



Week 1 - The Tension Is Here

This series looks at a gap we experience in our lives that causes discouragement and discontent - that is, the gap between who we really are, who people think we are and who God has called us to be. We all feel it, but very few of us talk about it. Thankfully, however, the scriptures have some answers for us on how to deal with these DELTAS in our lives. It is our prayer, as we come together as a Gospel Community to wrestle with what the scripture says, that the Holy Spirit will empower us to start the process of change.

1. The Gospel Demands Change

- Read Philippians 3:7-11 & 1 Corinthians 6:11

Paul's thinking, belief and behaviour was radically changed because of the gospel. In Jesus' words, he was "born again" and he was called, as we are called, to abandon our former ways in order to follow Christ. When Paul addressed the Corinthians, they were continuing to live in the same way as they had done before they were born again. Paul warned them that, if they continued in their ways, they might not inherit the Kingdom of God. They were supposed to change because they had been saved. As new creations, we too are instructed to live lives that are different to the world, continually putting sin to death. Like the Corinthians, we feel the delta between what God has called us to be and how we are actually living, and this tension should propel us towards becoming more Godly.

- ❖ Q: Why it is illogical for us to live in sin when we have been saved from it?
- ❖ Q: Why is the DELTA between how God wants us to live and how we actually live a good thing that can spur us on towards Godly ambition?

2. We Can Only Change Once We Acknowledge That We Need To

- Read Philippians 3:12-13a

It is very encouraging for us to read that Paul, the apostle who wrote most of the New Testament, was still not a 'perfect' Christian. Even late in his life, he really understood that there is no "graduation" for Christians on this earth, and that each day with Jesus is another chance to experience a little more of him. Paul knew that God was so much bigger than he could ever know, even after a lifetime of study and pursuit. He also knew that he still had much inner transformation to go through, and that he would continue to grow and change until he met Christ face to face. Knowing this helps us to acknowledge our sins and weaknesses too. The only way we start to close the gap between who we are now and who God has called us to be, is to close the gap between who we are and who we *pretend* to be.

- ❖ Q: In what way does it encourage you to know that Paul had not 'arrived' at being a perfect Christian when writing his letters?
- ❖ Q: Why is admitting our weaknesses and sins to one another really important in becoming who Christ wants us to be?

Take a moment to evaluate how good you are at owning up to the sin in your life. Think about the person your family experience, versus the person you are in the workplace and the person we all see at church in or GC.

- Q: On a scale of 1-10, how good are you at owning your sins and weaknesses in this Gospel Community?
- Q: Are you, in any way, a different person at church to what you are at home? Explain why.

Closing the gap between who we are, who we pretend to be, and who God designed us to be



- ❖ Q: Do you have sin that you don't want anyone to know about, that you keep hidden, pretending to be more holy than you are? (E.g. gossip, porn, gambling, excessive spending, eating issues, anger issues, rage, a temper, debt, crude speech, disrespect for women, abuse, racism, exploitation of workers, arrogance, pride, jealousy, unforgiveness, bitterness, lack of grace....the list is endless.)

3. Gospel Change Requires Looking Back With Mercy and Looking Forward With Determination

- Read Philippians 3:13b-14

Though Paul had a lot to boast about in his past, and much to be ashamed about as well, he put both the good and the bad in the past. Living in the past stops us from moving forward. Another area that stops us from godly change and growth is our passive attitude towards it. We plan for everything else in our lives but not for our Christian growth. But without a plan, we naturally gravitate towards sin, towards compromise and towards disobedience. Paul tells us to train for godliness. It is not something that just happens. It takes grace-driven, Holy Spirit empowered effort. We actually have to put sin to death. God's grace is freely given to us so that we are able to live godly lives that deny sin and live according to the Spirit instead.

We need a plan to grow in godliness this year. Here is a simple one that over time begins to stack up:

- Let's press on in our relationship with God.
- Let's press on in our relationships with others.
- Let's press on in our relationship with ourselves.

- ❖ Q: Why is letting go of the past crucial to moving forward?
- ❖ Q: Are you more prone to holding onto your past victories or your past sins and failures? Can you identify some of them?
- ❖ Q: What one thing is God asking you to put behind you now, once and for all, on order to move on to greater Godliness this year?
- ❖ Q: Think through and share with the group one of the things you know God wants you to change as you press on in your relationship with him, with others and with yourself. (Write these things down and come back to them in a few weeks to check in with each other, to see if you are making progress.)

4. Gospel Change Is Empowered Not Just By Knowing Who You Are, But Whose You Are

- Read Philippians 3:12-13b (again)

Paul pressed on to make gospel change his own because Christ had taken hold of him. He knew that Jesus paid a high price for him, to secure his freedom and to make him his own. Christ died in order to do the same for us. And so, the message to us is just the same as Paul's message was to the Corinthians, that we are not our own, that we were bought with a price, and therefore we should glorify God in the way in which we live. That means that we cannot go on living the same way, year in and year out, but rather that we should continue to grow in godliness (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

- ❖ Q: Jesus died to secure our freedom and to make us his. How should this impact the way in which we live?
- ❖ Q: What decisions is God asking you to make this year that are different to what you did last year in light of this message about living for him and not yourself? (Consider your finances, your working hours, the way you spend your money, the way you spend your time and your energy.)

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