

# How People Change

*7 strategies to aid in the pursuit of growth*

Equip Class – Session 1 – January 10, 2024

Be Diligent in the Means of Grace

## I. Introduction

“My fear is that as we rightly celebrate, and in some quarters rediscover, all that Christ saved us from, we are giving little thought and making little effort concerning all that Christ saved us to. **Shouldn’t those most passionate about the gospel and God’s glory also be those most dedicated to the pursuit of godliness?**” (Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in our Holiness* pg. 11).

“The New Testament is clear that our acceptance into the family of God is not the end of God’s work in us, but the beginning. God has not called us to a life of ‘I have spiritually arrived’ or ‘I am just waiting for heaven.’ Rather, he calls us to a life of constant work, constant growth, and constant confession and repentance. Making us holy is God’s unwavering agenda until we are taken home to be with him. He will do whatever he needs to do to produce holiness in us” (Paul Tripp and Tim Lane, *How People Change* pg. 6).

II. Five Gospel Perspectives that will help us keep our eyes on Christ throughout the class in the pursuit of godliness (taken from *How People Change* by Paul Tripp and Tim Lane, pgs. 15-19).

A. The Extent and Gravity of Our Sin

B. The Centrality of the Heart

“The heart is the real or essential you. All of the ways in which the Bible refers to the inner person (mind, emotions, spirit, soul, will, etc.) are summed up with this one term: heart. The heart is the steering wheel of every human being” (Paul Tripp and Tim Lane, *How People Change* pg. 17).

### C. The Present Benefits of Christ

### D. God's Call to Growth and Change

"Sanctification is the progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives" (Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine* pg. 326).

### E. A Lifestyle of Repentance and Faith

"Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow from sin, a renouncing of it and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ" (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine* pg. 309).

"Saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God" (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* pg. 710).

- Repentance and faith really are two sides of one coin – repentance is turning from sin and faith is turning to Christ.

## III. Thomas Watson – *A Godly Man's Picture*.

"Oh, that all into whose hands this book shall providentially come, may be so enamored with piety as to embrace it heartily" (pg. 7).

#### IV. Be Diligent in the Means of Grace (Philippians 2:12-13).

- “The Greek verb rendered ‘work out’ means to continually work to bring to fulfillment or completion. It cannot refer to salvation by works, but it does refer to the believer’s responsibility for active pursuit of obedience in the process of sanctification” (John MacArthur, *MacArthur Study Bible NKJV* pg. 1823).

#### V. Hear His Voice (The Bible)

A. Martin Luther said is best many centuries ago, “Let the man who would hear God speak read Holy Scripture.”

B. “God told me . . .”

C. “At the end of the day, there is simply no replacement for finding a regular time and place, blocking out distractions, putting your nose in the text, and letting your mind and heart be led and captured and thrilled by God himself communicating to us in his objective written words” (David Mathis, *Habits of Grace* pg. 45).

D. There are many ways to read the Bible, and many reading plans, but there are 2 basic approaches:

1. Familiarity: read 3-4 chapters per day to get you through the Bible in a year.
2. Intimacy: read a very small portion of Scripture that is followed by meditation and contemplation.

E. Why are we doing this? Is it to just know the Bible?

“The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into him, that they may delight in his presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God himself in the core and center of their hearts” (A.W. Tozer, *Pursuit of God* pg. 11).

## VI. Have His Ear (A Life of Prayer)

“Prayer, for the Christian, is not merely talking to God, but responding to the One who has initiated toward us. He has spoken first. This is not a conversation we start but a relationship into which we have been drawn. His voice breaks the silence. Then, in prayer, we speak to the God who has spoken” (David Mathis, *Habits of Grace* pg. 94).  
*Start with the Bible then and move to prayer!*

“All of Jesus’ teaching on prayer in the Gospels can be summarized with one word: *ask*. His greatest concern is that our failure or reluctance to ask keeps us distant from God. But that is not the only reason he tells us to ask anything. God wants to give us good gifts. He loves to give” (Paul Miller, *A Praying Life* pg. 118).

“The great purpose of prayer is to come humbly, expectantly, and – because of Jesus – boldly into the conscious presence of God, to relate to him, talk with him, and ultimately enjoy him as our great Treasure” (David Mathis, *Habits of Grace* pg. 95).

“So don’t hunt for a feeling in prayer. Deep in our psyches we want an experience with God or an experience in prayer. Once we make that our quest, we lost God. You don’t experience God; you get to know him. You submit to him. You enjoy him. He is, after all a person. Consequently, a praying life isn’t something you accomplish in a year. It is a journey of a lifetime” (Paul Miller, *A Praying Life* pg. 9).

## VII. Belong to His Body (Live in fellowship with your church community -Philippians 1:3-11)

“When the desire to avail yourself of hearing his voice (in the word) has dried up, and when your spiritual energy is gone to speak into his ear (in prayer), God sends his body to bring you back. It is typically not the wanderer’s own efforts that prompt his return to the fold, but his brothers’ (James 5:19-20), being to him a priceless means of God’s grace – the invaluable backstop” (David Mathis, *Habits of Grace* pg. 148).

# VIII. Conclusion - Hear His Voice, Have His Ear, Belong to His Body (Acts 2:42).

“The means of grace are such as Bible reading, private prayer, and regularly worshipping God in church, wherein one hears the Word taught and participates in the Lord’s Supper. I lay it down as a simple matter of fact that no one who is careless about such things must ever expect to make much progress in sanctification. I can find no record of any eminent saint who ever neglected them” (J.C. Ryle, *Holiness* pg. 26).

## IX. Discussion Questions

- A. What did you hear in this talk that was most helpful or encouraging?
- B. What is your reaction to the J.C. Ryle quote I just read about the importance of the means of grace? Does it seem too simple? Is it encouraging? How you found it to be true in your life?
- C. How has the body of Christ ministered to you at any point in your life in a way that is consistent with Paul’s words in Philippians 1:3-11?

-----At Your Table -----

- D. What was most convicting from this message? What is one thing you intend to change in response?
- E. What practices or action have you found to be most helpful in your pursuit of godliness?
- F. Is there a burden or concern that you want to share with your table as a prayer request? Then, have someone pray for that request.