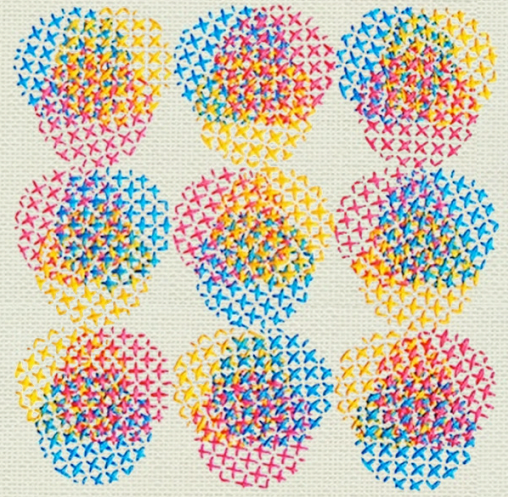


COLOSSIANS

A B O V E A L L



COLOSSIANS: HOW WE CHANGE

May 30, 2021

Ken Flower

Colossians 3:1-17

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Good morning, church. Morning. My name is Ken Flower, I'm a part of our team here at Doxa. If I haven't gotten to meet you, I would love to meet you. If you are visiting, please do introduce yourself to someone around you. Anyone that has one of those lanyards on would love to help answer any questions you have, and we are really, really thankful that you're here with us this morning. We have been going through the book of Colossians together as a church. It's often what we do as we walk through scripture, really verse by verse and let God bring us to what he wants to teach us as a church. And Colossians has been a really, really rich time for us as a church, and there's been a lot of things I think God has been stirring in us and convicting in us through this series.

Five years ago, within really just a few months -- and each of these things happened really unknown to the other. That'll make sense in a second. I had three different people come to me, three people that were very close to me, my dad, my wife, and a close friend, and all essentially share the same thing with me. And remember, they hadn't been talking with each other. They hadn't been comparing notes, right. This was all independent of each other. Essentially came to me and said that they didn't really feel loved by me.

Like, ouch. That I, I loved them, I cared about them, I wasn't intentionally being unkind to them or mean to them. I wasn't just this aggressive Ken, but ultimately like they experienced from me a disengaged Ken. Sometimes disconnected, not present. They didn't feel love for me. And as I, as I heard each of them, immediately the defenses start rising, right? Like what do you mean? Like we spend so much time together. We talk every week or I've gotten to serve you in all these different ways, and I care about you. I'm busy. You expect too much of me.

But at the end of the day, those defenses didn't stand because I knew what they said rang true. That I really had not been loving them well. You see, I was really good at seeming like I loved people, and I'm not saying I didn't love people at all, it wasn't an all or nothing game. But I was really good at appearing like I loved people, and people who were watching me from afar, or maybe even from a middle distance, right, a lot of us, we can keep people at a distance or even just at arms length, and we can seem like we love. And they would remark probably how selfless I was, how I gave my time, how I gave my energy, how I served them, how I was always willing to help out.

You see, I knew what people wanted from me and I was good at giving exactly what they wanted. But the people in my life that were close to me, and thankfully I had people like this, right? Cause sometimes we don't. We keep everyone at arms length, but there was people that knew me and were close to me and knew they could speak truth into my life. And when they experienced me, they did not experience a Ken that loved them because with them, I didn't have to earn their love. Right. I didn't have to do anything to get something for them. I could just be myself and myself was not a very present self. It wasn't a very loving self.

So I began asking this question then, God, I want to be someone who loves people well, the way you've loved me. I want to be present. I want to be engaged. Like, how do I become that Ken? How do I change? Was my big question. And I knew I couldn't just try myself into more loving or believe myself into more loving. I knew that something fundamentally had to change in, and I began asking God, how do I change it? It was a real question I was asking. It was serious because ultimately like I felt stuck. I felt like I didn't know. How do I change?

My sense this morning is that in this room many of us are asking the same question, and it may not be related to how you can love people better or maybe that is the question you're asking. But you're asking that question probably about something in your life. How do I change?

I just want you to sit with that question for a moment. And actually I want you to answer this. So if you have, if you're writing or if you just want to make a mental note, answer this question right now, what is the one area in your life where you long to see change? And where do you currently feel stuck? Does something just spring to mind? What is the one area where you really long to see change in your life and maybe you feel stuck?

Now I realize that even asking this question, how do I want my life to change? This can actually be a hard question to ask because we live in a world with an almost constant call for us to change our lives, right? Isn't that the point of marketing and advertising is to give us a vision for life and to call us to change our lives in some way, and so we're constantly bombarded with calls to change or calls to change our lives. And there's a million different visions for who, who we should become, right?

I mean, there's so many visions that we hear everyday of who we should become. And maybe we hear that we should become the effective, respected professional who's just crushing it at work, who's known for getting things done, always ready to take on the next project. Maybe we hear this call to become the mom who just balances everything perfectly, career, kids, self-care and somehow is like also an expert in nutrition and fitness And like all of this stuff. Or maybe for me, you hear the call or the vision that I need to become the successful pastor. That's a part of a growing church because I have a compelling vision and I'm really good at preaching.

What's the vision that you hear that you're called to that, that you think this is who I need to become? And the reality is these visions for change can be exhausting. Because it's never enough. When we think we finally have become that kind of person or we finally figured out we've, we've finally kind of lived into that vision. The goalposts get moved, right? The definition of who we need to be gets changed, and now we're constantly searching for the next thing. In a minor way we, you know, we talked about with the passing of the peace, which I love that, that we just get to like turn and talk to someone we don't know. I know some of you hate that. That's okay. It's good to like, it's good to actually practice meeting each other and loving each other in that way.

But honestly, this is a silly thing, but this is actually very real. I feel this like constant goalpost moving and the vision for what, who I should be in the vision for who I need to become, always looking different. I even feel it with fashion. That's why we asked that question at the beginning. And this might sound silly, but like literally 15 years ago I looked at guys wearing skinny jeans and I thought that's stupid. Like, what are you doing? Does anyone else like resonate with that? Maybe you're still feeling that? Right, like I, look at me today. I mean, these aren't like the most skinny jeans, but they're way different than the jeans I was wearing 15 years ago. And back then, like I saw this, I was like, that's weird, I can't do that, but then slowly, right, this vision of who I needed to become, came into my mind and I adopted it. And now here I am sitting in skinny jeans. And the reality is now the next generation is telling us we got to go back to mom jeans and middle parts, right? Like the goalposts keep getting moved.

I know that's silly, but here's the reality, we live in a world where we're constantly told that here's who we need to become. We need to become this person or this person. And we have all these visions being brought to us of who we need to become of how we need to change. And even as we pursue these, these things change themselves. And so we never truly find ourselves. We just constantly feel lost. We never really know who we are. Now here's the deal, the Bible tells us, and it's really clear in our passage today that we don't have to figure this out. That our creator who made us and designed us, he knows exactly who he made us to become. He has a vision for our life and it's defined and it's set and we don't have to figure it out.

And that this vision means we become the truest version of ourselves by becoming more like Jesus. I think often we think of this call to become more like Jesus and maybe often as too strong of a word. But sometimes we think this means we're all just going to look the same as we become more like Jesus, but that's not true. The more we become like Jesus, the more we become the true truest version of the people God made us to be, the unique version that God made us to be.

So in our passage this morning, Paul actually gives us a vision for change. He gives us a picture of who we can become, the truest version of ourself, more like Jesus. But he actually starts in our passage by giving us a really accurate picture of where we start. Of where we start, of who we are now. So we, we basically see where we start and this beautiful vision of who we get to become, but he starts with where we start and he gives this summary kind of title to this picture of where we start calling it the old self. In verses five and verses eight to nine, he gives these lists, right? We often see these as lists of like just the things we shouldn't do if we're going to be good Christian boys and girls, but that's not the point. He's painting a picture of where we start of the old self, of what God wants to change. And see as we look at these, if these ring true, maybe of you and your experience.

The first thing that Paul talks about is that the old self is marked by unsatisfied and misplaced desire that consume, consumes and destroys. Verse five, he says, Put to death therefore what's earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. And he sums up this list at the very end with the term idolatry, because essentially that's what's happening here, is that they have taken the good things that God has made, specifically physical intimacy, and they have looked to that to basically be their ultimate satisfaction. They've taken a good gift from God and separated it from the giver and made that thing in and of itself the thing in which they're putting all their hope, and they're pursuing that as what will satisfy them apart from God. And what ends up happening, whenever we do that, whether it's with physical intimacy, like Paul's talking about here or any other thing that we take and look to satisfy us apart from God, as we put a weight on it, that it can't bear, cause it's not God -- and so we crush it, we destroy the thing and then we consume everything in its path. And that's what's happening here in Colossae.

The second thing Paul says about the old self is it's marked by a relational brokenness from being false with each other. If you look in verses eight to nine, he says, Now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Right? All these words that define kind of how we relate to each other in ways that are broken. And then he sums it up saying, and do not lie to one another.

Now the theme here are broken relationships ultimately that come back to lying. To being false with each other. Another way of saying this is that we are living out of a false self with each other. And it may not be that you're just going around like telling each other blatant lies, but we put on a false self, we create this false self, which is basically an image that we create of ourselves. And it's not based on what's true, but it's based in a lie to protect ourselves from feeling guilt and fear and shame. And so we create this false self that we carry around with us everywhere. So effectively, we're lying to everyone around us, living falsely with everyone around us. And this only can lead to broken relationships because we're not being true with each other. We're not present with, with each other. We're not giving ourselves to each other.

This false self is highly critical of others. That can't admit to weaknesses. That constantly needs others approval. It's easily offended and defensive. We can all see ourselves I think in these lists, this is real, even for me right now, like as I preach, and as I was praying this morning, before this time together, even this morning, I feel this temptation to create this false self. This Ken, that presents myself in a certain way so that I can avoid having to feel any shame so that I can get the affirmation I want from you. And when I'm in that kind of mode of becoming someone so I can get something from you than I can't really love you, and I can't really serve you, and I can't even speak truth to you because I need you to love me and affirm me and accept me.

Do you see how we create these false selves? And we do it all the time in different ways. And when we do that, it actually stops us from really loving each other and being true with each other and relating to each other.

Now, the good news is that the old self is not the only list that Paul gives us in this passage. And God has a much more beautiful vision for us, church. Something so much better for us. And we don't have to figure it out, he's given it to us, he's defined us, here's who we were made to be. Here's what the truest version of ourself looks like. Here's what it looks like to become who we were created to be.

Now imagine with me, just think about this. Imagine becoming a truly loving person. A truly loving person able to love others, even those who have nothing to offer you in return. And you are able to love them out of an overflow of how secure you are and the fact that you're loved by God. And you're then able to give yourselves to others and to love others and to speak the truth to others and to be present with others. And you don't need anything in return. You're just filled with love, you're overflowing with love, and the overflow comes from the fact that you are secure in the Father's love for you.

Imagine becoming a non-anxious person, who can walk through this like crazy anxious world that we live in, right? The anxieties around us are just palpable, they're so strong, and we're able to walk through this tense, anxious world at rest and with peace. Imagine what it would be like to be a non-anxious person, actually able to care for people around you in their anxieties and not get, not absorb their anxieties onto yourself. To be a non-anxious presence.

Imagine becoming a content person. This, this, this one, man, this one hits me that we are full of gratitude and able just to enjoy the small things in life. Able to be present. Able to be able to just be thankful and at rest, not always like not tomorrow as we go into Memorial day, not just

always thinking about what else we have to get done or what we wish we had or how our life could be better. Just able to be present with the friends or with the families, or, or even with ourselves. Just able to be present and content and grateful.

Don't we all want that? Full of love and peace and contentment. Well, here's where Paul talks about the new self in verses 12 to 15. And he says this, the new self is marked by love, peace and contentment. He says, verse 12, Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Right? He's summing up that entire list as saying above all love. A person marked by love. Then he goes on, And let the peace of Christ rule in your heart, a person marked by peace, to which you indeed were called in one body. And be thankful. Marked by contentment.

So here's the question then, kind of going back to what we talked about at the beginning, how do we actually become these kinds of people? How do we become the truest version of ourselves, the people that we were created to be marked by peace and love and contentment?

Now in our earthly way of trying to pursue change and in the world's way of trying to pursue change, it's all about try harder, right? And even back in chapter two, we just talked about this the last few weeks, there were false teachers in Colossae who were calling them to pursue change basically by like observing these certain festivals or viewing the moon in a certain way or following these certain rules and regulations, and Paul's basically saying, none of that's going to work. None of that will change you. It's not effective. But we may not pay attention to new moons and festivals, but we probably do all think we can just try harder and to change, right? Or maybe the Christian version of that, which is we just need to believe harder. Fill our minds with more facts, believe those facts and we're good to go. And so we just think it's all about if I just read scripture and memorize it, somehow change we're going to -- is going to happen. And we'll see at the end scriptures a huge part of this. But somehow we just think if we just intellectually know things that's going to change us, and that doesn't work either.

As I, five years ago, began to think about how I was going to become a more loving Ken. I knew that I couldn't just try my way into becoming that person because I had tried and it had failed so many times. So how then does genuine, real lasting change happen? That's the golden question for us. How do we change? How do we become the people that we want to be?

Well, Paul makes it really clear that this change starts with God. Now this may seem like the obvious. That we, we just should assume this, but we can't assume this, right? Because our world is constantly telling us, if you want to change, you need to focus on yourself. And Paul makes so clear right away that our change begins with God. It begins with God pursuing change in us that he gives us a new identity.

And you look in verses one to three. He says, if you've been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things that are on the earth. For you've died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

And here's Paul's point. If you've put your trust in Jesus' saving work for you, then you've been united with him in his life, death and resurrection. As we've talked about this back in chapter one and two, that Christ is now in you. You have union with Christ through his work, and because of this union, then Paul can say, you've been raised with Christ. That you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. And therefore your primary identity in verse 11 is not an ethnic or a national identity, which was huge for the Colossians, but your primary identity is your union with Christ, that Christ is all and in all. And you're now God's chosen ones. Verse 12, you're his chosen ones. You're holy and beloved. Each of these statements was true about Jesus. He was the chosen one. He was the holy one. He was the beloved son of God, and now these statements are true of us.

Church, change is God's gracious work. It begins with God making you alive, uniting you to Jesus and giving you a new identity. The starting point then for real change, to becoming the person God made you to be, a person of love and peace and contentment is an identity change, and that's God's work. And from that point on, the point where God changes your identity and unites you to Christ, you then begin the process of becoming who you already are. The \$10 theological word for that: sanctification. But all that means is change. It means we're becoming who we already are in Christ.

Now we can't just end here because Paul doesn't end here. It is about our identity change, but in this passage, Paul gives nine different commands, not suggestions, right? He is giving nine different commands of things he's calling them to actively do. He's calling them to obedience.

So it's really clear that yes, God is the one who begins change, it starts with him, it's his work in us, but we are called to pursue change. We are called to active obedience. And so we can't just sit back and wait, God, change me, change me, make me more into this kind of person, and then do nothing. He calls us to obedience. And I think sometimes we confuse the doctrine of grace and think that God's grace means we do nothing. No God's grace works in us to actually cause us to do something.

So we're called to obedience, but what does that actually look like? Well, I want to sum this up, I think this is maybe a helpful way to view this, what Paul's saying this morning, in two words and how we pursue change. We need to see and receive. We need to see and receive.

The first one is this, we need to see Jesus and who he wants us to become. We need to see Jesus, who we are and how he meets our deepest needs. Paul at the beginning says, seek, right? The first command, and then he says, set your minds on things above. He's not calling them to just check out and just always be thinking about spiritual things. Actually, he's building off of what Jesus has already told them in the Sermon on the Mount, to seek the kingdom of God first. He's calling them to a new vision of what it means to be human, a kingdom way, a vision of becoming like Jesus.

You see, we can't change until we have a different vision for who we might be than the one that we're being given by our world and our broken stories. We need to be captivated by a superior vision of what it means to be human.

Dallas Willard, I love this, writes, To progress in spiritual formation, or change, we need to be ravished by a vision of life in the Kingdom of God.

We need to be ravished by a vision of life and the kingdom of God. And this new vision starts by looking at Jesus. And this is really, really simple, but it's so deep that we become more like Jesus by beholding Jesus. We need to see him. We need to behold him, and we become more like him. Paul has this in mind in 2 Corinthians 3:18 when he says, We all, with unveiled faces, as we look at Jesus with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. In other words, as we behold Jesus, and we see him with unveiled faces through the Spirit's work in our lives, then as we behold him, we are transformed from one degree of glory to another, we become more like him.

So this vision, we need to see Jesus, and we need also need to see ourselves more clearly. We need to understand who we are in light of what Jesus has done for us. And how we view ourselves actually does change how we live. Our perceived identity matters. I mean, think about this, like how you view yourself does change decisions you make and the way you live. To why I don't own a motorcycle. Because if I owned a motorcycle, I'd have to view myself or perceive myself now as a motorcycle guy. And that feels like a lot of work, right? Like that's a lot of denim and a lot of leather. And like Matt, Matt does it well, but I cannot be a motorcycle guy, cause that's like way too much, I can't afford that, right. So my, how I perceive my identity affects how I live. And I know that's silly, but it's true that the way we view ourselves change how we live.

Well, if we were to set our minds on our new identity, if we were to see our new identity, who we are in Christ, that we've died and been raised again to new life. That we're chosen. You're wanted. He wants you. That you're beloved. That you're holy. When we see ourselves more clearly like this, it actually frees us from living that lie we talked about earlier. We don't have to create the false self who puts up defenses in order to protect ourselves because we're secure in who we are in Jesus. We know who we are.

The last thing we need to see, is we also need to see that our deepest desires are met in Jesus. That he's the one that will meet our needs and satisfy us more than anything else. Saint Augustin writes this so beautifully in his Confessions, he says, You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.

We need to stop looking to satisfy our desires with something or someone that can't ultimately fill our need. And Jesus alone is the one that satisfies.

Church, real change can happen when our life is captivated by a vision of Jesus, when we see him more clearly, and we begin to see that our deepest longings will be met in him. But here's the deal, this clear vision is not enough because for some us, we see that. Like you could stand up here today and you could say clearly all of those truths that we just talked about, and yet you still feel stuck. And honestly, that was me in the last few years. That I knew all of these things. I saw these things and yet I still, I still felt stuck.

And here's the second part of this. Not only do we need to see Jesus in who we are, but we need to receive our new relational identity. We need to receive. In Christ you have a new identity, but you actually have to receive this identity, and real change will not happen until you begin relating to God as his beloved son or daughter.

Jim Cofield's an author, and he's really now spends a lot of his time as really a pastor to pastors, and he spent some time with our elder team this past year. And the first thing that he said to us as he met with us was this, Your spiritual formation, or change, starts with learning to receive the love of God.

Some of us know all the right things to believe. We know our theological identity. We read our Bibles every day, but we really don't believe that God loves us. We know theologically that he loves us, that he cares about us, that he's for us, that he wants to transform us, but functionally, we believe God's distant. That he condemns us, that he's disappointed in us. That he's looking for reasons to punish us. We're just waiting for the hammer to drop.

Often, this is rooted in our stories, maybe even potentially in the story of our family. And that we view the Father and how he thinks about us through the lens of maybe how a parent felt about us. Some of us are seeing no change in our lives then. And we feel stuck, even though we know all the right things and we see all the right truths, and we know how to talk about our identity. We can talk about our identity all day long, and yet we still don't feel, we still feel stuck. We still don't see change because we've never received our identity as beloved by God.

I gotta be honest, this is where I have been stuck for years now. And I think, I say stuck, I think God is unsticking me, day by day. That he is helping me begin to finally receive his love for me in a way that I have never been able to do. And I don't even know entirely why. To be completely honest with you. I don't know, in my story, all the reasons that go into why it's so hard for me to really believe that God loves me, but it is sometimes. Sometimes my default thought is that he's disappointed with me. That I have to earn my way back into his favor. And I know none of that's true, but functionally, that's how I respond and how I act.

And so I have felt stuck, I think because primarily because of this. And in my own story, as I've begun to sit with God in my pain and be honest about my story and realize that he is still with me, and he loves me. And I've experienced his love in tangible ways, sometimes through other people who have walked with me, and helped me experience his love. It's only then that I began to change and grow more secure in his love for me. Knowing who I am. And I'm still in progress here, church. But it started with me beginning to receive his love for me.

Some of you might still be thinking, well, this sounds really like emotional, which it is cause we're created as emotional beings, but you're wanting to understand even rationally how this works.

Let me just push you there a little bit because sometimes we just think we need to think our way through everything. We forget God made us as emotional beings, emotional people that need to experience and receive his love, and we can't solve everything just by thinking it out. But this is rational. This is how God made us. There's a theory called attachment theory that says that we from birth, were designed to attach to a caregiver, ideally to our parent, and that our character is actually formed by the strength of that attachment. Our character is who we are when we're pushed or squeezed, right? It's how we respond in the moment. Not when we stop and think about how to respond, but just how we respond. And the character actually is formed, and the same part of our brain, where the attachments are formed. In other words, the strength of our attachment and who we're attached to actually shapes our character. And so if

you have a strong attachment to someone who is a loving, present person, and that shapes your character in positive ways.

And this is all seen through neuroscience and psychology, but here's the point for us -- What if you were attached to a God who loved you unconditionally? What if you were attached to a God who you had nothing to prove to? But he cared about you and he was with you all the time. It would, it would change us. It would change our character. We'd be able to love because he loved us. We'd be able to forgive because he's forgiven us.

Church, you can't just believe your way into change. Do you receive the love of the Father for you? Do you trust and know that deep down he loves you, that you're his son and his daughter. When he calls you chosen, he means it. He's not reluctant. He desired you. His thoughts are for you.

We need to see and receive. See Jesus and receive his love for us.

And how do we do this? Let's get even more practical here, I want to offer three really quick ways, and we'll wrap up. Paul gives us three helpful keys for how we actually can experience change, see and receive Jesus.

The first is gratitude. Gratitude, verse 15, 16, and 17, three different times, he says, basically be thankful. He keeps calling them to give thanks. And here's the reason why, gratitude or giving thanks actually practically helps open our hearts and minds to receiving the Father's love for us. It reminds us that he cares about us. It's actually, when we stop to think about what, what the Father has done and how he's provided and how he's cared and how he was present with us in each moment of the day, and we give thanks for that, it opens our hearts and minds to receiving his love. And so one really practical way to grow in this is at the end of the day or some point in the day, just stop and give thanks. Maybe just sit down and try to write down two things that you're thankful for that day. And connect them, it can be big or small, but connect them to how God cares for you and provides for you and loves you. And as you begin to do this, God will use it to help open up your heart and mind to receiving his love.

The second thing that Paul says, not only gratitude, but through his word. Verse 16, he says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Now a lot of us think, well, yeah, that just means I need to like read the Bible more, memorize scripture, then change is going to happen. And we have been reading informationally our whole lives. We read the Bible like we read a newspaper. Right? We scroll through it, try to find something that seems pertinent to our life, pick that out, and then go on with our day. And that's not the way God invites us to read his word. He's inviting us in relationship. He's inviting us to read his word the way a loved one reads the letter from their beloved, the way a son hears the affirming words of his father. That's how he is inviting us to read his word, to read it as the word of the one who loved us so much that he gave his own life for us.

So as you read scripture, it's not about reading it just to get like facts. It's not about reading it informationally. It's about engaging in this story as a, as a word from the God who loves you.

But here's the point. Change will not happen if you're not having his loving word richly dwelling in you. In other words, you won't be able to see and receive and see real change in your life, if

the word of God is not richly dwelling in you. And some of us are stuck because we don't go to his word. It's not richly dwelling in us. And I just want to, I want to encourage you and challenge you to take a step wherever you are, take a next step and letting his word richly dwell in you. It may be that you need to open his word and read a Psalm every morning, and be reminded of how he thinks about you, of who he is. And maybe that you need to commit that you're going to be here every single week, to be here, to make this your regular rhythm, to hear God's word, to sing, God's word, the singing. It maybe that you're going to be here on time, right?

The singing is not secondary. When we sing, we are singing God's word for us and sometimes sinks into our heart and strikes us and, and opens our eyes in ways that sometimes the spoken word doesn't do. I can think of so many times where my kids or even myself, we've gone home, and a week later, I can't remember what the message was about, but I remember what we sang. We need to be here, church.

So what does that look like for you? How do you let the word of Christ richly dwell in you?

And here's the third thing that Paul says. So both gratitude, through the means of gratitude through his word richly dwelling in us, and the last, with community. With community. We can't miss the fact here that Paul is writing this to a community. He's not just writing to individuals. Every command he gives in this passage is a plural command, right? It's written to a community to practice and to live out.

Paul's vision for change is that it doesn't happen in isolation. It happens in community. We need a loving community to help us see Jesus more clearly. You're not going to see Jesus and who he is without getting to see him in the context of a community that can make him tangible for you. You also need a community that will help remind you of who he is and who you are. That's part of the reason I love my DNA group. In between a lot of jokes and just catching up on life, it's so common to hear one brother say to another, But that's not how God views you, brother. That's not how God thinks about you. That's not who you are. And we need those reminders. This happens in community.

So do you have a Jesus' light community around you that can help you see Jesus more clearly, help you see yourself more clearly, and then help you receive the Father's love for you.

Church, lasting change is possible. If you go on with nothing else, I want you to know this, that you can change, but it's not going to be something you can accomplish on your own. Through the help of the Spirit, through your obedience, you can actually become the people that God has saved you to be. You can become a loving, peaceful content, peace people. And it starts with you seeing Jesus, seeing who you are in him and receiving his love for you. Amen? Well, that's my prayer for you today. Let me, let me pray as we close this morning and we'll continue on in our time of worship.

Father, I pray that you would open our eyes to see you. To see you, not through the lens of just what we want to learn intellectually, but to see you in all for all of who you are, to see your love for us to see your passion, to see how much you care. Help us, not just to know you theologically, but to know you the way Paul talks about knowing you intimately. Open our eyes, Father. Help us to see you, help us to see ourselves, and then we pray that you would change us. In the places where we feel stuck, where each of us maybe wrote down one thing or

thought about one thing that we long to see you change, we ask that you, that your Spirit would change us. And help us to take the steps of obedience that you call us to, to pursue that change this morning. Lord we ask all of this in your Son's name. Amen.