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## Dynamic of Discipleship

### 1. Intro

- What are the dynamics of change
- When it comes to what motivates a person to change ... psychologists often refer to positive and negative motivators
- Positive motivators are things like
  - Challenge, desire, passion, satisfaction
  - Others include recognition and appreciation from others or financial rewards
- Then there are negative motivators, things like
  - Threat, fear of failure, inadequacy, insecurity
  - Could also be fear of a loss of job or relationship
  - Insufficient respect from others
  - Financial or social pressure
  - Pressure from significant others
- While positive and negative motivators will move people to change ... often there is a high risk of relapsing back to old behaviours when the motivating factor is negative
- When a person is motivated to change by more positive factors ... the change is likely to be more successful and long lasting
- Take fear for example
- If I'm a school student and the deputy head in charge of discipline is known to all the boys as a tyrant who tears shreds of boys for even minor indiscretions ... that's going to motivate me to behave in a certain way
  - I won't muck up in class or in the playground because I'm fearful of facing the wrath and punishment likely to be dished out by the deputy head
  - But fear won't bring about a heart change
  - I'm just modifying my behaviour to avoid punishment
  - Because what will happen when the deputy head retires or leaves and is replaced by someone who's less strict and more friendly
  - The fear goes away ... and therefore my motive for behaviour change has gone ... and I'm more likely to revert to old unhelpful behaviours
- This term we're thinking about discipleship ... and I've thrown out the #10weekdiscipleship challenge to encourage and challenge each of us to

grow and mature as we seek to live out our mission here at C@P to be and make disciples of Jesus

- There's a real danger as we do that, that we get our motive wrong
  - If we do ... we might see some change ... but it won't last
- The question ... what's the dynamic of discipleship?
- That is ... what's going to motivate you grow as a disciple of Jesus that will result in lasting, joyful change?
- That's what we're considering today

## **PRAY**

### **2. Context**

- If we're going to understand our Bible passage, we need to understand the context
- To do that we need to look at v1-2
- See there in v 1-2 Jesus preaching and teaching about the KOH > crowd around him
- Different groups of ppl there listening
- v1 > tax collectors and sinners
  - Tax collectors
    - Known for ripping ppl off, pocketing extra cash
  - And there's also the 'sinners'
    - prostitutes, drunks, thieves and misfits of society
- But there's another group of ppl there too ... the Pharisees and teachers of the Law
  - Muttering amongst themselves "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."
  - These guys are at the opposite end of the spectrum to the tax collectors and sinners
    - Super religious > know the scriptures off by heart > pray all the time
    - They see themselves as morally and spiritually superior to everyone else
- So, as we look at this parable ... we've got to keep in mind who Jesus is speaking to
  - Tax collectors & sinners
  - Pharisees & TOL

### **3. Grace Received: the Younger Brother**

- In v11 the parable begins with a father and two sons

- And it's the younger son who goes to his dad and demands his father give him his share of his inheritance
- He was basically saying
  - "Dad – I wish you were dead, give me the cash, I'm getting out of this place to go and live it up"
- Or to put it crudely
  - "Dad, I want your stuff, but I don't want you"
- So, the son sets off with all his stuff and a big wad of cash ready to live the high life
  - He squanders it on reckless living
- It's the ultimate slap in the face to his Father – isn't it?
  - He's turned his back on his father
  - He's treated his inheritance with contempt
  - He's only interested in himself and gratifying his hedonistic desires
- Now his situation is made worse by a famine in the land and he's forced to get a job feeding pigs
- Things were so bad ... he wished he could eat the food he was giving to the pigs
  - Now for a Jew - who considered pigs to be unclean animals ... feeding pigs and eating the food of pigs would have to be the absolute rock bottom in life
- The son is at a point of desperation ... and he finally came to his senses
  - He realises he's lost and needs to return to his father
  - And so, he resolves to go home to his father in humility and repentance
- The son realised he'd stuffed up
  - He realised he didn't deserve to be taken back by his father
  - He realised that he had sinned against him
  - He goes back to his Father in humility and contrition ... ready to confess his sin and knowing he deserves nothing
- And its this last bit in v19 that is interesting because he knows that because of what he has done he is no longer worthy to be considered a son
- He thinks the only way he can restore things once more with his father is if he works as a hired hand, not a son ... so that over time he can begin to pay back the debt

- **The Father**

- How does the Father react?
  - Reject his son?
  - Punish him?
  - Banish him to the furthest part of the farm to get to work?
- Here's where it gets shocking ...
- v20 we see the father saw him while he was still a long way off
  - The father had been patiently waiting for his son ... looking out for him ... hoping that he would return
  - When he saw him ... he was so filled with compassion for his lost son ... that he RAN to meet him and threw his arms around him
- When he gets to him the son starts saying how he didn't deserve to be treated like a son ... but the father does exactly the opposite
  - He put the best robe on him
  - He put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet
  - All of these would have belonged to the father ... they were his
- These were unmistakable signs of the son being restored back into the family
- And in addition, ... the father throws a party to celebrate
- And this is no ordinary party ...
  - It wasn't just a couple snags on the BBQ type party
  - He kills the fattened calf! ... an animal that would've been set aside for special occasions and worth a fortune
  - We're talking big fat juicy 550gm Wagyu beef rib eyes
- This is a massive party to celebrate the return and restoration of a son
- Despite all that the son had done to his father in the past ... we see the father so filled with love and compassion ... that he forgives his son and welcomed his son back joyously

- **Implication**

- Of course, Jesus tells the story to show us the amazing grace of God ... and how he welcomes back the repentant sinner
  - It shows that even though the son deserved to be cut off from the family ... the father showed him love and forgiveness
  - It shows that because God is so gracious and loving ... he is willing and able forgive and pardon every kind of sin and wrongdoing
  - It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done

- There is nothing that the grace of God cannot overcome or cover over
- For the sinners and the tax collectors sitting there listening to Jesus ... this parable this was great news
  - Because Jesus is speaking about them > they know they're the younger brother in the story
  - They're the ones who had engaged in wild living
  - They knew they'd turned their back on their heavenly father and lived life their way
- But for the prostitutes and drunks and thieves and sinners and all those that the religious establishment looked down upon ...
  - Jesus is saying ... "when you come back to me ... your heavenly Father will welcome you home"
  - "There's no sin too big that your Father in heaven isn't willing to forgive and receive you back into his eternal family"
  - "And when you do ... God is so overjoyed ... he cracks open the Moët, Penfolds Grange and Coronas and he celebrates your return"
- How wonderful that message would have been for them!!

#### **4. Grace Rejected: The Older Brother**

- The parable isn't just a story about a wayward son ... it's a story about two sons
- And the second son we are introduced to more fully in v24-32
  - He's the diligent son
  - He stayed loyal to his father
  - He didn't take off to fulfil he's own desires and wants
  - He stayed on the property, working hard for his father
- When the elder brother hears what his father has done for his younger brother, he's furious
- The problem with the elder son is he thinks that by remaining on the farm, working hard and not running off ... that he's the one who deserves to be honoured by his father
  - That's why the elder brother refers to his record
    - I've never disobeyed you
    - I've worked hard to earn this
    - I deserve this, not him

- The sad thing about the older son ... is that despite growing up on the farm ... the reality is ... he's a million miles away from the father
  - He's just as lost to his father as his younger brother once was
- What he forgets is that his inheritance is based on being a SON of the father ... not because he worked hard for it
  - Inheritances are given ... they're not earned
- And so, he refuses to go into the party and refuses make it clear to his father and to everyone else ... that he's rejected the father
- **Implication**
- This would have been a massive smack down for Pharisees and TOL
- Because the elder son in this story represents them
  - Remember back in v1-2 these are the guys who don't like Jesus welcoming and hanging out with sinners
  - They would've started off feeling smug and self-righteous as Jesus talked about the younger brother
  - But in talking about the elder brother ... Jesus is speaking about them
- The Pharisees and TOL thought that being in a right relationship with God was all about ...
  - Following the Law > being religious and moral
  - But that's not the basis of having a right relationship with God
  - It's only by his love and grace
- So, by including the elder brother in the parable ...
- Jesus is exposing the self-righteousness and pride of the Pharisees and TOL; and
- Showing them that their attitude to the sinners and tax collectors meant, that like the older brother ... they were just as lost and alienated from God as the wayward sinner
  - And Jesus is saying to these guys ... don't be like the elder brother
- **Application**
- Jesus warning here to the Pharisee and teaches of the Law ... is a warning to those of us who are elder brothers
- How do you know if you're elder brother?
- One type of elder brother is the person who thinks

- I go to church
- I keep the commandments
- I believe in God
- Another type of elder brother is the moralist who thinks I'm
  - Conscientious
  - Loyal
  - Reliable
  - Morally upright
  
- Now if that describes you let me ask you this
- If you died tonight and you God was to ask you
  - "Why should I let you into my good and perfect heaven?"
- Most likely you're answer is going to start with
  - "Because I ...
- It's all about
  - your obedience
  - your religiosity
  - your works
  - your morality
  
- If this is you ... then like the elder brother in the parable, you're failing to understand that entry into God's eternal feast is
  - not because of what you've done
  - not because of your obedience or morality or religiosity
- It's only by the gracious invitation of the father

## **5. Grace Renewed: The Loving Father**

- This parable is a wonderful illustration of the grace of God ... and how grace is THE dynamic for renewal and transformation
- We see this in the way the father acts towards both his sons in order to bring them back
  
- Notice how with the younger son ... he doesn't wait for him on the verandah of his home, impatiently tapping his foot murmuring
  - "Here comes that son of mine, after all he's done, he'd better have something good to say for himself!"
  - No! He shows amazing grace
  - He runs to and kisses his son and welcomes him
  - Even though he didn't deserve it ... he restores him, he loves him and celebrates at his return

- The son thought he would have to work to pay off this debt to his father ... instead the father graciously forgives him and welcomes him back as a son with all the privileges that come with being a son of the father
- And the Father shows the SAME love and grace to the elder brother too
  - When the elder son is standing outside the party and refusing to go in ...
  - The father doesn't say –
    - "Well if that's the way he's wants to be ... then he can sit out there and mope"
- No! The father shows grace and goes out to the older brother and pleads with him to come into the feast
- What this shows us whether you're an elder brother or a younger brother ... we all need God's amazing grace and love
- But for both ... it's God who graciously puts aside our failings and lovingly comes to us
  - We will never find God and we will never be able to enter the feast ... unless he comes to us first and shows us grace
- **Application**
- Obviously, the younger son was transformed by the grace shown by his father
  - He came home expecting to face a life time of banishment and hard labour in order to gain his father's approval
  - Instead, the grace of his father meant his life was transformed
  - And he experiences the joy, unburdening of guilt as he is welcomed into the father's feast
- It's the grace of God that is the dynamic that will renew you as a person and as a follower of Jesus
- How?
- When you realise like the younger son
  - how seriously you've rejected and sinned against the Father ...
  - how big the debt is that you owe him
- Then when you experience the forgiveness of God
  - that's going to change you
  - that's going to renew your heart
  - that's going to transform your life
- **Non-Christian**



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- Friends ... if you're here this morning and you'd say you're not yet a Christian ... this parable is wonderful news for you
  - Because Jesus is making it clear that forgiveness and restoration and reconciliation are possible when you come back to God and put your trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins
  - But like the younger brother ... you need see just how serious a thing it is to turn your back on God the Father and say ...
    - "God, I want your stuff, ...but I don't want you
    - "I'll take my good health and job and house and family you give me ... but I'm not interested in you"
  - And you need see how much of debt that puts you in before God ... and that the only way to be restored and reconcile with him is to humble yourself and come back to him in repentance
  - You need to humble yourself before your Father in heaven
  - Because when you do ... he welcomes you in
    - He treats you as his child
    - He loves you as his own
    - He blesses you with an inheritance that you don't deserve
    - He invites you in to the heavenly feast for eternity
  - And that's the good news of the Bible ... that's the gospel
  - My prayer is that if you're not a follower of Jesus ... then today would be the day you come back to the Father and allow him to wrap his loving arms around you and say, "let's celebrate ... for this child of mine was lost but now is found."
  - If you're not ready to take that step today ... then at the very least I want you to go home with this idea crystal clear in your head
  - That when you are ready to follow Jesus ... when you do realise you need to turn back to God ... when you are convicted of your sin and your need to be saved ...
    - That your salvation is not based on anything you do
  - Christianity is not like other religions
    - Other religions say in order to be saved you need to do this, and you need to do that ... and hopefully you've done enough
    - That's what elder brothers think ... and if that's the way you operate ... then it will only leave you disappointed and outside the heavenly feast

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- But the gospel ... good news of this parable says you are saved by grace ... there's nothing you can do ... because the work of paying off your debt has already been done for you at the cross by Jesus
  
  - You need to be clear that following Jesus is not about rules, religiosity and moralism
  - Because if you do think that ... one of two things will happen
  - Either ...
    - You seek out God's favour and salvation through your good works, by being good, by being religious
    - And not only will that leave you standing outside the feast it ... you will inevitably become bitter and resentful and disillusioned with God because you think you God owes you a good life for being so good, religious and moralistic and your life hasn't been rewarded for your efforts ... just like the elder brother was
  - The other possibility is ...
    - It will cause you to run away from God because you think that being a Christian makes you into an elder brother ... and the last thing you want to do is become a moralistic, self-righteous, religious, do-gooder
    - And so you think the only other option is to reject Christianity, reject God, reject Jesus and flee from all of that
  
  - Many people have turned their back on Christianity because they think it is full of self-righteous elder brothers
  - But friends ... you need to understand that Jesus not only calls us to leave our life of sin behind, but that he also condemns moralistic, religious, self-righteous elder brothers
  
  - **Christian**
  - Most of you here this morning would say you are followers of Jesus
  - And I would expect most of you understand that the gospel is a message of grace
    - Salvation comes by grace alone
    - You're made right before God not because of anything you've done but only because he graciously forgives you your sin in Christ
  - While I think many Christians know this in their head ... in their hearts ... their assurance comes from their works
    - That is, their confidence in entering into the eternal feast ... comes from how well they are going as a Christian
  - In effect they think ...

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- I'm saved into God's kingdom by grace ... but I stay in by my good deeds
  - They're confidence as a Christian comes from
    - the sincere they believe their faith is,
    - how they're going as a Christian
    - the extent to which they are falling into sin or not
  - If I was to ask you this morning ...
    - "If you were to die tonight ... could you be sure you would go to heaven and have eternal life?"
    - And if you call yourself a Christian and your answer is ... "I don't know" ... or "I'm not sure" then this is what I'm talking about
  - This term as we look at the theme of discipleship ... and I've given us the 10weekchallenge
  - The idea is to intentionally and prayerfully seek grow as a disciple of Jesus
    - Grow as you live to BE a disciple
    - Grow as you live to MAKE disciples
  - Friends ... I don't want to see you or I stagnating as Christians
  - I don't want to see us becoming complacent or lazy or sleepy Christians
  - I want to keep encouraging, challenging and urging everyone who comes here to C@P to
    - grow as followers of Jesus
    - keeping moving to the right
    - become more mature in Christ / become more like Jesus
    - to be convicted of our sin and repent of it
    - to flee from pornography, or greed, or pride, or laziness, or approval or security
    - to be passionate about God his kingdom
    - take up Jesus call to make disciples and see others saved from hell into eternity
  - But as we do that ... I want you to remember ... that your eternal salvation doesn't depend on
    - How big a step you take to the right?
    - How many ppl you read the Bible with?
    - Your perfect obedience as a Christian
  - But you have a heavenly father who says
    - Come to me and you will find rest for your souls
    - I will forgive your sins and remember them no more
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- I will welcome you back into my family and my eternal feast
- I want you to take up the #10weekchallenge ... not to give you assurance of your salvation ... but you know and have experienced God's grace to you in Jesus Christ
- Because you know
  - I'm accepted by grace ... therefore I obey ...
  - not I obey, therefore I am accepted
- Being clear on the gospel ... knowing that God is a God of amazing grace ... that's what is going to bring about your spiritual transformation
- If you think of God as someone you must obey to earn his favour
  - Either you will become proud when you are doing well
  - Or you will despair when you stumble and fall
- Or you'll give up on God and walk away from him because
  - you're not getting the life you think you deserve for being a good person
  - And you will lack joy in your life because life is all about dreary duty and obedience
- And friends ... if your motive to obey God and grow as a disciple of Jesus is wrong ... it won't last
- The only dynamic that will sustain you and bring about lasting change is God's grace to you in Christ
- **Illustration – Les Mis / Jean Valjean**
- In Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, Jean Valjean is jailed for stealing loaf bread
- Released > hard finding work or a place to stay
- At last, he is taken in by a Bishop, a kind-hearted old clergyman
- The bishop trusts Valjean > feeds him supper > gives him a bed for the night
- But during the night, he wakes up and steals the bishop's silverware and runs off
- He's arrested and brought back to the bishop
- Here's a man who
  - Had had great kindness shown to him
  - Yet he abused the Bishop's generosity and care
- However, the Bishop tells the policemen that the silver were gifts that he GAVE to him!
  - Then he goes even further and says

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- "My man, you didn't take the candlesticks as well. Here they are, take them."
  - The bishop showed amazing grace to Valjean > he didn't deserve it > it was unmerited favour
    - And it was the Bishops kindness to Valjean that turned his life around
    - It had such profound impact on him > it changed him for life
    - He became hard-working, honest, generous, caring ... and of course ... gracious and forgiving towards others
  - Just as the grace of the bishop towards Jean Valjean transformed him ... so it will be the grace of God to you in Jesus Christ that will bring about the transformation in you
  - And just as you understand that grace is the dynamic for your own spiritual renewal ... it is just as important you remember that grace is the dynamic for transformation in those you disciple
  - When you're teaching, leading or discipling someone ...
  - Whether that's
    - Children around the dinner table
    - Kids in Kids Church
    - Youth at Altitude
    - Someone you are mentoring
    - Non-Christian
  - Not only do you need to help them understand and know the grace of God to them in Christ and the cross
  - You need to remember that their conversion, their transformation, their growth and their maturity in Christ ...
    - Is going to be driven by grace
  - Not by
    - Guilting them into change
    - Making them change out of fear
    - Motivating them out of approval of you or God
  - Only the loving outstretched arms of the father who welcomes back and forgives each and every one of us will bring about lasting change
  - Only the grace of God to us in Christ and all he did for us at the cross will move us to become more like Jesus
  - Only his amazing grace will move us to live BE and MAKE disciples of Jesus
-