

THE BIG IDEA: Fighting through the tension leads us to a new dimension.

The Take-Off

22 days ago, our church family began a journey together.

We kicked off the 10 series and in that first week, many of us started getting intentional about spiritual disciplines that we've always heard of, even if we've never practiced.

In week 2 we talked about the power of simplifying our lives and learning to live with contentment.

Last week, Phil did a great job of showing us why we should make the effort to pay attention to how we spend our time and from where we get our identity.

If you have done any or all of these things, then you have probably begun to experience the word that we'll be focused on today: TENSION.

We'll be looking at a pretty good amount of Scripture today, but before we do, we need to do some no-brainer, foundational work first, and that's exactly what the first point does, so let's just jump right in.

1. **The reality of tension**

Probably the first question we need to ask - the fundamental question - is "does tension even exist?"

The obvious answer is yes, but let's talk about where tension exists...

Have you ever heard the phrase "ignorance is bliss?" Sure you have.

Usually we think of this along with another phrase many of us have heard: "what you don't know can't hurt you"

Well, take a look at this picture (man about to get whacked) and let me ask you again, will what he doesn't know hurt him? Apparently, yes.

So ignorance is bliss right up until the point when what we're ignorant about hurts us, and at that point ignorance become dangerous and maybe even, well, ignorant.

So while we may think ignorance is bliss, we know we can't afford to stay ignorant, and so we start seeking knowledge and that leads us to tension.

Paul touches on this principle in Romans 7:7

While you turn there, let me say that this chapter is often debated concerning whether or not Paul is describing the life of someone who isn't a saved or someone who is and is now struggling with sin, but whichever side you come down on, it won't change the truth of verse 7

Revelation creates tension. Without a law about coveting, Paul didn't know he was sinning. When he learned the law (revelation) he found himself in a struggle with sin (tension).

This is exactly where many of us are right now. 22 days ago we may an intentional choice to spend time daily reading the Scriptures, and our knowledge is growing quickly. For many, daily.

But the increased knowledge is going to start creating tension, if it hasn't already.

Jesus spoke to this in one of his many teaching moments.

We find it towards the end of Luke 12 in verse 48. Jesus makes a statement that all of us know is true but most of us wish wasn't.

Basically, Jesus says that the more you know, the more you should do.

Immediately we feel the tension, don't we? We want to increase our knowledge of Jesus, but that requires an increase in obedience to Jesus.

Maybe it's better to remain ignorant, right?

Not according to the statements Jesus made right before this one. He said that there is punishment for not doing the will of the master whether we knew it or not, and so not learning more isn't really an option.

The best option is to know more even if it reveals the tension between what we know and what we do.

And when we talk about whether tension is real, that's the biggest tension of all, isn't it? The tension between knowing and doing. There's not one person in this room that doesn't struggle with that tension.

If we go back to Romans 7 - esp. verse 15 - we find Paul wrestling with that tension. Whether this is before or after his salvation doesn't change the principle: he knows what to do and he's not doing it.

Tension is real.

- try losing weight and you'll feel tension between what you should eat and what you do eat

- try to handle your money better and you'll feel the tension between needs and wants

If we learn more, we're accountable for more, but we can't stop learning because what we don't know really can - and probably will - hurt us.

Maybe it's time to start seeing this tension in a different way, a more positive way.

Let me give you today's BIG IDEA and then we'll use our second point to really unpack it: **Fighting through the tension leads us to a new dimension.**

2. The result of tension

So let's talk through what tension can do for us, and it has everything to do with whether we see it as a bad thing or a good thing.

When we see tension as bad, we let it stress us and we become bitter.

When we see tension as good, we let it stretch us and we become better.

Let me share some examples with you that illustrate those 2 statements.

These are real-life stories and they have nothing to do with following Jesus or believing the Bible, but when you hear these and then hear the truth that Jesus taught, I think you'll be challenged to rethink the relevancy of Jesus and his word in your life if you're not following him.

[Share examples]

All of those people ran right into the middle of tension and made a decision to see it as a tool that could make them better instead of a trap to make them bitter.

They never gave up or stopped believing, and many of them followed a biblical principle without even realizing it. They allowed present tension to prepare them for future victory.

Remember our passage in Luke 12:48? To whom much is given, much is required.

In 1 Samuel 17, David would never have been expected to fight Goliath if he hadn't already gained the revelation of God as an empowering God when he fought the bear and the lion.

But because he knew more about God's character, the size of the giants - and victory! - increased.

In other words, the level of tension went up, not down.

People who do great things for Jesus and his kingdom don't fear these "all in" moments because they've already worked through the tension and are prepared for the pressure of those moments.

Athletes who have worked through the tension between knowing good shooting form and achieving good shooting form want to take the shot when the game is on the line.

Now, we're just about done, but before we wrap this up we need to talk through the most important truth of all about tension, and it reveals why Jesus wants each of us to fight through the tension instead of running from it.

Turn to a passage that many of you read on Day 2 of the 10/10/10/ reading plan, and while you find it, let me give you Webster's definition of tension: "the art or act of stretching"

In Mark 2:22, Jesus was talking about making sure wine doesn't get wasted because the wine skins can't handle it. Often in the Bible, new wine is a symbol of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:8), and so Jesus is laying out a pretty interesting truth: the power of God is limited to the capacity of the people of God to carry it.

We know that we are new creations in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17), and yet we also know that we struggle almost daily with our old sinful nature (Mark 8:34-35).

Part of the way God transforms us from old skins to new skins is by stretching us, and the way he accomplishes that is in the tension.

The result of tension - when we fight through it instead of running from it - is the ability to carry more and more of the power of the Holy Spirit to the world.

Fighting through the tension leads us to a new dimension.

The Landing

While we start to land this, let me give you some thoughts to discuss at home this week as you prepare for your Community Groups:

- Instead of trying to disobey less, fall in love with Jesus more. (John 14:15 says loving him helps us obey him!)
- Fighting through tension in one area is better than ignoring tension in many areas. (Philippians 3:16)
- Invite Jesus into the tension so he can take the shame out of it. (Romans 7:24-25; 8:1)

That last point is huge, especially if you're here and you have never made the decision to follow Jesus. Only Jesus can rescue us from sin, and Romans 8:3 sums it up beautifully: More knowledge can inform us, but only Jesus can transform us.

If you need that transforming power, meet our team here after we dismiss and let us pray with you.