



The Bible Changes My Life

#3

Big Idea: God transforms my life when I obey what the Bible says.

Bible Text: Philemon

Students Will:

- Know**
- Like Onesimus, when they hear and obey the Bible, God transforms them.
 - Forgiveness is a powerful force to change people.
 - *Using My Bible:* Consider the process of transformation (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- Feel**
- Eager for God's Word to change them.
 - Encouraged that God's Word is transforming them into beautiful people.
 - Compassion for those they need to forgive.
- Do**
- Let go of an old sinful way, and allow the Word of God to teach them God's way.
 - Write a simple prayer or poem about forgiveness.
 - Choose to forgive someone who might have sinned against them.



Pray for Wisdom

Lord, help me convey the great trust and faith that Onesimus possessed—even if it meant that he had to return to slavery. Fill my heart with the wonder of Christian forgiveness and its power over grave injustice.

As I introduce the children to Your powerful forgiveness, I pray that You will open their own eyes to Your love and to a godly response. May I love You with my teaching, Lord Jesus, amen.

Lesson Summary

Few things in our lives are harder to do than change. Everything inside us and outside us resists change. To truly change, we must be humble enough to see a need to change, be dissatisfied enough to desire a change, and empowered enough to accomplish a change.

We may resolve to change at the beginning of a new year. We may promise loved ones that we'll change when we see how our behavior hurts them. We may even hire experts to help us change. Many times, we are ultimately no more successful than we would be if we tried to scrub stripes off a zebra. Despite our best human efforts, often the only change we experience is that of growing worse. Over time, we become more and more like what we truly are. There's no doubt about it—it's hard to change!

Some experts say that by the age of five a child's personality is established, and many of his or her behaviors and

attitudes will follow into adulthood. We all know people who have been given opportunities to reform without ongoing success. Prisons are filled with repeat offenders. Clearly, it takes more than human power to bring about true and lasting change. The solution is not found in a program, but in a Person, revealed to us in the Word of God.

Philemon (pronounced Fi-LEE-mun) was a wealthy man who had become a Christian through Paul's ministry. Philemon had a slave named Onesimus (pronounced Oh-NESS-i-mus). In those days, slavery was very different than we know it. Onesimus was more like a rich man's servant, and was probably treated quite well. For whatever reason, however, Onesimus committed a crime against Philemon. We aren't told the exact nature of the crime, but it may have been that Onesimus robbed Philemon and ran away with the goods (verses 18-19).

While Paul was in prison for preaching, God arranged for Onesimus and Paul to meet. When Paul shared the good news about Jesus, Onesimus believed and was radically changed. A runaway criminal was transformed into a new creature in Christ. This lesson will show students how the Word of God can change anyone who is willing to believe and obey it.

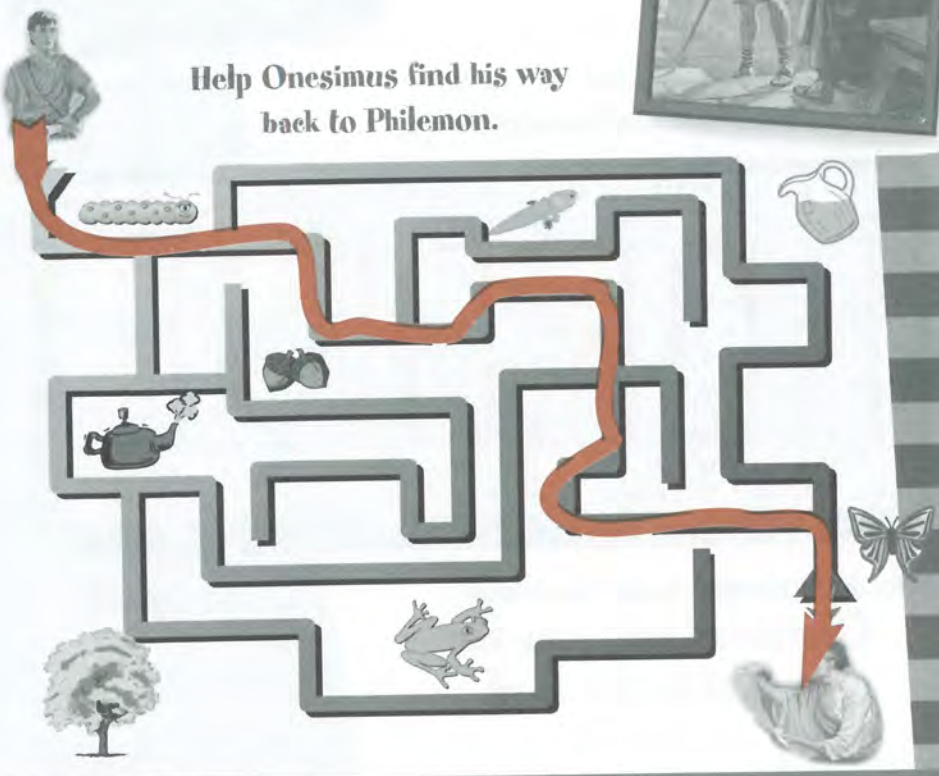
Philemon

The Bible Changes My Life

- TRUE / FALSE** When God changes us, we want to obey His Word.
- TRUE / FALSE** When we obey God's Word, He changes us.



Help Onesimus find his way back to Philemon.



Why We Got the Bible 2-8-3

motivates students to treasure the Bible and read it regularly.

- *God's Great, Wonderful Word* (Mark Chase, 1999) Theme song for Unit B—challenges students to share the Good News about Jesus with others.

Memorize Bible Verse

Use your favorite translation to teach and rehearse:

Topic: The Bible Changes My Life

Reference: 2 Corinthians 5:17

Suggested Memory Activity:

Recollection

We tend to remember what we write much better than what we read or speak. Have the students write their verses on a 3" x 5" card. Then, have them read the verse aloud repeatedly, each time doing something new to each word: underline, circle, box, strike through, etc. Then have them test themselves by turning the card over and writing the verse from memory, including the reference!

Alternate Passage:

Psalms 19:7-14 (learned through the entire unit).

Pray for Power

Pray that the children will understand that it is no small thing when God transforms a sinful person into a child with His divine nature. No one else can perform this most needed miracle!

Talk about ways that God does and does not want to change them.

After reading the story of Philemon and Onesimus, have fun with your students as they help these two get back together.



Sing with Joy

Special Songs

Two songs have been created to reinforce the learner targets for this unit. Lyrics and music are printed in this Teacher's Guide.

- *Treasure Expedition* (Mark Chase, 1998) Theme song for Level 2—



Spark Interest

You will need: a bag of popcorn to share, a few unpopped kernels (or an air popper and large bowl to pop popcorn in class).

Approach this object lesson in one of two ways. The easiest option may be to bring popcorn to class already popped. If you do this, bring enough unpopped kernels to give one to each student. Another option is to bring an air popper and allow the kids to actually see and hear the sudden change being made in each kernel. Ask students:

Do you know what “transform” means? It means to “change into a different form.” Can you think of anything that changes into a different form? Let’s play a game. Let’s take turns thinking of things that transform. I’ll go first. Little tadpoles transform into frogs. Now it’s your turn. Raise your hand if you can think of something that changes into a different form.

Allow students to think of as many things as they can. Some interesting examples you may want to use are:

- toy foam pellets change form when dropped into water.
- seeds transform into flowers or vegetables.
- dough turns into bread or pizza crust.
- water is transformed into ice or steam.

When students start to run out of responses, tell them to close their eyes and hold out their hands. Place one popcorn kernel in each hand. Ask students to identify the object without looking. Once they have identified the kernels, have them try to describe their shape, appearance, and feel. Explain:

Many years ago, nobody would have ever thought that these kernels could be changed. They saw them as small, hard, seeds that nobody would eat. Today, when you see them, you think of



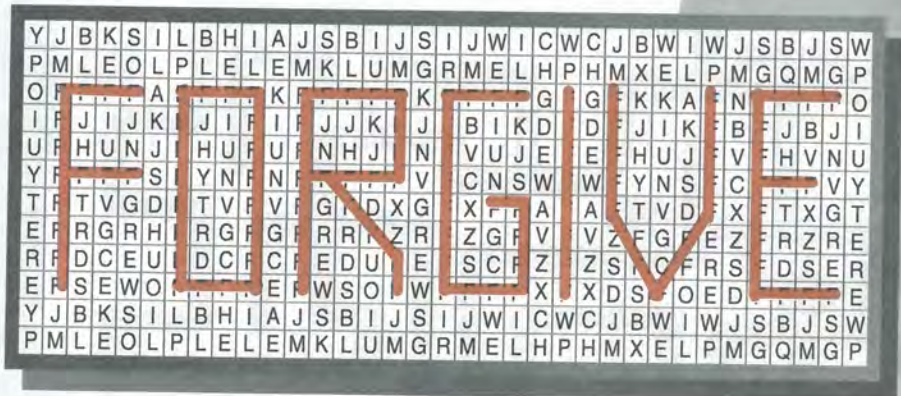
When Onesimus heard and believed the Word of God, he was changed. He wanted to go back home to make things right with Philemon.

When Onesimus ran away, he was Philemon’s slave. When he returned, he was Philemon’s

brother (verse 16).



Color in all the squares that have an “F.” Then you’ll find out what God likes to do.



Why did Philemon forgive Onesimus?

Onesimus was now his brother in the Lord

Discuss how transformation and forgiveness are part of God’s plan.

white, fluffy, yummy popcorn! You know that when you hear a “pop!” a kernel has been changed forever! It will never be an old, hard kernel again.

At this time, you may either serve the popcorn that has already been prepared or use your air popper to make enough popcorn for everyone. Allow students to put their kernels into the popper. As the popcorn is being eaten, tell students that they are going

to hear about someone who was transformed forever.

Explore Scripture

“I must...stop...and catch my breath,” said a puffing and panting man as he flopped down in some tall weeds behind a tree that towered over the river bank. “I can’t go...another step.”

What happens when we forgive each other?

Our love for God and for each other increases. We become "brothers" in the Lord.



Write a simple prayer or poem about forgiveness.

The Bible Changes My Life

2 Corinthians 5:17



Discuss forgiveness. Allow children to respond before sharing your thoughts.

Then encourage creativity in the HeartBeat.

Onesimus, a young slave from Colosse, was on the run. The tree beside the river made a perfect place for him to hide while he rested his weary legs. As he lay on his back, Onesimus looked up at the afternoon sky. A steady breeze was blowing puffy, white clouds across the sky from his left to his right. If only he could move that fast! He wanted to be far away when it was

discovered that he had stolen his master's money.

Onesimus sat up. Even though his feet were not moving anymore, his heart was still racing. He had already run a long way. Had he run far enough? How could he know if it would ever be safe? Now that he had broken the law, maybe he would be running for the rest of his life.

Crawling to the river's edge, he scooped some water in his hands and brought it up to his thirsty mouth. It was cold and delicious. After splashing water on his sweaty face, Onesimus looked around. The river seemed so peaceful. He wished he could camp there for the night. In fact, it would make a wonderful place to build a house and settle down for the rest of his life. But no, he would never be able to rest. He must keep running.

Scrambling to his aching feet, Onesimus felt something touch the back of his neck. Startled, he spun around quickly, fearing that someone had poked him from behind. It was only a branch, hanging down from the tree's lowest limb. "Look at me," he said to himself, "scared of a silly old branch." As he backed away from it, something caught his eye. On a leaf was a fuzzy, plump caterpillar. Onesimus paused to watch it. Slowly, very slowly the caterpillar crawled across the leaf. The caterpillar crept along so slowly that it made Onesimus nervous.

"I can't let them catch me," he told himself, forcing his sore muscles to pop one tired leg down after another. "Gotta go fast...never stop. I'm a criminal now, and that's a fact that will never change."

Ask students what they think happened to Onesimus next. Discuss how people feel when they get tangled up in sin. Why is it hard to stop sinning? Is it possible for sinners to change? In your own words, explain that God arranged for Onesimus to meet the Apostle Paul who was in prison for preaching about Jesus. We don't know how, but somehow God made it possible for Paul to share the Word of God with Onesimus. He told Onesimus that when he stole, he broke one of God's commandments. Paul told him that sin was destroying his life, and that God could give Onesimus a better life, a changed life. Paul told Onesimus the good news that Jesus died to forgive his sins. When Onesimus heard the Scriptures, he believed and received Jesus as his Savior. Onesimus was changed forever.

At this point, put away the popcorn and direct students to pages 9 and 10 of their student workbooks. Complete these activities as a class.

Inspire Action

"Didn't I tell you this place was beautiful?" said Onesimus to his companions as they finished their lunch. "I don't know where I've ever smelled fresher air. And wait until you taste the water!"

The sound of the river was like background music for his thoughts. Onesimus remembered how scared and hurried he felt the last time he sat under the droopy-branched tree. How much had changed! Now, instead of being alone and running away, he was returning to his master to make things right. Onesimus couldn't stop thinking about how kind Paul had been to him. Not only had he written a nice letter for Onesimus to give to his master, but Paul had introduced him to three new friends who were going back with him. Two of them were sitting with him by the riverbank. The third Friend was in his heart.

Just as the men stood up to leave, Onesimus noticed a beautiful butterfly fluttering past them. Immediately, he remembered the caterpillar. A giant grin spread across his face, and he burst out in laughter.

"Everything's the same, yet so different," he told the two other men. Their smiles told Onesimus that they understood. The same power that could change a caterpillar into a butterfly had transformed a running criminal into a rejoicing Christian!

Hold up a piece of popcorn and read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Tell students that when they hear and obey the Word of God, they will never be the same again. Close by going over page 11 of their student workbooks. Use HeartBeat to help personalize the lesson for them.

Pray for Life-Change

Ask God to shine forth His power in changing the hearts of children from the inside out!

Pray that He will show your students the difference between a heart still in sin and one totally renewed by His Spirit.

Ask that God will show them His forgiveness, and empower them to forgive others in need of it.

Most of all, pray for children to transfer their allegiance from them-

Explore More

✓ I have read Daniel 3.

Circle all the evil things King Nebuchadnezzar and his people did in this chapter.

- They tried to kill Daniel's friends.
- They stole money from the poor people.
- They made an image of a false god.
- They killed all the Jewish people.
- They worshiped King Nebuchadnezzar's image.

Using My Bible

God transforms (changes) people and things. Match the word with the picture that shows what these things change into.

God transforms a caterpillar into _____

God transforms a lizard into _____

God transforms an acorn into _____

Encourage students to complete this page before the next lesson.

selves to Christ as Lord of all they are and do.

Pray for the personal requests of students. Encourage children to voice their prayer concerns. Be sure to pray for each one.

Skill: Using My Bible

This will encourage your students to become comfortable and confident using their Bibles. Guide them through the activity that will help them develop a deep love and respect for God's Word.



1. *Snack Idea*

(10-15 minutes)

Serve raisins and sunflower seeds for a hearty snack.

3. *Metamorphosis!*

(15-20 minutes)

Stencil the shape of a butterfly on a piece of 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Copy it off onto colored paper (pastel is much better than construction paper because it does not tear as easily). Allow the students to cut out the shape of the butterfly. Then, have them fold the butterfly in half-inch strips until it is folded lengthwise in a single, long half-inch strip. Next, have the students fold the strip into half-inch squares in alternating directions so that it ends up with an accordion-type shape that resembles a worm or a caterpillar. Next, unfold the worm into the shape of the butterfly and explain to the children that just as a caterpillar can change into a butterfly by the power of God, so God can change our hearts to be like Jesus by the power of God's Word.

3. *Play "Simon Says, God Says"*

(15-20 minutes)

Play the traditional game of Simon Says with the children. First demonstrate to them how the game works. Then, allow students to take over being Simon. Use the game as an object lesson to demonstrate the importance of obedience and the chaos and disorder that come if we disobey. Tie in to the importance of obeying God's Word.

4. *"Onesimus Returns" Reenactment*

(20-30 minutes)

In a drama/role play, allow three different students to play the parts of Paul, Onesimus, and Philemon. Bring out the pathos of the situation by having:

- 1) Paul give a loving admonition to Onesimus.
- 2) Onesimus at first resist the idea because of the misery of slavery.
- 3) Onesimus conclude he can trust God as he returns to his master.
- 4) Philemon listen to Onesimus' explanation.
- 5) Philemon joyfully receive Onesimus as a brother in Christ.

Replay the drama again with different actors and actresses.

Teacher Tip

Don't assume that a student has already heard a story before or understands all the historical background. Calibrate your teaching to the level of knowledge your students already have.

Supply Checklist

General Supplies:

- Bibles, student workbooks
- pencils, pens, markers
- "Hidden People" Profiles

Spark Interest

- popcorn (popped and unpopped)
- air popper (optional)