

Over the past two weeks we have been talking about dust. Dust is everywhere. We can spend a day dusting our house only to find that a few days to a week later there is a layer of new dust starting to form. But Jewish Rabbi's have a different understanding of dust, one where dust is welcomed and sought after. They have a saying that goes, "May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi." Basically it means that a student would not just learn lessons from the teacher, but that the student would do life with the teacher, following him wherever, and follow him so closely that any dust that was kicked up by the teacher would fall on the student.

The question that we need to ask is, are we covered in the dust of our teacher, Jesus?

To answer that question we need identify our next steps. Every one of us has a next step to take. Read Philippians 3:13-14

To be intentional with spiritual growth, we need to identify our next steps, why, because we haven't reached the end yet...we must press on to win the prize. Our job as a body of believers is to help each other along this path. The last two weeks we have unrolled a pathway to help you identify next steps towards Jesus.

- **BELIEVE** in Jesus as our Savior and King
- **BELONG** to Jesus and His family, the Church

If you missed any of the past two weeks, be sure to check out the podcast. The third pathway is...

- **BECOME** more like Jesus every day

Become is all about change. Change is a part of life, change can happen gradually over time (like our bodies growing older) or it can happen fast (like a sudden change in your job or family dynamic). And yet as we follow Jesus, Jesus promises that we can be sure that change will happen. Matt 4:19 "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

How does he change us...Change happens within the context of community. You might say, it's the reading the Bible and prayer...but let me explain. I may read the Bible and find that God wants me to have patience. As I pray, I may become convicted of my lack of patience and ask God to help me be more patient. Now how is he going to answer my prayer...He will not just make me more patient...instead He will give me circumstances within community, where my patience is tested and opportunities within community with others to be more patient.

This concept of community is hard for us westerners, because we value two principles that get in the way of community.

- We value individualism. Community is really, me, myself and I. Other's don't factor in the equation. After a cancer diagnosis and enduring 17-months of chemo and radiation, Robin Quivers, co-host for shock-jock radio show host Howard Stern, claims to have discovered the meaning of life. In a 2013 issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine she said,

What I learned is very simple: that your life belongs to you. And it really doesn't matter what you do with it, but it should be what you want to do with it. Not what your mother or father or friends or society want. It should be "I" directed. And that's the only purpose for being here.
- The other value is what we call "the self-made man". That, all your success and achievements have come through years of hard work, and when you fail you pull yourself up by your bootstraps, dust yourself off and try again.

Because of those values it is easy for us to have our public self and then our private self. In public there are no weaknesses, asking for help is rare, we are more likely to give help to those who need. Throw a little money at an issue, but never really get our hands dirty. But when the garage door goes down, that's when we are who we really are. The image comes off, the makeup comes off and our families see who we really are for better and for worse. It is easy to play that game. We all can get caught up in it, why because we need to protect ourselves. But we must challenge this mindset because change happens within the context of community.

I went to a state university in Northeast Missouri call Truman State University. My freshman year was a year of spiritual change for me. College offers a lot of freedom, parents aren't there to see what is going on all the time, you are 18 and finally an adult by legal standards anyway. You can make your own decisions...there's that individualism again. There was a strong campus ministry at Truman, through a few guys on my wing my freshman year, I met quite a few people involved in the ministry, but I didn't really fully engage...I had better things to do. Every Sunday morning I had a few friends pound on my door and say "Tischer, get up, we're going to services." Sometimes I would go...sometimes I would come up with an excuse, sometimes I didn't hear them knock...but they kept at it. My sophomore year I went on a retreat with the ministry and God kicked my butt. Then I joined a small group, fall semester, started meeting with the campus minister regularly. By my junior year I was leading a small group, and meeting regularly with a football player who was seeking God and asking questions. - God used all of those people in various ways to foster growth in my life.

Romans 12:3-8

Change happens within the context of community...why, because **it's in community where our God given uniqueness shines!**

Last week we talked about the idea that we belong to each other, we are a family, individual members of one body...now Paul adds that we each bring a uniqueness to the family. That the body wouldn't be fully complete without our presence and contribution.

Illustration:

Eric Schlosser's book and then movie, *Fast Food Nation*, exposed the dark side of the fast-food industry. At one point, Schlosser described a food-production plant that runs twenty-four hours a day, 310 days a year, turning potatoes into French fries:

Conveyor belts took the wet, clean potatoes into a machine that blasted them with steam for twelve seconds, boiled the water under their skins and exploded the skins off. Then the potatoes were pumped into a preheat tank and shot through a Lamb Water Gun Knife. They emerged as shoestring fries. Four video cameras scrutinized them from different angles, looking for flaws. When a French fry with a blemish was detected, an optical sorting machine time-sequenced a single burst of compressed air that knocked the bad fry off the production line and onto a separate conveyor belt, which carried it to a machine with tiny automated knives that precisely removed the blemish. And then the fry was returned to the main production line.

Sprays of hot water blanched the fries, gusts of hot air dried them, and 25,000 pounds of boiling oil fried them to a slight crisp. Air cooled by compressed ammonia gas quickly froze them, a computerized sorter divided them into six-pound batches, and a device that spun like an out-of-control Lazy Susan used centrifugal force to align the French fries so that they all pointed in the same direction. The fries were sealed in brown bags, then the bags were loaded by robots into cardboard boxes, and the boxes were stacked by robots onto wooden pallets.

Here's the truth...we aren't a bunch of french fries. The church often get it wrong when we approach discipleship like the making of french fries. If we just put everybody into this process and treat them the same way and have them do and read and think about the same things then they will all come out the other end ready for service and leadership.

God has created us uniquely...isn't that amazing...and yet God has created us uniquely... which is why working with people can be so frustrating. We all approach situations a little or maybe a lot different than the others in this room. The key is don't give up on community because your frustrated...God designed the church that way. In community we have the opportunity to learn from each other...this process helps us in becoming the person that God created us to be.

Romans 12:9-14

This is interesting because Paul is describing what a changed life looks like. Let me ask, those of you who would call Jesus their savior and Lord, did you wake up one day and it was easy have genuine love...to hate evil and hold fast to good, is it easy to have brotherly affection for everyone, to be patient in trials, to be constant in prayer?

In fact it was far from easy right...and it still is. Why, because change is hard and it takes intentionality to change and learn. **In order to change you must put yourself in an environment where change can take place.** Maybe it's joining a group and connecting with others, maybe it's a serving for the first time, maybe it's stepping out and leading some aspect of ministry. We are transformed in the midst of our doing and you must put yourself in an environment to be stretched and transformed as you depend on God to help you through. There is no telling what God will do as you open your life to him changing you.

China thoughts - Dave and Shana Faust - 1st service, Michelle Evans - 2nd

1. What was something memorable from the trip?
2. How did you see God working (on the trip and in the country)?
3. How has God changed you because of the trip?

• Romans 5:3-5

In his book, [Chase the Lion](#) Mark Batterson shares that:

Shortly after being installed as the twentieth pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered a sermon in November of 1954 titled "Transformed Nonconformist." "The Christian is called upon not to be like a thermometer conforming to the temperature of his society," said King, "but he must be like a thermostat serving to transform the temperature of his society..

"I have seen many white people who sincerely oppose segregation and [discrimination]," said King. "But they never took a [real] stand against it because of fear of standing alone." Are you willing not just to stand but to stand alone?

On December 1, 1955, a transformed nonconformist boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus just five blocks from the pulpit where King delivered that sermon. When the white section filled up with passengers, the bus driver ordered Rosa Parks to give up her seat in the colored section. Rosa politely refused. She took a moral stand by remaining seated.

"Our mistreatment was not right," Rosa said. "I was just tired of it." It wasn't a physical tiredness; it was a moral tiredness. "The only tired I was, was tired of giving in." Rosa Park's stand against racial segregation started a ripple effect. It led to a court battle, which led to a citywide boycott, which led to the Supreme Court ruling segregation unconstitutional.

Until the pain of staying the same becomes more acute than the pain of change, nothing happens. We simply maintain the status quo. And we convince ourselves that playing it safe is safe. But the greatest risk is taking no risks at all.

Mark Batterson, Chase the Lion (Multnomah, 2016), pages 121-122

What daily resources are your because you are part of the community of Christ? Are you taking advantage of these resources? What resources and gifts do you bring to the body of Christ?

Think about the change that Christ endured for you...

Philippians 2:5-8 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.