

Day 7 Reflections and Observations

Week in Review

Briefly review your daily reflections and observations. What stands out most to you about what God is saying to you?



SESSION 4



He Chose to Love Us Forever

This is how we know what love is:
Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

1 John 3:16

To follow Jesus implies that we enter into a way of life that is given character and shape and direction by the one who calls us.

Eugene H. Peterson, The Jesus Way

GROUP DISCUSSION: CHECKING IN (8 MINUTES)

A key part of getting to know God better is sharing your journey with others. Before watching the video, briefly check in with one another about your experiences since the last session. As time permits, discuss one or more of the following questions:

- Briefly share your experience of the session 3 practice, “Clothed with Christ in God’s Presence.” The focus of this practice was to use your daily routine of getting dressed as a prompt to be aware of God’s presence. To what degree did the practice help to increase your awareness of God’s presence not only at the start of the day but throughout it?
- Did increasing your awareness of God’s presence impact the way you experienced your day (i.e., your state of mind, the choices you made, the way you related to others)?
- What was the most meaningful or helpful watchword you identified in your daily Scripture reading? How did God use it to challenge, encourage, or comfort you?
- What similarities or differences do you notice among the watchwords each of you identified this week?

VIDEO: *HE CHOSE TO LOVE US FOREVER* (16 MINUTES)

Play the video segment for session 4. As you watch, use the outline provided to follow along or to take additional notes on anything that stands out to you.

Notes

The cross was a gift from God.

He has provided two kinds of sanctification to us:

Positional sanctification: Christ’s work *for* us. We are given a prize not because of what we do but because of who we know.

Progressive sanctification: Christ’s work *in* us. We are continuously transformed by God.

The cross is the universal symbol of Christianity. The design couldn’t be simpler: one beam represents the width of God’s love, and the other reflects the height of his holiness.

The cross is where God forgave his children without lowering his standards.

The sin is punished, but we are safe in the shadow of the cross. We were “made holy through the sacrifice Christ made in his body once and for all time” (Hebrews 10:10).

We are *positionally sanctified*—the achievement of Jesus’ blood is credited to us. We are also *progressively sanctified*—his work in us is ongoing. We can’t be more saved than we were the day we accepted Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and received salvation—but we can grow in that salvation.

As boldly as the center beam proclaims God’s holiness, the crossbeam declares his love.

Because of God’s love for all of us, we can engrave in our hearts the truth that Jesus is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Because of God’s love, the blood of Christ does not just cover our sins, or conceal our sins, or postpone our sins, or diminish our sins. It takes away our sins, once and for all time. . . . Jesus allows our mistakes to be lost in his perfection.

GROUP DISCUSSION (34 MINUTES)

Take a few minutes to talk about what you just watched.

1. What part of the teaching had the most impact on you?

Receiving the Gift of Sanctification

2. Max used the structure of the cross to describe how God forgave us without lowering his standards: “One beam reaches out, representing the width of God’s love,” he said, “and

the other reflects the heights of his holiness. The cross is the intersection of his love and his holiness.” The apostle Paul provides a beautiful description of God’s work on the cross when he writes, “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). Paul stresses the miracle of what God did for us on the cross with three distinct Greek words:

(1) *apolousasthe* (washed): to be washed entirely (not just a part), especially the removal of dirt; spiritually cleansed and purified by God.

(2) *hēgiasthēte* (sanctified): made holy, consecrated, set apart for a purpose.

(3) *edikaiōthēte* (justified): declared righteous, not guilty (in a legal sense); approved by God and conforming to God’s standard.¹⁴

- We all come to God in unique ways—some as children, others as adults; some through the intensity of a crisis, others through the quiet routines of life; some at a specific point in time, others during a broader season of life. Overall, how would you describe the journey that brought you to the cross?
- As you reflect on your own experience of surrendering your life to Christ, which of Paul’s three words in

1 Corinthians 6:11 do you relate to most or find most meaningful?

- How would you characterize the role your conversion experience plays in your life with God in this season of your life? For example, if you’ve been a Christian for many years, it may be that you don’t often think of it or perhaps take it for granted. If you’re a new believer, it may be a daily source of joy, gratitude, and strength.
3. Max described two kinds of sanctification: *positional sanctification*, which is God’s work *for* us; and *progressive sanctification*, which is God’s work *in* us. Here is how theologian Wayne Grudem briefly summarizes the two.¹⁵

Positional Sanctification (Justification)	Progressive Sanctification (Transformation)
A legal standing	An internal condition
Once for all time	Continuous throughout life
Entirely God’s work	We cooperate
Perfect in this life	Not perfect in this life
The same in all Christians	Greater in some than in others

- Of the five contrasts on the chart, which do you find most helpful or clarifying? Share the reasons for your response.

- In what ways, if any, would you say we sometimes confuse the two?

- How would you describe the potential outcome of neglecting either one?

4. “We can’t be more saved than we were the day we accepted Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and received salvation,” Max said, “but we can grow in that salvation.” In his second letter to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul beautifully acknowledges the reality of such progressive sanctification, the expectation that we are continuously transformed by Christ: “And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image” (2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT).

The Message puts it this way:

And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him (2 Corinthians 3:18 MSG).

The root of the Greek word Paul uses for *changed* is *metamorphoō*, which is also the source of the English word *metamorphosis*. A metamorphosis is a complete and profound change that happens through growth. In the natural world, metamorphosis is what occurs when a tadpole becomes a frog or a caterpillar becomes a butterfly.

- The kind of life-change metamorphosis implies is radical—from one form into another—but it is also gradual. What makes this kind of radical-gradual spiritual growth uniquely challenging?
- What desires or hopes does the promise of metamorphosis stir in you? For example, in what ways do you long for your life to be brighter, more beautiful?
- The process of change can be discouraging because we can’t always see it when we’re in the midst of it. As you reflect on your life with God, what is one gradual

but significant change you've experienced over time, and what insights might this experience provide as an encouragement for any gradual changes you're working through now?

5. Progressive sanctification includes not only the expectation of growth but also of an increasing aversion to and freedom from sin. "We obey God and shrink back from all that displeases him," Max said. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, the apostle Paul uses the image of light to help his readers understand what living out their salvation in this way requires of them: "For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8–10 NRSV).

To better understand what it looks like in practical terms to live this way, consider how author and pastor Dallas Willard describes some of the characteristics of children of light:

Whenever they are found to be in the wrong, they will never defend it—neither to themselves nor to others, much less to God. They are thankful to be found out.

They do not feel they are missing out on something good by not sinning. They are not disappointed and do not feel deprived.

[They are] mainly governed by the pull of the good. Their energy is not invested in *not* doing what is wrong, but in doing what is good.

Life in the path of rightness becomes easy and joyous.¹⁶

- Paul could have used the phrase "*people of light*" instead of "*children of light*." What nuances might his use of *children* suggest about what living in light requires of us?
- Take a moment to think of anyone you know in whom you have observed one or more of the four characteristics Willard describes. What specifically did you observe about that person? How did his or her life demonstrate the fruit of light—all that is good and right and true?
- Recall a recent time when you were found to be in the wrong. In what ways, if any, did you defend yourself—to yourself, to others, or to God? Or, how did you respond with gratitude at being found out?

- Which of the four characteristics Willard describes do you feel most intrigued by or drawn to? Share the reasons for your response.

Walking Together through Lent

6. Christ demonstrated his love for us on the cross, but his love didn't stop there. Every day, he invites us to receive his love anew and to be changed by it. As you continue to journey through Lent to Easter, in what ways or in what areas of life are you most aware of your need to receive God's love? How do you hope (or fear) you might be changed by that love?

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY: WHAT I WANT TO REMEMBER (2 MINUTES)

Complete this activity on your own.

1. Briefly review the outline and any notes you took.
2. In the space below, write down the most significant thing you gained in this session—from the teaching, activities, or discussions.

What I want to remember from this session . . .

LENTEN PRACTICE

Before concluding, briefly review the session 4 Lenten Practice, "The Pull of the Good."

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time together with prayer.