

Growing in Christ

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INTRODUCTION:

Some think that people can never change. If someone is a good person or bad person, they don't have the power to change.

We're going to watch a scene from a movie about people changing. The movie is called *16 Blocks*, one of the better movies I've seen this year. It's about two guys, Jack and Eddie, who are running from some dirty cops. Jack used to be one of the dirty cops, and Eddie is a convicted criminal. Jack is trying to protect Eddie and get him to a courthouse where Eddie is going to testify against all the dirty cops. In this scene, Eddie has overheard cops talking about what Jack would *normally* do, but that he isn't doing it now. Eddie is grateful that Jack has decided to help him, even though that's unusual for Jack. Listen very carefully to what they say in their conversation. Eddie is a huge believer in second chances and the ability for a person to change into something better. Let's see what he says and how Jack, a tired old cop who has been around criminals his whole life, responds.

Attention Grabber: Movie – *16 Blocks*, PG-13, 2006, Warner Bros.

The scene begins at approximately 34:55, or the beginning of chapter 10 on the DVD, with Jack and Eddie walking through the streets. Eddie begins talking about Jack not doing what he would normally be doing. The scene cuts and goes to the officers searching for them, but quickly goes back to continue the conversation. Be sure not to cut off the second conversation. The clip ends after Eddie says he is going to send Jack a cake and make him eat his words. This is at approximately 36:29. Note: have the subtitles on during the clip, because Mos Def does a lot of mumbling.

Scene Script:

EDDIE: That cop back at the apartment, he said you should do what you always do. What did he mean by that? (*JACK doesn't say anything.*) You're not doing what you always do, huh? Jack Mosley, I get it. I see the signs. I'm where I'm supposed to be. I was wrong. You're the right guy. I could have got another guy, did something different, but I got you. I appreciate it. You're the right guy. Okay?

JACK: Okay, okay.

(Scene changes to the police chasing JACK and EDDIE. After this, the scene comes back to JACK and EDDIE, and they continue their conversation.)

JACK: What'd the deal with that book?

EDDIE: It's my business plans. I'm moving to Seattle. My sister's already living out there. I'm gonna open up a bakery. But it's only, like, a specialty bakery. Like, birthday cakes for little kids; there's a lot of money in that. But how about this—for your birthday, I'm gonna send you a big birthday cake on your birthday.

JACK: I *hate* birthday cakes.

EDDIE: You hate birthday cakes?

JACK: First thing that doesn't go your way, you're gonna be slipping into *Carol's Clip and Curl*, stealing all her hair-care products. Because you're a thief. And that's what you are, Eddie, you're a thief. You're always gonna be a thief.

EDDIE: People can change, Jack.

JACK: Days change, seasons change. Not people.

EDDIE: Yes you do.

JACK: People don't change, Eddie.

EDDIE: Yes, you do. You know what, I'm gonna get you that cake. You know what it's gonna say on the top of it, right? "Jack Mosley, ha-ha-ha, eat this." Make you eat your words, lick your fingers too.

Transition Statement:

It's kind of sad to hear what Jack's response is to Eddie's "business plans," isn't it?

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EDDIE: People can change, Jack.

JACK: Days change, seasons change. Not people.

This morning we're going to discuss the idea of change because you know what? God is always working in your life to change us and make us the kind of person we need to be. The question isn't whether we're changing or not, the question is whether or not we're changing for His glory.

BOOK:

Philippians 1:1-11

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

[2] Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3] I thank my God every time I remember you. [4] In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy [5] because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, [6] being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

[7] It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

[8] God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

[9] And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, [10] so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, [11] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

LOOK:

This passage is loaded with too much detail to cover this morning, but I'd like to try to summarize the process I see here of how change takes place in our lives.

...go to verse 6.

I. God's Continuous Work

[6] being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Now, this is from the NIV and the translation is okay, but if Paul was from Texas he might've written it like this:

...bein' confident uh dis, dat he who began some baaaad wo'k in ya' gots'ta carry it on t'compleshun until de day uh Christ Jesus.

In one way this translation is more accurate than the NIV because it carries the plural "you all" that Paul intends. Unfortunately this doesn't cross over too well in English unless you're from the south.

God's doing a good work "among" the believers in Philippi as a community rather than "in" any isolated believer.

Paul says this work God's doing in everyone's lives there will be to completion, or more accurately, "perfection!"

Perfection

Is anyone here already perfect?... Okay, then He's still working in all our lives, and He's not just doing it on an individual basis. He's working in our lives together, as a community, as a church. God uses people here at Redeemer to challenge, encourage, and grow each other. As God works in your life He uses you to grow others.

Coal Illustration

Most of us have heard the example of the coals in a fire. As the coals stay close together, they'll continue to stay red hot, but if one coal is separated from the rest of the fire, it quickly dies.

We need each other to not only stay hot, but to grow brighter and brighter as God works to bring us to perfection!

Day of Christ Jesus

I'm eager for this day of perfection to get here, aren't you? Verse 6 says that God's work to perfect us together as a community will be ongoing "until the day of Christ Jesus." Or, the day of His return.

Process of change for me

The whole process of change in our lives toward perfection always that easy, is it?

There's been a whole lot of change in my life lately

- Engaged in April.
- Transitioned out of my IT job in June (finances and budget changed).
- Emptying out half my stuff to make room for Dan (apartment's different).
- Got married in July and learning to live with another person (sharing everything, sleeping)
- And more...

Almost everything this summer has taught me that I can no longer just think about myself. Now all my decisions are made with another person and affect her just as much as they affect me. Being selfish and independent is easy – it's all about me me me, but now my life is about putting someone else's needs before my own.

God's been working in my life to perfect me and change me in these areas by using other people in this community, Dana.

APPLICATION

Are you willing to be refined? If not, what is holding you back? How does God want to use other people in that process in your life?

...let's move on to verse 9

II. Our Abounding Love

[9]And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,

DISCUSS

- Why does Paul pray for the church's love to "abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight" and not just pray for them to have more love?
- Is it important to have both love and truth (or knowledge)? Why?

The more you know about God the more there is to love. I've observed that the people I know who are most in love with Christ are the ones who also spend time learning more and more about Him.

It is also possible to have a lot of head knowledge without love, though.

Or, love without knowledge.

But we need both love and knowledge:

Ron Allen, a professor of mine in seminary, said that "*Love without knowledge is like water without a channel. Water uncontrolled is disastrous but is productive when controlled.*"

When we truly love something we naturally desire to learn more about it.

Love and knowledge go hand in hand: the more we know, the more there is to love. The more we love, the more we want to know.

APPLICATION

- What are you doing to learn more about God?
- Is your love for Him passionately increasing?

REVIEW

God is always working in our lives together to grow us to perfection while our love increases by learning more and more about Him.

...verse 10 and 11 continue verse 9 and answer the WHY question..

III. The Eternal Result

[9]And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, WHY?

[10]so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,

[11]filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

What's the result of abounding love and knowledge of God?

1. Able to discern what is best
2. Be pure and blameless
3. Filled with righteousness

When? – "the day of Christ."

Here's talk about his second coming again. Apparently God wants us to be ready for him when He returns and this is a description of what He wants us to look like by then.

As we know, Christ can return at any moment, so we'd better not waste time!

Fortunately, He doesn't leave us to change on our own – it's HIS work through us as we grow in love and knowledge of Him.

I don't know about you, but I still have a LONG way to go before I'm able to discern what is best, pure and blameless, and filled with righteousness. There's still plenty of areas for me to change.

Peter's Example

Perhaps one of the best examples of change taking place in a believer's life is the story of Peter.

Remember right after Jesus was arrested Peter followed behind and joined a fire near where Jesus was being tried. Over the course of some time a couple of people claimed he was one of Jesus' followers, to which Peter sharply denied.

Read Luke 22:60-62 (NLT)

[60] But Peter said, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about." And as soon as he said these words, the rooster crowed. [61] At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered that the Lord had said, "Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny me three times." [62] And Peter left the courtyard, crying bitterly.

APPLICATION

Have you ever been in this spot, where you just couldn't believe how far off track you were?

This event probably did a lot to change Peter because a little later, after Jesus rose from the grave and then went up to Heaven, we see a very different person.

Read Acts 2:14 (NLT)

Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this.

And now Peter gives this *huge* speech, about how the Jews need to understand that Jesus who just died was raised from the dead, and that He had come to save the world.

And the outcome of his sermon?

Read Acts 2:37, 40 (NLT)

[37] Peter's words convicted them deeply, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" [40]... Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church—about three thousand in all.

Peter goes from being a guy who's defensive about even being associated with Jesus to one who's unapologetically starts preaching about Him in large crowds.

Wrap-Up:

In the movie *16 Blocks*, Eddie is completely convinced that people can change. He refuses to stay the thief that he is known to be.

There are two big obstacles that keep people from changing.

1. They don't believe that they can. They are convinced that they are stuck in their ways and that no one can do anything about it.
2. Even if they believe they can change, they think they can just do it on their own. This is so dangerous! People can only change themselves so much, before they become discouraged and disappointed, and fall back into their old ways.

Only God can truly change us in the community of each other.

We need to recognize that God is powerful enough to bring us to perfection in Christ.

He already changed us once at the moment of salvation:

2 Corinthians 5:17 says,

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

As long as we rely on Christ to help us change, He has the power to make it happen!

APPLICATION

What in your life needs to change?

Understand that through God's continual work and our abounding love, it'll happen. We aren't stuck in our ways. We CAN be righteous, pure and blameless, ready for His return.

START: Chapter 10 (34:55)

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STOP: 36:29