

Coach House Church BEACONS

DO YOU MAINTAIN, OR MAKEOVER?

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No one would watch a programme about someone hoovering their house daily, but plenty of people watch Grand Designs. Maintenance is boring and makeovers look amazing, but without maintenance, the results of a makeover are quickly lost. God flips our lives upside down when we come to know him, but the changes he makes are meant to be cultivated as we come to know him.

Currently, I need to order new brake pads for my bike, a new lock and a new pullup bar. It takes me ages to adjust the brakes properly so I've put it off. My key keeps jamming in the rusted bike lock, and one of these days, it'll jam as I'm trying to untie my bike and stop me getting home. I can see the eroded grip on my pullup bar and flex in the metal which risks me featuring in a future You've Been Framed video. My pads still work, my lock still locks and my bar stays in place – but this will change if I don't fix them soon. All these jobs are easy to do, but have a low psychological payoff. There's no glam before and after pic, and the functionality is being preserved rather than fixed.

The Bible talks about a dramatic change of identity when we become Christians. Romans 8:14-17 describes how we are adopted into God's family when we become Christians and receive a new identity, as it says: *"The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship." (verse 15)*. Once we were fearfully enslaved to self-centred and evil ways of living which we couldn't escape. Then God rescued us and adopted us into his family as children forever. It's not like us just tweaking a few bits and making a few improvements, it's like handing your house over to be completely shelled and rebuilt by a builder and architect.

This analogy isn't perfect because change takes a while to be seen and we don't get perfectly fixed up in this lifetime. Even so, the change is big and will

show itself more and more over time. Colossians 2:6-7 describes how this process continues:

"⁶ So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."

When we put our faith in God to rescue us from our old lives, this begins the process of change. Colossians 2 tells us that the process continues. Let's observe the key points in this passage:

- 1.** – 'to continue' in faith is the main idea in this passage and everything else relates to it. If we believe that God is 'Lord' over everything, it makes sense that we will keep trusting him and learning to live his way. Returning to our analogy: if we let God tear out the old bathroom, why wouldn't we let him start fitting a new one?
- 2.**– Continuing in faith means we become properly established. Roots stabilise a tree and absorb nutrients from the ground which allows it to grow. Likewise, a building doesn't end with its foundations being laid, but with it built into a complete house over time.
- 3.**– Specifically, we live our lives 'in him', and are built and rooted 'in him'. We are not living for ourselves and we're not generally just becoming nice and better people. With God's help, we are becoming more like Jesus as we live with our lives focused on him.
- 4.** – Being well rooted and built up means being strengthened in your faith in God. You believe what God says about himself and you put this into practice more and more as time goes on.
- 5.**– Why does this passage say we should be overflowing with thankfulness? It's because God is the one who has saved us and promises to keep changing us. We put our faith in God, and let him do the work he needs to do. We trust him as the builder with the tools and the architect with a plan.

Think of it like this: if you think your house is pretty good and just needs a few tweaks here and there, you won't appreciate or understand why the builder and architect are asking for a complete overhaul. However, if they show you dry rot in the rafters, sinking foundations and wiring that might set your house on fire – then you would be thankful for the work! Even more so when they begin to fix it.

So, what actions can we take to ensure that we are rooted and built up? What does spiritual 'maintenance' and 'cultivation' look like?

Acts 2:42 notes how believers in the early church practised their faith: "*42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*" Each of the points in this verse are key things that Christians actively do (rather than the many things God has done for us).

We find the apostles teaching as we read the Bible. We have fellowship as we meet together as Christians. We remind ourselves of Jesus' death and resurrection when we 'break bread' and take communion. And we pray to communicate with God in numerous ways. These actions give our lives a Christian structure and scaffold. Each one takes up an amount of time and is an action we take.

The passage doesn't say how much time to give to this. It does note that early believers were devoted to these things. When we think about this verse alongside our verses from Colossians 2, we can understand that we become more and more devoted to God over time. Either way, my plea to you is this: make time for these things – it could be long or brief, but do them. Why? Because it gives God space and opportunity to speak to you. It puts you in places where you can hear him and cultivate a life of faith.

For example, I know I'm personally convicted to go and have more fellowship with believers, which has easily dropped off during the pandemic. Like with my brakes, bike lock and pullup bar – it's unsafe to leave things as they are. Let's encourage each other to keep cultivating our relationship with God and overflow with thankfulness.



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