

WEEK 1

This week as we meet for the first time we will discuss *Discover*, *Nurture*, and *Act* (see 1 page handout you can give to participants)

Take the time to look at the handout together and see if there are any questions.

Discuss the structure for each week:

1. Discover - Look at a passage together and study it using the four questions.
2. Nurture - Listen for one another's heart as they are answering question and engaging the scripture during the *discover* time. Use handout as a guide.
3. Act - In this step we will, as a community, seek to be "doers" of the word and not hearers only.

Begin with prayer before opening scripture. Ask these questions to prepare people.

- * What keeps you from digging into the Bible to discover God's character?
- * When you read the Bible do you have a method you use to study it?
- * What would most encourage your heart tonight as you open the Bible?

1. **Discover** - Read Ephesians 1:1-2:10 (Consider using handout for all three steps)
 - A. Jot down your observations here:

If there's still time...

2. **Nurture** - As you read the passage and discussed it, what stuck out? How did it connect to your life this week? Focus in on a smaller piece of the passage like Ephesians 1:3-8 or 2:8-10.

- A. Does this passage bring to mind any sin you've committed? Or any lie you've been believing?

3. **Act** - Which part of the passage did you *most* need to hear? How might the Spirit of God be encouraging you to respond to His words tonight?

WEEK 2

Discuss the structure for each week:

1. Discover - Look at a passage together and study it using the four questions.
2. Nurture - Listen for one another's heart as they are answering question and engaging the scripture during the *discover* time. Use handout as a guide.
3. Act - In this step we will, as a community, seek to be "doers" of the word and not hearers only.

Begin with prayer before opening scripture. Maybe ask - "What is the gospel? How would you describe it to someone who has no context or background?" Good dialogue like this will enhance one's engagement for the time.

1. **Discover** - Read Luke 15:11-32 (Consider using handout for all three steps)

A. Jot down your observations here:

2. **Nurture** - As you read the passage and discussed it, what stuck out? How did it connect to your life this week? Focus on either the younger or older son. What do both of their actions say about their father? Here are some questions to guide the heart focused time:

A. What do you think the younger son really wants in life?

B. Think about the older son's conversation with the father. He says, "I've been slaving for you all these years. Where's my party?!" If he considered his work to be like slavery, why do you think he kept at it? What do you think he wanted in life?

C. Do you think either son truly loved the father and wanted to be with him?

D. Their actions look very different, but explain how both sons' hearts are very similar.

E. After this story return to what the Gospel is. How would you answer that now?

3. **Act** -

A. Which son do you identify with? How is God inviting you to respond?

B. What is a specific way you can "enter the feast" of the Father's grace this week?

WEEK 3

Discuss the structure for each week:

1. Discover - Look at a passage together and study it using the four questions.
2. Nurture - Listen for one another's heart as they are answering question and engaging the scripture during the *discover* time. Use handout as a guide.
3. Act - In this step we will, as a community, seek to be "doers" of the word and not hearers only.

Take a few moments to simply check in. "How has your week been? Has God been speaking to you from the word last gathering? How?" Don't use all your time here though.

1. **Discover** - Read I Corinthians 15:1-11 (Consider using handout for all three steps)

- A. Jot down your observations here: (read attached article "What is the Gospel?")

2. **Nurture** -

- A. How do you understand (or have you understood) *how* you are saved?
Furthermore, *why* does God save?
- B. Partnership with God in restorative work is our call in making disciples. What do you think when you hear that phrase, "making disciples?" Is this you?
- C. Can you think of other people you would like to help experience the Gospel in this way as well? Write down their names here: _____

- D. How is community important for your understanding of the Gospel?

3. **Act** -

- A. Considering the last two gatherings, how would you describe the Gospel to a family member, friend, or neighbor if they asked you? (Maybe write it down in a journal or note in your phone).
- B. Take the names you listed above and spend just 1 minute each day this week praying for those people.

What is the Gospel: Understanding Two Perspectives

The gospel is called the “good news,” and it is particularly good news about our sin problem. In a nutshell, we can sum it up this way:

The gospel is that God Himself has come to rescue and restore creation in and through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

Why does creation (which includes me) need rescuing? Because of sin.

Sin is living for my fame and glory instead of God's. Sin is living life my way, for me, instead of living life, God's way, for God. We have all sinned and really need the gospel we desperately need Jesus to rescue us from the penalty and effects of sin, which the Bible teaches is ultimate and eternal separation from God. When we repent (change our mind about who is really God in our lives) and by faith we believe that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection has secured our rescue and restored us to a right relationship with God the Father, then this good news is true for us! We also have been sent out to proclaim this same gospel of restoration to the entire world.

Understanding Two Gospel Perspectives

We can read the Bible across the grain (thematically), and we can read it with the grain (as a story). Both are necessary, and each one leads to a different way of seeing the gospel. It takes both perspectives to understand and engage the gospel fully.

1. Thematically

The gospel power. We understand the means of salvation.

God—eternal, all-powerful, creator of everything.

Sin—humanity has all chosen self-rule over submission in relationship to God; the penalty for sin is death

Jesus—God incarnate came to die as a substitute for the penalty of humanity's sins

Faith—by faith in what Jesus did, not by any effort of our own, we are saved from our sins.

In this case, the good news is that God is completely aware of our sin problem and in and through the work of Jesus Christ accepts us AND changes us by the power of His Spirit. We have been saved from the penalty of sin (*justification*), are being saved from the power of sin (*sanctification*), and will be saved from the presence of sin. This means the same power that saved us from the penalty for sin also helps us obey God now.

This results in my understanding that . . . I am more broken and sinful than I ever dared believe, and at the same time I am *more loved* and *accepted* than I ever dared hope because of Jesus.

2. As a Story

The gospel purpose. Here we come to know the reason for salvation. We can look at the gospel through the lens of a story.

Creation > Fall > Redemption > Restoration

In this case, the good news is that God sent His Son to redeem the world from the effects of sin and create a new humanity. Eventually the whole world will be renewed to the way God originally created it. Rebellion, death, decay, injustice, and suffering will all be removed. When everything is restored, God will be seen by all for who He truly is—He will be glorified.

How does this happen? Jesus helped clarify how we accomplish the purpose of the gospel by giving us His mission: “Go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). A disciple of Jesus is someone who is learning to apply the gospel to absolutely every part of life. As the arts, industry, politics, families—all areas of culture—are being filled with Jesus’ disciples bringing about His gospel restoration, the earth is being filled with His glory! That is the point of the restoration of all things—that God would be glorified!

The gospel is not just about my individual happiness or God’s plan for my life. The gospel is about God’s plan for the world.

Good News!

When we repent of our sin (view it as God does) and receive the forgiveness and new life that Jesus has offered us, we begin a journey of restoration inside and out as disciples of Jesus. Being a disciple is not primarily learning a bunch of information or maintaining certain spiritual disciplines. Discipleship is not a class or a program you go through. Becoming like Jesus is all about the gospel. A disciple of Jesus is someone who is learning to apply the gospel to absolutely every part of life. The life of a disciple requires allowing the truth of the gospel to sink deep into our hearts, transforming our passions and motivations that in turn radically rearranges how we live. Although we have a role to play, the Holy Spirit is the one who does this transforming work. This gospel restoration happens in us in the context of a community on Jesus’ mission, and it’s not just for us—but for the entire world!

WEEK 4

Discuss the structure for each week:

1. Discover - Look at a passage together and study it using the four questions.
2. Nurture - Listen for one another's heart as they are answering question and engaging the scripture during the *discover* time. Use handout as a guide.
3. Act - In this step we will, as a community, seek to be "doers" of the word and not hearers only.

Take some time to consider that the purpose God has for us is that we become more like Jesus. To that end, think/pray about a specific area of your life you'd like the Gospel to have a greater influence over.

1. **Discover** - Read Matt. 6:6-13 & attached article "What would you like to change?"
 - B. Jot down your observations here:

2. **Nurture** - As you read the passage and article, what stuck out? How did it connect to your life this week? Is finding something to focus on in your heart a hard question? Here are some questions to guide the heart focused time:
 - A. How does Jesus reflect the glory of God?
 - B. Rom. 8:28 says God works things for good. What do you think Paul means by *good*?
 - C. If I am a "new creation" and God "predestined" me to be more like Jesus, what might that mean *this week*?
 - D. Do you really want to be like Jesus... Why or why not?

3. **Act** - (Your gospel-change project: "GCP")
 - A. What specific area of your life, actions, and attitudes do you want to change?
 - B. Is your GCP about changing your behavior or emotions? (We cannot control others. Think: "Being patient with my spouse" vs. "Have a better marriage.")
 - C. Is your GCP specific? Can you remember when you last time you felt, committed, or experienced it?

ARTICLE: What Would You Like To Change

We learned from the Story of God that humans were made in God's image. We reflected His image or His glory like a mirror. But when we rebelled against God, that image was broken. The Bible tells us, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The mirror has been shattered. We reflect a distorted image. Ephesians 4:22 calls this our "old self" or our flesh: "*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.*"

We can't be the people we want to be, let alone the people we were made to be.

We also learned in the Story that Jesus reflected God's image perfectly. Colossians 1:15 says, "*He is the image of the invisible God.*" Hebrews 1:3 says He is "*the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being.*" Jesus said, "*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*" (John 14:9).

Just as humans were designed to do in the beginning, Jesus shows the world what God is like. He does it perfectly, and John eloquently highlights the reality of Jesus's fullness in the opening lines of his gospel in John 1:14:

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Jesus is the glory of the Father. He makes God known in the world. He is God in human form. He shows us what it means to be the image of God and to reflect God's glory. That's why the New Testament sometimes says we should be like God and sometimes says we should be like Christ. It's because Christ is the true image of God.

Jesus shows us God's agenda for change. God isn't interested in making us religious. Think of Jesus, who was hated by religious people. God isn't interested in making us "spiritual," if by spiritual we mean detached: Jesus was God getting stuck in. God isn't interested in making us self-absorbed: Jesus was self-giving personified. God isn't

interested in serenity: Jesus was passionate for God, was angry at sin, and wept for the city. The word “holy” means set apart from or different from our sinful ways. It didn’t mean being set apart from the world but being consecrated to God in the world. He was God’s glory in and for the world.

The word “glory” means “weight,” as in “a person of importance, a weighty person.” So Jesus shows us the full weight, the full significance, of the character and nature of God. Jesus shows us God as He really is. God, in all of His majesty, splendor, wisdom, beauty, power, compassion, grace, patience, and love, was put on display in the person of Jesus Christ.

Through Jesus’ life, He demonstrated power over death and demons. His compassionate heart led Him to preach the good news to the poor and to heal the sick. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, we see God’s glory even more clearly. Jesus willingly took all of the sins of humanity and piled them on His shoulders, becoming sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). He endured the wrath of God against the sin of humanity and prayed, *“Father, forgive them.”* But death couldn’t hold Him, and He overcame the sentence that all humanity had faced since the garden. Jesus is the image of the invisible God!

Because of our connection to Jesus, we are now being restored to our original Image, the Image of Christ. Colossians 3:9–10 says, *“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self [There’s that same idea again.] with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”*

Our original identity as image-bearers of God has been completely restored through the work of Jesus on our behalf. We reflect His image with greater and greater clarity as we live the life Jesus modeled for us and produces in us through His Spirit. It’s as if the broken mirror is being healed and is slowly reflecting an accurate image again.

This process—us becoming more like Jesus so we reflect more accurately what God is like—is the number-one thing God is always up to in our lives.

For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness (or image) of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:29).

What this means is that God had a plan before time began to mold and shape you into the image of His Son Jesus. He uses both blessings and trials to do that shaping work. Therefore, we should submit to His perfect work in us. The Story is about Him!

From God's perspective, becoming like Jesus is the goal of the entire Christian life. The purpose of our lives is to bring glory to God, to show the world what He's like as His image-bearers. To do that, we must be conformed into the image of His Son, which brings Him glory! As we become like Christ, we will bring glory to God.

Again, a disciple is someone who is learning to apply the gospel to absolutely every part of life. Discipleship is all about letting God bring about change in our lives from the inside out so we look more like Jesus.

WEEK 5

Discuss the structure for each week:

1. Discover - Look at a passage together and study it using the four questions.
2. Nurture - Listen for one another's heart as they are answering question and engaging the scripture during the *discover* time. Use handout as a guide.
3. Act - In this step we will, as a community, seek to be "doers" of the word and not hearers only.

Do you have in mind what it is you want to be "working on" for change we discussed last week? For right now, when you hear the word "motive" what comes to mind?

1. **Discover** - Read Luke 6:43-45 & attached article "Why would you like to change? Part 1"

A. Jot down your observations here:

a. Consider your potential reasons for wanting to change:

1. *Prove yourself to God* - God didn't waste His grace on me and I'll be sure He sees that.
 2. *Prove yourself to other people* - I like it when others are impressed with me.
 3. *Prove yourself to yourself* - I am my own worst enemy and beat myself up until I can get it right.
 4. *Justified by Grace* - I realize I am not the one to deliver myself, it is Jesus' blood on the cross and glorious resurrection!
2. **Nurture** - Think back to the passage and some of your motives for change:
 - A.** Why do you want to change?
 - B.** Do you think giving up a particular sin will make you more acceptable?
 - C.** What evidence is there you may be trying to prove yourself to God?
 - D.** What evidence is there you may be trying to prove yourself others?
 - E.** What evidence is there you may be trying to prove yourself to yourself?
 3. **Act** (See below - certain passages are reworded to fit our actions. See if you can tell)

“When we prove ourselves by living a good life, we have peace with God through what we do. It is what we do that gives us access to God's blessing, and a good standing in people's eyes. This means we can worry a bit less about whether we will share God's glory in heaven.” See **Romans 5:1-2** for the TRUE version.

“It is by changing that our problems will be sorted out, through working hard. It's up to us. This is what we can do for God. We are saved by what we do, so we can prove ourselves. If we do the good works God plans for us, then we can become God's masterpiece, new people in Christ Jesus.” See **Ephesians 2:8-10** for the TRUE version.

ARTICLE: **Why would you like to change? Part 1** - While our motives are complex and hard to discern, they can often be boiled down into one of three categories:

1. To Prove Ourselves to God

I don't want God to have to work too hard to accept me. I want to help Him out. I want to be acceptable to God on the basis of my own merit. I want to put Him in a place of obligation, where He must bless me for my hard work.

Deep down, we all want to change so we can justify ourselves, to prove our worth. We are all natural-born legalists, laboring and toiling under the weight of guilt and insecurity. This instinct comes from our pride-filled flesh (also called our sinful nature).

God's grace is an insult to our flesh. We want to be seen by God and others as successful and worthy. We want to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We want to take credit. The reality is that we can do nothing to earn or lose God's love.

All the time God is saying, “In my love I gave my Son for you. He's done everything needed to secure my blessing. I love you as you are and accept you in Him.” God cannot love a Christian more than He does now—no matter how much we change our lives. God will not love a Christian less than He does now—no matter what mess we make of our lives.

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. —Romans 5:8

2. To Prove Ourselves to Other People

This is often the reason why I want to change: I want other people to be impressed by me. We may want to fit in or get other people's approval. We certainly don't want other people finding out what we're like inside. We wear masks to hide our real selves from people. Wearing the mask can be a great strain; it's like acting a role all the time. However we dare not let other people see us as we really are.

One of the problems with trying to prove yourself to other people is that it means they set the standard. Their standards may be ungodly, but you adopt their behavior to fit in. Their standards may be ungodly, but you're living in obedience to other people rather than obedience to God. Often what happens is that you settle for living like other people even when that falls short of living like Jesus. Sometimes you measure yourself against other people and decide you are more righteous. Indeed often we point the finger at other people's faults so we can feel better about ourselves. Instead we should be comparing ourselves to Jesus, finding we fall a long way short of God's standards and discovering we desperately need a Savior.

Here's the bottom line: I want other people to be impressed by me. For my entire marriage, I have wanted the approval of my wife. Her opinion has been more weighty in my life than God's. When I know I've hurt her and I know I've not measured up in her eyes as a husband, it's a struggle.

But this doesn't just affect marriage. This desire to prove ourselves to other people affects our work relationships, our friendships, the people we're serving, our parenting, even our relationships with total strangers ("I want these people who I've never met to think well of me.").

We perform to hide our real selves from people. Another way to think about performing is that it's like wearing a mask. We can often be like actors, putting on a false front to

impress people or vigorously defending ourselves so we're not seen for who we really are. Many of us know how draining it can be to feel like we're putting on an act all day long! This is a huge cause of stress in our lives.

This desire to prove ourselves to others hinders our growth as disciples because our primary objective is to be like other people—whatever will gain their approval—instead of being like Jesus.

3. To Prove Yourself to Yourself

When we mess up, we might hear things such as “Idiot” or “stupid” or “failure” go through our minds. In the past, I realized that one of my biggest fears in life was letting myself down, failing to live up to my own expectations for myself. I couldn't bear the thought of being labeled, even in my own mind, as a failure.

My ego still takes a serious hit when I mess up. Often the biggest sense of a letdown is having to face myself in the mirror. This means I am viewing my sin as primarily an offense against me.

4. Justified by Grace

What's wrong with wanting to change so we can prove ourselves to God or other people or ourselves? It does not work. We might fool other people for a while. We might even fool ourselves. But we can never change enough to impress God. Here is the reason. Trying to impress God, others, or ourselves puts us at the center of the change project. It makes change all about me.

It's all about making me look good. It is done for my glory. That is sin. In fact that's pretty much the definition of sin. Sin is living for my glory instead of God's glory. Sin is living life my way for me instead of living life God's way for God. Much of the time that means rejecting God as Lord and wanting to be our own lord, but it can also involve rejecting God as Savior and wanting to be our own savior. Pharisees do good works and repent of bad works. But gospel repentance includes repenting of good works

done for wrong reasons. John Gerstner says: “The thing that really separates us from God is not so much our sin, but our damnable good works.”

Another word for proving ourselves is justify. We want to justify ourselves to God, to show Him we are good enough. We want to justify ourselves to other people or ourselves, to show we are respectable. However we are justified through faith in what Christ has done. When you feel the desire to prove yourself, remember you are justified by Christ. You are accepted by God already because of what Christ has done. You cannot do anything to make yourself more acceptable to God than you already are. You do not need to worry whether other people are impressed by you because you are justified by God. What makes you feel good is not what you have done but what Christ has done for you. Your identity is not dependent on your change. You are a child of the heavenly king.

Deep down in all of us is a tendency to base our acceptance and worth on what we do. In theological terms this is basing justification on sanctification. Religious people do this, but so do most non-religious people. They do a secular version in which their identity is based on their performance. Christians, too, constantly slip back into a religious motivation. We are all trying to be our own savior. We want to make a contribution to our salvation that we can claim at least a little credit for it, but justification is not based on sanctification. We are made right with God entirely at God’s initiative and entirely through His grace.

The truth is that it is the other way round: Our sanctification is based on our justification. If we do not grasp the reality of grace, our good works will be done for wrong reasons. Without grace, we view life as a contract between us and God; we do good works, and in return He blesses us. When things go well we are filled with pride. When things go badly we either blame ourselves (which leads to crushing guilt) or we blame God (which leads to anger and bitterness). Only when we grasp God’s great love displayed on the cross are we free to serve Him for His own sake.

Here is the real problem with changing to impress. God has given His Son for us so we can be justified. Jesus died on the cross, separated from His Father, bearing the full

weight of God's wrath so we can be accepted by God. When we try to impress by our good works we are saying, in effect, that the cross wasn't enough. "What Jesus did on the cross was all well and good, but I need to finish the job. Jesus didn't quite do enough for me to be accepted by God. I need to do a bit more. I need to atone for myself." "It is finished," Jesus cried. "Not quite," we answer back. "I still need to do this to get God's blessing." Imagine you owed a huge debt that left you languishing in poverty. Then a relative pays off your debt and sets you free. They have given you thousands of dollars—everything that was needed. But then you try to give them some loose change in your pocket as repayment. You want everyone to know you helped pay off the debt, that it was joint effort. It would be pointless and insulting.

You will not cleanse a single sin from your life that you have not first recognized to be pardoned through the cross. If you fail to realize that Jesus has completely paid the penalty for the sin, then you will still work hard on your own to atone for it. You will never be free of the sin if you think it's up to you to pay for it. If you do not see your sin completely pardoned, then your affections, desires, and motives will be wrong. Your will aim to prove yourself. Your focus will be the consequences of your sin rather than hating the sin itself and desiring God in its place.

WEEK 6

Discuss the structure for each week:

1. Discover - Look at a passage together and study it using the four questions.
2. Nurture - Listen for one another's heart as they are answering question and engaging the scripture during the *discover* time. Use handout as a guide.
3. Act - In this step we will, as a community, seek to be "doers" of the word and not hearers only.

Have you ever asked, "Who am I?" & "Why am I here?" The NT says that we *are* a new creation in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). Change is about living out what we now *are* in Christ.

1. **Discover** - Read Galatians 4:4-7; 5:1; 5:13 & attached article "Why would you like to change Part 2"
 - A. Jot down your observations here:
 - a. Whether your father was good, absent, or abusive think back to the Father in the parable of the lost sons (Luke 15:11-32). He is the perfect Father.
 - b. What are some implications of being a part of God's family?
2. **Nurture**
 - A. Imagine two homes side by side. In one God is hosting His feast. In the other sin is hosting its feast. Compare the two feasts.
 - B. What satisfaction do they offer? How lasting and real is that satisfaction? What price must you pay?
 - C. Do you suspect you don't really want to change? If so, what do you think might increase your desire?
3. **Act**
 - A. Compare slavery to sin to being a child in God's family.
 - B. On the cross Jesus cried out, "It is finished." Imagine yourself answering back, "Not quite—there are still some things I need to do to finish the job." Think about how ridiculous and insulting this is.
 - C. What could you use prayer for to increase your desire to change?

ARTICLE: Why would you change? Part 2

We were slaves of sin, and now we are children of God. It would be crazy to go on living as slaves and not to live as children. Freedom does not mean we can sin. That is not freedom. That is going back into slavery. Imagine an alcoholic whose addiction has wrecked his life. Someone kindly puts him through rehab, and after several months he leaves, free from his addiction. He is not going to say, "I'm free at last so I'm going to get plastered." That is not freedom. That is returning to his old slavery.

When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. What was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. Now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:20–23 NLT).

It was Sophie's first day with her adoptive parents. She stalked nervously around her new home, fearing one of the beatings she used to get if something was broken. The toys in her room went untouched. She could not quite believe they were hers. At dinner she secretly stuffed food in her pocket; you never knew where your next meal would come from when you were on the streets.

That night she felt alone in her big room. She would have cried if she had not long since learned to suppress emotion. Now listen to her new mother one year on: "She crawled into bed with me last night because she was having a bad dream. She curled up next to me, put her head on my chest, told me she loved me, smiled, and went to sleep. I nearly cried with contentment."

Sophie had a new identity on day one. She had become a child in a new family, but she still lived like a child of the street. Her actions and attitudes were shaped by her old identity. Christians too have been adopted into a new family and given a new identity.

We are to live out our new identity—to be who we are. Do not live like a slave when you can live like a child of the King of heaven.

Our identity as God's children is the foundation of who we are now because of Jesus. As God's children, we bear His name everywhere we go. We are His family, His church. Church then is not a place or event. It's who we are. Some implications of being family are that we care for one another and live like God is our Father—we are like Him, do what He says, love Him, and know He loves us.

As God's children, we, like Jesus, are sent to the world so others may experience what God is like. We are ministers of reconciliation bearing God's message of reconciliation. As we obey Jesus's command to make disciples, God is using us to reconcile people to Himself. Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21 NIV). We are missionaries.

So what's the motivation to change and live in this new identity? The reason Christians should want to change is to enjoy the freedom from sin and delight in God that God gives to us through Jesus. I want to highlight four things from this definition.

First, growing in holiness is not a sad, dutiful drudge. It is about joy. It is discovering true joy—the joy of knowing and serving God. There is self-denial— sometimes hard and painful self-denial—but true self-denial leads to gaining your life (Mark 8:34–37).

Second, gospel change is about living in freedom. We stop living as slaves to sin. We refuse to go back to our chains and to our filth. We live in the wonderful freedom God gives us. We are free to be the people we should be.

Third, gospel change is about discovering the delight of knowing and serving God. We give up on our sin and in return we get God Himself! Our job is to stop grubbing around in the dirt and instead to enjoy knowing God. We give up our cheap imitations and enjoy the real thing. We often think of holiness as a means to an end—the end being

the approval of God or the admiration of others. Holiness is the end, and the means is God's grace giving Christ for us and the Spirit in us. Our problem is we think of holiness as giving up the pleasures that sin offers for some worthy but drab life. But holiness is recognizing that the pleasures of sin are empty and temporary while all the time God is inviting us to magnificent, true, full, and rich pleasures that last forever.

Fourth, becoming like Jesus is something God gives to us. It is not an achievement we offer to God. It is enjoying the new identity He has given us in Christ. It begins with His work for us. He has set us free from sin and offers a relationship with Himself.

There are two feasts. There is the feast of God, and there is the feast of sin. We are invited to both. God invites us to find satisfaction in Him. Sin entices us with its lies to look for satisfaction in sin. So we are double-booked. All the time we have to choose which feast we attend. We cannot attend both; we cannot feast with God and feast with sin at the same time. This is God's invitation to us:

*Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.
Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of
fare. — Isaiah 55:1–2*

Sin promises much, but it doesn't satisfy; it charges a high price. That price is broken lives, broken relationships, broken hopes. Ultimately the wages of sin is death. God offers us a feast that satisfies. He offers us delight for our souls.

The motivation for change and holiness is this: God's feast is so much better! The price tag reads "No cost." There's no charge. It's His gift. Whose feast are you going to attend today? How can you strengthen your resolve?