



WEEK SIX: HOW DOES GOD CHANGE MY BEHAVIOR?

Appetizer

(Teachers: Before your group session begins, prepare two different bowls. In one, place a piece of steak or chicken marinating in your favorite sauce. In the other, have a piece of steak or chicken with no marinade. Make sure to explain in this illustration what marinating is in the most vivid language you can.

Here you see two different pieces of meat. One of them is soaking in my favorite marinade. I can't wait to cook it and eat it as soon as our meeting is over! The other one doesn't have any marinade. Do you know which piece of meat will have more flavor and taste better after it's been cooked? It's the marinated one. Meat tastes best when it has marinated in the right mixture of sauces. That's because when you marinate meat, the juices and flavors of the sauces soak into the inside of the meat and make it taste so much better. What happens on the inside of the meat before it is cooked changes the way it tastes after you put it in your mouth.

What if I took this piece of meat that is not marinating and ate it later on? Would it ever taste like it had been marinating all day? Of course not. You simply can't fake marinade. Meat that has not marinated will probably taste bland. It will lack the flavors that come when meat soaks in the right mixture of sauces. When we encounter a relationship with God, we have the opportunity to soak in His presence. When we do this, He develops His qualities on the inside of us.

Main Course

The apostle Paul once wrote a letter to the church at Galatia. In this letter, Paul wanted the Galatians to really understand what it was like to have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This particular church thought that following Christ was about doing all of the right things and never doing any of the wrong things. But Paul explained that it was quite different.

Read Galatians 2:20

From the moment of our salvation when we enter into a relationship with God, our lives are never the same again. He gives us abundant life for now and for eternity. Paul tells us that the reason we have life is not because of anything we do but because of the fact that Christ lives inside of us. God wants us to know Him so that He can get inside of us and make our lives like Jesus Christ. He wants our thoughts to become like His thoughts. He wants the things we do to become more and more like the things that Jesus would do.

The last two weeks, we have learned about what God sees when He looks at us and about what building a relationship with Him looks like. Because Jesus lives inside of you, God sees Jesus when He looks at you. But that's not all!

God has put Himself in you - that's called His Holy Spirit inside of you. The Holy Spirit helps you in all areas of your life - helps you to have direction, to understand Scripture, to better obey your parents, to be wise, to make decisions, and so much more. You will start to see your behavior, actions, thoughts, and life change when you begin to understand that God is inside of you making you more and more like Him.

Dessert

(Teachers: Give each student a piece of clay or play-dough.)

Each one of you has a piece of clay in your hand. Take a few minutes to create anything you want to create.

(Teachers: After each individual finishes his/her creation, have some students demonstrate what they developed with their own hands.)

As I look around the room, it's clear that everyone created something that was unique to his or her personality. But what did all of us have in common when we created our object? All of us worked with our hands. And more importantly, all of us had an image in mind before we tried to create those objects with our hands.

This is exactly what God wants to do in your relationship with Him. When God created you, He had a perfect image in His mind. That image is Jesus Christ. For those who know God through a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is inside of them making them like the person of Jesus. God makes you like the image in His mind by using the Holy Spirit to make you like Jesus. In the same way that we talked about meat marinating, God soaks into our hearts and souls. He marinates Himself into us so that what takes place on the inside of us affects everything that happens on the outside of us.

God longs to change us on the inside. He has a very specific image in His mind of what He wants us to be like, and He has given us help to make us like Jesus. When we believe in God's activity in us and surrender to it, our lives begin to reflect the God we serve, and people all over the world begin to enter into that same relationship with God. As we leave, let's pray that God will help us be aware of all that He is doing on the inside to make us more loving, more faithful, and more like Jesus every single day.