

Series: REAL

Week 4

REAL Fruit

THE BIG IDEA

A real changed life does not stay private. When Jesus changes us, it changes how we live, love, serve, forgive, and respond to the people around us.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS:

Romans 12:1-2, 9-21; Matthew 5:14-16; Matthew 7:15-20

OUTCOME

Students will understand that real faith produces visible fruit and impacts the world around them through love, obedience, service, and self-sacrifice.

SUMMARY OF LESSON PROGRESSION

Movement 1: Lamps for God's Glory

Students see that if Christ has changed them, that change should be visible.

Movement 2: A Transformed Life

Students learn that a transformed mind becomes a transformed life.

Movement 3: Real Fruit Looks Like Real Love

Students see that the clearest evidence of real change is costly love for friends, enemies, and the people around them.

Opening

Illustration:

Imagine a farmer walking through an apple orchard, trying to figure out if his trees are healthy.

He probably is not going to cut every tree open to inspect the inside. That would destroy the tree.

Instead, he looks for signs of life.

ASK:

How can you tell if a tree is healthy?

>> leaves, growth, LAND ON FRUIT

So if a fruit tree is healthy, what should it produce?

>> fruit that's good

If a fruit tree is diseased, what might it produce?

>> bad fruit or no fruit

SUMMARIZE: Matthew 7:15-20

Jesus uses a similar image in Matthew 7 to describe people. He says that healthy trees produce good fruit, and diseased trees produce bad fruit. In other words, what something is on the inside eventually shows up in what it produces.

ASK: Does fruit make the tree alive, or does fruit show that the tree is alive?

>> fruit shows the tree is alive

In the same way, our good works do not save us, but they do show that Jesus is changing us.

Last week, we talked about the REAL You: How God gives us a new heart, makes us a new creation, restores our identity, and begins to make us more like Jesus.

ASK: If Jesus really changes someone on the inside, what kinds of things would you expect to start changing on the outside?

>> actions, words, priorities, relationships, love, forgiveness, obedience, how they treat people

That is what we are talking about tonight. A changed life may not become perfect overnight, but real inward change should begin producing visible fruit.



Movement 1: Lamps for God's Glory

READ: Matthew 5:14–15

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”

ASK:

What does Jesus call His followers?

>> Jesus says His followers are the light of the world, a city on a hill, and a lamp. For this section, focus on the lamp image

What do people do with a lamp?

>> put it on a stand, let it give light to the house, don't hide it under a basket

Jesus says His people are like a lamp. You do not light a lamp and then hide it. You use it to light the house.

MAIN POINT: If Christ really changes us, that change cannot stay hidden. The inner change must come out.

Your life is transformed for your good, but not only for your good. It is also meant to display God's glory.

READ: Matthew 5:16

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

ASK: According to Jesus, what happens when people see your good works?

>> They give glory to your Father in heaven.

When people see your life changing, the goal is not for you to look impressive. The goal is for them to see God at work and give Him glory.

MAIN POINT: Our transformed lives are meant to put God's glory on display.

>> This would be a strong place to add a personal example of someone whose faith became visible in ordinary life. Possibly highlight a student whose faith changed their habits or friendships, or a story of how your faith changed your actions.

So how does that happen? How do we make sure the inner change comes out?



Movement 2: A Transformed Life

Paul gives us a picture of how we do this in Romans 12.

READ: Romans 12:2

Do not conform 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.

Paul says not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewal of your mind. In other words, the gospel does not just change what you believe in your head. God begins changing how you think, what you value, what you love, and how you live.

MAIN POINT: A new heart becomes a transformed life.

A few verses later, Paul tells us what a transformed life looks like. As we read, listen for examples of what real change looks like in ordinary relationships.

READ: Romans 12:9–21

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another.

Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

ASK:

Which command would be hardest to fake if your heart was not actually being changed?

>> expect: bless those who persecute you

Does this sound like a faith that's private?

>> No. Romans 12 does not describe a faith that stays in your head. It describes a life that is being transformed.

MAIN POINT: Real inward change produces outward fruit.



Movement 3: Real Fruit Looks Like Love

Apple trees produce apples, but a transformed life produces many kinds of good works. To summarize the fruit of a changed life, Jesus gives us a simple category: Love.

Listen to how Jesus responds when asked, “What is the most important commandment?”

READ: Mark 12:29–31

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’

The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

There is no commandment greater than these.”

ASK: What does Jesus say are the greatest commandments?

>> love God and love your neighbor

We should love God with everything we have, and love those around us as well.

In John 13:34–35, Jesus tells His disciples that people will know they belong to Him by their love for one another.

John says something similar in 1 John 3:14: love for other believers is evidence that we have passed from death to life.

Real change in your heart looks like real love poured out for others, but Jesus does not only call us to love people who are easy to love.

READ: Matthew 5:43–44

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”

Jesus does not only call us to love the people who are easiest to love. He even calls us to love our enemies. Love means being good to those who show you evil, and that’s really challenging.

It is one thing to be nice to people who are nice to you, but it is another thing to:

- Bless those who persecute you.
- Forgive someone who hurt you.
- Serve someone who cannot pay you back.
- Do good to someone who has done evil to you.
- Love people who annoy, exclude, insult, or oppose you.

These are exactly the kinds of things Jesus calls us to do, and we will only be able to do these things if our lives have been transformed by Him.

MAIN POINT: The clearest evidence of real inward change is real outward love, even when it is costly.

That might mean:

- forgiving someone who wronged you
- loving a difficult family member
- serving someone who never says thank you
- choosing not to retaliate
- defending someone others mock

Let's take a moment to pray and reflect on these questions. If something comes to mind, write down a quick note for yourself.

ASK:

Is there someone God is calling you to love in a way that costs you something?

If you did not call yourself a Christian, what evidence would show others you are one?

Where should the inward change Jesus is doing in you become more visible this week?

Jesus changes us from the inside out, but that inner change is not meant to stay hidden. A changed heart becomes a changed life. Real faith produces real fruit, and the clearest fruit is love.

Small Group Questions

Leader Note: *This lesson should feel practical and honest, not shame-heavy. Keep reminding students that good works do not earn salvation. Good works are the fruit of a life changed by Jesus.*

Movement 1: Lamps for God's Glory

What does Jesus mean when He relates His followers to lamps that shouldn't be covered?

>> The inward change Jesus is doing in us should become visible in how we live.

Why is it important that good works lead people to glorify God, not us?

>> Some students may wonder why God cares about receiving glory. Help them see that God is not needy or insecure. He is perfectly good, and all goodness ultimately comes from Him. So when people see real goodness in us, it is right for that goodness to point back to Him.

Movement 2: A Transformed Life

Which command from Romans 12:9-21 is the most challenging to you?

>> This is a good conversation point. Follow-up questions could be "Which one of these seems like the easiest?" or "Which one of these do you see yourself already doing?"

Why is it important to remember that good works do not save us, but show that Jesus is changing us?

>> If students need another passage, James 2:14-17 helps show that real faith does not stay invisible. James is not saying works save us, but that living faith produces visible obedience.

Movement 3: Real Fruit Looks Like Real Love

Who can you go out of your way to love this week, especially if it's difficult?

>> Push students toward a specific action, not just a general intention. If appropriate, have them tell one person in the group who can pray for them and check in during the week.

Fill in the blank: This week, I want the reality of Christ to show in

_____.