

## **Start Timer!**

### **I. Introduction**

**[Slide 1]** We are in a middle of a series called, **Life Change from the Heart**. This is a series about how God changes us from the heart through the gospel. We have showed you that the 12-Step Recovery Program does a great job distilling how gospel transformation works.

How does it work? We start with acknowledging our powerlessness to change ourselves. The Bible talks about this as sinful nature that we are powerless to. **[Slide 2]** That's step 1: **We admitted we were powerless over our addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.**

Then, we go on a spiritual quest to seek power greater than ourselves. We made the case that believing in Jesus is both intellectually credible and it restores us to sanity. **[Slide 3]** That's step 2: **Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**

Then, we come to a point of surrendering our life to God who kisses us with love and grace even when we were all messed up. **[Slide 4]** That's step 3: **Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.**

We said that we are not zapped into life change after we surrender our life to God. Rather, we start the process of cleaning the inside of the cup, our heart. We go through an extensive process of self-examination to find self-indulgence in our heart. **[Slide 5]** That's step 4: **Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**

Then, we confess what we find. **[Slide 6]** That's step 5: **Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**

Then, we repent, which means change the posture of our heart. **[Slide 7]** That's step 6: **Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**

Last week, we started step 7. **[Slide 8]** Step 7 says: **“Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”** How does God remove our shortcomings? We said that it is by the power of grace. Going through the process of self-examination in step 4, confession in step 5, and repentance in step 6 leads our heart to humility. When we

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realize how messed up we really are, deeply acknowledged that, and change the posture of our heart, we can't help but to come to God in humility. And when we come to God in humility, we come to God like the younger brother in the parable of the prodigal son came back to the father. And we experience his extravagant grace. It is this grace that shocks our heart and changes our lives. Our lives change afterwards.

But, does this mean that I don't have to try to obey God? Does this mean that I can just sort of stay the way I am and enjoy the consolation of God's grace? I find the way step 7 is worded interesting as well: Humbly ask God to remove my shortcomings. It seems like they are assuming that God is doing the removing and I am just doing the humbling. Is there nothing I can do? Is it just asking God to remove it? Don't I have to start doing stuff?

Absolutely. Jesus is calling us to discipleship, to take up the cross and follow Jesus in every way and surrender everything to him. But, there is a wrong way to do discipleship and the right way to do discipleship. After I talk about that, I want to talk about the kind of discipleship he is leading us to. **[Slide 9]** The sermon is entitled, **“Step 7: Grace Based Discipleship.”** I want to share this from a story of how Paul confronted Peter regarding a sin.

**[Slide 10]** Let's go to Galatians 2:11-14:

<sup>11</sup> When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. <sup>12</sup> For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. <sup>13</sup> The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

<sup>14</sup> When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

**[Slide 11]** **First, the wrong way to do discipleship.**

Here, we have one of the apostles, Paul, challenging the behavior of another apostle, Peter. Peter used to be exclusive. He never associated or ate with non-Jews. But, the Holy Spirit showed him that God accepts non-Jews (Gentiles) just as much as Jews, and they were commanded to fellowship together with gentiles. Essentially, God

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told him to make the church multi-ethnic and bring people of all races together, loving one another. But, later on, his racism and hypocrisy and the sense of superiority creped in, and he started to disassociate himself from non-Jews.

The way Apostle Paul argues with Peter is extremely important! He could have said to Peter: you broke the no racism rule, but instead, he said, you are not acting in line with the truth of the gospel.

So, the wrong way to change is through laying down the rules and demanding compliance from yourself via moral striving or trying harder (this is the approach that Paul didn't take with Peter). But, this is the way we all try to change. I am not saying that we shouldn't try to be good or try harder, but if our focus in Christian living comes from moral striving or just trying harder to keep the rules, it's not going to work in the *long run*.

Let's take some time to look at why we change our behavior.

We change because of fear or pride.

- Fear that if we do this we are going to get arrested, or it's not good for business or our spouse is going to leave us, we are going to get hurt, etc. If you don't do this, we are going to sue you. If you don't do this, you're going to make less money. You're going to get a bad grade. It's going to make you sick. If you don't do this, you are not going to be accepted, you are not going to be loved, you are not going to be included.
- Or we change because of pride. I'm better than them. You don't want to be like those people. Your identity as a person is based on thinking of yourself better than other people; so, you have to live up to it. That's your motivation for being good.
- Now, the world would be a horrible place if there weren't moral compliance due to fear or pride. It's very useful. I am all for good moral behavior. But, if you are moral out of fear or pride, you have not done anything to root out the self-indulgence or self-centeredness of the heart. You've actually appealed to it. Ultimately, moral people who are moral do it for themselves. They don't do good

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for others or in it of itself. The morality is actually nurturing the self-centeredness. When you nurture for example, honesty, out of fear or pride, it is a house of cards because sometimes it is not worth telling the truth—because of it was done for yourself in the first place. When morality does not pay for it, you don't do it. You might be shocked by your behavior (I can't believe I actually did that, stole that, lied to him), but you WERE nurtured to do it.

- Once upon a time, a gardener grew a great garden. He grew the best and the greatest carrot and gave it to the prince, and said, “I want to express my esteem and affection for you.” The prince discerning his heart that he just wants to express his love and admiration, thanked the gardener and said, “I happened to own the garden next to you and I want you to have it so that you can go out there and be twice the gardener.” And the gardener went home rejoicing.
- A Nobleman heard about this. And he thought if gardener gives a carrot and he gets 3 acres, what might he give if I give him something much more valuable. So, he went to the prince and said, I raise horses and this is the best and the greatest horse that I own. I want to express my esteem and affection to you and gave the prince the horse. The prince discerning the nobleman's heart, said, thank you and walked away. The nobleman said, wait a minute, did you hear what I said. The prince said, “Yes I did. The gardener gave me the carrot but you gave yourself the horse.”
- Do you see that unless you get the gospel of grace, all of your virtues are a sham and it won't last and in the heart of your morality, you are nurturing self-centeredness?

Some of you have asked me this question: if we are saved and accepted by God through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by works, what incentive do we have to be a good person? Why not just go on sinning? This gospel of love does not change us, you imply. It actually gives us an excuse for continuing to live in sin. If that's your question, here's my answer. If the punishment is taken away and you said you lost your motivation to be

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good, then the only reason you were good is because of fear. And what I am saying is that moral compliance based on fear is essentially selfish, leading us to darkness in our hearts and ultimately depravity in society.

So, behavioral compliance, while it seems good on the surface, is superficial and ultimately does not work to change us at our core.

**[Slide 12] Then, what is the right way to do discipleship?**

Our thesis has been that you have to get to your heart. Your heart has to change. That's what God is after. And the passage says that right way to change is to act in line with the truth of the gospel. Why? Because the gospel works to change our heart, and therefore, our character. It's an inside-out transformation.

The only way to change your heart is to be smitten by the beauty of God and the gospel of grace and truth. John 1:14 tells us that Jesus is full of grace and truth. We must fully grasp grace and truth, which is the gospel.

The truth of how messed up we are has to click in our heart: that I have been running away from him. I have been selfish even in my goodness. That I've been out of control or trying to control too much. That my life is messed up. That I am more sinful than I can ever imagine. My heart is deeply selfish and prideful even in the things I was doing right. If we truly understand this about ourselves, humility sets in and pride is destroyed. If you know how messed up you are, you are humble.

But, truth without grace is not truth at all. It's only self-condemnation. Or some people might say, bad self-esteem!

You see, God's grace has to click in your heart as well: that he loved you so much that he left the glory of heaven, came down to this dusty place, forsook his riches, lived in poverty, was stripped naked on the cross, was whipped, spat upon, humiliated, and ultimately suffered separation from his father—he was so much in agony that he cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” He was forsaken, so that we can be accepted, so that the price of justice can be paid. He became our substitutionary atonement, or put another way, someone who paid the debt that we could not ever pay.

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He paid it with his life. Because of that, we are unconditionally accepted by God not based on my performance, but because of his grace and unconditional love. So, we are not motivated by fear. We are motivated by deep love and gratitude. Romans 5 says, we love him because he first loved us. We are motivated because he adopted us as his children, included in his family.

The gospel destroys pride and fear, and changes our heart to gratitude and love. Because we experienced an undeserving acceptance, our hearts are transformed, and so, **we obey**. The Bible calls us to obedience to God regarding all kinds of matters, but out of gospel transformed heart.

Let me give you some examples from the Bible:

- 2 Corin 8:9. In most churches, when we try to get people to give money: you do it this way: pride—you want to be one of the persons that gives away a lot. This is God’s command. You put pressure on the will. He says he is not commanding them. Paul says: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty you might become rich.” He is bringing Jesus salvation into the realm of money. Think of what Jesus has done for you and it should move you. The solution of stinginess is the reorientation to Christ’s generosity. The gospel goes after the root cause of stinginess.
- Eph 5:25: Paul is speaking to husbands, who grew up in a pagan society. Marriage was a business relationship but Paul wanted them to cherish, honor, and love their wives. Paul does not appeal to morals. Paul tells husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself to them. Again, it is motivated by the gospel.
- Faith in the gospel restructures your heart. Behavioral compliance is superficial and fleeting. Now, am I saying that you should not do good if you are not compelled by grace? No. Do it anyway if you can. But, the problem is that you will not be able to sustain your good behavior only out of fear and pride. That’s

why you relapse. And here's the thing: what you do and are willing to do will be limited to your sense of fairness, not to grace. That's leads me to the final point.

**[Slide 13] What kind of discipleship is he leading us to?**

Now, some people say that grace means we get off too easy. In The Cost of Discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer talks about "cheap" grace. He said, "Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ." God is not calling us to cheap grace. He is calling us to a kind of discipleship that only graced soaked people can live. He is calling us to move from a life based on the law to a life based on grace in every way.

If you look at his teachings very carefully, there's a shift from the principles of law to the principles of grace.

- Matthew 5:38-41: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ [the principles of law and justice—it’s fair] But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him tow miles.” [this is the principle of grace—giving to people not what they deserve but even more]
  - Note: Martin Luther King Jr. got the non-violent direct action principle from here. It is the principle of grace. It’s not about passively taking it and being a doormat; it’s about responding directly in grace. It might be the strongest thing that you do.
- Matthew 5:43-48: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemies.’ [here’s the principle of law and justice—it’s fair to do this] But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” [here’s the principle of grace—loving your enemies and those who persecute you]

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- How about the story of the prodigal son that we talked about last Sunday? That story is a contrast between the attitude of the older brother on the one hand [who wants fairness and justice—He believed that his little brother should get what he deserved for blowing the family estate on wild living], and the attitude of his father on the other hand [who demonstrated grace—he waited for him day and night, ran to him when he saw him from far away, hugged him, kissed him, killed to fatted cow to celebrate his return, and restored all the rights of a son; the father didn't give him what he deserved].
- How about the parable of the workers who got paid equally in Matthew 20:1-16? This landowner went out to hire people at 6 am to work on his vineyard and promised them 1 denarius each. He went and hired more people to work at various hours of the day even at 5 pm. Then, he paid everyone 1 denarius. People who started at 6 am complained. They thought it was unfair. [Here is the principle of law—getting what you deserve] But, the landowner demonstrated grace by paying equally [He gave the late workers more than they deserved]

It's not just his teachings; it's his life was also centered on grace as well.

- He reached out to and fellowshiped with tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners (Luke 5:27)
- He ministered to Gentiles--outsiders (Luke 5:17)
- He spent the entire day on a boat to go across the Sea of Galilee to free a gentile person possessed by demons in Gerasenes, and immediately after the healing he gets kicked out the towns people and he came immediately came back and nearly got shipwrecked (Luke 8:26-38)
- We can go on and on.

Here's the bottom line: The movement from law to grace is at the center of the life of Jesus, teachings of Jesus, and at cross of Jesus: It was the reason he came to this world and the reason he died for us.

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Apostle John put it this way (John 1:17): “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

This means that the kind of discipleship that Jesus is leading us to is centered on grace and worked out in every part of our lives through the Holy Spirit.

- In cartoon strip, “Peanuts,” Lucy is seen saying that if she were in charge of the world, she’d change everything. Charlie Brown says, “That wouldn’t be easy. Where would you start?” Lucy looks directly at him, and without hesitation, points her finger at him and says, “I’d start with you!” In many ways, we want to see grace work in other people first. But, God calls us to allow grace to flow through our lives first.
  - I’ve often wondered how we are supposed to live by the ethics of grace that Jesus taught us to live by in the Sermon on the Mount. How are we supposed to love our enemies or turn the other cheek? I believe that the only way to do so is to fully immerse ourselves in the grace of God, and through the power of the Spirit of God, emulate the giver of grace
  - Luke 6:36: after commanding us to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us (in other words, show grace), Jesus says: “Be merciful, **just as** your father is merciful.” **Just as, Just as** your father is merciful.
  - “Not justice, but just as”—meaning it is not about justice—giving them what they deserve, but showing grace “just as” God showed grace towards us.
  - You have to remember, you can’t do this unless you first experience God’s grace, and you know what’s the most amazing thing about grace is? God give us grace even when we are not repentant. There is no condition whatsoever! But, when we realize our sins, his grace overwhelms us.

- So, how do we actually do it? Instead of explaining this more, let me try to paint it by giving you a few examples.
  - When Kaetlyn, our daughter, was 4 years old, she was taking too long to get ready. So, Grace, my wife, said: “Kaetlyn, if you don’t hurry up, we’re gonna leave without you.” Then, she was ready to go, but Grace was not ready to go. Kaetlyn said to Grace: “Mom, that’s okay. I won’t leave without you.” Grace experienced grace.
  - I heard this story from one of you. He grew up in a pretty rough neighborhood. Then, spent some time in jail. When someone disrespected him, he beat that person up. That was how he lived. It was the code by which he lived. Then, he became a Christian. And it happened again. Someone openly disrespected him, and his automatic response was to let that person have it. He and I talked about what it means to live by grace. He began to reflect more and more on God’s grace in his life. Later, someone disrespected him again. In fact, he was openly cussed out. But, this time, he walked away feeling a sense of compassion for him. That’s grace in action.
  - Corrie Ten Boom and her family secretly housed Jews in their home during WW II. Their activity was discovered, and Corrie and her sister Bessie were sent to the German death camp, Ravensbruck. There, Corrie watch many, including her sister, die.
  - After the war she returned to Germany to declare the grace of Christ.
  - After one of her talks, she came face to face with a man who was a guard at Ravensbruck. He was one of the crudest guards. He didn’t remember her specifically. He had since become a Christian. He acknowledged how cruel he was and asked her for forgiveness.
  - And I stood there—I whose sins had again and again to be forgiven—and could not forgive. Betsie had died in that place. Could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking? It could have been many

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seconds that he stood there—hand held out—but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do.

- For I had to do it—I knew that. And still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart.
- But forgiveness is not an emotion—I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. "Jesus, help me!" I prayed silently. "I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling." And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust out my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.
- "I forgive you, brother!" I cried. "With all my heart!" For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely, as I did then. But even then, I realized it was not my love. I had tried, and did not have the power. It was the power of the Holy Spirit.