

Fruit (part 2)

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[0:00] We're coming today to the end of our study on the book, How People Change, Tim Lane and Paul Tripp. And I hope that it has been a profitable study for you.

! It has been for me in the digging into this book and through it into God's Word and seeing what it has to teach us about our sanctification, becoming more like Christ.

I still highly recommend it to you for your own personal reading. If you haven't picked it up and read it, just as highly as I did back at the beginning of the class, even more so. It's not a magic book. It's not a magic formula.

But it does, I think, very helpfully, very plainly apply the truth of the gospel to our lives every day, to the here and now. And if you need help with that, this book will help you with that.

I trust that you've grown in grace throughout our study and reacting to the heat in your lives. As we've looked at these truths. But maybe some of you have listened with a measure of skepticism.

[1:04] And said, that's all pie in the sky, whatever he's saying about Jesus living in me. That's a little too abstract for me. That doesn't meet me where I live. My heat, or whatever the book calls it, is beyond any solution a book can offer.

I hope that's not your attitude. But some people do seem to think, well, that's well and good for most people, but my situation is different. I'm unique. My struggle is greater.

My situation is more complicated. It's more difficult than any of the examples that he gives in the book or that he's given in the class. And really, it's just different.

It's harder. Well, how people change doesn't have all of the answers, but the Bible does. And I think how people change helps us take the Bible and apply it to our lives.

And so, if you think that the wisdom of God is just nice, it's something for church, but you don't really see how practical it is on an everyday level.

[2:07] We're simply not seeing the power of the Gospel. The power of the Gospel is the power to change lives, to change people's hearts, and out of that changed heart to produce changed behavior.

Real growth in grace. Real likeness to Christ is possible in this life. Maybe you've heard us emphasize here before that you'll never be perfect in this life.

And that's true. But maybe we've so laid hold of that, well, I'm never going to be perfect in this life. I'm just going to wait until I get the glory. It's not worth the fight here.

I'm not going to attain it, so why aim for it? That is not what God wants. He wants us to strive for perfect likeness to Christ in this life.

To get as close as possible, so that when you see Him face to face, you will be like Him as He is. But until then, God giving us grace will become like Him in this life.

[3:05] And again, this book I think is very helpful to that end. The power of the Gospel, not just to save sinners, but to make you more like the Master. And so, we come to fruit today.

We've seen heat, the thorns that we produce in that heat, the cross that corrects our perspective, and now the fruit. We saw the heart from which good fruit comes last week, and now the fruit itself. And we begin with the biblical view of the Christian life. And the Bible doesn't paint the Christian life as pie in the sky, an easy road to holiness, an easy road to sanctification.

It's very realistic about your life, about the situations and trials that you face. And this quote is on your handout. The Bible takes your struggle seriously. It doesn't gloss over those things and say, oh, you'll be fine.

You just need to be more like Christ. It looks at your trials, and it understands that you suffer in this life. And so our authors say, it's there on your handout, the Bible intends to shock us out of our tendencies toward fear, complacency, and unbelief.

[4:15] It begins with a startling honesty about the poverty, injustice, bondage to sin, violence, corruption, shattered relationships, and decaying creation we encounter every day.

But more than anything else, the Word of God shocks us with its hope as it presents us with possibilities far beyond anything we would expect this side of eternity.

We look at our struggles and the heat that we face in the world, and we go, not much potential for growth there. This world is too hard. The temptations are too great. The suffering is too significant. I don't even have time to think about growth and grace. I've got to deal with my life. The Bible takes that seriously and expects great things in the midst of that.

So although it's hot, the Christian life can be fruitful. And so we come to that fruitful life we should be living in this world. And I hope that you, again, haven't left it in the generic, that you've personally said, what is my heat?

[5:16] What is it that's so difficult in my life that's preventing my growth and grace? Well, given that, and this is on your handout as well, under the fruitful part on number one, given the trials and temptations of this life, specifically, what are your trials, your temptations?

Given those things, we would expect God to describe us as parched earth and withered plants. Instead, the Bible reveals an oasis of grace in the midst of the desert.

We would. We would. We look at our situation. We go, I'm just going to be a plant that's barely hanging on.

Maybe a little green left in that plant. But the Bible paints a very different picture. And some will say, well, I know that's the way it's supposed to be, but that just doesn't work for me.

Listen to what the Scripture says our lives should look like in spite of the heat. We won't look at all the references that I've given there, but just notice a couple of them. You don't have to turn here, but Isaiah 58 and verse 11 says, The Lord will guide you always.

[6:19] He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

It talks about a sun-scorched land. And when you think about that, you think of dead plants, things that are withered and dry. But instead, for those that love the Lord from the heart, you will be like a well-watered garden. That's what God expects.

That's the picture the Bible gives us in the midst of the heat. Or Psalm 1 that you're familiar with.

Verses 1-3, Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers.

Or mockers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, an honest law. He meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither.

Whatever he does prospers. The opposite of what you expect in the heat. The leaf isn't withering. It's producing fruit. Unless we forget and begin to think that we have to do this on our own, in our own strength.

[7:25] That's too high of a standard for me. I can't do that. That's right. You can't. But remember Jesus' own words in John 15, talking about the vine and the branches. And he says, Remain in me, and I will remain in you.

No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. So right, you have to have Christ.

You have to be abiding in Him, in Him, in you, to produce that fruit. Remember, Christ is dwelling in you by His Spirit. That's the power that you have as a Christian. And so the reality for the Christian life is that it's hot, but even in that heat, we must be, we will be producing fruit.

We might draw very different conclusions when we look at the conditions of the Christian life. But the Bible points us to an entirely different reality. The power of Christ in us.

Don't forget everything that we've seen at the cross to this point. The thing that corrects our perspective. As we talk about fruit today, remember that that comes out of a heart that's been changed by Christ.

[8:30] That Christ is dwelling in. Don't think that this is somehow just in your power or your strength. So let's talk some about that fruit. Turn with me to Psalm 4.

Let's see what it looked like in David's life. In the midst of the heat and struggles that he faced. David has fled from his son Absalom.

Remember, Absalom planned an insurrection against his father. A mutiny of sorts. Trying to take over the throne. And even turn David's own friends and his advisors against him. And that would be painful enough coming from some random person in your kingdom. Or a trusted advisor even. But this is more than that.

This is David's son. This is his flesh and blood that is turned against him. And we want to see what David's response is. You can read about it in 2 Samuel and see what David does.

[9:27] But here in the Psalms we have his heart exposed to us. And Psalm 3 explicitly tells us in the heading that it's when he fled from his son Absalom. I think that Psalm 4 goes with Psalm 3.

I think they go together and it continues to speak of his experience when he's fleeing from Absalom. At least that's likely the case. But let's read Psalm 4.

And you see the fruit that David's producing in the midst of really significant heat in his life. He's about to lose his throne. He's about to lose his life even possibly. And he's already lost his son. His son has turned against him and many of his companions. And so he says, Psalm 4, Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress.

Be merciful to me and hear my prayer. How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods? Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself.

[10:27] For the Lord will hear when I call to him. In your anger do not sin. When you are on your bed, search your hearts and be silent. Offer right sacrifices and trust in the Lord.

Many are asking, who can show us any good? Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord. You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.

I will lie down and sleep in peace. For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. Now, to me, that's remarkable.

Given the circumstances of David's life. Don't forget the circumstances as we talk a little bit about this fruit that we see in David's life. First of all, he turns to God.

He doesn't turn away from him. He doesn't question him. He doesn't doubt him. He doesn't run from God and say, Lord, if you love me, this wouldn't be happening. He goes to him.

[11:27] Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. So it doesn't push him away, but draws him near to God. And so should our troubles. Draw us near to God. Not cause us to run away from him.

But David also, in the midst of it, he remembers who he is. He remembers his identity. That he's a child of God. That he's a godly one. That God has set apart for himself in verse 3.

That God will hear. He remembers that God's going to listen to him. Not questioning where God is, but acknowledging his position before God. One of his godly ones.

One of his chosen ones. He's one of the people that God listens to. He might be tempted to think that he's all alone. That God's forsaken him.

And his own son has turned against him. But I know he remembers who he is in Christ. But he also examines his heart. Something we should do in the midst of trial.

[12:24] He's searching his heart instead of questioning God or blaming others. That's in verse 4. Search your hearts and be silent. And our authors say in difficulty, our hearts are exposed.

Trials give us an opportunity to know and guard them more effectively. In the midst of trials, you might see something in your heart that you hadn't seen was there before. You might see some sin, some idol that's there.

A great opportunity to have a look at yourself and to see what idols need to be killed. What you've been worshipping instead of God. Trial tends to produce some thorny behavior and reveal a thorny heart.

It's a great time to search your heart. And so David does that in the midst of his trial. But he also worships. In verse 5. Offer right sacrifices and trust in the Lord.

And our authors say, this is such a real temptation. This is on your handout. When we are in pain and difficulty, we are tempted to skip personal devotions and corporate worship.

[13:27] We allow ourselves to miss small group meetings and to ignore ministry opportunities. In not so subtle ways, joyful worship is replaced by doubt, anger, fear, discouragement, envy, bitterness, and cynicism.

But when you peek into the cave of Psalm 4. David's hiding in a cave as he runs from his son. You don't find David wallowing in a pool of complaints.

You find him worshipping God. You say, wow. That's true. Have you ever found that to be true? You're discouraged. You're down. You say, you know what? I just don't feel like doing my devotions today.

I just, I, that's not what I need to be doing right now. Or I'm, I'm too, I'm struggling too much to even bother going to church today. And, um, we managed to excuse ourselves away from church and God's word at the very moments when we need it the most.

Amen. And, so, instead we should be aiming to produce the fruit of worshipping, even when we don't feel like it in the midst of trial.

[14 : 31] David does that. But he also ministers to others. David had a crowd of, of those who hadn't abandoned him. Those who hadn't turned against him. They were with him. They were fleeing with him.

And, um, you know, if, if you're in that situation, if I am, we're thinking, just, we're going to wallow in some self-pity. Poor me. I mean, my son has turned against me.

I'm losing the kingdom here. And we're going to think about ourselves. But David doesn't focus only on himself. He thinks about the people who are with him. In verse 6, many, likely those people who are with him are saying, who can show us any good?

David, look at this circumstance. How could any good come out of this? And so David prays for them. Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord. He ministers to other people.

He thinks about his companions and not just himself. And prays for God's blessing to shine upon them. Do you ever think of other people when you're suffering?

[15 : 29] Does your suffering ever cause you to think of other people's suffering and to pray for them? And to think of something that you could do selflessly to be an encouragement and a blessing to them?

That's the kind of fruit that a cross-centered life will produce. You say, that's radical. Yeah, it is. That's what God wants from us. To not be so self-centered. And then, perhaps in some ways, even more amazing is David sleeps.

And maybe you don't think of that as the fruit of the Spirit, but I think it is. He rejoices. Verse 7, you've filled my heart with joy.

And he sleeps. In verse 8, I will lie down and sleep in peace. For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. He says it back in Psalm 3, too. I will lie down and sleep. I will wake again because the Lord sustains me.

When we've got trouble like David's, or maybe even less trouble than he was facing, we get worried. We get worked up. We fret.

[16 : 39] And sometimes we lose sleep. And I am as guilty of this as anyone here, I think. But David, I mean, he's surely saddened and troubled with the tragic situation with his own son.

We see that in the psalm. But he still has the joy of the Lord and he has peaceful sleep. And this quote is on your handout. He hasn't lost the one thing most precious to him.

Because the Lord is with him, David knows he is just as secure in that cave as he was in the palace. He can lie down and sleep even when he experiences crushing disappointment.

Can you? You can imagine for a moment that you had a prominent position. Maybe in the church or in the community or at your work. You had ascended the ladder and had lots of people under you. Or even in the state or the nation. Like David was king. You have a high position. You can imagine one of your children turning against you and going on a campaign to turn everyone around you against you as well.

[17 : 45] And you knew you were in the right. But in order to say that, you knew you'd have to destroy your son. That's what David had to do with the alternative.

Either kill Absalom or run. He didn't want to kill his son and so he runs. In that situation, you're facing that kind of heat. Would you turn to God? Would you remember who you are in Christ? Would you take the time to examine your heart to see what sin is there and how you can be growing in grace? Would you take the time to worship God in the midst of that? Would you take the time to think about the needs of other people around you and serve them?

And would you be able to put your head on your pillow or the rock in the cave or wherever you are and sleep? You say, no. That's ridiculous.

That's beyond me. But the point is that you can respond with that kind of fruit. You say, David was one really holy guy.

[18:47] He was the man after God's own heart. And I say, remember that this is the David that sinned with Bathsheba and killed her husband. So I can relate to that. I can relate to giving in to temptation.

So, you can relate to the power of sin. But you can't relate to the power of God. Work in sinners to conquer that sin that remains and produce good fruit.

I hope that's not the case. I hope that we're seeing the power that we have through Christ dwelling in us by His Spirit. That you could write Psalm 4. Maybe not as pretty, as poetic.

You don't have maybe that gift that David had. But the truths that are contained there, those could be just as real for you as they are for David.

That's the beauty of the power of Christ. It's not a standard of holiness that's out of reach. And so, our authors write, Psalm 4 does not picture a man's mechanical obedience to a set of biblical principles.

[19:50] If all we needed was information about how to do the right thing, Jesus never would have needed to come. What we actually see in this psalm is God's grace at work in a man's heart.

Empowering Him to do things that would be impossible on His own. Christ's work on the cross makes that same grace available to us, no matter what we may be facing.

Have you seen any of that kind of fruit in your life as you focus more and more on Christ and His power at work in you, in the midst of your struggling, in the midst of your suffering?

You and the deep waters that you are going through right now can worship God. You can think about other people and serve them. And you can sleep with peace at night. Well, this is possible because of the next thing on your handout there, the streams and the desert.

Jesus, a quote from John 7, verses 37 and 38, On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

[21:02] Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. And He's talking about the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And that Spirit in you produces the fruit that we so desire, that we so need in our lives. Turn with me to Galatians chapter 5. Here it's described as the fruit of the Spirit.

Jesus promised that Spirit to those that would trust in Him. He's given that Spirit to you if you're a follower of Christ. And so you will have the fruit of the Spirit growing in you.

If we had time, we'd read from Galatians 5 and verse 13 all the way through chapter 6 and verse 10. But notice just some highlights along the way. It begins with a warning against self-centeredness and a call to service, which is being others-centered.

Look at chapter 5 and verse 13. You, my brothers, were called to be free, but do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature. Rather, serve one another in love.

[22:09] Don't use your freedom to serve yourself and to love yourself and to indulge those things, but serve one another. It's a call away from self towards others. And that, of course, grates against our sinful nature, which wants to please self.

Look out for number one. We want to please ourselves. We want to protect ourselves. And our authors say we all know that sin causes us to be more committed to ourselves than to anyone else. Sin causes us to be more concerned about our own welfare than anyone else's. Such self-centeredness destroys relationships and does great harm. And so this passage goes on to list the deeds of the flesh, the deeds of the sinful nature.

And they're all selfish. They're sexual immorality and impurity and debauchery. They're pleasing me. Or they're against other people. Hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition.

You see how the fruit of the flesh, the sinful nature, is selfish. It's all about me. But Paul reminds us in verse 24 that that man is dead.

[23:16] Those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature. They've crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Remember, I've been crucified with Christ and I no longer live.

Part of what was crucified that was nailed to the cross was my focus on myself. My self-centered desires and actions.

And in its place, through the work of the Spirit, we have the fruit of the Spirit. Have you ever noticed how other-centered the fruit of the Spirit is?

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

All of those, maybe with the exception of joy, and even joy too, are directed towards other people. They're thinking less about me and more about our Savior.

[24:14] And then Galatians 6, the first 10 verses go on to describe a life centered on serving other people. And so the passage from 5.13 to chapter 6 and verse 10 moves from this self-centered, sinful flesh to other-centered, spirit-produced fruit in our lives.

And the only path that you can take to get from self-centeredness to selflessness is through the Holy Spirit. You can't do it on your own.

It comes from the Spirit within you. That's why it's called the fruit of the Spirit. And if you are a believer, you are that fruit-bearing tree. You have the Holy Spirit. And He is working this radical change in you.

There's a quote on your hand out there. As a child of God, I am that tree. Its fruit is God's gift produced by His Spirit. I need not be satisfied with thornbush responses.

It's not impossible to be who God says I am, a tree bearing fruit in the middle of the desert. And so that's just by way of encouragement.

[25:23] It's not all about you. It's the Holy Spirit working in you. And you can go through this kind of change. You want to talk about how people change? That's a radical change.

From loving me, and me first, and me only, to loving other people. And so, let's take a moment and describe some further new surprising fruit as we finish up this morning.

Things that we'll be seeing in our life by the power of Christ. So I'll live with personal integrity. And we've touched on some of these things earlier in the study, but we'll return to some of them for just a moment now.

Here's some of the areas where we'll see Christ working in us. Not so we can pat ourselves on the back and say, look at all this fruit I've produced. Look at what a good job I'm doing. But rather so that we might bring glory to God.

And so we might see. We can look at our lives and know if we're going in grace. That's why we're studying these things. So we can see if we're doing what God has called us to do.

[26:27] We'll live with personal integrity. We'll no longer hide or cover up or blame other people for our sin. When we're living with an awareness of the work of Christ within us, the power of God, the influence of the Spirit, then we can boldly confront that sin that remains in us.

We can examine ourselves without fear of what we're going to find there. And we can humbly confess and repent of and forsake that sin that we find. And turn for power to God in order to resist that sin.

We don't have to fear what we find there because we have the resources in Christ to deal with it. We don't need to be consumed with guilt and shame when we take those sins to the cross.

And so instead of deceitfully pretending like we're not struggling with sin and just pretending like everything's okay, we can have an honest look at ourselves and deal with the sin that remains by God's grace.

And not just on our own. We'll seek help from others in the body of Christ. Do you find yourself... Here's a sign of fruit in your life. Do you find yourself keeping all of your struggles to yourself?

[27:41] Just trying to deal with them on your own? Or do you share them with your brothers and sisters in Christ? Are you open with them? Do you confess your sins to one another? Do you bear one another's burdens?

You can't bear somebody's burden if they don't share it with you. Your burden won't be borne by anybody else in this body of Christ unless you tell them about it. That's some of the fruit that God's working in you that you're willing to open up and to share those things with one another instead of trying to hide behind some sort of facade where everybody thinks you're great and everything's good in your life and everything's wonderful when the reality is that you're really struggling.

That's not a fruitful life. God's given us the body of Christ for a reason. That's why there's a chapter in this book called Change is a Community Project. He's given you the body of Christ.

Take advantage of it. Our authors say, if I am encouraged that the ultimate helper lives within me, I will gladly take advantage of all the resources He gives me in the body of Christ. I will not live independently.

I will take advantage of biblical teaching available to me. I will ask to be shepherded by my elders. I will pursue the wisdom of mature brothers and sisters. I will try to benefit from the accountability a close friend can provide.

[28:58] Jason mentioned last week, one of the ways you guard your heart is through accountability. Are you taking advantages of those resources that you have sitting right next to you

today? You can look around and here's part of your growth in grace.

And here's a sign that you are growing in grace that you're making use of the resources God has given you. Part of that personal integrity will be living with godly emotions.

We won't try to be stoic and emotionless beings to avoid showing any sort of weakness. the strong, tough guy veneer. That wasn't our Savior.

He displayed emotion. And we're to be like our Savior. Jesus cried out on the cross and we can cry out as well knowing that He hears us.

And our authors write, Christ cried to a Father who was silent as He let Him die so that you could cry to a Father who will hear you and give you what you need to live.

[30:03] You know, when Christ cried out on the cross there was no answer. And in that, Jesus purchased for us the right as children of God to call out to Him and know that we'll be heard.

Are you calling out? There's a sign that you're growing in grace. Instead of a proud independence, we exhibit a humble, broken dependence on God. Righteous emotion will be sad over our sin.

We won't treat it like it's no big deal. That's not what I mean when we can face it honestly. Oh, I'm a sinner. It doesn't matter. No, I'm a sinner. I'm broken over it, but God has given me what I need to put that sin to death and to find forgiveness for it.

Sad over our sin, but joyful at the salvation, the forgiveness that's ours in Christ. And so, we'll live with personal integrity. We'll let the cross shape our relationships.

We will share the grace that we've experienced with others. We'll forgive those who sin against us just as God has forgiven us as we sin against Him.

[31:05] And forgiving other people is hard. It goes against our sense of justice. And we don't like to be wronged by other people. And it hurts to be wronged by other people, and so it's hard to forgive them.

But when we're living a cross-centered life, we'll remember our Savior who is willing to be mistreated for us. We'll remember our God who's graciously forgiven our sins.

And we will forgive those who sin against us. Ephesians 4.32 Be kind and compassionate to one another. Forgiving each other just as God and Christ forgave you. And so, are you a forgiving person now?

Having been forgiven so much yourself, or do you still hold grudges? You still hold it against people when they sin against you. Are you like that servant that was forgiven a massive load of debt?

Jesus told the story about him. He was going to be thrown in debtor's prison and everything he had. So, he said, have mercy on me. I'll pay it back. And the master forgave this huge debt. And then, the one that was forgiven the huge debt goes out and he finds a servant that owes him some paltry amount of money compared to his great debt.

[32:19] He says, pay up. He says, have mercy on me. And he takes him by the neck and he brings his neck and he says, you pay what you want. He throws him in prison. And we say, oh, that's ridiculous.

What a cruel, what a hard-hearted man to have been forgiven not to forgive, but don't we do that? We've been forgiven this massive debt of sin against God.

And then, somebody sins against us and we don't throw them in prison, but we don't wring their neck, but in our minds, we'd like to. We can't believe what they did to us.

We can't believe somebody would sin against us. But if we're producing, focused on Christ, they sin against us and we immediately think, how many times have I done that to my God? To my brothers and sisters in Christ?

How many times have I been forgiven? So, I will show that grace and forgive others around me. will have that kind of fruit. It is a willingness to give up your desire to hold on to and in some way punish the person for his offense against you.

[33:27] You make a decision to respond to this person with an attitude of grace and forgiveness. We'll also seek forgiveness when we sin against others, admitting our fault without justifying or excusing our behavior.

And not just saying we're sorry, but asking for forgiveness. It is expressing sorrow for the pain that we've caused them. We should truly be sorry, but more than that, we need their forgiveness and we should ask for it.

Changes my heart. The cross of Christ changes my heart, making me sensitive to the sin I was once blind to and ready to admit what I would have once excused. Do you find that? Instead of

excusing your sin, you go to the person and you ask them to forgive you.

That's the kind of fruit a cross-centered life will produce in our lives. And then this quote is on your handout under letting the cross shape our relationships. When the cross shapes my relationships, I respond to the sin and weakness of others with grace.

Do you hold people to higher standards than you hold yourself? Do you tend to forget you are a sinner while remembering that others are? Do you fail to overlook minor offenses?

[34:41] Do you spend more time catching people doing wrong than doing right? Do people feel accepted and loved by you or criticized and judged? How do you tend to respond to the weaknesses, sins, and failures of those around you?

Do you let the cross of Christ shape your relationship with other people? It's one of the signs that you're changing, that you're becoming more like Christ. We'll also, in those relationships, seek to serve one another in love.

We're living with our lives centered on the cross. We talked about how we move from selfishness to selflessness. Do you serve others? Do you look around and look for those opportunities?

Or do you think, well, somebody should be serving me. I'm worthy of that. I'm a little bit better, a little holier. I've been a Christian a little longer.

I have a little higher place in society, and so others should, just waiting for somebody to serve me. Are you looking for opportunities to serve them? The beauty of being part of the body of Christ is that it's a level playing field.

[35:51] We're all sinners that have been saved by grace. There's neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus, and so we should treat each other that way.

Not thinking that you're better than that person that you're sitting next to. Oh, you know they struggle with that sin, and so you're going to look down your nose at them until they get their act together. What if they knew about the sins that you struggled with?

Maybe yours are not as outward or ugly somehow in your mind. You're a sinner just the same. And we should treat each other with love and look for opportunities to serve one another.

Humility. You know, you read Philippians 2 and the call to humility and to be done with selfish ambition and vain conceit. That all flows out of a cross-centered life that sees that Christ, who had every right to be worshipped and praised and served by others, gave all of that up and came to serve.

And to humble himself to the point of death on the cross. And so if your life is centered on that Christ, that's the Christ that's dwelling in you. The one that was so humble that He was willing to do that for you.

[37:08] That's where you live every day. Then when you look around at people, you're not going to have that selfish ambition, that vain conceit, except for the grace of God. I'd be struggling with the same thing.

So let me come alongside you, brother. How can I serve you? How can I love you? That's the kind of fruit that comes out of a Christ-centered, humble life. It's lived by the grace of God.

That's the kind of life that applies to the cross and the gospel every day. And so then the cross directs us towards...

It'll shape our relationships with other people. It'll also give purpose and direction to our words, to our actions, and that's sort of a catch-all category. It'll change everything that we do, say, our thoughts.

We will make peace. We will tell the truth. We will manage our time while we will recognize and use the gifts God has given us. We'll live with one another in an understanding way.

[38:09] We'll keep the Ten Commandments. We'll live by the Sermon on the Mount. We'll do all the things that God has called us to do. You say, I can't do all of that. I know. I can't either. But you're dead.

And it's Christ living in you. And the life you live, you live by faith. And the Son of God who loved you and He gave Himself for you and He will give you the strength to give yourself for other people. So there'll be fruit. There'll be new fruit. Surprising fruit even. You say, I can't do that. Yes, you can. By the grace of God, this is the kind of life that we are called to live and that we can live because of what God has done, what He is doing, and what He will do for us.

Well, the book has two more chapters in it that we're not going to cover in this class. But I, again, recommend getting it and reading those chapters.

And the book takes the principles that we've studied and applies them to two particular situations. In the second to last chapter, it takes a couple that is struggling in their marriage and it gives us the picture of all their struggles, the ins and outs of everything that they faced.

[39:22] And then it takes heat, thorns, cross, fruit, the other things that we've seen in this book and applies it to their marriage and shows how they were able to work through their problems, applying the gospel to their lives every day.

So it just, it does what the book has done all along. It's given us little examples along the way. Here it does it with an extended example with a couple. And so you're struggling in your marriage, pick it up and read that chapter.

And your struggles are likely not the same as theirs, but you can see how it works out. And then the last chapter takes the principles of the book and it applies it to a whole church.

It describes a church and I believe it's a real example of a church. I don't know if the couple is hypothetical or real, one that they found in a counseling situation, I'm pretty sure the church is a real situation.

Looked healthy on the outside, but there were some problems on the inside as they began to look and examine themselves. And they took these principles and applied them as a body, as a leadership, as the body of Christ.

[40:23] They began to integrate these things into the life of their church and shows how the church went through a period of change for the better because of it. Just showing how some of these things work out in real life.

And there's not really a good way to teach those two chapters except to just read them to you. And I don't think that would be the most profitable way to spend our next Sunday school classes. So get a hold of it and read those if you'd like to see more practically how to apply some of these things.

But one parting quote that's on your handout there to sum up the book and the class with. God calls you to a new identity in Christ.

Christ. This is who I am. And therefore, a new way of living. This is what I can be. 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. And so, may God take these things that we've seen about how people change and make us to be not quick to forget them, but quick to remember, quick to live them out every day, to take them and apply them.

[41:41] You think about your heat and you think about your usual response and then think about the cross of Christ. How He is your power and He gives you the strength to respond in new and surprising ways.

Read Psalm 4. Pray, Lord, help me to respond like that in my struggles. So, may God make us to be a holy people that are as like to Christ as we can be in this world before we get to glory.

Amen. Amen.