

Do you ever get tired of yourself? Do you know that you're not all you could be and need to change for the better? If so, then learn from the caterpillar.

Insects and Instincts

Caterpillars are ugly and clumsy, just inching along, eating lots of plants and never going very far in life. Nobody likes them, and all in all, they have a pretty miserable existence.

Butterflies are beautiful and graceful. They fly around, drinking nectar from flowers and sometimes migrating hundreds of miles! Everybody admires them, and they seem to lead an ideal life.

Caterpillars surely don't know much, even about their own selves, and don't even *dream* of flying. They don't realize – and who would have imagined! – that they are actually an early form of a butterfly! But by *instinct*, a caterpillar builds a cocoon around itself, and then a natural, dramatic change (a “*metamorphosis*”) occurs, and it becomes a butterfly.

A Person's Metamorphosis

The change in becoming a Christian can be every bit as dramatic, and happens from the inside out.

Be transformed* by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

(Rom. 12:2) (*This word in Greek is “metamorphosis.”)

The “renewing of the mind” happens not miraculously or instantaneously, but gradually and with a constant, conscious effort, both to *make* it and to *maintain* it. People who are already Christians are told:

¹ If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. . . . ⁹ since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him. **(Colossians 3:1-10)**

Who Can Change?

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” **(2 Corinthians 5:17)** “Anyone” means you and me. Jesus came to save us *all*, while we were His enemies. **(Matthew 9:12-13; Luke 19:10; Romans 5:1-11)** Jesus made Paul, who had even killed Christians, an example of how *any* sinful person could be saved.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. **(1 Timothy 1:15-16)**

Homosexuals, drunkards, thieves – *anyone* – can be washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. **(1 Corinthians 6:9-11)**

If you're not a Christian, you have the potential to become a beautiful new person, even if you've never even dreamed of it, and no matter how sinful you've been. God's mercy and longsuffering can reach *all* “those who are going to believe on Him.”

The Power to Change

Like a caterpillar, we have guiding instincts. We wonder where we've come from and what life is all about, and we even think about life after death. We reflect on the world around us, realizing that Someone wonderful and powerful made it **(Romans 1:19-20)**.

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. **(Psalm 19:1)**

We also have a natural curiosity about spiritual things and a desire to worship. **(Ecc. 3:11; Acts 17:24-27)**

But like a caterpillar, we don't understand very much about ourselves. Relying on our instincts alone, we remain lost, and even confused. Thankfully, our Creator has given us *more* than a beautiful creation to turn our hearts toward Him - He has given us verbal, *written* answers to our questions, and direction for our lives. His very *words* tell us how to please Him - how to make the change to become a new creation.

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul. **(Psalm 19:7)**

The gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. **(Romans 1:16)**

When our “instincts” are educated by God's *words* in the Bible, we gain faith in Him. **(Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)** When His law guides us and we “obey the gospel” **(2 Thessalonians 1:8)**, or “obey the truth” **(1 Peter 1:22)**, we are

born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever. . . . ²⁵ This is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. **(1 Peter 1:23, 25)**

Jesus has shown us and told us how to think, and He *helps* us think that way. **(Philippians 2:5; 4:8, 13)** He forgives us, renews our spirit, helps us out of temptation **(Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 Corinthians 10:13)**, and forgives us again when we fall. **(1 John 1:7 - 2:2)** Our mind, by faith, is “renewed day by day” in spite of life's trials and problems. **(2 Corinthians 4:16-18)**

The Extent of the Change

“Old things have passed away; all things have become new.” **(2 Corinthians 5:17)** Christians have a new direction and purpose in life, a new perspective and motivation, new hopes and dreams - a whole new *identity*. **(Galatians 2:20)** They develop new relationships, too, especially with other Christians.

Like butterflies, Christians leave behind a sinful life and develop new interests, a new “diet,” new wholesome habits (like Bible study and worship) and even new abilities. (For example, *butterflies*, not caterpillars can reproduce. Christians can help *others* become Christians, while non-Christians have very limited ability to influence others for God.) We even look at the innocent parts of our daily routine in a new light because of our new self-esteem, because God has made us “a new creation.”

Starting to Change

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) Being “in Christ” is being a member of His body, or church. (Ephesians 1:22-23) It’s being Jesus’ follower - a Christian (Acts 11:26) -and being *saved* from self, sin, and the eternal punishment we deserve. *All spiritual blessings* are found “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3) such as adoption as God’s child, redemption through His blood, forgiveness of sins, hope of heaven, the privilege of prayer, knowledge of His will, and spiritual wisdom.

To get “into Christ,” we must first recognize our poor spiritual condition. It takes humility, sincerity, a love of truth, a desire for righteousness, and sorrow for sin. *Faith* naturally leads us to turn away from sin, or *repent*. (Matthew 5:3-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; Hebrews 11:6; James 4:1-10)

But the right frame of mind, *alone*, is not enough. For example, the demons believe in God, but because they don’t act on their belief, they are lost. (James 2:19) And some people *regret* their sins, but because they don’t repent, their souls will die. (2 Corinthians 7:10) Even sincerity, alone, won’t save a non-Christian. After all, Saul prayed for three days with fasting, but still had sins in his life! He was asked, “Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 9:8-11, 18; 22:16) Then he started to change and grew stronger in faith. (Acts 9:20-22)

Baptism is to remit (cancel) sins (Acts 2:38), to “put off the body of the sins of the flesh” (Colossians 2:11-12), and it’s how to get “into Christ.” (See 1 Corinthians 12:13)

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:27)

Baptism pictures a death and burial of “the body of sin,” and a resurrection to the start of a new life.

We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

In our new life, we are “set free from sin” (like a butterfly from a cocoon) leaving our slavery to sin (John 8:31, 32) to become “slaves of righteousness” and “slaves of God.” (Romans 6:18, 22)

A Butterfly Without a Cocoon???

Can you imagine a caterpillar trying to become a butterfly without making a cocoon? *Some people* think they are saved before they are baptized. (The passages above show that cannot happen.)

Others try to fix up their lives on their own, *before* putting on Christ, maybe so they’ll feel more worthy of salvation. But none of us can ever be worthy of His great love - we can only accept it. Baptism is a person’s “cocoon,” marking both the “death” of his ugly, sinful self, and the start of his new spiritual life.

Others never become Christians out of fear that they won’t live up to a new, higher standard. They’ve never *had* God’s help in their lives, and they can’t imagine the power that comes with it - power to maintain the change, and forgiveness when we fail.

Don’t resist changing and advancing to a better stage in your life. Read your Bible and learn about Jesus. (After all, caterpillars *eat...* a *lot!*) Then, with confidence that He is God’s Son, turn away from sin.

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. (Acts 3:19)

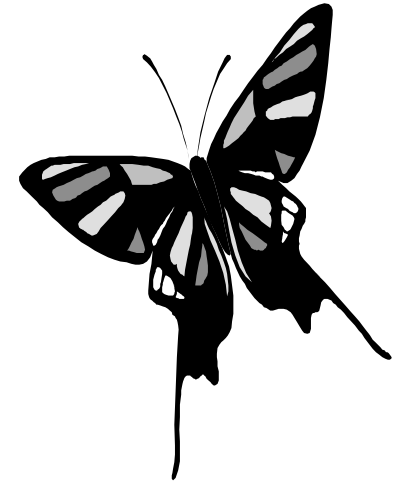
Obey Jesus from the heart and He will give you the gift of “eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:17, 18, 23)

He who believes and is baptized will be saved. (Mark 16:16)

As His follower, you will learn to “observe all things” that Jesus commands (Matthew 28:18-20) and God will help you *complete* and *strengthen* the transformation of your mind.

For help at any point in the process, read your Bible, pray to God, and contact the one who gave you this brochure. You can become a *whole new you!*

A Whole New You



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he is a new creation;
old things
have passed away;
behold, all things
have become new.
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

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