

Changeless!

Leader's Notes and Bible Passages Available Online

(Please do NOT use the "if time permits" sections when your study session time is limited. These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private.)

What changes have occurred in your lifetime that have impacted you in a positive way? In a negative way? Explain your answer with a partner or in your small group. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.**

During this Bible study, we will explore our changeless God and His "constants" in our lives. His power, presence, promises, and love for us in Christ Jesus are faithful and steady, even in our turbulent, changing, and often storm-tossed world. We are strengthened by God's amazing truth in Hebrews 13:8: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* Remembering God's faithfulness in the past, we can confidently look to our future, as we live today with our changeless God leading and guiding us.

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, You are our awesome and unchanging God! Thank You for Your plan of salvation in our lives and for sending Your Son Jesus to live a perfect life, suffer, die, and then rise again from the dead for us. We know that because He lives, we, too, have eternal life in heaven if we have faith in our Savior. We praise You that You have sent us the Holy Spirit Who engenders and nurtures our faith even in the midst of change and trials in our lives. Help us by the power of the Spirit to share the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday and today and forever. Give us wisdom and insight as we read and discuss Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Jesus Christ ... Yesterday

The words of the meaning to the Second Article in Luther's *Small Catechism** remind us: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord." How is Jesus Christ identified as true God in the following Bible passages?

Divine names: **John 8:58 (Exodus 3:14); John 20:28; 1 John 5:20** _____

John 8:58: ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." (Exodus 3:14: ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'")

John 20:28: ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

1 John 5:20: ²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Divine attributes: **Matthew 28:18; Matthew 28:20b; John 1:1-2; John 21:17** _____

Matthew 28:18: ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (omnipotent)

Matthew 28:20b: ^{20b} And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (omnipresent)

John 1:1-2: ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. (eternal)

John 21:17: ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. (omniscient)

Divine works: **Matthew 9:6; John 1:3; John 5:27; Hebrews 1:3-4** _____

Matthew 9:6: ⁶ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home (miracle)."

John 1:3: ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. (creation)

John 5:27: ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

Hebrews 1:3-4: ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (preservation)

Divine glory and honor: **John 5:22-23; Philippians 2:10** _____

John 5:22-23: ²² For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Philippians 2:10: ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

How is Jesus Christ identified as true man in the following Bible passages? _____

1 Timothy 2:5

1 Timothy 2:5: ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. God's Word calls Him a man.

Matthew 26:38

Matthew 26:38: ³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." Jesus had a soul.

Luke 24:39

Luke 24:39: ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." Jesus had a body.

Matthew 4:2; John 11:35; John 19:28; Hebrews 4:14-16 Jesus had human feelings and actions.

Matthew 4:2: ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

John 11:35: ³⁵ Jesus wept.

John 19:28: ²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."

Hebrews 4:14-16: ¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Read **Genesis 3:15** and **John 3:16-17** for God's salvation plan. _____

Genesis 3:15: ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

John 3:16-17: ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

How did our loving God and Savior fulfill God's plan and promise of salvation for the world? _____

See **John 10:1; John 11:25-26; Romans 3:23-26; Galatians 4:1-7; Ephesians 2:1-10**. Be specific.

John 10:11: ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, died for the world.

John 11:25-26: ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Jesus rose and those who believe in Him will also rise and have eternal life.

Romans 3:23-26: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Jesus lived a perfect life and we are justified through His blood (death) on the cross as punishment for all sins.

Galatians 4:1-7: ¹ I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. Through Jesus, we become the children of God and His heirs by grace. We become loving children of our Heavenly Father.

Ephesians 2:1-10: ¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. We were dead in our sins, but God has made us alive by His grace through the gift of faith in Christ Jesus and gives us His immeasurable riches, that we might live to His glory and follow Him.

What difference has that made in your life? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Read **Psalm 77: 10–15**. ¹⁰ Then I said, “I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.” ¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. ¹² I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. ¹³ Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? ¹⁴ You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples. ¹⁵ You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.

Asaph begins this Psalm in a state of trial and tribulation, but then meditates on what the Lord has done for him. What does he remember about God? _____ **He remembers what deeds and wonders the Lord has done and how God has redeemed His people.**

How can remembering what God has done in our lives in the past help us to live today and into the future? _____ **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

In **Hebrews 13:5** we are reminded that our Lord promises, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” How does knowing that God always keeps His promises – including this one! – affect our attitude during turbulent and changing situations in our lives? _____ **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Faith Talk: Being immutable or unchangeable, is another attribute of God. When you consider the many attributes of Jesus Christ, which one is most meaningful to you and why? Share with a partner or the small group. **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Jesus Christ ... Today

Read **Isaiah 35:3–6** and **Matthew 11:2–6**. How did Jesus fulfill the prophecy made by Isaiah? _____
Isaiah 35:3-6: ³Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴ Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.” ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.
Matthew 11:2-6: ² Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴ And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

We might say to ourselves, “Yes, Jesus did these things then, but He is not doing them now.” However, consider the following examples of the sinful condition we were all in before our salvation in Jesus Christ. Read the Bible verse and explain what God is doing today to transform the lives of His people. (Refer also to **Matthew 11:5**.)

Eyes **blinded** by the gods of this world: **2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 1:17–18** _____ **God has opened the eyes of His people to the light of the Good News of salvation in Christ Jesus.**
2 Corinthians 4:6: ⁶ For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
Ephesians 1:17-18: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

Those **crippled** by sin: **Romans 6:4** _____ **We have been baptized and our sins have been forgiven. Our lives are transformed to live for Him.**
Romans 6:4: ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
Ears **deaf** to the Word of God: **John 10:27; Romans 10:17** _____ **The people of God have been given faith through hearing the Word of God and the faith-instilling work of the Spirit. His people follow Him.**
John 10:27: ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
Romans 10:17: ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Those **dead** in trespasses and sins: **Colossians 2:13–14** _____ **God’s people were dead, but are alive in Christ, through His perfect life, death, and resurrection.**

Colossians 2:13-14: ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

The poor **not receiving** the Good News: **1 Corinthians 15:1-11** _____ **God's people are made spiritually rich in Christ Jesus, as we hear the Gospel message and believe by the power of the Spirit.**

1 Corinthians 15:1-11: ¹ Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

How does the Lord accomplish all this in our lives today? See **John 15:26** and **Titus 3:4-7**. _____

John 15:26: ²⁶ "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. **The Helper, the Holy Spirit works in our lives.**

Titus 3:4-7: ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. **The Spirit works through Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Word – His Means of Grace.**

The Holy Spirit works in our lives through His Word and Sacraments. Why is it so important to daily read God's Word, daily remember our Baptism, and regularly participate in the Lord's Supper? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Faith Talk: How can we live our lives by the power of the Spirit to the fullest today, trusting in the promises of our unchangeable God? What does that look like in our daily living? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Jesus Christ ... Forever

It would not be enough to say that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today if somewhere down the road He should cease to be. But the truth of our God is that the best is yet to come! Read **1 Corinthians 15:50-58**. Define the future of every believer in Christ. _____ **Eternal life; imperishable; changed.**

1 Corinthians 15:50-58: ⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Read **Hebrews 11:10**. ¹⁰ For he [Abraham] was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. What was Abraham in the past looking forward to in the future? _____ **Heaven.**

Read **1 Corinthians 15:19-20** and **Hebrews 10:23**. What is our hope and what is it based upon as believers in Christ? _____ **Our hope is living with our Savior Jesus forever. It is based upon the One who promises that eternal life – our Lord Jesus!**

1 Corinthians 15:19-20: ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Hebrews 10:23: ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

As we look forward to our future, forever, with our Lord, what does **Romans 5:1-5** say our lives in the present will look like? _____ **We will suffer for the sake of Jesus which produces endurance, then character, and finally hope. The Holy Spirit fills us with God's love.**

Romans 5:1-5: ¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

In addition, what does **1 Peter 3:13-16** encourage us to do? _____ **Honor Christ as holy; endure suffering for righteousness' sake; be prepared to share your faith and the reason for the hope that you have.**

1 Peter 3:13-16: ¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

Faith Talk: Think outside the box. What color would you use to paint the hope that is within you because of our resurrected Savior? Why? Share with a partner or the small group. **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share. Have fun with this!**

Faith Talk: Read **Philippians 3:14.** ¹⁴ **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** How do the changeless promises from the past and the blessings from God today help us to focus more clearly on the future hope we have in Jesus Christ? Share with a partner or the small group. **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Why is it so important to know and trust that *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever* (**Hebrews 13:8**)? We are God's children through Holy Baptism, redeemed and forgiven by the blood of our Savior Jesus, looking forward with hope to eternity with our Lord in heaven. Our God is immutable – He does not change and His promises are sure. Even in the midst of chaos and change in our world, He remains steadfast and sure. We confidently sing with hymnist,

“Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.” (LSB 878:4)

Faith Walk:

1. Think of ways that the Lord has blessed the Lutheran Women's Missionary League over the past 75 years. Make a thanksgiving list and pray it aloud to our changeless and faithful God.
2. Think of ways that the Lord has blessed Christianity in the last 500 years and the changes that have happened following the Protestant Reformation. Talk about the blessings and changes around your table and remind one another that it is still all about Jesus!
3. Look for opportunities to share the Good News about Jesus with a special woman in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit for strength and guidance.
4. Celebrate that Jesus Christ is the *same yesterday and today and forever* and that He has made His own child in Baptism, a recipient of His grace and an heir of heaven.
5. Memorize the words to the fourth stanza of “Abide With Me.”

Closing Prayer (sing or speak together): “Abide With Me” (LSB #878; LW #490; TLH #552).

**(Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation, ©1986, 1991, Concordia Publishing House. See Questions 118, 119, 120.)*

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