GC Global Missions
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Missionaries to the MENA Region

TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)
17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

1 Corinthians 6:9–11 (NLT)
9 Don’t you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don’t fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, 10 or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. 11 Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)
20 My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- What stood out most to you about Nick and Portia's stories from the Middle East?

Start sharing. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- How does the real threat of rejection or imprisonment change the way people in the Middle East approach their decision to follow Christ? What holds us back from sharing our faith when we face so little risk in comparison?

- Why does witnessing a clear move of God often compel people to change the trajectory of their lives, as it did for Portia in Zambia? How can we cultivate that same level of faith to see God work miracles in our own neighborhoods?

- Why is it so easy to look at people according to the flesh rather than seeing them through the Spirit as God showed Nick in East Africa? How would your interactions change if your heart truly broke for the lost around you?

- Why is relying on the Holy Spirit's direction more effective than forcing our own agendas when sharing the gospel? How can you practice listening for His prompting this week before speaking to someone who is far from God?

- How does the reality of being "washed, sanctified, and justified" in **1 Corinthians 6** change the way we view our past mistakes? What old label do you need to stop using on yourself so you can live confidently as a friend of God?

- How does the constant effort to balance good deeds against sins contrast with the finished work of Jesus on the cross? What religious checklists are you still using to try to earn God's approval instead of resting in His grace?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Identify one person in your sphere of influence who is far from God. Commit to praying every day this week that God will give you His eyes for them and open a natural door to share the gospel.

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Father, thank You for the work You are doing in the 10/40 window and for Nick and Portia's faithful service. Give us a passion for the lost, break our hearts for what breaks Yours, and help us walk in our new identity as Your saints. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Devotional

The Scale is Destroyed

In this week's message, Nick shared an observation about the difference between Christianity and works-based religions. He noted that many Muslims use physical clickers to track their good deeds, hoping that when they stand before Allah, the scale will tip in their favor.

It is easy to look at that practice and feel pity, but many Christians unknowingly carry their own invisible "clickers." We try to balance our bad days with extra Bible reading, our sinful thoughts with extra giving, and our failures with frantic serving. We treat God's approval like a scale that must be managed.

However, Jesus Christ didn't step onto the scale to balance it for us—He completely destroyed the scale.

1. A New Creation, Not a Cleaned-Up Clunker Second Corinthians 5:17 states, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."* As Portia explained, God didn't take your old life, wash it, put new tires on it, and call it new. He removed your old nature and replaced it with His own righteousness. You are not a patched-up sinner; you are a brand-new creation.

2. The Finished Work of the Cross

When Jesus hung on the cross, His final words were, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). He did not say, "It is started; now you finish it with your good deeds." The Greek word used here is *tetelestai*, an accounting term that literally means "paid in full." Because the debt of your sin has been wiped out by the blood of Christ, there is no need for a scale. You cannot add human effort to a debt that has already been paid.

3. Resting in the Identity of a Saint The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church and reminded them of their past: *"And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 6:11). Paul didn't tell them to try harder or click their counters faster. He reminded them of their new identity.

When you grasp that the scale is destroyed and the cross is sufficient, it changes how you live. You no longer serve God out of a fearful obligation to earn His favor. You serve Him out of joy and gratitude because you already possess His life.

Reflection: Are you secretly using a "spiritual clicker" to try and earn God's favor or balance out your past mistakes? How does fully embracing your identity as a "new creation" free you to love people and share the gospel without the burden of religious performance?

Adapted directly from GotQuestions.org: What does it mean to be a new creation?