Week 2: Jesus, the New Adam Who Makes Us a New Creation

This week we will focus on how Jesus helps us to see fellow believers as a new creation.

Supplies:

- For optional opening activity – Either paper and colored pencils/markers or butterfly-shaped sugar cookies, white frosting, colored sprinkles, plastic knives for spreading frosting
- Blank nametags for each person in the group and a second set of nametags with the word "Beloved" written on them ahead of time. (If you don't have any, labels or Post-it notes will do.)
- Tissues, music player, and Family Lesson handout (on last page) for any parents in your group

Optional Opening Activity as People Arrive: Either invite people to frost a butterfly sugar cookie that represents who they are as a new creation or draw one on a piece of paper. Before people eat their cookie, have them share with the group how it (or their drawing) represents who they are in Christ as a new creation.

Prayer: Invite the Holy Spirit to come and lead us into a deeper revelation of Jesus who enables us to be a new creation.

Encounter: Play the song "Dancing on the Waves" by Bethel Music featuring We the Kingdom. (A link can be found on the worship playlist at the bottom of the Puzzle Piece 1 page at TillingMinistries.com.) Listen with your eyes closed, picturing God the Father singing this over you, declaring your new beginning as his masterpiece. <u>The purpose of these opening visualizations is to recondition our imagination to see what God is doing. We're consecrating our imagination to the Lord, inviting the Holy Spirit to open our spiritual eyes so we can receive pictures from him, expecting to see his goodness.</u>

Remaining in the Word: Encourage people to have their Bible open as you read.

1. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-17.** *"Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. **15** He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. **16** So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! **17** This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (NLT).*
   Discuss: Why do you think God wants us to see our old life as something that has died, having no more power over us? How do we stop "evaluating others from a human point of view" and partner with the Holy Spirit to think differently about others?
2. **Read Ephesians 2:10.** *"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."*
   Discuss: According to this verse, why is it important that we see ourselves as new creations in Christ? How does thinking about your children and others in the family of God as God's work of art in progress change how you perceive them?

Removing Labels Activity: Hand each person a blank nametag to put somewhere on their arm or leg that represents a false identity or negative label that has been applied to you that you have agreed with. We often need help from people in the body of Christ to remove false identities and labels because they were usually put onto us by people and, thus, need to be removed by people. (Have new labels handy.)

Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal a label: Spend a few minutes in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal any false label you have been believing about yourself. A label might be true about your past without being THE truth about you. You may be talkative, but a negative label might be "Talks too much" which is meant to shut down something God has put in you. A false identity is when a temporary state or disposition becomes an identity that doesn't line up with scripture. For example, a person who has made a mistake might receive a false identity of "Failure" which is meant to rob you of hope and prevent you from moving forward.

Move with Compassion: Explain that after each person shares, we're going to wait on the Lord and ask Jesus to show us how he views that person. Whoever feels the compassion of Jesus moving them to respond can then go to the person and remove their label, adding whatever words of comfort that the Comforter brings to mind. (If this feels intimidating, a simple, "I'm so sorry you were made to feel that way because that's not how God sees you" will suffice.) We are establishing a precedent that when we feel moved with compassion, it is okay to stop what we're doing and respond to someone who is in pain. Too often, people share deep pain in small groups, then we move on to the next person without responding. Jesus was moved with compassion to act, so we agree to move with him and love people.

Share and Care: (If you have a large group, break into smaller groups of 3-5.) Ask for volunteers to share what's on their imaginary label and invite those who feel led to remove the label and minister new identity to the person. (Have tissues handy because these kinds of statements often come out with tears.)

Leader: After everyone has shared and had false labels removed, go to each person and apply a nametag that you have prepared in advance that says, "Beloved" on it, and declare this as their primary identity in Christ along with any other words of encouragement the Spirit gives you.

Closing Prayer: We are practicing seeing one another as Christ sees us, no longer regarding each other from a human point of view. Break into small groups of three to share prayer requests and before you pray, ask the Holy Spirit to give you revelation of how he sees the other two people in your group. Simply ask the Lord, "What do you love about (person's name)?" Then wait on the Lord with expectation that he will bring a picture to mind, drop a word or scripture into your spirit, or even give you his emotions toward each person as you lift them up to the Lord. As you pray for each person, declare that they are a new creation in Christ.

Optional Handout for Families: Hand out copies of the page below to parents in your group who would like to teach their children about Jesus who makes us a new creation like a butterfly.

Jesus, the New Adam, Family Lesson

Learn how Jesus makes us a new creation by giving us his Spirit.

Bible Verse: 2 Corinthians 5:17: *"Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (NLT).*

Supplies: Sugar cookie dough (store-bought cookie dough is fine!), gingerbread man cookie cutter and butterfly cookie cutter (or use a plastic knife to cut out shapes), spatula, cookie sheet, frosting and/or colored sprinkles

Activity: Making new creation cookies. (Talk about what each step means as you go through them.)

1. **Preheat oven according to recipe directions.**
2. **Roll out some of cookie dough on a lightly floured surface and cut out a gingerbread man shape, leaving it surrounded by dough.** When God created the first man, Adam, he was connected to God, surrounded by his presence like the sweet cookie dough that surrounds our cookie man.
3. **Carefully remove cookie from the dough with a spatula and set aside.** When Adam and his wife, Eve, disobeyed God by eating what God told them not to eat, they separated themselves from God. They suddenly became aware that they had lost the covering of God's presence and became self-conscious.
4. **Fold the arms and legs in until you have something resembling a log.** Sin makes us turn inward, focusing on ourselves. Adam and Eve hid from God and tried to cover themselves.
5. **Pinch off half of the dough log (leave the rest for later) and roll it into a ball with the dough scraps.** God came up with a solution to the problem of sin that separates us from God and others when we focus on ourselves. He came to earth in a body like we have so we could see what selfless love looks like through Jesus.
6. **Roll out the dough ball and cut out a new gingerbread man cookie.** Jesus is both God and man, just like our dough ball is made of half of the man mixed with the big dough ball that represents God's Spirit. Jesus overcame death and separation from God by dying for our sins and coming back to life so we can be covered with God's presence again and love each other the way Jesus loves us.
7. **Place the original man/dough log on the Jesus cookie vertically so it somewhat resembles a butterfly.** When we tell God we're sorry for our sin and selfishness, and invite Jesus to be our Savior, we are reconnected to God. God gives us his Holy Spirit so we can talk to him and be covered in his love and presence all the time.
8. **Fold the Jesus cookie around the dough worm and add a little more dough, forming a ball.** Our dough worm went into Jesus just like a caterpillar goes into a cocoon to become something new.
9. **Roll out dough and cut out a butterfly.** The Bible tells us that *"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV).* Just like our little dough worm went into Jesus and became a butterfly, the Holy Spirit transforms us into a new creation by helping us to be like Jesus.
10. **Cut out enough butterflies for each person to have one and bake according to recipe instructions.** While cookies bake, talk about how a butterfly can do things the caterpillar could not. In the same way, the Spirit transforms us to do things we couldn't do before like love our enemies.
11. **Decorate your cookie to represent who you are as a new creation in Christ.** Describe how your cookie represents you and Jesus together. As you enjoy eating your cookies, talk about who you could share your cookies with as a way of sharing Jesus. Then bake the rest of the cookies to share.