



Week Two

We are in week 2 of our message series focusing on Jesus' desire to change our lives. This week, Angela Reiss, one of our Online Pastors, shared more about Paul's own struggle with doing the right thing. We often find that even though we know what we ought to do, we do the opposite. If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit prov.church/signup and click on Small Groups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture. Follow the daily prayer prompt and then pray this prayer together:

Jesus, come and change my life. Give me grace for the clunky attempts and fits and starts of living into the new life you make possible. Your grace is all I need, for on my own, I will continually fall short. Because of you, condemnation does not follow me around. I say yes to you today. Amen.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ROMANS 7.14-16 (MSG)

I can anticipate the response that is coming: "I know that all God's commands are spiritual, but I'm not. Isn't this also your experience?" Yes. I'm full of myself—after all, I've spent a long time in sin's prison. What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary.

- Maya Angelou said, "I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better." Like Paul, we live in the tension between knowing one thing and yet doing another. There is often a disconnect. What are some of the struggles you face in following the spiritual commands of God? Is there relief in knowing that you are not alone in these struggles? Is it possible that your inability to conquer these struggles leaves an opening for something better?
- *Pray for grace in the struggle to follow through on what you know to be true. Pray that you would be kind to yourself as Jesus moves towards you.*

TUESDAY: ROMANS 7.17-20 (MSG)

But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

- Following the law of God as a checklist might keep you from certain trouble, but as James 1.25 points out, the law was meant for our freedom. Religious people can fall into the trap of knowing the law and spending their whole lives trying to keep it or reinterpret it. The law was meant to help us live, not lock us down with fear. Do you ever find yourself trying to measure up to spiritual giants only to find out that they too are imperfect? Paul identifies that the problem seems to come from within. Paul needs more than the law, he needs transformation from the inside out. When has a checklist of "do's and don'ts" helped you out? When has such a thing let you down?
- *Pray for the transforming power of God's Holy Spirit to guide you through your imperfect week and free up your heart to live for Christ.*

WEDNESDAY: ROMANS 7.21-23 (MSG)

It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

- Even though we were born in brokenness, sin can feel like an outside force. It trips us up just when we are set on making real changes. Parts of us are like a covert rebel, failing to delight in the goodness of God. Have you ever come face to face with a covert rebel that is actually anchored in you?
- *Pray that you would see those parts of you that covertly rebel. Pray for continued transformation so that you could fully join into the delight of God.*

THURSDAY: ROMANS 7.24-25 (MSG)

I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?

²⁵ *The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.*

- At the end of our rope is a place where God seems to do God's best work. That's where Paul began to fully realize Jesus is his only hope. After trying "everything" Paul tried Jesus and learned that Christ is where his help comes from. Think of a time when you tried one thing too

many in pursuit of fixing your own situation. Jesus can meet you in your shortcomings and sin. Jesus can do anything for you.

- *Pray for the humble acceptance of Jesus' help over your own attempts at getting it all right.*

FRIDAY: ROMANS 8.1-2

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

- Here is a comparison of the law of the Spirit who gives life and the law of sin and death. Paul realized that strict adherence of the law apart from life in the Spirit leads to death. But if you are in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit will lead to your freedom. What do you think this freedom looks like? Freedom from what? Freedom *for* what?
- *Pray that you would experience freedom because you are in Christ Jesus.*

SATURDAY: 2 CORINTHIANS 12.9

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

- It is difficult for us to accept our own weakness, much less boast about it. But Paul finds reason to boast because Christ's power is able to rest on him when he accepts his weakness. This is one of the strangest paradoxes in the Christian faith. But it is at the point where we recognize our need for him that Jesus' power is most evident.
- *Pray for the power of Christ to be made perfect in your weakness.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Pastor Angela shared the story of Kathy. Kathy has found freedom in Jesus and is continually striving to give her life over to him. View her story at prov.church/jesuschangedmylifestories.
- How do you connect with Kathy's need for freedom in Christ Jesus?
- Pastor Angela shared a conversation with her oldest child who has seen her through all of her imperfections as a parent and as a Jesus follower. When has transparency about your past helped you on the road to receiving freedom in Jesus?