



## Transforming Faith: A Gift from a Faithful God

### Leader's Guide

(Leaders and participants are encouraged to look up Bible passages for most effective study. Passages are printed below for ease in presentation.)

What transforming events have occurred in your life? How was your life changed?

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should start to begin discussion. Events could include such things as marriage, birth of a child, recovery from an illness, death of a spouse or friend, a car accident, or the like.

Our God is faithful and gives us transforming faith in our Savior, Jesus, bringing us from death in our sins to life everlasting. Our God of grace transforms our lives, our living and service here on earth, and our eternal lives. Praise be to the Triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

**Opening Prayer:** O God, our faithful God, You conceived a plan of salvation for all people after sin entered our world. In our natural condition, we are lost in the darkness of our sin and need a Savior. Thank You for sending Your own Son Jesus to become a man, live a perfect life on earth, suffer and die for our sins, and rise to life again so we might live eternally with You. You have given us transforming faith to believe in Jesus as Savior — giving us new life in You. May Your Spirit be with us while we live in this sinful world that we do not conform to its ways, but live transformed lives of faith and joy in service to You. Bless our study of Your Word. In our faithful Savior's name, Amen.

### Transforming Lives

Read **Romans 3:23** and **Ephesians 2:1–5a**. What is the natural condition of every human?

**Romans 3:23:** <sup>23</sup> **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**

**Ephesians 2:1–5a:** <sup>1</sup>**And you were dead in the trespasses and sins** <sup>2</sup>**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—** <sup>3</sup>**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.** <sup>4</sup>**But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,** <sup>5a</sup>**even when we were dead in our trespasses**

**We are enemies of God, sinful and God hates sin, dead in our sin, living in the dark, following the devil, and children of wrath. We all act upon our sinful desires. We deserve only God's wrath and punishment.**

In **Psalm 99:9b** the Psalmist declares, *the Lord our God is holy!* Describe how sin affects our relationship with the Holy God?

**God is holy or, in other words, without sin. In fact He hates sin and we could not live in the face of His judgment.**

In **Galatians 5:19–21** and **Colossians 3:5–9a** are comprehensive lists of behaviors that manifest our sinful condition. Make a list of these sins. Can you think of others to add to the list? **Even though this list is comprehensive, maybe some will appreciate the challenge of thinking of more. The sins are in red below.**

**Galatians 5:19-21:** <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident: **sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,** <sup>20</sup> **idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,** <sup>21</sup> **envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.** I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**Colossians 3:5-9a:** <sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: **sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.** <sup>6</sup> On account of these the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup> In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup> But now you must put them all away: **anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.** <sup>9</sup> Do not **lie** to one another

***Faith Talk:*** Look again at **Ephesians 2:1**. Share with a partner or a small group: How can the sins and sinful behaviors of the “walking dead” be seen in our world? In our community? In our personal lives?

**Ephesians 2:1:** <sup>1</sup>**And you were dead in the trespasses and sins**

**Answers will vary, but encourage each participant to share.**

Since *the wages of sin is death* (**Romans 6:23a**), what is the fate of all without Christ?

**Eternal death and separation from God.**

What specific feelings does this fact engender? **Answers will vary, but encourage each participant to share.**

See **Genesis 3:15**, **Luke 2:1–12**, and **Ephesians 2:4–7**. What was our faithful God’s solution for our sinful condition?

**Genesis 3:15:** <sup>15</sup> **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.”**

**Luke 2:1-12:** **In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> And all went to be registered, each to his own town. <sup>4</sup> And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup> to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. <sup>6</sup> And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. <sup>8</sup> And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”**

**Ephesians 2:4-7:** <sup>4</sup>**But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup>and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**

**Following mankind’s fall into sin, He already gave His promise of salvation in Jesus Christ in Genesis. The promise of a Savior began to be fulfilled when Christ was born — born to**

die. In Jesus, we are made alive through His life, death, and resurrection and receive God's mercy, grace, and eternal life.

See **Romans 3:21–26**. Why is our salvation — our transformation — dependent on Jesus becoming a man, living a perfect life, and suffering and dying for our sin?

**Romans 3:21-26:** <sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>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. <sup>26</sup>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 had to live perfectly under God's law. Because He was righteous, He did not need to die for His own sins, but gave up His life for the sins of the world. His righteousness becomes ours by faith for the sake of Jesus and our sins are no more. We are seen as justified before our just God.

In the explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, Martin Luther states: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him." In **Ephesians 2:8-9**, Paul talks very clearly about the source of each Christian's faith. What do you find there?

**Ephesians 2:8-9:** <sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast. It is a gift of God.

He reiterates in **Romans 3:27a**: *Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded.* Why is it impossible to have faith in God of our own volition?

**We are natural enemies of God and cannot come to Him on our own.**

How is faith defined in **Hebrews 11:1** and **1 Peter 1:8–9**?

**Hebrews 11:1:** Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

**1 Peter 1:8-9:** <sup>8</sup>Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, <sup>9</sup>obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

**Believing and trusting in something that you cannot see.**

**Faith Talk:** Read **Psalms 28:7–8** and **1 Corinthians 1:9**. It has been said, "I want my God to be bigger than everything – not confined by any box that I can build." As you ponder the passages and quote, share with a partner or the small group adjectives that describe your faithful God in Christ Jesus. Be specific.

**Psalms 28:6-9:** <sup>7</sup>The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am

helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. <sup>8</sup>The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed.

**1 Corinthians 1:9:** <sup>9</sup>God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**He is my strength, shield, helper, joy, song, refuge, and faithful — outside any box of human expectation.**

***Faith Talk:*** What transforming Christian faith events have occurred in your life? How has God changed your life?

**Answers will vary but encourage each participant to share. Answers could include such events as Baptism, confirmation, Christmas or Easter celebrations, Baptism of a child, or the like.**

## **Transforming Living**

Being transformed by our faithful God is, literally, to be changed into something different. In the following Bible verses, identify what we are changed *from* to what we are changed *into* because of Christ's saving work.

**Romans 12:2** <sup>2</sup>**Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

**not conformed to the world, but transformed to God's will**

**Ephesians 2:5** <sup>5</sup>**even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—**

**dead in sin, alive in Christ**

**1 Peter 2:10** <sup>10</sup>**Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

**not a people, but now God's people; not received mercy, but have received mercy**

**Romans 6:11, 17–18** <sup>11</sup>**So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

<sup>17</sup>**But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,** <sup>18</sup>**and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.**

**dead to sin, alive in Christ; slaves of sin to slaves of righteousness**

How does the Holy Spirit engender and grow faith? See **Romans 10:17, Romans 6:3–4,** and **Matthew 26:26–28.**

**Romans 10:17:** <sup>17</sup>**So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**

**Romans 6:3–4:** <sup>3</sup>**Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** <sup>4</sup>**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.**

**Matthew 26:26–28:** <sup>26</sup>**Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”** <sup>27</sup>**And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you,** <sup>28</sup>**for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**

## God's Word, Baptism, the Lord's Supper

Read **Galatians 5:22–24** and **Colossians 3:12–16**. Identify and make a list of transformed behaviors that

characterize Christian living. **Characteristics are indicated in red below.**

**Galatians 5:22-24:** <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

**Colossians 3:12-16:** <sup>12</sup>Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup>bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup>And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup>And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

What does God want us to do as His redeemed — and transformed — children? Look at **Galatians 5:25**, **Ephesians 2:10**, **Colossians 3:17**, and **1 Peter 2:9**.

**Galatians 5:25:** <sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

**Ephesians 2:10:** <sup>10</sup>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**Colossians 3:17:** <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**1 Peter 2:9:** <sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

**Live in step with the Spirit; do good works God has prepared; do everything in the name of Jesus; give thanks to God; and proclaim to the world the Good News of salvation in Jesus.**

**Faith Talk:** Discuss ways that you can, *in the name of Jesus (Colossians 3:17)*, proclaim and share Christ

at home, in your group, and in your church. **Answers will vary, but encourage each participant to share. Specific situations could include: talk about your faith with your spouse and children; as a group, start a cradle roll in your church and celebrate newly baptized children with gifts and spiritual resources; be part of a community food bank or fixing and serving meals to the homeless while distributing spiritual resources or pocket Bibles.**

## Transforming Eternity

Without faith in our Savior, our eternity would look bleak — eternally dead. However, the transforming faith in Jesus given to us by our faithful God is the assurance of eternity in heaven. See **John 3:16**.

**John 3:16:** <sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

What phrases from **Romans 5:1-2** and **Hebrews 12:1-2** give us strength and encouragement for life here and into eternity? **Phrases marked in red below.**

**Romans 5:1-2:** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup>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.

**Hebrews 12:1-2:** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Finally, what does our faithful Lord promise in **Revelation 2:10b**?

**Revelation 2:10b:** <sup>10b</sup>Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life  
Eternal life; the crown of life.

**Faith Talk:** When was the last time you had a conversation with your family or friends about your faith the hope of eternal life you have because you believe that Jesus is your Savior? Why would this be an important conversation to have? Share if you are comfortable with your partner or small group. **Answers will vary, but encourage each participant to share.**

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**Faith Walk:**

1. Praise God for His faithfulness and steadfast love.
2. Thank God for the gift of transforming faith in Jesus as Savior in your life.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you boldly tell your family and friends about the salvation and faith you have in Jesus Christ and His redeeming work.
4. Rejoice in the hope of eternal life in heaven with your faithful God through faith in Jesus.

**Closing:** Pray the words of “I Know My Faith is Founded” (LSB 587), and sing or listen to “Christ the Eternal Lord” (LSB 829).