



WHAT HAPPENS IF WE BELIEVE GOD?

Living as New Creations and Ambassadors for Christ



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5.31.26

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2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-20

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Title: What Happens If We Believe God: Living as New Creations and Ambassadors for Christ

Sermon Summary: This powerful sermon challenges believers to move beyond simply believing in God to actively believing God and His promises and His power to transform us completely. Pastor Canady explores 2 Corinthians 5:17-20, emphasizing that when we are in Christ, we become new creations with a divine commission to serve as ambassadors of reconciliation. We're reminded that God doesn't patch up broken pieces; He creates entirely new lives.

The message addresses contemporary challenges facing the community—attacks on voting rights, civil rights, and educational opportunities—while declaring that God is still building even when the world is tearing down. The sermon celebrates five years of LIFE Male STEAM Academy as a tangible example of what God can accomplish when His people believe Him and act on His vision. God still builds when the world tears down, still opens doors when systems close them, and still writes new chapters when others try to erase our progress.

The central call is for believers to recognize their identity not in worldly categories but in their relationship with Christ, and to understand that salvation is not just for personal benefit but carries a commission to reconcile others to God. This isn't just about receiving salvation—it's about understanding that God saves us with purpose, commissioning us

as ambassadors of reconciliation in a divided world. The call is clear: we must stop focusing solely on what's being taken away and start celebrating what God is still doing, because our God specializes in making the impossible possible.

Chapters

Chapter 1: The Condition: Being In Christ

We explore the foundational condition for transformation - being in Christ, not just around Him or familiar with Him, but truly connected to Him.

Chapter 2: The Creation: Becoming New

We learn that when we are in Christ, we become a new creation - not improved or renovated, but completely made new by God's transforming power.

Chapter 3: The Commission: Ministry of Reconciliation

We discover that God didn't just save us to leave us blessed, but to use us as agents of reconciliation, bringing divided people back together and back to God.

Chapter 4: The Calling: Ambassadors of Christ

We are called to be Christ's ambassadors, representing the Kingdom of God while living in this world, advancing His interests and delivering His message.

Key Points:

- The condition of transformation is being "in Christ," not merely knowing about Christ or being around Christ
- God's promise of new creation is available to "anyone"—not based on perfection but on connection to Christ

- Before God changes a community, He must first change a person from the inside out
- Salvation comes with a commission—the ministry of reconciliation to bring divided people, families, and communities back together
- Believers are ambassadors of Christ, official representatives of heaven's Kingdom living in this world
- God specializes in creating new lives, not just patching up broken pieces
- We cannot have a new season without becoming a new creation internally
- The church must be a ministry of reconciliation when rights are challenged and people are marginalized
- What God has ordained cannot be destroyed by opposition, criticism, or delay
- Our greatest identity is not in race, gender, profession, or affiliations, but in our relationship with Jesus Christ

Scripture Reference:

- 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 (primary focus)
- The passage emphasizes being a new creation in Christ, the ministry of reconciliation, and serving as Christ's ambassadors

Stories:

- The founding and five-year journey of LIFE Male STEAM Academy, which opened during the pandemic in 2021 despite opposition and doubt, now serving students from sixth through tenth grade with plans for the first graduating class in two years

- Testimony from the eighth-grade promotion where parents shared that their sons had never experienced anything positive in school until attending LIFE Male STEAM Academy
- Personal testimony about the pastor's habit of not eating before preaching and recent dehydration requiring him to change this practice
- Biblical references to Noah (preserved a generation), Moses (delivered a nation), Esther (saved her people), and Peter (called to catch men, not just fish) as examples of God's commission beyond personal salvation
- The symbolism of the cross with its vertical beam connecting us to God and horizontal beam connecting us to one another, with Jesus at the center

Scripture References from the Sermon

Explicitly Mentioned/Read:

1. **2 Corinthians 5:17** - Main text: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, and the new has come."
2. **2 Corinthians 5:18** - "All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."
3. **2 Corinthians 5:19** - "That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them."
4. **2 Corinthians 5:20** - "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us."

Alluded To/Referenced:

5. **John 15:5** - Branch connected to the vine metaphor
6. **John 17:14-16** - "You are in the world, but not of the world"

7. **Philippians 3:20** - Citizenship in heaven concept
8. **Exodus 3-4** - Moses and the burning bush
9. **Genesis 6-9** - Noah and the ark/preservation of generation
10. **Esther 4:14** - Esther saving her people
11. **Matthew 4:19** - Peter catching men instead of fish
12. **Ephesians 2:10** - Created for good works/purpose
13. **Isaiah 43:19** - God doing a new thing
14. **Ezekiel 37:1-14** - Dry bones reference

Suggested Relevant Verses for Main Themes:

Theme: New Creation

- **Galatians 6:15** - "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation."
- **Ephesians 4:22-24** - Putting off the old self, putting on the new self

Theme: Reconciliation

- **Colossians 1:19-20** - God reconciling all things through Christ
- **Romans 5:10-11** - Reconciled to God through Christ

Theme: Ambassadors/Representatives

- **Matthew 5:14-16** - You are the light of the world
- **1 Peter 2:9** - Royal priesthood, holy nation

Theme: God's Faithfulness

- **Philippians 1:6** - He who began a good work will complete it
- **Numbers 23:19** - God is not a man that He should lie

Theme: Overcoming Opposition

- **Romans 8:31** - If God is for us, who can be against us?
- **Isaiah 54:17** - No weapon formed against you shall prosper

QUOTES:

While the world is busy tearing things down, our God is still building. While systems are closing doors, God is still making a way out of no way.

It's not enough for you to believe in Him. You have to believe Him.

Your greatest identity is not your race or your gender. Your greatest identity is not your fraternity or your sorority. Your greatest identity is in your relationship with Jesus the Christ.

God is not in the business of merely just patching up broken pieces. God specializes in creating new lives.

Before I do something new around you, I got to do something new within you.

God didn't just save us. God sent us. God didn't just bless us. God commissioned us because salvation is only the beginning of the story.

We live in Pittsburgh, but our citizenship is in heaven. We work here, but our citizenship is in heaven. We vote here. We raise families here, but we represent heaven.

If God said it, He'll do it. If God promised it, He'll perform it. And if God started it, He will complete it.

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5-Day Devotional: What Happens If We Believe God?

Day 1: The Condition - Connected to Christ

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 15:1-8

Devotional: Your greatest identity is not found in your profession, education, or accomplishments, but in your connection to Christ. Just as a fish must be in water to live and a branch must remain in the vine to bear fruit, you must be in Christ to experience true transformation. The condition is not perfection but connection. God is not asking if you have it all together; He is asking if you will surrender to the One who holds it all together. Today, examine where you are finding your identity. Are you in Christ, or merely around Christ? The promise of new creation begins when you are fully connected to Him. God's love for you is unchanging—there is nothing you can do to make Him love you more, and nothing you can do to make Him love you less.

Reflection Question: What areas of your life need to shift from being "around Christ" to being "in Christ"?

Day 2: The Creation - Made Brand New

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Psalm 51:10

Devotional: God is not in the business of merely patching up broken pieces—He specializes in creating new lives. When God touches you, He

does not just improve you or upgrade you; He makes you a new creation. The old passes away, and the new comes alive. God can take your mess and make it a message, your test and turn it into a testimony, your trial and transform it into a triumph. But here is the truth: you cannot have a new season without becoming a new creation. God wants to do something new within you before He does something new around you. If your mind stays old, your future stays old. Allow God to renew your thinking, transform your heart, and reshape your possibilities. You have been changed by the power of God.

Reflection Question: What old patterns of thinking or behavior is God calling you to release so He can create something new in you?

Day 3: The Commission - Ministry of Reconciliation

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Matthew 5:9; Colossians 1:19-20

Devotional: God did not save you just so you could be blessed—He saved you so you could lead others to Him. Salvation is only the beginning of your story. God has given you the ministry of reconciliation, which means you are called to help bring divided families, communities, and generations back together and back to God. When you feed the hungry, you reconcile people to dignity. When you visit the sick, you reconcile them to hope. When you mentor the young, you reconcile them to their purpose. Everything you do as a believer is reconciliation work. The cross connects us vertically to God and horizontally to one another, with Jesus at the center. Do not retreat when things get hard; the church must be a ministry of reconciliation in a divided world.

Reflection Question: Who in your life needs reconciliation, and how can you be an agent of God's peace and healing today?

Day 4: The Calling - Ambassadors for Christ

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20; Philippians 3:20; John 17:14-18

Devotional: You are an ambassador of the Kingdom of God. An ambassador lives in one place while representing another. You live in this world, but your citizenship is in heaven. You represent a kingdom where love is greater than hate, grace is greater than guilt, hope is greater than despair, and faith is greater than fear. God has chosen ordinary people to represent an extraordinary King. You do not carry your own message; you deliver the King's message. When you walk through your workplace, your neighborhood, your home, people should encounter the values of another kingdom. You are the hands, feet, voice, and heart of God. Stop seeing yourself as just a member and start seeing yourself as an ambassador representing the Most High God.

Reflection Question: In what specific ways can you represent the kingdom of God more faithfully in your daily life this week?

Day 5: The Promise - God Completes What He Starts

Reading: Philippians 1:6; Isaiah 55:10-11; Hebrews 10:23

Devotional: What happens if we believe God? Everything changes. The same God who opened doors before will do it again. The same God who started the work in you will finish it. When the world is busy tearing things down, your God is still building. When systems close doors, God still makes a way out of no way. You cannot stop what God has ordained. Pharaoh could not stop it, slavery could not stop it, and the challenges you face today cannot stop it either. Keep believing, keep building, keep serving, and keep hoping. If God said it, He will do it. If God promised it,

He will perform it. If God started it, He will complete it. The best is yet to come for those who believe God and trust His faithfulness.

Reflection Question: What promise from God do you need to hold onto today, trusting that He will complete what He has started in your life?

Closing Prayer: Father, thank You for making me a new creation in Christ. Help me to live as Your ambassador, representing Your kingdom with boldness and love. Strengthen my faith to believe You completely, trusting that You will finish what You have started. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Small Group Discussion Guide

"What Happens If We Believe God?"

Based on 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together with prayer, asking God to open hearts and minds to receive His word and apply it to daily life.

Ice Breaker

Share a time when someone believed in you when you didn't believe in yourself. How did that change your perspective or actions?

Key Scripture

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come. All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." - 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Main Takeaways

1. The Condition: In Christ

Your greatest identity is not your race, gender, profession, or affiliations—it's your relationship with Jesus Christ.

2. The Creation: New Life

God doesn't just improve or upgrade us; He makes us completely new. When God touches you, He changes you from the inside out.

3. The Commission: Ministry of Reconciliation

God didn't save us just to bless us—He saved us to use us. We are called to help reconcile people to God and to one another.

4. The Calling: Christ's Ambassadors

We are official representatives of heaven living in this world. We carry the King's message and advance the interests of His Kingdom.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. The pastor emphasized the difference between believing "in" God versus believing God. What's the difference, and why does it matter?
2. The sermon states, "Before God can change a community, God must first change a person." How have you seen this principle play out in your own life or community?
3. What does it mean to be "in Christ" rather than just "around Christ" or "familiar with Christ"?

Personal Reflection

4. The text says "the old has gone, the new has come." What "old things" has God removed from your life? What "new things" has He created in you?
5. The pastor mentioned that we often want new blessings without becoming new creations. In what areas of your life are you resisting God's transforming work?
6. How does understanding yourself as an "ambassador of Christ" change the way you approach your daily responsibilities—at work, at home, or in your community?

Application and Action

7. The sermon highlighted the ministry of reconciliation. Who in your life needs reconciliation—with God, with family, or with community? How can you be part of that healing process?
8. The pastor said, "God didn't save you so you can walk around and brag that you're blessed and highly favored. God saved you so that

you will lead somebody else to Him." Who is God calling you to lead to Him right now?

9. What obstacles or opposition are you facing that might be causing you to doubt what God can do? How does this message challenge your perspective on those obstacles?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Identity Check

- Write down all the ways you typically identify yourself (job, role, achievements, etc.)
- Then write "I am in Christ" at the top of the list
- Pray daily that God would help you see your identity in Christ as primary

Option 2: Reconciliation Action

- Identify one broken relationship in your life
- Take one concrete step toward reconciliation this week (prayer, phone call, letter, conversation)
- Journal about the experience

Option 3: Ambassador Mindset

- Each morning this week, pray: "God, I am Your ambassador today. Use me to represent You well."

- Look for one opportunity each day to represent Christ's love, grace, or truth
- Share your experiences with the group next time

Option 4: Testimony Sharing

- Write out your testimony of how God has changed you (old creation to new creation)
 - Share it with at least one person this week who needs to hear about God's transforming power
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Group Activity

"From Old to New" Exercise

1. Give each person a piece of paper
 2. On one side, write "OLD" and list things God has brought you out of
 3. On the other side, write "NEW" and list what God has created in you
 4. Share with the group (only what you're comfortable sharing)
 5. Pray over each person's journey from old to new
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Memory Verse

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come." - 2 Corinthians 5:17

Challenge group members to memorize this verse and meditate on it throughout the week.

Closing Reflection Questions

- What is one thing God spoke to you through this sermon?
 - What is one action you will take this week as a result?
 - How can this group pray for you?
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Closing Prayer

Pray together, focusing on:

- Thanking God for making us new creations
 - Asking for boldness to fulfill our calling as ambassadors
 - Interceding for those who need reconciliation with God
 - Committing to believe God for what seems impossible
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For Next Time

- Share testimonies of how you practiced being an ambassador this week
 - Discuss any breakthroughs or challenges you experienced
 - Continue to encourage one another in believing God
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Additional Resources

Recommended Reading:

- 2 Corinthians chapters 4-6 (fuller context)

- Romans 12:1-2 (transformation and renewal)
- Ephesians 2:1-10 (new creation in Christ)

Reflection Questions for Personal Study:

- What does it mean that God is "not counting men's sins against them"?
- How does being a new creation affect how I view my past?
- What would change in my life if I truly lived as an ambassador of Christ?

"If God said it, He'll do it. If God promised it, He'll perform it. And if God started it, He will complete it."

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the difference between believing in God and believing God, and how does this distinction impact the way we live out our faith daily?
2. The sermon emphasizes that our greatest identity is in Christ rather than in our race, gender, profession, or affiliations. How does this truth challenge the way society defines identity, and how can we better embrace our identity in Christ?
3. Paul writes that if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation where the old has gone and the new has come. What old things in your life need to pass away for God to do a new work in you?

4. The pastor states that God saves us not just to bless us but to commission us for service. How does this understanding change your perspective on salvation and your role in the kingdom of God?
5. What does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ in practical terms, and how can we represent the values of God's kingdom in our workplaces, homes, and communities?
6. The sermon highlights that reconciliation is not pretending problems do not exist but putting God in the middle of our problems. What broken relationships or divisions in your life need God's reconciling power?
7. How does the success of Life Mail STEAM Academy despite opposition and obstacles demonstrate what happens when we believe God rather than focusing on limitations?
8. The pastor mentions that before God can change a community, He must first change a person. What personal transformation needs to occur in you before God can use you to impact your community?
9. In what ways are Christians called to be agents of reconciliation when facing challenges to voting rights, civil rights, and truth in our current society?
10. The condition for becoming a new creation is being in Christ, not around Christ or familiar with Christ. How can you deepen your connection to be truly in Christ rather than merely associated with Him?