

How People Change

7 strategies to aid in the pursuit of growth

Equip Class – Session 6 – February 21, 2024

Spend Time with Godly People

I. Introduction

A. Before we get to this week's lesson, let me take a moment to recap where we have been thus far.

1. In week 1 we were challenged to - Be Diligent in the Means of Grace (Bible reading, prayer, and belong to a local church)
2. In week 2 we discussed Guarding against Worldliness because we recognize that custom (it is accepted by culture), example (everyone seems to be doing it), and interest (it is a benefit to me) can blind us to the sins of our day like John Newton was blinded by the sin of slavery in his day.
3. In week 3 we discussed the importance of Thinking Holy Thoughts – and you were encouraged to create a meditation sheet to aid in the pursuit godly thinking.
4. In week 4 we examined how to Watch for Temptation while Redeeming Our Time. *In particular we walked through James 1:13-18 in what we described as the temptation cycle – and you were encouraged to examine your own temptation and then respond with corresponding biblical truth to help you overcome your temptation cycle.*
5. In week 5 we considered how important it is to Ponder the Brevity of Life.
6. And this week we will examine the importance of Spending Time with Godly People.

B. To begin, I would like you to take a moment to consider the people who have had the biggest positive influence in your life.

Thomas Watson, our guide for this class, wrote: “Be among the godly . . . It is good to be among the saints to learn the trade of godliness: Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (Proverbs 13:20) (Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man's Picture* pg. 208).

“Godly growth is most frequently mediated through the gifts and graces of brothers and sisters in Christ . . . Good role models make a huge difference” (David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* Pg. 65).

II. The Necessity of Spending Time with Godly People.

A. God's Design.

- “Have you ever wondered why living in community is so important? Your immediate response probably emphasizes the personal benefits of good friendships. While these are valuable, the most important reason for community is the reality that God himself lives in community! Does that sound strange? It shouldn't. God lives in community with himself! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in perfect harmony, love, and unity. We begin our discussion about the importance of community where all good theology begins: with God. When we do, it radically alters the way we think about relationships. They become God-centered and not people centered” (Paul Tripp and Tim Lane, *How People Change* pg. 77).

B. Our propensity to sin (Luke 5:29-32; 1 John 1:8-9; Proverbs 24:16; 28:13; Eph. 4:22-24; Romans 7:11; Isaiah 44:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Luke 17:3-4; Hebrews 3:12-13).

C. Isolating yourself is foolishness (Proverbs 18:1; 11:14; Eph. 2:14-22).

- “It is impossible to read this passage and come away with the idea that Christianity is a ‘just me and God’ religion. Have you ever heard someone say, ‘Yes, I am a Christian, but I don’t go to church. Why do I need that when I have the Lord?’ Or, ‘What is most important is my personal devotion to Christ, not the church.’ The Bible never separates the two. Our salvation connects us to God and his people. It is not an either-or but a both-and arrangement. It is not just in heaven that we will be united around the throne of God. Our personal relationship with Christ unites us to believers now (Paul Tripp and Tim Lane, *How People Change* pgs. 81-82)!

D. Change is a community project (Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 13:17; Titus 1:1-5; 1 John 1:16-18; Galatians 6:2; Matthew 7:24-27).

“This phrase is best understood in context as a single office of leadership in the church. The Greek word translated ‘and’ can mean ‘in particular,’ so the two functions together define the teaching shepherd” (John MacArthur, *MacArthur Study Bible* pg. 1763).

“If Christ is the head of His body – and He is – then everything else is just body. The most influential pastor or ministry leader is a member of the body of Christ and therefore needs what the other members of the body need. There is no indication in the New Testament that the pastor is the exception to the rule” (Paul Tripp, *Dangerous Calling* pg. 70).

I would like to summarize our observations from Ephesians 4:11-16 like this:

- God wants all of His children to be unified around growing in Christ-like character and to accomplish this goal He has gifted to us the body of Christ. This body is to be led and taught by elders to know God and then serve one another in love.

III. Benefits of Spending Time with Godly People

A. Grow in knowledge (information).

B. Grow in wisdom (application).

C. Grow in humility.

“Being involved with people is time consuming, messy, and complicated . . . Close relationships make it more likely that you will sin against someone or that someone will sin against you. There will need to be times of confession and forgiveness. There will be times when you will need to serve someone, even though you feel you lack the resources. There will also be times when you will be served! That may not sound like a challenge, but if you are proud, it is the last thing you want” (Paul Tripp and Tim Lane, *How People Change* pg. 83).

D. Grow in insight.

E. Grow in effectiveness in ministry.

F. Encourage us not to give up when we become discouraged.

“Christian friendships do not simply help us bask in the sunshine of God’s grace; they also help us to roll up our sleeves and strive after holiness. . . The ultimate goal of God’s grace is an active, healthy, unified body of believers, a full-fledged family freed from sin and its slavery. It is this people, purified and zealous for good works, that is God’s precious inheritance” (pg. 75).

IV. Discussion Questions

1. What was most encouraging, challenging, or convicting from this message?
 2. As we have been challenged to spend time with godly people, we also need to recognize we have been called to evangelize people who are living ungodly lives. How can we balance these two ideas in a way that is healthy and wise?
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3. I mentioned some people I know and then well-known figures that have influenced me positively; who has been one of the most influential people in your life and briefly explain why?
4. How are you doing at spending time with godly people and welcoming their influence in your life?
5. Discuss your reaction to the following summary I shared from Ephesians 4:11-16:
 - God wants all of His children to be unified around growing in Christ-like character and to accomplish this goal He has gifted to us the body of Christ. This body is to be led and taught by elders to know God and then serve one another in love.
 - Do you agree?
 - How are you, and how is Crosspointe, living out this vision of body life from your perspective?
 - Does that sound exciting, scary, uninteresting, etc?