

<http://biblesumo.com/how-people-change-executive-summary/>

[How People Change](#) by Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp starts with God, and so avoids the fatal flaw in all the self-help books. You become profoundly different as you come to the growing realization, “It’s not all about me.” It’s all about the One who is remaking us into His image, and thus into a community that practices lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth. (David Powlinson)

This executive summary covers [How People Change](#) from chapters 1 to 14.

CHAPTER 1: THE GOSPEL GAP

All Christians should understand the “Then-Now-Then” gospel.

- “then” of the past: God has forgiven your sins completely.
- “now” of the present: God gives us the ability to change today.
- “then” of the future: God promises us an eternal future with Him, free of sin and struggle.

Most of us understand how the gospel impacts our past and our future. Few of us connect how the gospel affects us today. That is the “gospel gap.”

Many Christians are blind to three truths.

BLINDNESS OF IDENTITY

We underestimate the presence and power of our indwelling sin. We fail to grasp our rights and privileges as a child of God. We base our identity on our performance and not on Christ’s imputed righteousness.

BLINDNESS TO GOD’S PROVISION

We have been given everything we need for life and godliness. We do not need to look for God’s provision. Christ Himself is our provision for a godly life. We already have Him.

BLINDNESS TO GOD’S PROCESS

God calls us to a life of constant work, growth, confession and repentance. God is not working for our comfort and ease. He is working on our spiritual growth.

Consequently, we sometimes fill the gospel gap with externals, but this does not work.

- We increase our church participation in meetings and ministries.
- We create more rules, and we follow them better.
- We seek more dynamic emotional experiences with God.
- We stand up more for what is right.
- We master the content of Scripture and systematic theology.
- We define our problems or as moral or relational; we define them as a catalog of unmet needs.
- We seek more fellowship with other people.

These desires and goals may be good, but they do not fill the gospel gap. We fill the gospel gap by understanding our true identity and God’s provision and process.

CHAPTER 2: COUNTERFEIT HOPES

What do we do when we feel discouraged? What do we do when we continue to fail to change? We look for something to give us hope. We commonly look to 5 things, but these 5 things offer

false hope.

MY CIRCUMSTANCES

We think that if our circumstances change, things will get better. We can change if our circumstances change.

“If I had better parents, I would be a better person. If I have more money, I will be less stressed and worried. When I get married, I will be happier. If my kids obey me, I will be less angry. If my spouse does what I say, I will live better. If my health improves, I will serve God more.”

“If my circumstance changes, I will change.” This statement is false.

MY BEHAVIOR

We think that if we can change our behavior, that will fix our problem. Our behavior, however, is not the root problem.

We can stop stealing, but that will not change our covetous heart. We can drop a lawsuit, but that will not remove the bitterness in our heart. We can stop drinking or using drugs, but that will not take away the underlying depression in our heart. We can give more money to the church, but that will not make our hearts more generous.

Changing our behavior and speech only addresses the symptoms of our problem; it does not address the root problem.

MY THINKING

If we change our mindset, we hope it will fix the problem.

If we understand the consequences of pornography, that will help us successfully resist it. If we see the destructiveness of hurtful words, we will be more encouraging. If we lowered our expectations of our spouse, we will be less disappointed.

Even though this is closer to biblical change, it is not sufficient. Changing our thinking does not cause genuine change and spiritual growth.

MY SELF-CONCEPT

Another strategy is to have more self confidence. “If you believe in yourself more that you can change, you can do it. Believe in yourself.” This mentality is antithetical to what God teaches. God does not want us to esteem ourselves. He wants us to esteem God instead.

JUST TRUST JESUS MORE

Some people suggest that if we “just trust Jesus more,” that will fix the problem. But what do we mean. Some have the mentality that Jesus is the therapist that meets all our needs. If that is what we mean, this will also fail us.

If Jesus is our therapist, then we want him to meet our needs as we see them. But if Jesus is our redeemer, he defines my true needs and addresses them far greater than I could have imagined.

WHERE CAN WE FIND TRUE HOPE?

We do not need to find true hope. We already have true hope. We have Christ, and all the fullness of Christ dwells in us as Christians. He gives us a new record and new power. He has set us free from the enslaving power of sin and the condemnation of the Law. We don't need to

find hope. We already have it in Christ.

CHAPTER 3: HERE IS WHERE GOD IS TAKING YOU

- We all have our own instinctive way of thinking, feeling, acting and wanting in response to life.
- Our ultimate purpose is to become like Christ and live with Him forever.
-

It does not come naturally for us to connect these two realities. The daily work of the Spirit is what makes this connection.

If you want to go in the right direction, you need to know the final destination. The details of your life only make sense when viewed from the perspective of eternity. Eternity teaches us what is really important in life.

Living with Christ and his body is the Christian's final, most fulfilling destination. This destination adds hope to the way we see ourselves and others right now. God promises to complete the transformation of our hearts into his likeness through Christ's indwelling presence and power. Revelation 7:9-17 describes our final destiny. Your destination is secure. All of the things that are truly worth living for cannot be taken away from you! Yes, you can lose your job, your health, your house, your car, or your friend. The loss of any of these things would be hard. But you cannot lose your identity in Christ. You cannot lose his love and grace. You cannot lose his gift of forgiveness or the place reserved for you in heaven.

When you keep your eyes on this destination and pursue the things that move you there, you can live securely in a world where it seems as if nothing is guaranteed. You will not escape the difficulties of life, but you can rest assured that your Savior will use each one to prepare you for the place he is taking you.

CHAPTER 4: MARRIED TO CHRIST

Biblical writers use the marriage metaphor to depict the legal, deeply personal, two-sided nature of the believer's relationship to God. It is the relationship God initiates and in which we participate.

3 PROFOUND REALITIES OF UNION WITH CHRIST

- If I am married to Christ, the core of my present life is not personal happiness, but spiritual purity.
- My betrothal to Christ has a "now and then" structure.
- The Christian life is all-inclusive.

The hope of personal growth and change rests on my relationship with Christ who acts on my behalf. I must not let my relationships and circumstances overshadow the reality of my marriage to Christ. The Christian life rests on accepting who I really am (past and present) and who Christ truly is. The Bible calls us to approach life aware of who Christ is and what he has given us.

CHAPTER 5: CHANGE IS A COMMUNITY PROJECT

At one level we want friendships. At another level we don't want them. A Christian is not only a child of God, but a member of the family of God. Christians cannot grow to the fullness of God by living independently of others. Personal transformation takes place in the context of

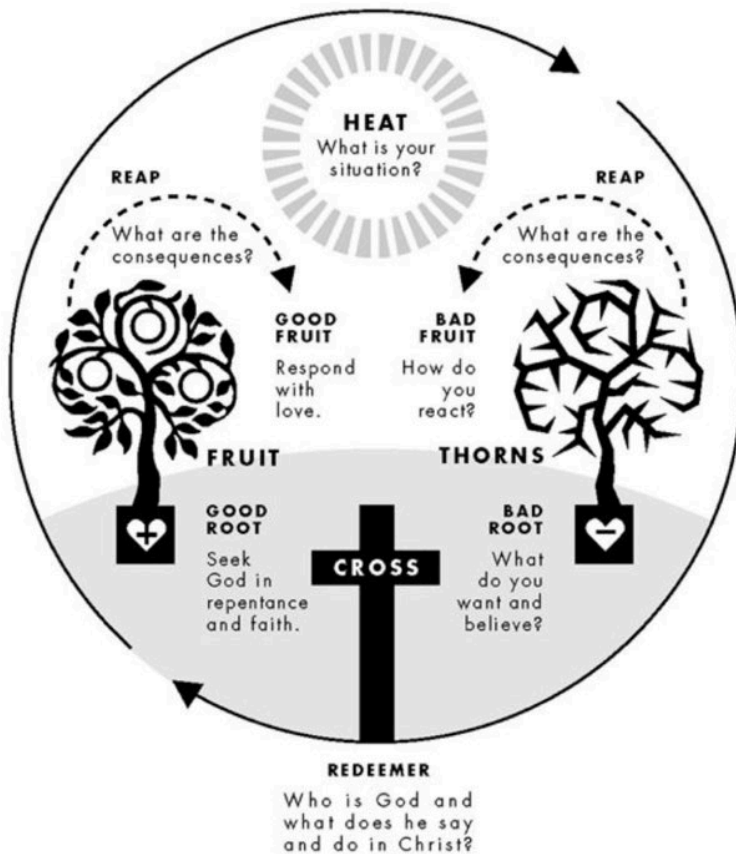
redemptive community. Change is something God intends his people to experience together. It's a corporate goal.

OBSTACLES HINDERING REDEPTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

- The busyness of life, keeping relationships distant and casual.
- A total immersion in friendships that are activity-and happiness-based.
- A conscious avoidance of close relationships as too scary or messy.
- A formal commitment to church activities, with no real connection to people.
- One-way, ministry-driven friendships in which you always minister to others, but never allow others to minister to you.
- Self-centered, "meet my felt needs" relationships that keep you always receiving, but seldom giving.
- A private, independent, "just me and God" approach to the Christian life.
- Theology as a replacement for relationship. Knowing God as a life of study, rather than the pursuit of God and his people.

CHAPTER 6: THE BIG PICTURE

- Practical hope, comfort and direction result from looking at our lives and our world from God's overall perspective on change.
- The Bible is honest about the trouble we face in a fallen world.
- Scripture's description of the change process that God oversees in our lives can be described using the categories of HEAT, THORNS, CROSS and FRUIT.



1. **Heat.** This is the person's situation in daily life, with difficulties, blessings, and temptations.
2. **Thorns.** This is the person's ungodly response to the situation. It includes behavior, the heart driving the behavior, and the consequences that result.
3. **Cross.** This focuses on the presence of God in his redemptive glory and love. Through Christ, he brings comfort, cleansing, and the power to change.
4. **Fruit.** This is the person's new godly response to the situation resulting from God's power at work in the heart. It includes behavior, the heart renewed by grace, and the harvest of consequences that follow.

CHAPTER 7: HEAT 1 – GOD IN THE REAL WORLD

5 TRUTHS FROM PSALM 88

- God understands the full range of human experiences, from supreme joy to crushing sorrow.
- The promises of the redeemer come to people who live in a world where such things take place.
- God's honesty about these experiences invites me to be honest about the things I face. Biblical Christianity is never blind or stoic in its reaction to life.
- Going to God with my despair, doubt, and fear is an act of faith. Psalm 88 reminds me to run to God in desperate moments, not away from him.
- The Bible describes a world we recognize, where very good and very bad things happen, and where people make wonderful and horrible choices.

In Psalm 88, God welcomes us to honestly express our struggles. When we do, we will find that God already knows and understands!

JAMES 1:1-15

- Trials will certainly come. (v.2)
- Trials have benefits. (v.3-4)
- We need wisdom. (v.5-8)
- Trials come in difficulty and blessing. (v.9-12)
- Trials lead to growth or temptation to sin. (v.13-15)
- Remember that God is good. (v.16-18)

CHAPTER 8: HEAT 2 – YOU IN THE REAL WORLD

ROMANS 8:20-22

- “subject to frustration” – We face futility in this broken world.
- “bondage to decay” – Everything living is dying in some way, and the bondage lies in our inability to reverse the process.
- “groaning as in pains of childbirth” – Life is full of struggle and pain.

1 PETER 5:8-9

- Satan lives to tempt, trap and torment humanity.

NUMBERS 11:4-23

The trial of a monotonous menu of manna seems minor. The focus is not on the trial but on the people's response to the trial. We can respond similarly to trials.

- We long for life the way it was before.
- We look for someone to blame.
- We question God’s goodness, faithfulness, love and wisdom.

NUMBERS 14:1-4

The Israelites realized that their destination, the promised land, will not be free of trials. We can respond similarly.

- “How in the world did I get here?”
- “Where is the Lord in all of this?”
- “What will happen to me now?”
- “What am I going to do?”

NUMBERS 20:1-5

This is an example of how quickly pain can turn into anger. The anger we reveal in the middle of trial says more about us than it does about the trial. The Bible teaches that our circumstances do not cause us to act as we do. They only expose the true conditions of our heart, revealed in our words and actions.

DEUTERONOMY 8:2-14

God sought three times with trials: to teach, humble and discipline Israel. He is also using trials to expose, change and mature us.

Psalm 46:1 reminds us that God is never absent from your heat. He is an “everpresent help in trouble.”

CHAPTER 9: THORNS 1 – WHAT ENTANGLES YOU?

As sinners, we tend to respond sinfully to the circumstances of life.

GOD’S CALL TO DISCONTENT

God wants us to be discontent with the thorns in our life. As a reminder, thorns represent our sinful responses to trials and temptations. We need a sense of urgency to grow spiritually. We need to be discontent and dissatisfied with our present condition. The truth is that we are not all we can be in Christ.

God is not calling us to be self-loathing or self-condemning. He wants us to be vigilantly examining our life in light of our hope as new creatures in Christ.

HEBREWS 4:14-5:10

- God is not surprised by our struggles.
- The Bible is for ordinary people like you and me.
- Christ enters into our struggles.
- Christ will help.
- Christ pleads our case to the Father.
- We can come to God in confidence.

EPHESIANS 4-6

- We need to put off the ways of the Gentiles: wrong thinking (4:17), wrong desires (4:19), impurity (4:19), lying (4:25), destructive anger (4:26), stealing (4:28), unwholesome communication (4:29), fighting, slander, unforgiving spirit (4:31-32).
- We need to put on the new “know Christ” way: new way of thinking (4:20-22), new set of

desires (4:22-24), speaking in truth (4:25), being angry without sinning (4:26-27), a lifestyle of giving (4:28), kindness, compassion, forgiving (4:30-31).

- The spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6 is primarily war within our own hearts.

QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY PERSONAL THORNS

- What are your thorns?
- Where do your actions and responses fail to demonstrate the fruit of faith?
- In your current situation and relationships, how are you responding sinfully.
- Where are you experiencing the consequences of your responses?
- Where have you slacked off?
- When have you given in to anger and envy?
- Where have you quit doing what God says is good?
- To whom have you spoken unkindly?
- Where have you blamed others?
- When have you accused God?
- Are you dealing with your feelings by doing unhealthy things?

THORN BUSH RESPONSES

- **Deny, avoid and escape:** We pretend things are okay when they aren't.
- **Magnify, expand, and catastrophize:** We think our life is defined by one painful moment.
- **Become prickly and hypersensitive:** We see suffering where it does not exist because we remain in angry and bitterness, becoming overly sensitive and prickly.
- **Return evil for evil:** We think about how someone has wronged us and what we would like to do in return.
- **Bogged down, paralyzed, captured:** We quit and give up in the midst of suffering.
- **Self-excusing self-righteousness:** We quit viewing ourselves as a sinner and blame my sins on others.

FRUIT TREE RESPONSES

- **Face reality:** It is right to grieve and be honestly sorrowful. Jesus wept, and He was anguished.
- **Respond with appropriate intensity:** Sorrow and anguish must be expressed with appropriate intensity, with the knowledge that our identity in Christ, our relationship with God, and the promises in God's word are secure.
- **Be alert:** God intends suffering to wake us up from complacency to action, discipline and perseverance.
- **Engage in constructive activity:** Respond with a heart ruled by Christ and not the sheer panic of loss.
- **Remember:** Recount all the truths and promises of the gospel.

CHAPTER 10: THORNS 2 – WHY DO YOU GET ENTANGLED?

We need to diagnose our sins properly to have a correct remedy. Diagnosing our sin is not just recognizing what is our sin, but it is uncovering why we sin?

4 FALSE REASONS FOR OUR SIN

- **Blaming other people:** We think that the problem with our sin is due to other people.
- **Blaming our upbringing:** We think that because we had an upbringing that was not

ideal, that is the reason and cause for our sin.

- **Blaming the difficulties of life:** We think that because of the extra stresses of life on a particular day, that is the reason and cause for our sin.
- **Blaming the weakness of our physical bodies:** We think that because our bodies are weak (due to lack of sleep or illness), that is the reason and cause for our sin.

Notice that all these reasons and explanations are pointing to the externals and not the individual's sinful heart.

OCCASIONS AND CAUSES

We cannot minimize our suffering, but we need to differentiate the "occasion for sin" and the "ultimate cause for sin."

We can discuss ways we can deal with life's difficulties, even though they are not ultimate solutions to the problem.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST PROBLEM?

The problem is us. The problem is not psychological, social, historical or physiological. The problem is spiritual. The problem is our hearts.

We have replaced Christ with something else, and as a consequence, my heart is hopeless and powerless. We have a worship disorder. We are worshipping something else and not Christ.

THE LAW AND THE HEART

The first three of the 10 commandments (Exodus 20) focus on what or whom to worship.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 emphasizes the centrality of worship. We fail to keep commandments 4 to 10 because we have failed to keep commandments 1 to 3.

- **Commandment 4 (Sabbath):** My time for my self-interest is more important than God.
- **Commandment 5 (Honor parents):** My will and honor is more important than God's call to honor and obey my parents.
- **Commandment 6 (Do not murder):** I demand to be loved and served by others, and when I am wronged, I seek revenge.
- **Commandment 7 (Do not commit adultery):** My pleasures are more important than honoring and obeying God.
- **Commandment 8 (Do not steal):** I want things for myself instead of honoring God by sharing resources with others.
- **Commandment 9 (Do not bear false witness):** My desire to make me look good and others look bad are greater than my desire to honor and obey God.
- **Commandment 10 (Do not covet):** I want what others have, and I don't want others to have the same thing. This is more important than honoring and obeying God and rejoicing in the blessings of others.

GOOD THINGS MORPHING INTO ULTIMATE THINGS

We are constantly tempted to love and serve things in the creation rather than the Creator. We think of false worship and idolatry only in terms of things that are obviously sinful. Romans 1:25 indicates that idolatry is often the result of taking good things in creation and making them ultimate things.

When we make good things an ultimate goal, it becomes our functional god.

James 4 points out that when two people have conflict, this war is an outgrowth of a war inside

each person's heart. Desires are not being met, so people lash out in an attempt to satisfy those desires. James 4:4 says that people engaging in ungodly conflict have already begun to worship someone or something other than God.

God is committed to reclaiming our hearts through the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. When we see our **Thorns**, they help us detect our idols, our specific God-replacements, and our ruling desires. James 4:5-6 says that God is a jealous lover who will not let you share your affection with anyone but him.

James 4:7—10 invites us to move toward God. He gives us grace at the very moment we are straying, and promises to give us even more when we repent and humble ourselves before him.

X-RAY QUESTIONS

The following questions can help you identify some of your idols that fuel ungodly responses in your life.

1. What do you love? Is there something you love more than God or your neighbor?
2. What do you want? What do you desire? What do you crave, long for, wish?
3. What do you seek? What are you working for?
4. Where do you bank your hopes?
5. What do you fear? Fear is the flip side of desire.
6. What do you feel like doing?
7. What do you think you need?
8. What are your plans, agendas, strategies, and intentions designed to accomplish?
9. What makes you tick? What are you living for?
10. Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, and escape?
11. What do you trust? Do you functionally rest in the Lord?
12. Whose performance matters to you?
13. Whom must you please? Whose opinion counts?
14. What do you desperately hope will last in your life?
15. How do you define success or failure in any particular situation?
16. What makes you feel rich, secure, and prosperous?
17. What would bring you the greatest pleasure? the greatest misery?
18. Whose political power would make everything better for you?
19. How do you define victory and success?
20. What do you see as your rights? What do you feel entitled to?
21. In what situations do you feel pressured or tense? When do you feel confident and relaxed?
22. What do you really want out of life?
23. What do you pray for?
24. What do you think about most often? What does your mind drift instinctively?
25. What do you talk about? What occupies your conversations with others?
26. How do you spend your time?
27. What are your dreams at night? What do you daydream about?
28. What is your belief system? What is your worldview?
29. In what do you place your trust or set your hopes? What do you consistently turn to or regularly seek? Whom do you serve?
30. In what ways do you live for yourself?
31. In what ways do you live as a slave to the Devil?
32. When do you say, "If only. . .?"

33. What instinctively feels right to you?

CHAPTER 11: CROSS 1 – NEW IDENTITY AND NEW POTENTIAL

YOUR POTENTIAL: THE INDWELLING CHRIST

The Cross is more than a doorway or escape route from eternal punishment and divine judgment. The Cross defines our identity and potential. We are alive in Christ.

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

We have the Spirit of Christ living in us. Christ indwells us through the person of the Holy Spirit. He gives us a new heart and new power to live out of an entirely new potential.

“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” (Romans 8:9-10)

THREE REDEMPTIVE TRUTHS

- **The Redemptive Fact:** “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live.”
- **The Present Reality:** “But Christ lives in me.”
- **The Results of Daily Living:** “The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

When Jesus died physically, all believers died spiritually. Paul sees himself so united to the death of Christ that he can say, “I no longer live.” In his physical death, Christ broke the spiritual power and authority sin had over us. Paul writes that the changes inside him are so basic to who he is as a human being that it is as if he no longer lives. He is still Paul, but because of his death in Christ, he is a Paul who is utterly different at his core.

You are not the same as you once were. You have been forever changed. You no longer live under the weight of the law or the domination of sin. Christ’s death fulfilled the law’s requirements and broke the power of sin. You do not have to give in to sin. You can live in new ways amid the same old situations. This constitutional change is permanent!

It is not enough for Paul to say that the death of Christ made him new. When he died, the old Paul was not replaced with a new and improved version of Paul, but with Christ himself! Our hearts are new because Christ lives there. Our hearts are alive, because Christ lives there to give it life. Our hearts can respond to life in new ways because it is no longer dominated by sin, but liberated by the gracious rule of Christ.

We no longer live based on our assessment of what we possess in strength, character, and wisdom (from family, education, and experience). We base our lives on the fact that because Jesus lives in us, we can do what is right in desire, thought, word, and action, no matter what specific blessings or sufferings we face. Our potential is Christ.

The Christian mom, who speaks with patience when she once would have spoken in anger, is experiencing the reality of Christ living in her. The husband, who comes home tired from work but still serves his wife, is living in the power of the indwelling Christ. The friend, who chooses to overlook minor offenses and stay in a friendship she would have once forsaken, is choosing to

live on the basis of “Christ within me” faith.

THREE REDEMPTIVE IMPLICATIONS

- You will live with personal integrity
- You will create a climate of grace in your relationships
- You will act with courageous grace and constructive truth.

You will be willing to examine yourself in the mirror of God’s Word, seeking practical, accurate self-knowledge. You will be honest in your struggles.

You will forgive as you have been forgiven. You will be merciful about the sins of others, based on the mercy you yourself have received from Christ. You will be ready to ask for forgiveness, freed by Christ from defensiveness, rationalizing, blame-shifting, and other types of self-justification.

You will speak with honesty in the pursuit of unity, peace, and blessing. Your responses will be more shaped by the Savior’s will than by your own selfish desires, the expectations of others, or the pressures of the situation.

WHAT IF YOU FAIL?

What do you do when you sin and fail? Do you excuse and rationalize? Do you wallow in self-defeating guilt and regret? The Cross calls you away from both responses. It gives you the freedom to admit your sin and repent.

When you fail, keep Jesus and his work in view. Run to your Lord, not away from him. Receive his forgiveness, get back up, and follow him once more, knowing that each time you fail, you can experience your identity as one for whom Christ died. Each failure reminds us of why he had to die; each confession reminds us of the forgiveness that only the Cross could provide.

CHAPTER 12: CROSS 2 – THE CROSS AND DAILY LIVING

We are personally united to Christ through the Holy Spirit. We have new resources and potential because God has moved in. The basic spiritual DNA of every believer has been radically altered, and we are part of a new story of redemption that includes the entire creation.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT: MAGNIFY CHRIST

One of the new experiences that come with this indwelling work of the Spirit is the ability to see something we couldn’t see before conversion. The believer can now understand spiritual truth. (1 Corinthians 2:6-16) The Holy Spirit enables us to see Jesus and all that we have and are in him. (John 16:5-15)

THE CROSS-CENTERED LIFE

All of us live our lives based on some identity. Most of us are not particularly aware of our view of ourselves, but it determines how we will respond to everything we face during the day, especially to the Heat in our lives.

The Cross must be central, because it defines who you are, who you are becoming, and who you will be. While a Christian should never minimize personal gifts, past problems, or current struggles, these do not displace his more fundamental identity of being in Christ. Jesus defines

me, not my particular calling or vocation.

Once you become a Christian, you do participate in your ongoing growth. You do actively pursue the obedience that comes from faith. You do engage in spiritual warfare. However, you are never to minimize your continuing need for the mercy and power of Christ in the process of becoming like him.

FAITH AND REPENTANCE ARE THE KEYS

How do you avoid leading a cross-less life? The answer is found in moment-by-moment faith and repentance. Faith keeps us laying hold of the grace and mercy of Christ and thereby avoiding despair. Repentance keeps us facing our ongoing struggle with sin and thereby avoiding pride.

Repentance, or turning from sin, is never easy. It means admitting that you are wrong. Seeing Christ is essential if we are going to admit and turn from our sin.

- **You Are Justified:** One aspect of our justification that many Christians fail to see is that we are not just forgiven because Christ has paid for our sins. God also treats us as if we had perfectly obeyed the law, because Christ has obeyed it perfectly for us. He is our righteousness.
- **You Are Adopted:** Because we have been justified, we are now welcomed into God's presence and family. God is no longer our judge; he is now our Father.

If the Christian is grounded in his or her new identity, it will show itself in a life of repentance.

THREE INGREDIENTS TO FAITH-DRIVEN REPENTANCE

- **Wake Up:** Real repentance means that you see that your biggest problem is you, not your circumstances.
- **Own Up:** Repentance follows the wake up call. Repentance is godly sorrow, not worldly sorrow. It is seeing the heart sin beneath the behavioral sins. It is repenting of your righteousness apart from Christ, not just your sins.
- **Shift Weight:** When you admit the depth of your sin and repent, the love of God gets increasingly attractive. The false identities and idols that were once so alluring lose their appeal. You start to experience the love of Christ, and change results.

CONCLUSION

The life of repentance and faith puts to death the deeds of the sinful nature and lives more and more in righteousness. The Father who calls us to obedience has provided everything we need in Christ to live it out.

When we fail, he promises never to leave or forsake us. He wins us back by the Spirit and gives more grace when we confess and repent of sin.

CHAPTER 13: FRUIT 1 – REAL HEART CHANGE

Change can and does happen when we live in relationship with our Redeemer and embrace all the benefits he brings.

Real change does not take place until it is visible in our lives and our relationships. Our understanding of something does not mean we have solved the problem.

It is not enough to diagnose the problem. You need genuine, concrete change in your behavior.

THE OVERFLOW OF THE HEART

When the Bible talks about the Christian life, it talks about loving God with all of our hearts. God is not content to live on the periphery of our lives. A Christian is someone whose life has been invaded by the holy love of God. God intends to create in us a pure love that flows from a new heart.

The outward Fruit of a believer's life does not grow out of a stoic obedience to God's commands, but from a heart that has been captured and captivated by the Giver of those commands. There will still be times when obedience is difficult. But even the struggle will grow out of a sense that the rules are there because a personal God cares for you.

Jesus says that all true obedience grows out of a transformed heart. (Mark 12:28-31) Anything less is empty and hypocritical because the heart is central to change. True godliness begins in the heart.

THE HEART IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- 1 Samuel 16:1-13
- Psalm 139:23-24
- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- Ezekiel 36:24-28

THE HEART IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- Ephesians 1:15-19

My life is not determined by my upbringing, physiology, culture, or emotions. Because God has made every provision to address my most fundamental need, redemption, I can have confidence and joy that change is possible for me. My sinful heart is my biggest problem and hindrance, and it has been addressed by God.

CASE STUDY: PHILIPPIANS VS. YOURSELF

Heat

- What is your situation?

Thorns

- What are your responses in difficult situations?
- What cravings and beliefs tend to rule the human heart and produce ungodly reactions?
What cravings and beliefs rule your heart?
- What consequences do you face after sinful actions?

Cross

- What changes your life? What rules your heart?

Fruit

- What specific good fruit do you observe in your life?
- What good effects result from the way you handle your situation?

CHAPTER 14: FRUIT 2 – NEW AND SURPRISING FRUIT

Fundamental change takes place in our actions and responses when Christ changes our hearts. The hope of the New Covenant is a new heart that is daily being renewed. It is important to be reminded of how God's renewal of our hearts helps us deal with life's Heat in new ways.

LESSONS FROM PSALM 4: DAVID AND ABSALOM

- David does not run away from God.
- David reminds himself on his identity as God's child.
- David examines his own heart.
- David worships.
- David ministers.
- David rests.

Don't read Psalm 4 and say, "This is what I should be doing, but I'm not!" Say, "This is what God is doing in me too. These things are possible for me, because David's Redeemer is my Redeemer. Christ's work on the Cross makes that same grace available to us, no matter what we may be facing. God does more than deliver us from the Heat. He delivers us from ourselves so that we don't simply survive the Heat, but bear good Fruit.

We reject the view that emphasizes what we should do more than what God is doing in us by his Spirit. We should reject any view that says that the change God calls us to is impossible, or only takes place in eternity. We should reject any perspective on the Christian life that minimizes the war that rages in our hearts every day or ignores the fact that God is fighting it for us and with us. The biblical picture is that God meets us in the trials of life, and he doesn't just give us rules; he gives us his Son. Because of him, what we are called to do is not unrealistic.

We are not listing things we should do as believers, but rather, what we have been given by Jesus. He gives us new life, new wisdom, new character, new hope, new strength, new freedom, and new desires. Christ's work on the Cross gives us a new heart. Our heart has been brought to new life through the Holy Spirit. When we think, desire, speak, or act in a right way, it isn't time to pat ourselves on the back or cross it off our to-do list. Each time we do what is right, we are experiencing what Christ has supplied for us.

- **I will live with personal integrity.** If the God of forgiveness, wisdom, and power actually lives in me, why would I be afraid to face my weaknesses and sin? The Cross not only frees me from my slavery to sin, it opens me up to the resources of God's grace. One of those resources is the body of Christ.
- **I will let the Cross shape my relationships.** To let the Cross shape your relationships means to be ready, willing and able to forgive. The Cross causes me to want others to know the same forgiveness Christ purchased for me, and it changes me, enabling me to genuinely forgive others. The Cross enables me to humbly ask for forgiveness. When I ask for forgiveness, I admit my responsibility for a sin against you, without any justification, excuse, or blame. When the Cross shapes my relationships, I respond to the sin and weakness of others with grace.
- **The Cross gives purpose and direction to my words and actions.** God calls his children to actions that reflect the grace we have received in Christ. Examples include making peace, speaking the truth, serving others, granting forgiveness, learning to say no, and using the gifts God has given for his glory.

3 PARTS TO SEEKING FORGIVENESS

- Seeking forgiveness means coming to someone I have wronged with an attitude of humble honesty.
- Seeking forgiveness acknowledges that I have sinned against another person, and I

need to ask that person to be part of the forgiveness process as well.

- Seeking forgiveness should include a compassionate acknowledgment of the pain my sin caused.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- You are already a Fruit tree because of what Christ has done for you. There are already evidences of godly character and strength in your life. By faith, recognize the good Fruit that results from responding to the gospel and the Spirit's work.
- The Christian life is about living by faith in Christ, with the possibilities and privileges he brings. It is not about grudgingly keeping the rules in a "grin and bear it" lifestyle.
- Because Christ has made you a new creature, good things are possible even in difficulty. His work enables your heart to respond with good Fruit.
- Because you are united with Christ and inhabited by his Spirit, trials and temptations are opportunities to experience the power of God at work.

God calls you to a new identity in Christ and a new way of living. Change is not rooted in a body of knowledge, a set of rules, theological outlines, or behavioral techniques. It is the result of your heart's transformation by the risen Lord. As his grace rules our hearts, we can keep his commands.