

"How Jesus Changes Lives"

The Lord can transform your life, if you will let Him. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders; and this is a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." Yes, the Lord can change your life, if you will let Him; but you have to let him. Today we're going to explore those changes; so stay with us.

Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and we're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Way. We love God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We want to walk in His ways and have no other desire. God wills that we believe, love, and obey Him. We're not interested in doing our own thing or reinventing Christianity. We simply want to take up our crosses daily and follow our Lord. We believe that you do, too. We're so grateful that you're interested in studying God's Word with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. And by saving them He brought changes to their hearts, their lives, and their destinies. We can choose no Lord greater than Jesus Christ, who brought peace, hope, life, and immortality to mankind. You're watching this program today because you believe that your faith in Christ will make a difference in your life. You may be looking for spiritual help. You may be looking for the truth. You may be looking for a loving relationship with God. I don't know all the needs that you have in life, but I know the One who can help you through every struggle and every hurt. That's Jesus our Lord.

Jesus can make a difference in your life, a difference you can count on! Today we're going to see how Jesus can give you the power to make some changes in your life by providing for your basic spiritual needs. When you're willing to give your heart and your life to Him, He can work in you things that you never imagined. You don't have to be trapped in sin. You don't have to be filled with despair over the future. You don't have to live in loneliness. The Lord can help you; and He wants to bless your life.

Now, if you want to study more about How Jesus Changes Lives, we offer the information on this program free. And, in fact, we're offering a book that includes this and you can have a printed copy of Jesus as Lord or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org. Well, the Edmond church will worship in song; then we'll have a reading from Colossians chapter 1:9 through 12. And then stay with us because then we will talk about How Jesus Changes Lives.

Our reading from God's Holy Word comes from Colossians chapter 1, verses 9 through 12. "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." That's a reading from Colossians 1, verses 9 to 12. Let's pray together. Father, we are so very grateful that through the Lord Jesus Christ our lives can change. We are thankful for the blood He shed; we're thankful for the Word that You have given to us. And, Father, help us to be obedient to Your will always. In Jesus' name, Amen!

All of my days I have watched the power of God turn people's lives around. I have seen criminals become Christians, atheists become strong believers in Christ, sinners become saints, and addicted people become free. The power of God can work in your life, because the Lord Jesus is

everything that He claimed to be. The New Testament records how He walked on water, turned water into wine, calmed the storm, healed the sick, set the captives free, gave sight to the blind, gave hearing to the deaf, gave speech to the mute, and gave hope to the despondent.

Wherever He went, Jesus lifted people up and gave them a new start in life. He opened the door with His teaching and His death on the cross for people to be born again, freed from all the trappings of their old man of sin. He was God's true light in a world darkened by sin and bound for hell.

But Jesus did more than this. Jesus lived in a day when the human traditions and teaching of the time convinced many that God would never accept them. The Pharisees had made and observed many man-made laws that God didn't give and they bound them on other people. Even to this day various denominations and religious groups believe and practice things that they invented but the Lord Jesus never taught. We believe that Jesus is Lord, and the only Lord. Only the Lord Jesus has the right to legislate to His church what they are to believe and practice. He didn't give that authority to anyone.

In Matthew 28 and verse 18 the risen Lord Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." I tell you, there's no authority in heaven or on earth higher than His authority. The Bible says in Ephesians 1, verses 20 to 23 that God "seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Jesus is truly Lord of all and He has all authority. We should not think that He will someday have authority on earth. My friend, He is already Lord and King. He has all authority now and cannot have more authority than He already has.

If I call Jesus "Lord," I need to treat Him as Lord. Jesus said in Matthew 7, verses 21 to 23 that, "Not every who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" You see, serving the Lord means obeying His laws and commandments.

Now, in our culture we like to determine our own way. We don't fully appreciate what it means to have a Lord and to belong to a Master. In ancient times, masters had complete authority over their servants. Many today think the whole world should be subservient to them and to their desires. But when we take on the name of Jesus and we become His disciples, we give our lives to His service and we become His slaves.

The Lord said in Matthew 10, verses 24 to 25 that, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master." Our task as servants of our Lord Jesus is to become like Him, to think and act like Him, to love and live like Him, and to pray and obey like Him. Hebrews 5, verses 8 and 9 says, "Although He was a Son (of God) a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." Now, if we're going to honor our Lord Jesus, we must be obedient to Him just as He was obedient to the Father.

As Lord, Christ can turn our lives around. He has the power; He has the will; and He has the way to make a difference in our lives. And He will help us make changes, but He won't force us to change. Christ can transform our lives, but we have to let Him. You know, some people think Christ uses miraculous power to make these changes and He makes them irresistibly, but they're mistaken. The Lord rather reasons with us and works on our hearts, and He does that through His Word.

Isaiah 1, verses 18 to 20 says, “ ‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. If you consent and obey, then you will eat the best of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.’ Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” The Lord God wants what is best for you and for me, but we have to be willing to trust and obey Him.

The power of Christ is not some mysterious or irresistible force. God doesn't arbitrarily choose some folks to be saved and others to be lost and then mysteriously force His will on us. No, that's a terrible doctrine of man, and it's an unscriptural doctrine. God rather helps whosoever will to change when they accept Him and obey His teaching, when they deny themselves and follow Him according to the teaching of the Word.

What power does the Lord use to transform our lives? Well..., the power is in the simple message of the gospel. And how much it changes our lives depends upon our hearts and whether we're willing to listen and to follow God's Word or not. Where is the power of God? First, it's in the Word of God. The Word of God brings us to faith. Romans 10 and verse 17 says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1, verses 21 that God chose the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

Again, John chapter 20, verses 30 and 31 says, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” The Word of God helps us to believe Jesus is the Christ, and that faith leads us to eternal life.

Second, here's how the Lord uses His power to help us. The Lord uses the power of love to reach into our hearts. The story of what Jesus did on the cross reaches deep into our hearts and moves us to love God. The Lord Jesus said in John 12 and verse 32, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” The cross demonstrates in undeniable terms the unfailing love of our Lord Jesus and the Father. Jesus said in John 15 and verse 13, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.” Jesus showed the greatest kind of love towards us in dying for our sins, suffering the punishment that we deserved. Such love, I have to tell you, is beyond my full understanding.

People are willing to deny themselves, and take up their crosses daily, and follow Jesus as Lord, because they love Him. They've seen His love in the Word and they want to love in return. The Bible says in 1 John 4, verse 19 that, “We love, because He first loved us.” People are grateful for all of God's wonderful promises and they know Romans 8 and verse 32 is really true. That verse says that, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

My friend, we're not enslaved to God against our will. We serve God by choice, because we know our Lord Jesus is a loving master who will do us good and give us an abundant life (John 10 and verse 10). In addition to the forgiveness of sins and the daily blessings we receive from Him, He also adds us to His church and gives us a family to strengthen and encourage us. The church is a great blessing, and the Lord knew that we would need each other to grow in faith. The love of our brothers and sisters in Christ is essential to our spiritual growth. They stir us to love and good works.

Third, another way the Lord works His power on us is that the Lord uses the power of the truth to reach into our hearts. He is lovingly honest and straight with us about our sins and about righteousness. He uses the truth that's in the Word like a mirror for us to see ourselves as we really are

and as God sees us. Such honesty may cut deep and hurt, but I would rather be hurt temporarily by the truth than to believe a lie and suffer much greater pain for eternity.

The Lord gives us the truth that hurts for a time but heals us. He corrects us in order to make our lives better and to help us to avoid the pitfalls of life. Some people think that when the Lord condemns sin, that He is mean and harsh. And I hear some people say that if you call certain sins sinful, that you're "unchristian." There seems to be in this day a kind of a knee-jerk reaction to saying anything is, that if we say anything is morally or spiritually wrong that we've done something terrible. Well, the best known passage of the Bible for some people today is "Judge ye not, that you be not judged" (Matthew 7, verse 1). But those who react quickly to calling sin sinful on the basis of Matthew 7:1 may need to think more about this matter.

The Lord Jesus also said in John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Honesty means that we hear all the Lord Jesus says not merely what we wish to hear. The same Bible that condemns murder and rape also condemns covetousness, lying, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and drunkenness. Christianity is not a pick-and-choose faith that allows us to tell God what we feel rather than to listen to His Word.

You see, the Lord greatly values His Word as truth. He said in John 8, verse 31 to 32 that, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." When we deceive ourselves by failing to hear what the Lord says, we remain enslaved to sin and death. But when we listen to the Lord's words and obey Him, we are set free from sin and become true disciples.

It is the Lord who determines who are true disciples on the basis of whether they continue in His Word. You see, the Lord has standards that He has clearly communicated and uses to make distinctions between true disciples and how they're different from deceived disciples. I count it a Christian kindness to learn the truth about sin and what I need to do to be saved. I would rather know the truth that can correct me than to be told a lie that leaves me in a false assurance of my salvation. You see, it's the work of Satan and very cruel to let people think they're saved, when they're really lost. The Bible still says in 1 Corinthians 13, verse 6 that love "does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth."

Fourth, and I love this. The Lord gives us the power of hope. We need hope to live spiritually as much as we need air to live physically. The Lord Jesus blesses His people with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. First Peter 1, verses 3 and 4 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." Oh, we have all the blessing of God in this life and heaven, too. Thank God. Let's pray together. Father, we are grateful for all Your blessing in this life, and for the power to change our lives. Help us to have the strength and the will to make those changes. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!

Jesus can transform your life, if you will let Him; but you have to let Him. You have got to give yourself to Him completely: body, soul, and spirit. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6, verses 19 and 20, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

The Father invested His Son in you, and the Lord Jesus gave His life so that you might be redeemed from sin and live a new and righteous life. God does not think that you are cheap. You are

worth far more than what Judas paid for Jesus; you remember it was only thirty pieces of silver. The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:18 and 19 “that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”

But if you want the blood, that purchased and redeemed you, to apply to your soul, you must obey the gospel. You must allow the grace of God to work in your life. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, and out of love repent of every sin, confess Jesus as the Christ and as your Lord, and be baptized in water to be saved. And when you're immersed in water, the Lord washes away your sins (Acts 22:16) and adds you to His family (Acts 2 and verse 47). That family is His kingdom, the church. You're purchased with His blood, and you belong to Him when you are baptized and Him alone. Humble yourselves, and turn your hearts, and seek the Lord.

We hope that today's study of How Jesus Changes Lives has blessed you or challenged you. If you want a free printed copy or CD, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. And we'll be happy to fill your request.

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So please worship with a church of Christ in your area. They're the reason we don't ask for money. If you are looking for a church home, we'll help you find one. Visit one of these churches very soon. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.