

# “Gospel-Centered Change” // Gospel: The Revolutionary Power of the Christian Life, #1 // John 15:1– 17

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*If I am to do this as a general conference talk, then I can stop  
exegesis at vs. 11 and cut out everything after the gospel prayer)*

## Announcements

- *Vision night:* Over the course of the next month we’re going to have a lot of ways for you to get involved. Earlier this weekend we had the small group leaders rally (which was awesome); Frontline; perhaps one of the most important is our vision night. Ticketed/1000 seats. We celebrate what God has done for the last year, and talk about what is going to happen in the next, and then pray our rear ends off. One important thing we’ll do but that won’t take long is vote on our new budget. If you want to take a look at that before we vote on it click on Vision Night on our website and it will also tell you where and how you can ask questions if you have them. You’re going to hear some amazing stories of what God has done this year. Every campus. Every member together, Tuesday, August 23. Pick up tickets TODAY.

## Introduction

**have two purposes this weekend:**

- I want us to explore together one of the most important passages where Jesus explains how people change.
  - I think this is a question on everybody’s mind: Is real change possible? And if so, how does it happen? If you don’t believe me, just go to B&N and look at all the books. The self-help section is like ½ the store.
    - How does a **fearful** person become brave?
    - How does the **racist** become tolerant?
    - How do you develop **self-discipline**?
  - Well in this passage Jesus takes you down deep to show you how He says you change; along the way He gives one of the most concise-yet-comprehensive pictures of what a disciple of His looks like. We’re going to study that for the next 8 weeks. Going to show you 5 disciplines the disciples has all that come out of this passage.
    - Our small groups are going to study right along with us; (**Study guide**). You get so much more out of it; plus, the church is not supposed to be an audience; it is supposed to be a community, and that is how that happens.
- My 2<sup>nd</sup> purpose today is I’m going to be explaining a core truth at the Summit Church. Something that is in almost every sermon.
  - If you’ve been around here, you have heard me talk about this before, and that’s good, because this is the core of all that we do.
    - I have people tell me that this has been a new concept for them: TA: I never understood this until being here.
    - CS: I’d been in church all my life; always been a deacon, but I’ve never really gotten this until the last 5 years.
  - And BTW, if you’re new around here, don’t be discouraged if you don’t quite get this the first time I talk about this. Not an insult to your intelligence. Things like this you usually have to hear multiple times. And plus, I talk fast.

- **Here it is: We believe the gospel is not just for unbelievers; it's for Christians, too. The gospel is not just how we begin in Christ, it is also how we grow in Christ.** We think that in the gospel are all the resources necessary for Christian growth.
- We'd go so far as to say that the way you grow in Christ is never growing beyond the gospel, but deeper into the gospel.
- For most people, the gospel (the message that Jesus died for our sins and offers us salvation now as a gift) was their initiation into Christianity; it was a prayer they prayed to begin their Christian life; the diving board off of which they jumped into the pool of Christianity.
- I want to show you why we say that the gospel is not just the diving board off of which we jump into the pool of Christianity; it is the pool itself. It's not just the ABC's of Christianity; it is the A-Z.
- We always talk about the gospel setting you free from sin; but it has to set you free from religious substitutes as well.

## Exposition

15:1] "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.  
 2] Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

He's using the metaphor of gardening. For many plants to flourish they have to be pruned. **For example**, rose bushes need pruning because, if not, 2 things happen: 1. the vines begin to grow in on themselves. They literally choke on themselves. The vines shield the roses from the light. 2. All the extra vines divert the plants' resources and attention away from the few good roses.

So you end up with a bunch of little, scraggly roses rather than vibrant, healthy ones.

[3] Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

- In Greek, there is a connection of words that is missing in English. He didn't just switch metaphors (from pruning to taking a bath). Clean means "stripped." Jesus' words have already stripped a lot of the bad away. He's taught them that the world is passing away; called them away from sin; He's shattered their pride by showing them they need forgiveness.
- But there is so much more to do.
- And so all their lives He's turning them away from yourself and pruning off the useless pursuits they are in. He's stripping away things they love more than Him; depend on more than Him. We were created to live for Him, but we turn in on ourselves and God just shatters that. **Martin Luther said that the Word does a lot of the cleaning in our life, but some things can only be removed by suffering.**
- And, as some of you know, a lot of times it is painful. If you ever see a plant after a gardener is done pruning it, it looks like a disaster. Things that look perfectly good (leaves and branches and fruit) lying all over the ground; the plant looks barren; like it is all scarred up and bleeding. But the gardener has not removed anything that was not a loss to keep or a gain to lose.
- **That might be a statement to write down: *The Gardener takes out of our lives only those things that are a loss to keep and a gain to lose.***
- It's painful, and I'm not saying you'll always understand it, but when God prunes you, that's what He's doing.
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[4] Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

- The branch only lives as it is connected to the vine. A branch has no life in itself, but as it is connected to the vine, the life of the vine flows into it.

In the same way, we have no spiritual life in ourselves; but as we abide in Jesus, the life of the Holy Spirit flows into us. "Abide" is the Greek word "meno," which means literally to "make your home in." Plant yourself into Jesus and His life will flow in you.

5] I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Nothing does not mean nothing, because clearly a lot of people who aren't connected to Jesus do lots of things; even religious things! Throughout the Gospels Jesus frequently talks about lots of people who are not connected to Him at all who do lots of religious things. Go to church, read the Bible, participate in ministry.

No, "nothing" here means "nothing of eternal value." Nothing with real life in it.

(That is a really important point, which we'll come back to.)

6] If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

7] If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. [8] By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

BTW, it is sheer discipline keeping me from preaching a sermon on each of these verses. We'd be here until Thurs.

9] As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

*What an astounding statement!* Think of the Father's love for His Son. It is a love beyond what we can comprehend: Think of your love for your child. Ours is just a pale reflection of His. God has a perfect, everlasting love for His Son, and that is the love with which Jesus has loved us. Jesus says, "Make your home in that."

- Some of you may have thought, "What does it mean to 'abide'? Sounds like Christian mumbo-jumbo. A list of behaviors?"
- Here is where you see what it means. It means resting in His love. Abiding in Him is not so much about things you are to do for Him as it is resting in His thoughts about you.
- This seems to be the hardest part of Christianity for people to learn. God's acceptance is given to us not as a reward for what we have done, but as a gift. *It's called 'gift righteousness': God's righteousness given to us as a gift.*
- *We think we become righteous (or, acceptable) in God's sight by acting a certain way. (Makes sense, right? The more righteously you act, the more God accepts you and approves of you.) But the gospel is the counter-intuitive truth that you can never be righteous before God, so God offers righteous standing before Him as a gift, not according to what you have done, but according to what Christ has done in your place. Gift righteousness given in love.*
- **Good way to remember GRACE:** God's Righteousness or Gift-Righteousness At Christ's Expense
- And when you receive that, when you abide in it, and rest in it, His life starts to flow in you; and then you start to change. Not because you are told to change, but because *you change*.
  - **Throw up.**
  - Not just your behaviors, but your desires.
- Faith in what God has done releases the life of God into you.
- ***Write this down:* Real change begins not with you being told what you are to do for God but believing what God has done for you.**
- In the NT believing rightly precedes behaving rightly.

[10] If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

- Now, this verse trips people up sometimes: "You just talked about gift righteousness and resting in God's grace but here it sounds like Jesus is saying abiding in Him is conditional on keeping my commandments."

Ahh, very good question, grasshopper. But, look again, that's not really what it says. It doesn't say that His love is a reward for having kept His commandments; it says that one of the ways we remain connected to His love is by keeping His commandments.

Over the next several weeks we're going to talk specifically about 5 commands Jesus gives us... **Word/Prayer; Character; Community; Missions and Evangelism; Generosity**

It is very important that you understand that these are not ways you earn God's favor (Christ's righteousness was perfect; you can't add to it).

1. Results of abiding in Jesus
2. The means of remaining connected to Jesus

For example:

- **In vs. 8, Jesus talked about reading and memorizing His word and prayer.** Those are two of His commands, right? *Read your Bible and pray.* Now, what is He saying, that when you do your quiet time every day, God will love you more? Not at all. (I mean, Christ kept the law perfectly in your place; there's no way that you can add to that and make God love you more by reading your Bible a few times each week.)

- **No, but as you read the Bible, you are reminded of the truth of God's love for you. And you can remain in it. You start thinking in line with the gospel.**
- **The challenge is not earning God's love; the challenge is living in constant awareness of God's love. The hard work of Christianity is not earning God's love; it's believing that God's love was given to you as a gift.**
- So, obeying God's command to read the Bible allows you to daily reflect on the truth of God's love. And, as you believe in that love, its power is released into you.
- *Does that make sense?* **Jesus' commands are like wires that connect us to the power of the gospel. They don't have power in themselves;**

**but they connect us to the place from which the power flows.**

- That's what all these things are. Vs. 12, being in community... ways that you remain connected to Jesus. Even generosity. **Vs. 13. God doesn't love you more when you are generous.** But when you are generous, it is one of the ways God teaches you to love generosity.
  - This is almost a universal experience: as you are generous, you learn to love generosity. I'll have an extra \$1000 and I think, "I could give that to someone I know who needs it, or to God's work through the church, or I could buy another flat screen TV with it, but there's a space in the hall between the family room and the bedroom that doesn't have one and it would be nice to not have to miss those 4 seconds of TV..." But I say, "You know what? Jesus has commanded me to be generous." And I give, contrary to my desires. But as I do, I start to love generosity. There's just something about giving that God uses as a means of grace in your life. God uses my obedience to change my desires. It's like Jesus said (Matthew 6:21), "where you put your treasure, that's where your heart will be also."
- **So, again, generosity and community and a daily quiet time have no power in themselves, but they are like wires that connect us to the place from where the power flows.**

[11] These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

[12] "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. [13] Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. [14] You are my friends if you do what I command you.

- This is a verse I quote to my friends. “You are my friends, if you do what I command you.” Doesn’t really work. Works for Jesus.

ump down to vs. 16: [16] You did not choose me, but I chose you  
 There Jesus was establishing that He was a Calvinist—no, just kidding, that’s not the main point here. I **married a Presbyterian**, and they are all into the Calvinism thing (**I grew up singing, “I have decided to follow Jesus;”** she grew up singing, “You have decided I’ll follow Jesus.” When we got married (Baptist with Presbyterian) our compromise was I baptized her, made her quit drinking, and consented to the fact that it was all pre-destined to happen... *I chose you*) **and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.**

[17] These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

*his passage shows us:*

### **. What spiritual change is**

Spiritual change is the life of Jesus coming into you.

- God told Adam in Genesis 2:17 that the day he and Eve ate of the fruit they would die. Now, they didn’t drop dead immediately, but their spirit, the thing alive with God, that died. So they started to desire sin. We can’t help but choose sin because it is in our natures; not sinners b/c we sin; but we sin because we are sinners.
- **Illus.** I was explaining this to my kids... “Adam is such an idiot”

Our desires are corrupted.

- We desire things we shouldn’t desire. We love other things more than God.
- We are radically self-centered, rather than God-centered and others-centered, like God created us to be. **Dorothy Sayers** used to say that sin was being radically curved in ourselves.

- So any change that last has to happen on the desire level, so that we begin not just to do right things again, but to love the right things again.

### **2. How spiritual change happens**

- By abiding in Jesus’ love for you. By “making your home in” it. In the gospel itself are all the resources for spiritual growth.
  - By abiding in it; dwelling in it, we change.
  - The gospel is not a list of things we are to do for God, but the glorious good news of what God has done for us
  - *It is not a list of behaviors to be adopted; it’s an announcement to be believed.*
  - *It’s not good advice; it is good news.*

Let me show you, really quickly, a few verses in addition to John 15 where you see this:

- **Colossians 1: 6, “In the whole world the gospel is bearing fruit and growing, as it does also among you.”**
  - Just like the gospel is growing in the world, it is growing in you. When Paul thinks about gospel growth, it’s not just about more people being saved; it’s about believers growing in it.
  - What’s it mean for the Summit to grow in the gospel... mean getting bigger? Yes. But it also means that the members are growing in their understanding of the gospel—how great God is, and how great His love is.
  - Church health is not just numeric.
  - In fact, I don’t think we’ll be that effective at reaching others and sending out church planting teams if we are not growing in the gospel ourselves. I mean, “if the gospel is not transforming us, how will we have confidence it can transform others, it can release the drug dealer and heal the abused wife?” How will we know it can overcome the captivity of Islam or Communism or materialism?
- Here’s a passage our small groups are studying: **2 Peter 1:5-1 (faith; virtue; knowledge; self-control).**
  - 2 Peter 3:18. Christian growth is essentially growth in the knowledge of the God revealed in the gospel.

- You don't grow in Christ by growing beyond the gospel, but by growing deeper into the gospel.

### **here are 2 kinds of growth**

**Mechanical growth:** Growth by external compulsion:

- Counseling: The man who only changes to make his wife
  - Fear: doesn't want wife to leave him
  - Pride: doesn't want the stigma of divorce
  - Desire for something else: a stable home.
  - *In all these things, he is not loving her, he is loving himself*
- **Religious activity can be motivated by all those same things:** fear of punishment; pride; desire for blessing. It may look like love for God, but it is not. And as soon as you remove the external pressures, you go back to the way you were.
- Or here is another example: **If you take a piece of metal:** heat it up; restructure it. Or, you can bend it, at which point when you take away the pressure it snaps back, or, it breaks.
  - Religion makes you busy for Jesus. A lot of new Christians get busy for Jesus, but don't develop friendship with Jesus.

**The gospel changes you in a totally different way.**

Organically (that's the other kind of growth). It gives you life within. The gospel changes your desires.

How? By abiding in His love.

- The gospel saturates you with the reality of His love. Specifically, the announcement about what Christ has done for you, so that the desires of your heart change. Loving God flows out of your nature.
- **1 John 4:19, "We love Him because He first loved us."**
- **Illus. MLJ:** "Command me".

One more **analogy: Rose stapling**)

So many Christians go off on this point. If you listen, you'll hear all these alternate ways people tell you to change:

- At a lot of churches, the emphasis is on **rules**: this is how you are to live; this is how modest girls dress; this is how you talk and what you watch and what you shouldn't drink. Anybody grow up in a church like this? My problem is not that these churches have recommended guidelines for how someone should behave. Because, face it, we all have them. I don't mean to be crude, but at even the most relaxed church it is agreed that girls should not come to church topless and guys shouldn't wear speedos to church. We'd all agree that it is not a good idea to do crack cocaine even if you're in a place where it's legal. We all have guidelines for behavior. **The problem is when those behavior modifications are larger at the church than the gospel.**
  - It's not a list of things that I should be doing for God that changes me; it is when I stand in awe at what God has done for me that I will be changed. **Religion tells you to go and change; the gospel changes you on the spot by changing your desires.**
  - Some churches say it is more **doctrine** that you need. Some say it is more **radical obedience**. Some say it is big faith that asks God for big miracles. Look at what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:

[1] If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels (spiritual gifts), but have not love, I am a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. [2] And if I have prophetic powers, an understand all mysteries and all knowledge, (doctrinal knowledge) and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. [3] If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Let's face it: Paul's list here is impressive by anyone's standard. "Speaking with the tongues of men and angels" has to put you in the top 1% of spiritually gifted people. "Understanding all mysteries and all knowledge" means that you've got even the finer points

of Christian doctrine down pat. “Faith to remove mountains” means you know how to pray down heaven. And “*giving away even your body to be burned?*” Wow. Obedience doesn’t get any more “radical” than that. When the offering plate goes by, you pull out of match and lights yourself on fire for God? That’s Varsity.

But none of these things, Paul says, equals the one thing that really matters to God: love in your heart for God. So yes, spiritual gifts and doctrinal knowledge and great faith and radical obedience are all really important elements of the Christian life. But these things are worthless if they don’t flow out of a heart of love.

And to produce love takes something different. Radically different.

### **1 John 4:19: we love Him why? Because He first loved us.**

Love in our hearts for God will only be produced by a felt knowledge of His love for us.

- Every time I walk into the Christian bookstore, there’s a new strategy for Christian living:
  - The other day I saw one: “Oh, the megachurch show is the problem; it creates consumer Christians; we need to get away from traditional churches and instead live in ‘missional communities’ (small groups of people who meet in houses and minister to the poor.) Great. On some levels I agree: every believer ought to be fervently engaged in the mission of God. But sometimes I think they are missing the point: **No new strategy is going to change people: the glory of the gospel changes people.** I don’t care if you live in a one-room commune with the

Apostle Paul. Only the gospel can change the desires of your heart.

- **One Christian author says: “You’ll be lifted out of despair and unbelief by God’s promise of a better life now.”** No! You’ll be lifted out of those things by the gospel! I believe in a better life now for Christians. But that is not the center of Christianity. The center of Christianity is the glorious good news of what Christ has done by suffering the wrath of God in our place.
  - Here’s why: Sin, at its core, is as a worship problem. Spiritual death. Radical self-centeredness. You love something more than God; you desire something more than God; you depend on something more than God. Well, **you worshipped your way into sin; guess what You have to worship your way out.** So the only way to really overcome sin is for what your heart most worships and longs for and delights in to be changed.
  - Only the gospel can do that: So **behavior changes**, even good ones, like the ones I’ve mentioned, **might trim off the fruits of sin; only the gospel pulls up the roots (John Owen).** Religion changes your behavior; the gospel changes your desires.
  - We need to be set free not just from sin, but from religious substitutes for the gospel as well.
  - ~~**God is not just after obedience; He’s after a whole new kind of obedience, an obedience that is born from desire.**~~
- So, the most important, central element in everything we teach here is the gospel:
  - **Charles Spurgeon: “At the end of every sermon, I plow a trough back to the gospel.”** I always thought that meant taking a hard right and explaining the 4 spiritual laws. But think about the imagery of trough... i is for water. From the cross alone comes the living water that gives us the power to change.

- Whatever we are talking about in the Christian life, the resources for doing it come from the gospel. That's why we say growth in Christ is never beyond the gospel, but deeper into the gospel.

**Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*** – “My observation of modern Christianity is that most of us tend to base our relationship with God on our performance instead of on His grace. If we've performed well, whatever 'well' is in our opinion, then we expect God to bless us. If we haven't done so well, then our expectations are reduced accordingly. In this sense we live by works rather than by grace. We are saved by grace, we acknowledge that, but we are living by the sweat of our own performance. We give lip service to the grace of God but our unspoken motto is 'God helps those who help themselves.' The realization that my daily relationship with God is based on the infinite merit of Christ instead of my own performance is a very freeing and joyous experience.”

**Kevin DeYoung** – No doubt some Christians need to be shaken out of their lethargy but there are also a whole bunch of Christians who need to be set free from their performance-minded shackles. I promise you that some of the best people in your churches are getting tired. They don't need more statistics and more stories about how bad everything is in the world. They need to hear about Christ's death and resurrection. They need to hear about how we are justified by faith apart from works of the law. They need to hear the old, old story once more. *Because the secret of the gospel is that we actually do more when we hear less about all we need to do for God and hear more about what God has already done for us.*<sup>1</sup>

**he gospel produces in us what no amount of religion ever could: a desire for God.**

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<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2009/08/25/n-mission-changing-world-and-not-being/>

**So here is what we're going to do over this series.** First, I'm going to introduce you to a prayer that I use to saturate myself in the gospel *daily*. The book I have coming out October 1 is built around this prayer. It goes like this:

### ***The gospel prayer***

1. **In Christ, there is nothing I could do to make You love me more; nothing I have done that makes You love me less.**
  - a. Against works-righteousness
  - b. Martin Luther said we are wired for works-righteousness.
  - c. I am like that... I would lose touch with God and I'd sense displeasure. Some of you are like that this morning: been a rough week...
  - d. WR constantly reappears in our hearts; we're like a **car severely out of alignment** that always veers into the ditch of performance Christianity. We have to **continually remind** ourselves of the gift-righteousness of the gospel so that we **think in line with the gospel**. Unless your hands are on the wheel, you are drifting back into performance mentality.
  - e. Do you believe that phrase (1)? Like the **rodents at the whack a mole game**; every morning I slam them back down.
2. **You are all I need today for everlasting joy.**
  - a. This goes to war against our idolatry.
  - b. It's one thing to know you have God's approval; it's another thing for that approval to be the **weighties** reality in your life. (As I've often explained to you, the word for worship in Hebrew is closely related to "weight." You worship something when you give it weight. This phrase helps me remember that God's presence and approval have more weight in my life than any other reality; any possession or person.)

- c. John Calvin: the human heart is an idol factory. Constantly coming up with things we need besides God, or in addition to God, for joy and security and happiness.
- i. The approval of certain people
  - ii. A certain achievement or recognition: If I could just get there I'd be happy
  - iii. Respect and reputation
  - iv. Marriage
  - v. Money
- d. Me: I'm a people-pleasing addict. I feel like sometimes my whole life has been engineered around winning the approval of people. This goes to war against that.
- e. Some of you deal with pain, deep pain. I know. Deeper and greater than all the pain is the God who loved you with the greatest love in the Universe. "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you." That presence and approval will sustain you even in the darkest and most severe hours of pain.
3. **As You have been to me, so I will be to others.**
- a. Radical generosity
  - b. The way we become generous is by tasting of the generosity of Christ.
  - c. I can stand up here all day long and command you guys to give, but until you become generous it's always going to be unnatural. It's like bending metal; as soon as the sermon series is over, you go back to being self-centered materialists.
  - d. **I want you, Summit Church, to be the kind of people who don't need to be commanded to be generous, you give when you see opportunity and need because you are generous people. And the way you will become generous people in your heart is by feasting on the lavish generosity of Christ toward you in the gospel.**
4. **As I pray, I'll measure Your compassion by the cross and Your power by the resurrection.**
- a. This speaks to two things: **Audacious faith. What if God's compassion for sinners was measured by the cross and His power to save by the resurrection?** Wouldn't that change your prayers for people? Wouldn't that drive you to ask big, huge things of God for other people? Your family? Our city? Unreached people groups. **Intercessory faith**
  - b. The other thing this phrase of the gospel prayer speaks to is the **reckless trust** we have in God. When God doesn't answer my prayer, I know that is not because He doesn't love me or is not fully in charge of the situation and working all things for good. How He feels about me was forever settled at the cross. So in my dark hour of unanswered questions I hold on to the God whose feelings about me and commitment to me was revealed in the cross and resurrection.

*My challenge: Every day for this series*

In addition to that, as a small group, I want you to push one another to really dive into how these truths play out in the routines and relationships of your life. We've created a small group study to help you do that (hold it up). You can pick them up today after the service. There are family devotionals for you and your kids in here. If you're not in a small group, pick one up anyway. Running through this study is a tool we think can help you begin really living in the gospel.

It's the **wheel**.

What role are the spiritual disciplines? 2 things.

- Responses to the gospel (Matthew 22:37). If we really know the gospel, we'll be generous; engaged in community and evangelism
- As I explained, they are wires.

Well, if I don't feel like doing those things, and force myself to do them anyway, aren't I doing what you said where I coerce myself through external pressure, like trying to bend the metal?"

- Well, what you do when you don't feel like doing these things is you do them anyway, but while you are doing them you repent to God that you don't feel like it, and you ask Him to change your heart. And you meditate on who God is and what He's done for you and let that change your heart.
- You see a good-looking girl in the mall... and at that moment you don't care about your marriage... think about what God went through for your impurity.
- You don't feel like telling the truth... think about a God to whom truth was so important that He gave His life to keep His promise to you.
- So, you do them, but you repent as you do them and ask God to change your heart and saturate yourself in the gospel.

But don't get confused, thinking that how well you do these things determines how much God loves and accepts you. That is based on what Christ did, not on what you do. Jesus kept the wheel PERFECTLY! And He gave you that record as a gift and that is now how God sees you. You could say, "*Jesus took the wheel.*" So, whether you've read your Bible 4 hours a day like Martin Luther or have really struggled all week, if you have trusted Christ God sees you in Him.

So, embrace the gospel and let all the changes begin to flow into our life.

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# Bullpen:

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Word and prayer together. God use me above all my abilities.

Why SUFFERING is so effective in the Christian life is it pulls up the roots from the soils other than Jesus you are abiding in, and causes you to replant your roots in the gospel. Roots in the gospel lead to a substantial increase in fruitfulness. Suffering makes fruitful and powerful Christians, because that is the natural result of being planted in the soil of Jesus.

ways to boost your career; have more energy; be less angry; stop getting the bed.”

- Here’s what makes me nervous about preaching this: For some of you, if you’ve been around, you’ve heard a lot of this before. Because, again, this is core stuff here at the Summit Church.
  - We have pastors who say this is the thing they learned here that had never really “clicked” with them before. Trevor: been in conservative, evangelical churches all my life and I never really got this; One of our elders: I’m 60 years old and I’ve learned more about the gospel in the last 5 years than in all the years combined.

spiritual disciplines trim off fruits of sin; gospel pulls up the roots