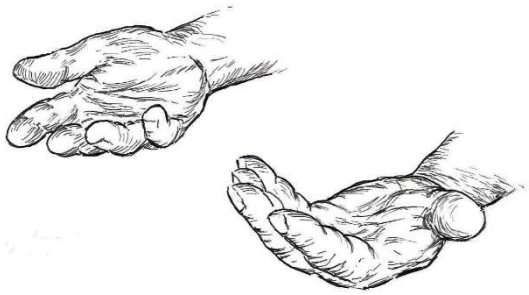
20 The following verse from God's Word summarizes what we have learned today:

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"
(2 Corinthians 5:17) *NIV 1984*

Fill the gaps and repeat the verse until you know it by heart:
"If anyone is in _____ , he is a _____ creation; the _____ has gone, the _____ has come!"
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Now say this prayer:

"O Lord,
In your great mercy you made us your own chosen people – thank you!
Thank you for giving me new birth and a new nature.
By Christ's power, help me daily to fight the spiritual war against my old sinful nature.
Amen."



PRACTICAL TASK

Make a list of three positive changes in your life, which come from your new nature.
Thank God for these changes.
Also make a list of three habits from your old nature which still persist in your life.
This week, with God's help, fight against these bad habits.

REVIEW

1 a) When a person entrusts himself to Christ, what change takes place in him or her?
_____ birth

b) What new identity do we have as Christ's followers? We are
God's _____ _____

2 Our spiritual battle is between our [old / new] sinful nature and our [old / new] nature in Christ *(cross out the wrong answers)*

3 Give two examples of changes which Jesus Christ brings in the life of his followers *(if you can't think of any, see questions 11-12)*:

_____

4 From memory, fill the gaps from the verse 2 Corinthians 5:17:

"If anyone is in _____ , he is a _____ creation; the _____ has gone, the _____ has come!"