

STUDY GUIDE

CHIP INGRAM



THE MIRACLE

OF LIFE

CHANGE



HOW GOD TRANSFORMS  
HIS CHILDREN

# SESSION 2

## TRANSFORMATION

### OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO LIFE CHANGE

Last session we said that change is part of our DNA . . . that we are hardwired to continually “change for the better.” Depending on where we are in life, we are getting faster or slower, larger or smaller, more skillful or falling behind—more changes than we can count. But if change is inevitable, then what makes it so difficult to experience the kind of **life change** we desire? Why can so many of us easily relate to Chip when he talks about the heartache and frustration of wanting to change, but feeling helpless? We all know what it feels like to try for so long to change some area of our life that sometimes we end up settling for faking it, or just plain failure. The truth is, the cycle of “*try hard, do good, fail; try hard, fail, fake it*” can be broken. You can begin to undergo the radical transformation you’ve been longing for—you just have to be willing to allow God access to your heart. He longs to give you the life you desire by changing you from the inside out.

In this session we begin with the underlying reason that drives spiritual transformation or life change. We have

*“Life can’t stay the same. . . . We must reflect Him living in us.”*

already recognized that there is a call from God to morph—to let Jesus live His life through us. We learned that there is a process for spiritual transformation—the cocoon of authentic, godly relationships in the body of Christ. Now we will see *why* spiritual transformation is not an option for believers—it’s a necessity! Then, we will step back and look at some of the primary obstacles we encounter in our journey toward spiritual transformation and explore specific ways we can overcome them.



## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO LIFE CHANGE

### The Reason—God’s Church Must Reflect His Character

*There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. —Ephesians 4:4-6 (NIV)*

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### Three primary causes lead to failure when it comes to living the transformed life:

**First reason** we fail to morph: Spiritual \_\_\_\_\_.

**“Our failure to understand our identity in Christ and how to appropriate grace destines us to the ‘try hard, do good, fail’ syndrome.”**

\_\_\_\_\_ will never bring about the righteous life that God requires.

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. —Ephesians 4:1 (NIV).*

We need to understand . . .

. . . that we are justified in Christ. (Ephesians 1–3)

. . . that this growth in grace is a process. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

. . . how to appropriate the grace that’s available by faith. (Romans 12:2)

The **cause** for spiritual ignorance: Lack of biblical \_\_\_\_\_.

The **cure** for spiritual ignorance: Master the English \_\_\_\_\_.

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**Second reason** we fail to morph: Spiritual \_\_\_\_\_.

**“Our failure to actively participate in in-depth, Christ-centered, honest relationships makes transformation not hard, but impossible.”**

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*“You’ve got to have some people that you’re ‘real’ with . . . authentic, other-centered, vulnerable, real relationships.”*

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. —Ephesians 4:2-3 (NIV)*

The **cause** for spiritual isolation: Sin of pride.

The **cure** for spiritual isolation: Join a small group.

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**Third reason** we fail to morph: Spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ (near-sightedness).

**“Our failure to see the magnitude of ‘what’s at stake’ in our call to Christ-like behavior minimizes its importance and shatters our motivation.”**

*There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. —Ephesians 4:4-6 (NIV)*

*“It’s about Him, and His name and the integrity of His church, and a generation of people . . . I think we can start The Miracle of Life Change.”*

The **cause** for spiritual myopia: We’ve become a \_\_\_\_\_ culture.

The **cure** for spiritual myopia: Get a high view of \_\_\_\_\_. (Isaiah 40)

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## SESSION 2 Transformation Conversation

- 1** Share what your current view of God is with the group. Where did you get your current view of God? How has it changed over the last year? In pursuit of a more accurate view of God, what step or steps do you feel you need to take?

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- 2** What's your response to Chip's question, "Have you made God a cosmic vending machine?" In what other ways has today's culture affected our view of who God is?

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- 3** After hearing Chip speak about Paul's description of the church and its relationship with God in Ephesians 4:4-6, what characteristic do you long to see displayed more prominently in your church?

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- 4** Are you experiencing any of the pitfalls to living a transformed life? Spiritual ignorance, isolation, or myopia? What's the cause? What's the cure? How do you plan to act on the cure this week?

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- 5** Finish this sentence: My purpose on this planet is \_\_\_\_\_. How is God using you to reflect His glory? Are you ready and willing to step outside of your comfort zone and allow Him to work in you?

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**JUST AS THERE'S MOLDING AND SHAPING THAT HAPPENS** with the butterfly in the cocoon, so transformation is a process. The Bible calls this process "sanctification." A big word that basically means the moment you ask the Spirit of God to come into your life as a believer, He inhabits your heart and begins the transformation process in you.

Once you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, you have all of His Spirit that you're ever going to have. You have all the grace you'll ever need. God longs for you to progressively surrender control of who you are to Him so that the life of Christ can be lived out through you.

That's why the focus of New Testament Christianity is relationship and not works or simply morality. Do you see the difference? It's a process—a journey. Based on today's session, list what you consider to be the next two priorities God wants you to deal with in the area of spiritual transformation.

Priority One

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Priority Two

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**BY AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY** I'm talking about vulnerable, deep, intimate, intentionally accountable relationships where God's Word is at the center. Relationships that encourage an openness to share with one another what's really going on—confessing sin, encouraging one another, sharing where you've blown it, people looking you in the eye and saying, "I've been there too. Now you know you can't keep living that way, but I'm not down on you. I'm for you." Your group may be your family, a small group at church, or any place where genuine relationships can occur, where you feel connected and can overcome isolation.

Without this kind of authentic relationship you are destined to the "*try hard, do good, fake it*" syndrome. Millions of people are faking the Christian life, living with the guilt and struggle and lack of peace.

Identify three authentic relationships and/or community group(s) available in your life. Note one benefit each of them could offer you.

### Anti-Spiritual Isolation Groups



**This week**, spend some time thinking and praying about Chip's closing thoughts in the video. Do you need to repent about the casual way you have been thinking about God? Have you had to admit that the struggle to describe your view of God is because you haven't thought about Him very much? Remember that Chip's purpose wasn't to make you feel guilty, but to help you simply clear away some of the obvious self-centered misconceptions of God. God loves you and longs for a personal relationship with you. Open your heart and mind and ask God to use these sessions to help you gain a significantly higher view of who He really is.

What are some of the words you've heard used to describe God (like holy, sovereign, loving, omnipresent) that you want to understand better so that you can better understand the One they describe? Make a personal list in your journal and begin to develop definitions.

**For the next session**, carefully read Ephesians 4:1-10, reflecting on the contents of the last two sessions. Answer the question: What was Jesus doing from the time He was put into the grave until He rose three days later?

If you are already part of a small group, take some time to pray specifically for each of the members this week.