



How successful were you this past week in identifying lies at work in your life?
Were you able to change any behaviour as a result?
Share your experiences.

	1	2	3	4
TRUTH	God loves you	The work is finished	God is Changing You	You are significant
LIE	I am not fully loved	I must do more	I cannot change	I have nothing to offer

Psalms 51:5 (NIV)

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Psalms 58:3 (NIV)

Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies.

The Bible is very clear about the fact that we have a sinful nature. In what ways do you see evidence of the sin nature at work in your own lives? Can you give some everyday examples where you find the most natural response is to sin?

Secular society sees these natural tendencies as well (though they will not refer to it as a sin nature). What are some ways society tries counter the effects of the sin nature?

- Laws – laws exists to restrain our sinful tendencies
- Medication – to subdue the sinful effects of the mind and body
- Drugs
- Exercise and diet
- Positive thinking
- Anger management
- Realize you are god and act accordingly
- Use the power of the universe
- Set goals and discipline your life to achieve them
- In some cases, it does not try to counter it, but encourages the sin nature.

Will any of these approaches actually change our nature and move us forward in freedom? Why or why not?



Through our own efforts, how much can we truly change and what can we not change?

Through our own efforts we may change some behaviour, but we cannot ultimately change our nature. Our nature is what determines what we most naturally do in any given circumstance. By the grace of God, we can restrain our sin nature to a certain degree, but it is always there, manipulating our actions, motives and thoughts.

To change the nature of anything would require a God-orchestrated miracle.

When someone becomes a Christ-follower, what are some of the changes that immediately take place?

Read the following verses and discuss the implications of each change God has made in you through Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Romans 6:6-14 (NIV)

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him

When we receive the Holy Spirit he puts to death our old, sinful nature and he gives us a new life through a new nature.

Romans 8:9-10 (NIV)

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Through the Holy Spirit, we now have the ability to live for God and his righteousness. We no longer "have to" sin; we can choose to do what brings glory to God.

When someone becomes a Christ-follower, what does not change right away?



Romans 8: 10 (NIV)

But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

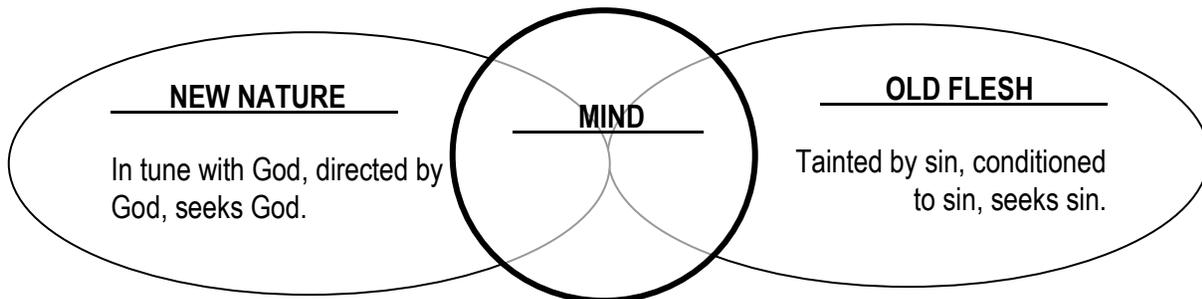
When we receive the Holy Spirit our nature is changed immediately, but we still live in a body that is tainted by sin. It has been trained and conditioned to sin over many years and those patterns do not immediately disappear.

In our spirit, we want to live to glorify God but we have a body that is addicted to sin. It is used to sinning, it likes sinning, and it has been programmed to sin. It is in conflict with our new spirit and the Spirit of God.

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

What is role of the mind when it comes to the tension between our new spiritual nature and our sin-tainted bodies?



The battle for our behaviour takes place in the mind – the meeting place of the body and spirit. The mind needs to learn to think differently about God and life. It has spent so much time thinking a certain way that it will take time to get rid of old patterns and replace them with new ones.

If we want to change our lives we need to change our thinking and learn to control our bodies.



How will God ultimately deal with our sin corrupted bodies?

Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV)

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NIV)

⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Romans 8:22-23 (NIV)

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Eventually, when Christ returns, the dilemma of our sin-tainted bodies will be fully resolved.

If God accepts us as we are, then why is he at work to change us?

God accepts us as we are, but he loves us so far too much to allow us to stay as we are. He created us to be holy and he will continue to work in our lives until he brings us to that point. Anything less than holiness brings sorrow and death into our lives. God created us to experience joy and peace in relationship with him. He created us to accurately represent his love to the world around us. He did all this not for his benefit, but for ours. He is restoring us to the life he originally designed us to experience.

What processes does God use to bring change into our lives?

Discuss the implications of how God changes us in each of the following verses.

John 16:7-8 (NIV)

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:

The Holy Spirit convicts us with regard to sin and how to live righteously. It is his promptings that create the most significant change for they come from within.



2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Holy Spirit works through the Word to change our way of thinking and our behaviour. The more time we spend in the Bible, the more our minds will be transformed to line up with God's character and purposes.

Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV)

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. ² Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

God provides us with each other to be catalysts of change and growth. As we become a community faith, we encourage one another, build each other up and hold each other accountable. We need each other in order to mature and have the strength to live out the Christ-life.

James 1:2-4 (NIV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴ Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

God provides "opportunities" to strip away issues in our lives that prevent us from maturing. These opportunities are not always pleasant, but they are necessary if we are to become the person we were created to be. The gardener prunes vines so that they will bear more fruit (John 15). Pruning is always a traumatic experience for a plant, but it produces great results.

Have you experienced a trial that in hindsight was a very valuable learning and faith strengthening experience for you? Share your experience.

What is stopping us from living the holy life God created us to experience?

The only thing stopping us from living a holy life is simply our decision to follow our own will and to not submit to the will of God. It is all a matter of choosing to live the Spirit-filled life where we surrender control to him and as a result he gives us greater self-control to rule our own bodies (Gal 5:23).



2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

What statements in these verses give you hope and encouragement?

We are complete, with everything we need to live a godly life. There is nothing more we need. All we have to do is apply God's truth and reject Satan's lies. The only things holding us back are the temptations of the flesh and the lies we choose to embrace. Give up the lie and embrace God's truth and you will experience the freedom your spirit desires.

Are you able to identify and share any changes God has been making in you over the past year? Have you seen any godly changes in other group members that you could identify?

AT HOME:

Each day take one of these verses and spend time reflecting on all its implications. Ask God to help you trust that he is at work in you, changing you to be like him.

Colossians 3:10 (NIV)

and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 (NIV)

⁴² *So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.