

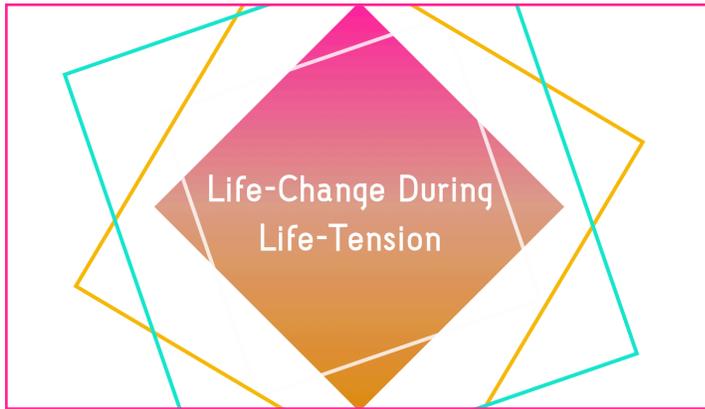
### **Sermon Extension**

Tensions come in many shapes and sizes and can seem strenuous or insurmountable in our lives. Maybe you're stressed out for a big exam, maybe you had a heavy fallout with someone, maybe you're losing sleep trying to take care of the household, maybe you've lost a family member, maybe your finances are not as in-order as you'd hoped, maybe the car in-front of you just won't go that extra 5 km to reach the regular speed limit, or maybe your job has you working overtime all week. Take a moment and review your own life. What are some of your life-tensions? In what areas of your life do you feel stressed, overwhelmed, stretched or helpless?

Sometimes, when our life-tensions are uncomfortable or overpowering we feel like God cannot work in our lives. But it's important for us to understand that God uses life's tensions to form Christ's life in us. Has there ever been a tough time in your life that you felt God was using to transform your character? If yes, how did you feel His presence in those times? How was your character being transformed to be like Christ?

On Sunday, Gerry explained that Christ did not die on a cross just so He could save us a spot in heaven, rather, Christ came to die on a cross so that we could have the opportunity to be transformed into His very likeness. We can take hold of this opportunity by doing three things. One of those things is to *confess our brokenness* by recognizing it in our lives and presenting it to Him in prayer. Take a moment to think about the brokenness in your life, then pray and confess this to God authentically.

The second way God can change us through life-tension is by *connecting with Christ's fullness*. We need Jesus' transformative presence in our lives to receive His power, love, grace, mercy and truth, but sometimes tensions can get in the way of this. Think about your past month, when did you spend intentional time with Christ? What were some of the circumstances in your life that took time away from you connecting with Christ in stillness and prayer? How could you invite Christ into these circumstances and submit them to Him to allow His transformative presence to work in you?



The last way we can be transformed into Christ's likeness is through *consenting to God's process*. Sometimes God lovingly allows life-tensions to tempt us so that we must seek Christ's transformative presence to grow the opposite character trait. What are some of the struggles or temptations in your life that you've been trying to pray away? Reflect on your answers. How can you trust God with these struggles / temptations? What character trait is evident in your temptations? What opposite, Christ-like, character trait might God be trying to enlarge through those tensions?

### **Scripture Exploration**

Read **Romans 8:28-29**: *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters"*

Paul writes in verse 28 that God works for the good of those who love Him in ALL things. This means good, bad, happy, sad, etc. What "things" can you submit to God today?

According to verse 29 it is God's will that believers would be conformed to the image of Christ. What does this mean? How can we be conformed to be like Christ? What areas of your character need to be conformed to the image of Christ?

Read **Romans 7:18b-19**: *"For I have the desire to do what is right but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep doing."*

AND **Hebrews 4:15-16**: *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

In Romans, Paul writes that he does not have the ability to carry out the desire to do what is right, but in Hebrews we see what we have a High Priest that is able to sympathize with this weakness, and whom has been tempted before but never sinned. What does it mean to you that you have a High Priest who is able to sympathize with your life-tensions? How does this give you confidence?



How can you draw near to the throne of grace and receive God's mercy this week? How can you do this when life's tensions flare up?

### **Deeper Connection**

Try out at least one (or more) of these activities to go deeper this week.

**Pray:** Ask the Holy Spirit to prompt you when life-tensions are starting to take supremacy in your life. Then pray and invite Christ's presence into those moments, that He may transform your character through your struggles and temptations.

**Memorization:** Write down Hebrews 4:15-16 on a small index card and keep it somewhere you can check daily (i.e. phone, bathroom mirror, wallet, car, purse, etc). Read and memorize it to remind yourself that you have Christ, who not only sympathizes with your struggles but also gives mercy and help in your life-tensions.

**Study & Write:** Read Romans 5:3-4 once. Read it again and underline (or highlight) the result of what our pressures become when we have Christ's transformative presence in those tense moments. Pray that the Holy Spirit reveals to you a particular pressure that is evident in your life now, write it down in a journal, notebook or phone and as the week goes by, log each time this pressure surfaced, making sure you've invited Christ into each of these moments. At the end of the week, review your log and read Romans 5:3-4 again. What about Christ's presence (our joyful confidence) helped you through your pressures this week? Even if the pressures remained, when you invited Christ's transformative presence, how did you notice that your character started to become refined?

**Discipleship:** Spend time with a friend, mentor, or someone you trust this week and ask them about a time when they felt tempted or overwhelmed by a tension in their life? How were they able to persevere in these moments? How did they seek Christ's presence in these times? How was their character changed or refined? What opposite / Christ-like character trait began to surface out of these tensions when they actively sought Christ's presence?