



## **You Can Change**

*Tim Chester*

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## **You Can Change** Tim Chester

A practical, interactive, and solidly biblical book designed to help Christians in all stages of life to find victory over sin by focusing on what God has already done in us.

It's about heart change, not behavior change. That's the conviction of Tim Chester as he seeks to help everyday Christians "connect the truth about God with our Monday-morning struggles." This interactive book, laid out in workbook fashion, is for newer Christians struggling with sin and for more mature Christians who have plateaued in their faith as they seek to find victory over sin in their lives.

With a conviction that sanctification is God's work and the journey to holiness is joyful, Chester guides readers through a "change project"-beginning with the selection of one area of life they would like to modify. Each chapter includes a question (e.g., Why would you like to change? What truths do you need to turn to?) to guide readers as they deal with a specific sin or struggle, truths from God's word, and a reflection guide to help readers through their change project.

## **You Can Change Details**

Date : Published June 20th 2008 by Inter-Varsity Press

ISBN : 9781844743032

Author : Tim Chester

Format : Paperback 204 pages

Genre : Christian, Religion, Theology, Christian Living, Nonfiction, Christianity, Psychology, Counselling

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# From Reader Review You Can Change for online ebook

## Kate says

I find the title to Tim Chester's book to be obnoxious and cheesy. In fact, I felt embarrassed reading it at Starbucks.

Yes, I'm a snob.

I find Chester's writing lacking, as he is prone to make sweeping generalizations and statements about absolute truth that are not absolute. Example: Chapter 5 begins with the statement that "Behind every sin and negative emotion is a lie." That is a sub-heading for the chapter and something to which Chester returns throughout the chapter and the book.

Had he not written the word 'every,' I might have gone with it. However, what I ended up doing instead of tracking with him was writing "cancer" into the margins every time he referred to that sub-heading.

As time went on, I went from writing "cancer," to writing...

CANCER

then,

CANCER

then,

FREAKING CANCER!

then,

B.S. - CANCER!

then,

Bull Shit! Cancer! Cancer! Cancer!

Now, I think you can probably figure out why I was writing that, but just in case, I'll explain: I think Christians should probably admit that there are certain situations that feel terrible even for the most spiritually magnificent among us. There are situations in life that come about through no error or sin, and no amount of truth can keep us from negative emotion in those situations. Cancer is one of the more obvious examples of when that's true. The book of Job is another obvious example, and one that God Himself provides for us.

It bothers me that Chester so obnoxiously generalizes, neglecting the relatively common human experience of undeserved and inexplicable pain and suffering.

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Now that I've gotten that out of the way, I can tell you that Chapter 6 actually turned my hatred of this book around. It's the first chapter that dealt with sanctification as I would reasonably expect to have been written

by a mature Christian. It addressed the depth and intangibility of character change, and it did so by referring to the gospel.

Highlight for you:

"In 1569, Dirk Willems escaped from a Dutch prison. He'd been imprisoned because he was an Anabaptist... Willems fled across a frozen lake, pursued by a prison guard. Half-starved from prison rations, Willems crossed the lake safely. But the guard fell through the ice into freezing water. Willems immediately turned back and pulled him out. The guard wanted to release Willems, but by then a burgomaster had arrived on the scene. Willems was arrested, tortured, and burned at the stake. Willems didn't have time to decide on the right thing to do. He reacted in a moment. That's a sign of Christian character. It's a sign that grace has become a habit. You can't create Christian character overnight. It's the fruit of suffering and perseverance (Romans 5:3-4). It's the harvest of daily weeding out sin and planting grace," (112).

Up until this point in the book, Chester seemed immature to me. He seemed like a writer of Christian self-help, which, I now think is probably what he's writing against. He also seemed like someone who knows very little of suffering or endurance. Of course those are unfair impressions generated from reading a hundred or so pages of the man's writing. I suspect he's a perfectly good Christian leader.

And yet, my greatest criticism of this book is that I wish it hadn't taken Chester five chapters to say what needs to be said. I think he was trying to lay a foundation in those five chapters, but I honestly wouldn't have read past them except that I'm in a Bible study that's committed to reading the book.

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### **Chris says**

Generally helpful book. Appreciated the emphasis on the power available through God's means of grace. The discussion of "legalism" was inconsistent and self-contradictory when compared with the larger context of the book. For this reason, I gave it 3 instead of 4 stars.

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### **Aidan Magill says**

Excellent and practical book, that I plan to re-read.

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### **Jon says**

Wonderful summary of several different sanctification approaches. It is a practical, theological and accessible read.

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### **Matt Moran says**

Great book on fighting sin through faith and repentance. I would recommend this to anyone in any type of small group leadership.

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## **Kevin Larson says**

### **One of the best**

It's at least the second time that I've read this book. Such a terrific book about hope for change. It is an excellent beginning counseling book. It is great for discipleship. Highly recommended.

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## **Nikki says**

I finished this book last week with my pastor and his wife, and have been, frankly, avoiding my review. Why?

Because I didn't like it, but I don't have any real reason for why I didn't like it beyond it was hopeful, and I was not.

As a general rule I do not like spiritual self-help books. I don't like books that talk to me, and try to "counsel" me. I'd rather read a book that's directed at the third person, and feels less personal. One that doesn't feel like it's trying to preach to me personally.

But I suppose that's a pride defense mechanism.

To be completely honest, *You Can Change* makes many good points. It presents a non-watered down Gospel, and puts the emphasis that the Gospel is not only for the unsaved, but it's especially for the believer. The Gospel is our source of hope, and if we as a Christian do not have and show the hope that is in us, then...we are probably missing some point somewhere. (Note: I'm not saying "If we aren't hopeful, we aren't saved" which leads into an entirely different argument of eternal security which I won't get into here).

It was a difficult book for a cynic like myself to go through. Because, as a cynic, my pride in my cynicism and my steadfast determination to not be happy so-help-me...is pretty strong.

However, thanks to my pastor and his wife's guidance through the pages, I managed to get something out of it. My heart is a bit less cynical now, and hope seems less of a quality of the ignorant, and more a quality and gift of the adopted child of God.

That said, I still found getting through the pages of somewhat cheesy and sometimes simplified (in a negative way) wording to be difficult. I didn't want to read it because, again, it was hard to let go of my word-picky pride enough to get something out of it just because it was "simple."

A lot of the questions at the end of the chapters are, again, cheesy, whereas some others are very direct, trying to get to the heart of whatever your "change project" is. The real heart, not the heart that you may try to pretend to have toward your issue.

This book will appeal to and help some people, and to others it may just be a sugary-sweet turnoff.

Either way, I wouldn't suggest going through it by yourself. Go through with a pastor or a trusted friend who gives wise counsel. If your inclination is to believe anything you hear, having someone will help you truly digest what the words are saying and help you truly search your heart. If you're like me, and want to turn your nose up at anything that claims to "fix stuff," that someone can help you locate just what is really bothering you about it. Is it for legitimate reasons? Or is it just because cynicism is comfy?

Hope is scary for some people. And regardless of whether or not you're predisposed to be a negative rain cloud (like I am) for "legit" reasons or just because, for the Christian, it is still not a right response to life.

*You Can Change* points out the Biblical reasons for hope, and strives to be encouraging while not sugar-coating Biblical responsibility for our actions and reactions to circumstances and life in general.

I'm leaving my star rating for the book blank because I'm still fighting against wanting to give it 1 or 2 stars, when there is no theological reason for me to have disliked it.

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### **Nathan Moore says**

I think this is my favorite book on Gospel change. Better than *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*, and even better than *How People Change*. Chester is a wonderful writer and balances clarity, brevity, and the inclusion of biblical detail well. This is now my go-to book on the subject.

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### **Joshua Moran says**

I really enjoyed reading most of Tim Chester's book and found it to be both thorough and convicting. He walks us through how to step into one of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith, that of grace and holiness.

We need more books on holiness that aren't legalistic. This is one of those. He helped me to see the emotions behind our sin and what our deep motivations are when we find ourselves in sin.

I found the book to be a great compilation of a lot of things I've heard (and Tim even quotes a lot of people in here). I would recommend this book to anyone who is looking to dive a little deeper into why you find yourself dealing with sin, specifically in a habitual manner. It is both practical and pastoral. A great read.

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### **Rick Walton says**

#### **A Must Read for Every Christian**

Biblically sound, rich in wise counsel, and believes in the gospel of Jesus to change lives! You will be presented with Scripture and Christians, who over the centuries sought for real change in their lives.

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## **Chris says**

another book that's a must read! If you are struggling in sin, which we all are.... this is the book for you.

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## **John Neil says**

Don't judge a book by its cover/cheesy title. This book was biblically grounded and a great read. heyoo.

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## **J.S. Park says**

The danger in Christian books about change is the bogeyman of legalism. Some of the "classic" Christian literature is nothing more than a manifesto of Do's and Don't's that have nothing to do with the Bible, much less Jesus. Tim Chester does not avoid these familiar pitfalls: half of his work is a brilliant call to holiness while the other half is counterintuitive to his own goals. It makes for a frustrating read that at times connects deeply but often succumbs to being another screaming manifesto.

First the negatives. Tim Chester, who can be a good writer, writes this book in a clinical, abrupt, academic form that never really "breathes" like one human being speaking to another. For a work of this sort, it makes for a dull read that smears together like a textbook. It's as if Chester included all the necessary doctrine so that no one would fault him for being shallow. The result, perhaps unexpectedly, is a bunch of fluff that is neither interesting nor practical.

Chester also strains to explain "why" we should stop sinning. For all his proper doctrine, he never conveys a compelling reason to change. For all the talk about God's glory, Chester uses so much Christianese that he hardly defines the bottom line. He simply writes about what happens when we change and how hard it will be. So why bother? Every prodigal I have ever counseled does not fully understand the freedom that God offers. And neither does Chester communicate that freedom with any real urgency.

Other weak spots: Each chapter ends with exercises that appear fruitful but do not come with warnings about legalistic methodology. So these exercises almost tear down what he has been building about grace. Chester is all over the place with his explanation of idols. Is sin the idol? Or is an idol just external? Is it a desire? He doesn't delineate. And all the idealistic pep talk begins to float above reality and sounds like New Age self-help mantras. Seriously.

Positives: Despite all the holes in the book, Chester really picks up steam in the last half by exposing the nuances of sin -- its secrecy and allure -- and exposing it as a lie. By conveying the heart of all sin as a lie, Chester creates a grounded biblical principle that will already cover half the work of sanctification. It is no longer about rules, but about seeing what is really true.

Chester's "mess" of a church culture is also a bold biblical truth that earned four stars for this review. By itself, it could be its own book. I won't say much on that except: if your church is not messed up, chances are your church lacks a culture of grace in fear of a damaged reputation. The insight in this chapter is worth the cover price.

Though there are numerous problems with Tim Chester's work, like any Christian book about change, I still

commend those parts of brilliance that do outweigh the negatives. As always, read with discernment and keep it grounded in the Word. There is some truth to be found here.

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## **Stephen says**

Great book on the Reformed view of sanctification and how to practice it for true personal change.

Some helpful quotes:

(1) Chapter 1: What would you like to change?

-pg. 18: The secret of gospel change is being convinced that Jesus is the good life and the fountain of all joy.

-pg. 23: The message of this book is that change takes place in our lives as we turn to see the glory of God in Jesus. We 'see' the glory of Christ as we 'hear' the gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4-6). Moral effort, fear of judgment and sets of rules can't bring lasting change. But amazing things happen when we 'turn to the Lord'.

(2) Chapter 2: Why would you like to change?

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## **Tim Woody says**

At first I thought this book was going to be cheesy Christian self help. The first few chapters could even be summarized by the catch phrase WWJD. But then it took a turn, and focused on where change really starts. The free gift of salvation and grace changes our hearts and redirects our desires. Life in Christ is a life of competing desires, and we should desire Christ. In turn our behaviors change. That is oversimplified and the book gives practical advice as well but the meditations were solid.

One enjoyable illustration was how we tend to see sanctification. We tend to see our fight against sin as trying to push a heavy boulder up a hill, sure we might make progress but its a burden. Chester says that this analogy isn't quite right. Instead God promises victory over sin and changing desires. Sanctification is like a boulder rolling down a hill over us. God is faithful to complete a good work in you. Sometimes our sinful hearts and nature fight against the rolling of the rock and we push it back up the hill.

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## **Micah Hester says**

One of my favorite books of truth. I go back to the principles in here often.

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## **Rev Ricky says**

This is a good book about gospel powered sanctification. We sin because we desire other things more than we desire God, or because we do not want the hope that is offered to us in the Gospel.



Chester explains that Holiness is what would truly complete us as humans. God wants our ultimate happiness, and we must trust him for how to find it. Therefore, the path to change means we must turn away (repent) from the false things we believe about God, and from the idols we pursue instead of God, and turn to (believe) the truth about God and the hope he offers in Christ.

Chester goes on to explain that we will continue this change only as we get to the roots of our sin, live in community, and continually use the means that God has given us for our growth (means of grace).

Overall, it is a good book, a great one if you have never thought through these things before. It is both theologically clear and practically useful.

However, I do think he fails to acknowledge some of our deeper issues that may stand in the way of change. Sometimes I believe the truth about God, and reject the lies the world tells me and yet I still sin. Sometimes I am driven by compulsions that I don't even understand. To heal from those compulsions we may need more than simple advice. We may need someone to walk with us as we go deeper.

You Can Change is not the last book you will ever need on growing in holiness. But it is a great first one.

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## **Becky says**

First sentence: What would you like to change?

Premise/plot: Is Tim Chester's book your typical self-help book? Far from it. It approaches change not from a self empowerment perspective but from a Spirit empowered one! In other words while he encourages you to focus on where you personally want to change, it is very much a book about the sanctification process. It explores essential Christian ideas: sin, temptation, repentance, holiness, etc.

My thoughts: I really thought this was well written. It is plainly and clearly written. It takes theological doctrines and presents them practically. Chester approaches the subject honestly and not condescendingly. If I had to sum this one up I'd say it was about humility and holiness.

Favorite quotes:

Jesus isn't just good for us--he is good itself. He defines good. (15)

Sin is living life my way, for me, instead of living life God's way, for God. (25)

We need to repent of trying to be our own savior. (25)

You will cleanse no sin from your life that you have not first recognized as being pardoned through the cross (28)

Sin doesn't love us. It tries to use us, abuse us, enslave us, control us, and ultimately destroy us. Sin takes from us and gives nothing in return. (33)

We become Christians by faith in Jesus, we stay Christians by faith in Christ, and we grow as Christians by faith in Jesus. (44)

Sin is wanting to live our lives our own way without God. The terrible irony is that we even want to overcome sin our own way without God. (45)

I used to think sanctification was a bit like pushing a boulder up a hill. It was hard, slow work, and if you lost your concentration you might find yourself back at the bottom. But it's more like a boulder rolling down a hill. There's something inevitable about it, because it's God's work, and God always succeeds. The sad thing

is that often I try to push the boulder back up the hill. (55)

Every time we don't trust God's word we're believing something else, and that something is always a lie. (74)

The problems lie in the gap between what we believe in theory and what we believe in practice. (75)

Freedom is found in the truth that we were made to worship God, to serve God, to trust God. Freedom is found in acknowledging that we are responsible for the mess we have made of our lives, that our problems are rooted in our hearts, that we deserve God's judgment, that we desperately need God. Freedom is found in accepting that God is in control of our lives, that he is gracious, that he forgives those who come to him in faith. (77)

God is great--so we do not have to be in control. God is glorious--so we do not have to fear others. God is good--so we do not have to look elsewhere. God is gracious--so we do not have to prove ourselves. (80)

Every joy we experience is but a shadow of the source of all joy, which is God. (85)

A sinful desire is a desire that is bigger than God. (103)

Sin is fundamentally an orientation toward self. Repentance is reorienting ourselves toward God. (106)

Humility is the realization that we can never merit blessing from God. It's the recognition that grace is our only hope. (118)

Sin is like mold: it grows best in the dark. (124)

A changing life is a cross-centered life. (127)

The cross leaves no scope for human boasting. (127)

God has given us the Christian community not as a substitute for Christ but as a pointer to Christ. (158)

Love without truth is like doing heart surgery with a wet fish. But truth without love is like doing heart surgery with a hammer. We will speak the truth effectively only in the context of loving relationships. (158)

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### **Jonathan Penn says**

This book is practical without being legalistic. A must read for Christians as we battle sin daily and seek to sow in the Spirit. One day we will reap what we sow.

I believe more of who God is after reading this book. He is good, great, gracious, and glorious.

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### **Paul says**

Helpful book. Good emphasis on both the need for actively fighting daily the small battles and yet aware that we live in the grace of God. Interesting that Tim Chester highlights the distinction between Wesleyan and Keswick holiness which is rarely noted.

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