

OHIO BRIGADE CAMP

BIBLE X | LEADER'S RESOURCE GUIDE

DAY 3 — Marks of a True Conversion

George Whitefield | c. 1750

Scripture Focus	Matthew 7:21–23 2 Corinthians 5:17 Ephesians 2:1–10
Sermon	Marks of a True Conversion — George Whitefield (c. 1750)
Theme	True Conversion Changes the Inside, Not Just the Outside
Session Length	45–60 min (adjust questions as needed)
Audience	Young men, Ohio Brigade Camp

SERMON BACKGROUND — KNOW THIS BEFORE YOU LEAD

George Whitefield was the most widely heard preacher in American colonial history. He crossed the Atlantic thirteen times and traveled over 20,000 miles across the colonies, preaching to crowds of 20,000–30,000 people at a time. An estimated 80% of the colonial population heard him preach at least once — without a microphone, a platform, or social media.

Where Edwards gave the diagnosis (sin and judgment), Whitefield gave the cure — and the evidence. His sermon "Marks of a True Conversion" addresses a problem that was common in his day and is common in ours: people who have the form of religion without the reality of it.

Whitefield's argument: true conversion is not an improvement of the old self. It is the creation of a new self. A changed man looks different — not because he follows better rules, but because something has changed at the root. He uses the image of a child: converted people become like little children — humble, dependent, guileless, and eager to learn.

This hits young men directly. Many of them have grown up in church, know the language, and can perform religion. Whitefield forces the question that the Day 3 study is built around: Is there an inside to match the outside?

THE THREE BIG IDEAS — WHITEFIELD'S FRAMEWORK

1. Outward Religion Is Not Enough

Whitefield catalogues the ways people fool themselves: denomination membership, baptism records, moral reputation, church attendance, performing duties. None of these is conversion. A

man can have Christ in his head without Christ in his heart. The test is not what you do — it is who you are becoming.

- Key text: Matthew 7:21–23 — Not everyone who says 'Lord, Lord' will enter.
- Key text: 2 Timothy 3:1–5 — Having the appearance of godliness but denying its power.
- Key text: Ephesians 2:8–9 — Saved by grace, not by works.

2. True Conversion Is a Change of the Heart

Real Christianity is not about making bad people good — it is about making dead people alive. Whitefield draws from the new birth language of Christ himself. A genuinely converted person is a new creation. The old patterns of pride, self-reliance, and self-promotion begin to give way to humility, dependence, and service.

- Key text: 2 Corinthians 5:16–17 — If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
- Key text: John 3:1–3 — You must be born again.
- Key text: Ephesians 2:1–7 — Dead in sin, made alive in Christ.

3. The Evidence Is a Child-Like Spirit

Whitefield's image is striking: become like a little child. Not innocent — children are not innocent. But humble, teachable, guileless, and dependent. A truly converted man does not trust his own strength. He knows he needs to be led. He does not pretend to have it figured out. He is still learning and admits it.

- Key text: Philippians 3:7–9 — All things are loss compared to knowing Christ.
- Key text: 1 Corinthians 15:20–22 — In Christ, all shall be made alive.
- Key text: Acts 3:19 — Repent and turn back.

LEADER COACHING NOTES

The "Good Person" Question Is the Hinge

The study opens with: Can a person be a good person but not a Christian? Take your time here. Many boys believe that being a good person is the goal. Whitefield is dismantling that idea. Goodness is not the destination — relationship with Christ is. Goodness is a fruit of that relationship, not a substitute for it.

The Appearance vs. Reality Gap

Ask them to name examples of "outside change but no inside change" from their own experience. You are looking for real answers — not examples from TV. What does it look like to clean up behavior without addressing the heart? This is where the session gets personal.

The New Creation Language

When you get to 2 Corinthians 5:17, slow down. Whitefield's point — and the study's point — is that Christianity is not self-improvement. It is a new identity. Ask: What does it mean that the old has passed away? Is there evidence in your life that something genuinely new is happening?

The Closing Question Carries the Week

"God does not ask us to become a better version of ourselves. He is offering to make you into a totally new person." This is the turn from Days 2 and 3 into the rest of the week. Edwards showed the danger; Whitefield shows the door; the remaining days show what it means to live on the other side of that door.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS — WITH LEADER GUIDANCE

Opening: Matthew 7:21–23

Is everyone who calls themselves a Christian actually a Christian? How would you know the difference — in your own life?

Leader note: You want honest self-examination, not judgment of others. Keep the question pointed at themselves.

2 Timothy 3:1–5

What does "having the appearance of godliness but denying its power" look like today? What would it look like in a young man your age?

Leader note: Let them name examples. The more specific they get, the more honest the conversation becomes.

2 Corinthians 5:16–17 / John 3:1–3

Whitefield says true conversion is a change of the inside, not just the outside. What's the difference between changing your behavior and being genuinely changed?

Leader note: You are looking for the distinction between discipline and transformation. Both matter, but they are not the same thing.

Ephesians 2:1–10

If you were dead in your sin and God made you alive, what should that produce in how you live? Is that showing up in your life?

Leader note: This is the application question. Give them a moment. Then push: What would someone who knows you well say?

Closing question

Whitefield's mark of a truly converted person: humble, teachable, guileless — like a child. On a scale of honest reflection, where are you? Are you growing more teachable or less? More dependent on God or more confident in yourself?

Leader note: Growth in humility often feels like regression — you become more aware of your own failures, not less. Help them understand that more awareness of sin is often a sign of growth, not failure.

CLOSING CHALLENGE — SEND THEM WITH SOMETHING

"Being good is a religion. God wants a relationship. Whitefield traveled 20,000 miles and preached to millions because he believed every person in front of him needed to stop performing religion and start living inside it. That is still the question. Not: are you doing enough? But: is there something real happening on the inside?"

Assign them one honest task before tomorrow:

- Identify one area where you are performing Christianity rather than living it. What would it look like to stop performing and start being honest with God about where you actually are?

LEADER NOTES

Notes from this session:

Follow-up needed with:
