

SESSION 2

# LIVING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

*“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

*MATTHEW 11:28–30 (ESV)*

# SESSION 2: Living From The Inside Out

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- ▶ **Main Idea:** A restful, “inside-out” life comes from having security in our identity as God’s children, not by striving to behave perfectly.
- ▶ **Head Change:** To understand that we don’t have to perform to earn God’s love—Jesus’s life and death show us that we are already loved.
- ▶ **Heart Change:** To feel safe in surrendering control of our life to God.
- ▶ **Life Change:** To confess our weaknesses regularly and trust the Holy Spirit to empower us when we pursue what he has called us to.

## 1 OPEN

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**When you are given the opportunity, how do you like to relax? Why do you enjoy that method?**

Some of us have a difficult time truly relaxing or being willing to pause our daily striving. Physical rest comes more easily than spiritual rest for many who do not understand, or perhaps cannot accept, that we can only accomplish God’s purposes through God’s help. Surrendering to God is the ultimate act of trust, and it’s what God is asking us to do. In this session, Christy Nockels examines how trust in God empowers us to fruitful, joyful living.

## 2 VIEW

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Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Christy Nockels’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

**1. How does trusting God equal rest?**

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**2. What keeps us from experiencing life in the Spirit?**

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**3. What empowers our “inside-out” living?**

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▶ **Show Session 2:** *Living from the Inside Out* (12 minutes).

### 3 REVIEW

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1. Christy Nockels elaborated on themes from the previous session: Trusting God, she said, looks like rest. But it doesn't mean we lay around wasting time. Rather, it involves actively surrendering our dreams for God's plans. **How does Christy's explanation affect your understanding of rest?**
2. We tend to stress over achieving our goals, our calling, our dreams. Yet Jesus gives us permission to rest in him. Read Matthew 11:28–30. Christy described the yoke that connects a mature, stronger animal with a younger, less experienced animal so they can do the work together. **What about a yoke makes that image so encouraging? What thoughts run through your mind when you hear Jesus's words, "Come to me . . ."?**
3. Christy acknowledged that we indeed have work to do, but she encouraged us to work with a mindset of surrender. **What does it look like for you to take Jesus's yoke upon you and learn from him? In what specific area of your life can you stop striving and instead trust God to work?**
4. One of the primary enemies of resting in God is busyness, Christy said. **How can staying busy prevent us from confidently settling into God's plan? In what ways have you seen a tendency toward busyness in your life?**
5. Christy identified comparison, jealousy, productivity, and performance pressure among the most prevalent "outside-in" patterns in our lives. **Which of these distractions do you struggle the most with?**
6. The pressure to perform and compare can lead to exhaustion and depression, a state of living that Jesus never wanted for us. He desires for us to live abundantly, with joy and purpose as we remain close to him. **What can you do to realign your pattern of life so that you can trust God's way instead of your own?**
7. Christy mentioned that some Christians, even pastors and teachers, are prone to burnout and may end up rejecting their faith. **Which spiritual leaders can you pray for? In what ways can you support them as they serve the church?**
8. **If you see signs of exhaustion in yourself, what steps can you take to get help?**

9. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9. Think of your primary weaknesses, where you lack strength, skill, or emotional capacity to succeed. **What do you think about Paul’s perspective of boasting of his weakness so that Christ’s power could rest on him? How could that mindset shape your view of your own weakness?**

10. We are tempted to strive for accomplishment, meaning, and purpose in what we do. But even when we find success, it can leave us feeling empty and wanting more. Finding meaning first in our identity as chosen children of God will reorder our efforts—when we move into our world confident of God’s love, we bring that love with us to others. **How have you seen someone impacted by God’s love expressed through another person’s life?**

## 4 BIBLE EXPLORATION

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Christy compared an inside-out life to the descriptions we find in the New Testament: “life in the Spirit,” “putting on the new self,” and “abiding in Christ.” Using new imagery to describe an old truth from Scripture, she painted a picture of a person secure in her identity as God’s beloved child.

We will explore what it looks like for someone to “put on the new self” as we study Ephesians 4 in greater depth. This letter from the apostle Paul was written to believers in the church of Ephesus, a wealthy center of commerce in the Roman world. Paul spends the first half of his letter explaining what believers are—saved by grace, beloved of God, richly blessed. As chapter four opens, he pivots to ask, “So what? How do we live in light of who God says we are?”

Read Ephesians 4:1–3. Paul opens with “Therefore” (or “then” depending on which translation you read), connecting his readers to all that he just laid out in chapters 1–3 about their identity as God’s blessed children. **In what ways are our relationships impacted when our behavior reflects our identity?**

As you read the list of character qualities in verses 2–3, think of people in your life. **Who in your life displays one or more of these godly characteristics? Which of these qualities do you want to reflect more wholly?**

Christy reminded us that living inside-out requires us to be in communion with others. “Community before capacity,” she said. **In what ways do these first few verses echo Christy’s emphasis on community?**

Read verses 4–6. Paul’s obvious emphasis is on the word “one.” He paints an expansive picture of the unified church. **What unites Christians to one another? How does Paul describe God’s role in the church in verse 6?**

Read verses 7–16. In verses 7–10, Paul references Psalm 68:18, a celebratory song depicting God as a conqueror. Here, Paul sees Christ as such a triumphant king who, instead of receiving gifts, gives them. In verse 11, we find a shortlist of leaders gifted for a specific purpose. **What is the purpose of these leaders and their gifts? What should be the result in the church if they lead in a godly manner?**

Notice that, in verses 12, 15, and 16, Paul draws a word picture of the church as Christ’s body and Christ as her head. Think of a physical person, rather than an organizational chart. **What happens to the health of the body**

**when we mature in our identity “in Christ”? How do believers serving with their gifts help the church look more like Jesus?**

In verses 17–24, Paul contrasts those who do not know Jesus (the Gentiles) with those who have “put on the new self,” that is, those who live in ways that reflect their identity as redeemed and beloved of God. **How is the “new self” described in verse 24? Why do you think it is important for Christians to resemble the character of Christ?**

Finally, read verses 25–32. The conclusion to the chapter is filled with practical applications of our inner faith. These examples give us tangible ways to show others what we know about Jesus. **Which two or three of Paul’s instructions need more focus in your life this week? Who among your circle would benefit from your renewed desire to resemble Christ?**

## 5 LAST WORD

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Now that you know who you are in Christ, act like it. That’s the teaching of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4. In his encouragement, he explains how the church works as a body, knit together, interconnected, interdependent, and most effective in tandem. Our individual faith naturally finds expression in the lives of those around us. The more we look like and act like Jesus, the more he is glorified and the better we will be.

Christy encouraged us to surrender our striving and learn to rest in Jesus. Living from our identity as God’s children rather than working to look like the perfect Christian allows God to lead and equip us to do whatever he has planned for us. This is inside-out living—a healthy, thriving place from which we can love those within our circle without guilt or pressure to perform.

## 6 DEEPER WALK

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- ▶ **Walk:** Write an encouraging note (email, letter, or another form) to a mature believer whom you admire for their consistent lived-out faith. Let them know how they have influenced your faith.
- ▶ **Study:** Re-read Ephesians 4:25–32. Draw a line down the center of your page and list out the behaviors of Gentiles, then the godly behaviors of Christians. Meditate on verse 32, asking God to show you who needs to see compassion, kindness, and forgiveness from you.
- ▶ **Pray:** Thank God for making you his child. Ask him to reveal areas where you do not fully trust his love and grace and to show you how to rest in the reality of his love.