

---

# FOUNDATIONS OF CHANGE

---

## Introduction

**Paul Tripp:** Change is a by-product of being **known** and **loved** by Jesus, our Redeemer. Change is not accomplished by mastering a technique or following a system; it takes place as we are in relationship with Christ.

*What are some obstacles to change?*

- *confusion – goal destination?*
- *despair – powerless to change*
- *isolated – pride and fear of rejection*
- *temporary – not lasting change*

*We are going to discuss each of those obstacles.*

- 1. Change's Destination: heaven**
- 2. Change's Power: oneness with Christ**
- 3. Change's Method: relationships**
- 4. Change's Location: the heart**

## **1. Change's Destination: heaven**

*God has placed us on earth to prepare us to live forever with him in heaven.*

*But heaven has a different culture, different values.*

The Storyline of Change: creation, fall, redemption, consummation

*The Bible is not a compendium of principles but a storyline of change.*

Creation

*So, 1. God created us to be in a personal, loving relationship; to be one with us.*

*2. God withholds satisfaction to show us our need and to teach us that only he can satisfy our core needs and deepest longings.*

*3. God uses relationships to teach us how to love and be one with him.*

Fall

**Sinclair Ferguson:** We were born addicted to sin and under its dominion. ...corrupted by it, and powerless to reverse its effects. ...We live in, breathe the atmosphere, and share the nature, of a fallen world. ...we are all by nature 'in Adam', deeply implicated in his fall, sharing in his subsequent alienation from God.

Sin is a condition that results in behavior therefore, our view of change must entail more than behavior modification.

**Paul Tripp:** Sin renders us **incapable** of doing what God has ordained us to do. This inability colors every situation and relationship of our lives. It is not just that I don't want to do God's will, or that I think my way is better, it's that even when I have the right intentions, I can't pull it off. I always fall short of God's standard.

## Redemption

**Sinclair Ferguson:** But Christians are no longer 'in Adam'. Therefore we are no longer 'in the flesh'. By definition we are 'in Christ' and participate in the new creation. We are possessed by the Spirit, live under his lordship, and are breathing his atmosphere...I have no taxes to pay to the domain of sin. I owe no loyalty to its institutions. It has no claim on me.

## Consummation

*Revelation 7:12*

*Revelation 19:1-8*

*Revelation 21:1-5; 22:1-5*

*According to these passages and others, God is preparing us to:*

- a. worshipping him*
- b. oneness with him*
- c. fulfillment through him*

**Paul Tripp:** Living with God's ultimate destination in view gives **hope** and **perspective** in our daily situations and relationships.

**Paul Tripp:** Positive personal change begins to take place when my dreams of change begin to line up with God's purposes for change. Leaving behind goals of personal comfort and self-fulfillment, I begin to reach out for Christ, desiring to be more and more like him each day. As I do this, I become more and more prepared for my ultimate destination—**eternity** with him.

God is taking you where you do not want to go to produce in you the change you could not produce on your own.

## **2. Change's Power: oneness with Christ**

**Bryan Chapell:** The grace that identifies me as God's child is not based on my actions. He characterizes me based on my **relationship** with him, not on the basis of what I have done. My union with Christ (the indicative of who I am) precedes and motivates my obedience (the imperative)

## 2 Peter 1:3-9

### The Gospel Gap

Past forgiveness - here and now - future hope >

**Paul Tripp & Tim Lane:** Many believers live a '**gospel gap**' in their lives: They have some sense of the past forgiveness of our sins and the future promise of heaven but without understanding or experiencing the power of the gospel in the present. The monotony of life lulls us to sleep, and we miss the miraculous presence of Christ.

### Discussion Questions

- What are 1-2 things you are taking away from this session?
- Do you find biblical change to be a difficult process? Why or why not?
- Where does the gospel gap show up in your life?

---

## FOUNDATIONS OF CHANGE

---

### 3. Change's Method: relationships

**Tod Bolsinger:** More than any before us, an American today believes 'I must write the script of my own life.' The thought that such a script must be subordinated to the grand narrative of the Bible is a foreign one. Still more alarming is the idea that this surrender of our personal story to God's story must be mediated by a community of fallen people we frankly don't want getting in our way and meddling with our own hopes and dreams.

What prevents Christian community?

Ephesians 4:11-16

#### **4. Change's Location: heart**

What is the heart?

*Mathew 15:17-19*

Proverbs 4:23 "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."

**Tim Keller:** Sin isn't only doing bad things, it is more fundamentally making good things into ultimate things. Sin is building your life and meaning on anything, even a very good thing, more than on God. Whatever we build our life on will drive us and enslave us. Sin is primarily idolatry.



**Paul Tripp:** A good thing becomes a bad thing when it becomes a **ruling thing**.

Three words the Bible uses to describe idolatry:

1. trust
2. love
3. obey

What promises do idols make to us?

- autonomy
- pleasure
- care free living
- security
- happiness
- good relationships
- wealth
- health

The Progression of an Idol

- a. **Desire:** “I want”
- b. **Demand:** “I must”
- c. **Need:** “I will”
- d. **Expectation:** “You should”
- e. **Disappointment:** “You didn’t”

### Questions to uncover heart idols

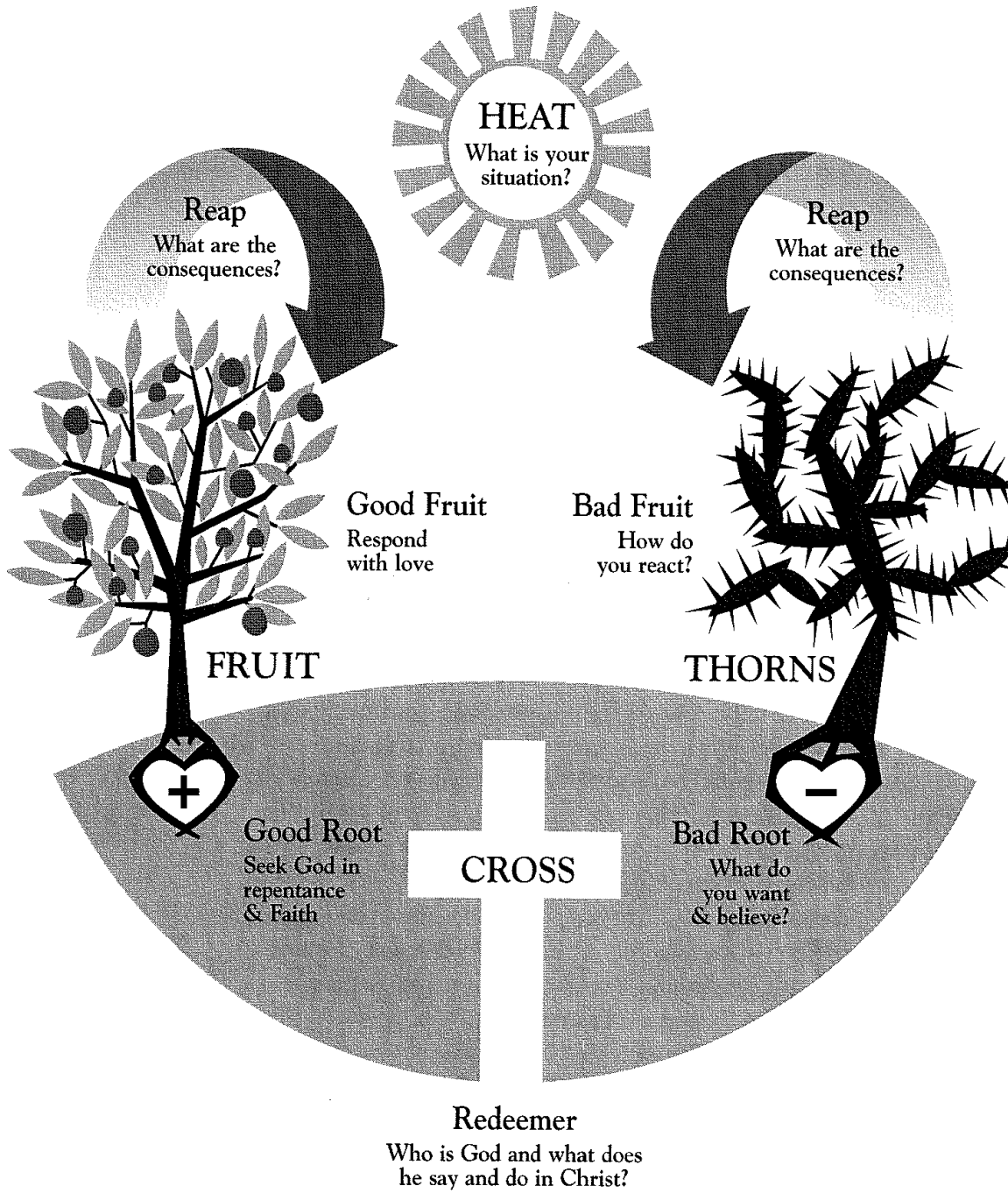
- What people, places or things make me most happy or joyful?
- What happens when these are taken away, removed or changed?
- Do I feel threatened when I lose approval, affirmation, happiness, etc.?
- When times get tough I typically turn to \_\_\_\_\_?
- When times are good I typically attribute it to \_\_\_\_\_?
- I am most known for \_\_\_\_\_.
- What things do I celebrate as objects of worship in my life?
- What things or people have my affections?
- What things do I find pleasure in?
- What or who do I trust in regularly?

### Discussion Questions

- What are 1-2 things you are taking away from this session?
- Is biblical community an important part of your life? Why or why not?
- Do you seek change at the expense of ignoring the heart? If so, how?

HEAT

Jeremiah 17:5-10



Common examples of HEAT

Man's view of the HEAT: Psalm 88

God's view of the HEAT: James 1

**Tripp & Lane:** Psalm 88 and James 1 both remind us that the Bible speaks of a real God who **meets** and **comforts** real people in the midst of difficulty in the real world. Psalm 88 emphasizes that God knows and understand what we are going through. James 1 provides an example of a pastor applying this truth to the lives of people he dearly loves. In both passages, the reality of the HEAT is acknowledged and responded to in ways that are truly liberating. We are not alone. God does understand. So what can we learn from these 2 passages (Psalm 88 and James 1)?

### The Desert Experience

#### Discussion Questions

- What are 1-2 things you are taking away from this session?
- Take a current situation (HEAT) in your life. How might you be misinterpreting it? What could God be up to in your life?

---

## THORNS

---

**Paul Tripp:** You and I are never really **passive**. We are always acting, reacting, and responding to the *heat* in our lives.

### Common excuses to explain THORN-bush responses

1. other people
2. family background (nurture)
3. your body (nature)

**Tripp & Lane:** While external conditions can be very **influential** in our lives and should not be ignored, the Bible says that they are only the occasion for sin, not the cause. Difficulties in life do not cause sin. Our background, relationships, situation, and physical condition only provide the opportunity for our thoughts, words, and actions to reveal whatever is already in our hearts.

**Tim Chester:** Our struggles and temptations often **trigger** sin, but they never cause it. The root cause is always the heart and its sinful desires.

What are some typical ways we as sinful humans deal with the HEAT in our life?

- a. Deny, avoid, escape
  - pornography
  - escapist fantasies
  - depression
  - suicide
  - various addictions
  - self-injury
  - various eating disorders
  - work-a-holic
  
- b. Magnify, expand, catastrophize
  - gossip
  - slander
  - explosive anger
  - verbal/domestic abuse
  - various personality disorders
  - narcissism
  - bi-polar
  
- c. Become prickly and hypersensitive
  - bitterness
  - resentment
  - excessive defensiveness
  - paranoia
  - stinginess
  - jealousy & envy
  - excessive insecurity
  
- d. Return evil for evil
  - hurtful anger

- revengeful manipulation
- various forms of abuse
- silent treatment/coldness
- constant criticism

e. Bugged down, paralyzed, captured

- depression
- acute anxiety
- religious OCD
- fear of man
- struggles with the past
- morbid introspection

f. Self-excusing, self-righteousness

- constant judgment
- arrogance
- legalism
- entitlement attitude
- constant comparison to others
- blame-shifting
- constant excuse making

### Thorn Bush Passages

- Mark 7:21-23
- Romans 1:29-32
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
- Galatians 5:19-20
- Colossians 3:8-10
- 1 Timothy 1:9-10
- 2 Timothy 3:1-6
- 1 John 2:15-17



### James 1:13-15 Progression of Sin

- Tempted
- Lured
- Enticed
- Conceived

**Cornelius Plantinga:** Human sin is **stubborn**, but not as stubborn as the grace of God and not half so **persistent**, not half so ready to suffer to win its way.

**Gordon Dalbey:** To let God meet us where we are, we must know where we are, and such an exercise in **truth-telling** can often be painful.

### Discussion Questions

- What are 1-2 things you are taking away from this session?
- In response to the HEAT, what are your default THORN-bush responses?
- Using the progression of sin diagram, analyze underlying desires which feed external sinful (THORNY) responses.

-----  
CROSS  
-----

Galatians 2:20

- The **Redemptive** Fact: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live.”
  
- The **Present** Reality: “...but Christ lives in me.”
  
- The Results for **Everyday** Living: “...the life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer:** **Cheap** grace is the deadly enemy of our church. The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. What would grace be if it were not cheap?

## Repentance

**Tripp & Lane:** Yet so many believers only think of faith and repentance as the way to enter the Christian life. They fail to realize that faith and repentance link us to Christ on a daily basis.

**Tim Keller:** All-of-life repentance is the best sign that we are growing **deeply** and rapidly into the character of Jesus.

### What are some common misconceptions regarding repentance?

- selective
- self-preservation
- eliminates consequences
- sorrow equals repentance
- being sorry for something
- penance and repentance are equal
- doing to cover your sin
- self-defense is compatible with repentance
- open confession

### Seven Principles of Repentance<sup>1</sup>

1. True repentance is a **gift** from God.  
*Ps 51:10; 14:7; 60:1, Jer 24:6, Lam 5:21; Acts 5:31; 2 Tim 2:25; Heb 12:15-17*
2. True repentance is not a **single** act but an ongoing and continual attitude.
3. True repentance is not a mechanism to escape the **consequences** of sin.  
**Bryan Chapell:** False repentance flees correction; true repentance seeks it.
4. True repentance is not what you do for yourself but what you do **for God**.
5. True repentance is not merely of the fruits of sin but of the very **roots**.

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Owen Roberts, *Repentance: The First Word of the Gospel*

6. True repentance is not **secret** but **open**.
7. True repentance is both **negative and positive**.

### Luke 15:11-32

#### The Prodigal Son

1. Wake-Up
2. Own Up
3. Go Up

#### The Older Brother

- **restless** anger: 'was angry and refused to go in...'
- **loveless** duty: 'all these years I've been slaving for you...'
- **fastidious** performance: 'I never disobeyed your command...'
- **proud** comparison: 'This son of yours...devoured property... prostitutes'

### Discussion Questions

- What are 1-2 things you are taking away from this session?
- In what areas of repentance do you need to see grace-empowered growth?

-----  
FRUIT: REAL HEART CHANGE  
-----

**David Powlison:** The process of redemption is painfully **unfinished** this side of eternity.

**Tim Chester:** Many people change their behavior, but their **motives** and desires are still wrong; so their new behavior is no more pleasing to God than their old behavior.

Ephesians 4:22-24

What are some characteristics of true biblical change?

1. My **perspective** on life changes
2. I understand the dynamics of my **vertical** relationship with God and my **horizontal** relationships with others
3. The way I **speak** with other people changes
4. How I deal with sin: the response, the speed, the intensity, the humility, etc.

5. My **motivation** for change becomes less me-centered, and more God-centered
6. My desires, hopes, dreams and goals become more **aligned** with Scripture
7. My **daily** awareness of Christ increases
8. I **run** to Christ first instead of other substitutes
9. I become more attuned to the dynamics of my heart **idolatry** and sinful propensities
10. Momentary **pleasures** no longer hold your attention
11. The Bible gets **personal**, it's not just talking about them- it's talking about me
12. I begin to see that God is a God of **grace** and **mercy**, and He becomes increasingly attractive<sup>2</sup>

#### Discussion questions

- What are 1-2 things you are taking away from this session?
- Write down 1-2 areas from our discussion today that you will return to in thoughtful meditation in the coming months.
- Discuss 1-2 areas of encouragement you've received today.

---

<sup>2</sup> Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2006), 189.