

Flipping Tables Podcast



*Study of Philippians*

*The house church at Philippi  
and beyond  
with the women who led there.*

"Grace and peace to you from God our  
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

## Table 2

## Season 4 Episode 6

### Welcome to the table!

It's a new year, and I'm guessing you've made a few goals—or at least had a few thoughts about what you'd like to be different this year. Maybe you didn't write out official resolutions, but there's something about starting a new year that stirs this quiet feeling: *I need something new.*

I need a change of scenery.

At the start of a new year I might dream about trips I'd like to take this year, most of which I won't take. Why? Because below the surface I'm dreaming of a new scene, a fresh start, an improved version of life. My heart is longing for **renewal**.

Maybe the new scenery you're longing for isn't a vacation. Maybe it's something a little closer to home.

Before I closed out my social media for a much-needed digital detox, I watched a number of reels that all resonated with me. A woman stands in her living room, coffee in hand, preparing to take down the Christmas decorations. But instead of simply packing them away, she's —imagining how she might redecorate the entire house.

New paint. New furniture. A new layout. A fresh look.

The new year has a way of doing that to us. **It invites us to imagine what could be different, what**

could be better, what could finally feel complete.

I have a number of things in my life I want to be finished with. Anybody else?

Twila joined me on the podcast to discuss [Matthew 3](#), where we spent time with the eccentric and fascinating John the Baptist. And fair warning—if you find yourself suddenly craving a Toblerone while listening, my apologies in advance... especially if that interferes with your health goals for the year. Listen here: [Apple](#) or [Spotify](#).

A change of scenery and a fresh start is what all the people who went out to the Judean wilderness to listen to the message John the Baptist was preaching wanted. “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.*” Well... almost all of the people. I don’t think that’s what the Pharisees and Sadducees were seeking—but we’ll get to them in a minute.

In this series on Matthew, I’m trying to learn to walk in the way of the Kingdom of Heaven because the kingdom of earth is not really working for me. Is it working for you?

I’m looking for someone to flip the tables in the life I’m living. And something tells me that’s exactly what the people were looking for when they went out into the wilderness to hear John the Baptist. If they were satisfied with the lives they were living, they wouldn’t have gone searching for something new. They knew something was missing.

The people in John’s day seemed to know something that you and I probably know too: **religion doesn’t work**—at least not the kind that polishes the outside while leaving the heart untouched. They were tired. What they were longing for was something real, something different, something that could actually make things new.

I came seeking Jesus for the same reasons. The religious system I grew up in didn’t make my life better. Mercy and grace were a far better message than the impossible burden of trying to be good enough or doing enough to satisfy the wrath of God.

**Striving doesn’t make you holy.**

**It makes you tired.**

*“Repent! The kingdom of heaven has come near.”*

Let’s talk about repentance for a minute. John the Baptist was preparing the people for the radical, life-changing message Jesus was about to begin to preach.

Repentance isn’t just about feeling sorry. It’s about being sorry enough to quit. You’ve been moving in one direction, and now you turn completely around and go another way.

When we read the Bible, repentance carries meaning from both the Hebrew and Greek.

In Hebrew, the word is **שׁוּב** (**shuv**). It literally means *to turn back, return, or change direction*. In short: **repent = turn around**.

In Greek, the word is **μετάνοια** (**metanoia**). It means *a change of mind, a new way of thinking, a renewed understanding*. In short: **repent = change your mind**.

True biblical repentance holds both ideas together.

It’s a changed mind and heart that leads to a changed direction.

Repentance isn’t behavior modification or religious striving. It’s transformation from the inside out—a renewed way of thinking that produces a renewed way of living.

Water baptism alone isn’t going to deliver this kind of transformation. This is going to require being born again (see [John 3](#) for more on that). Maybe one of the Pharisee’s was listening.

John says it this way:

*“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*

I hear John saying, *You’re going to need more than what this water can do.*

Water can symbolize a decision, but the Spirit brings new life. The Spirit supplies the transforming power to live out the way of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Jews were familiar with ceremonial cleansing. They were also firmly acquainted with the requirements of the law and the sacrificial system. And still, they needed something new.

They were tired. They longed for a fresh, clean start—a new beginning.

They needed a Redeemer. And bless the Lord, **He was near.**

Friends, are you tired? Because the Lord is near.

Maybe, like me, there are things in your life you're ready to be finished with—old patterns, old stories, old ways of striving. Advent helped me lean into Jesus in my waiting. I surrendered the need for answers or outcomes; I learned to draw near. To just be with Him. To simply behold Him.

And in that nearness, I found strength again—not from doing more, but from staying close to Jesus.

Let me encourage you with this: you may be tired of the things in your life that aren't finished yet, but Jesus isn't tired of talking with you about them. As much as we want things finished, nothing is more important to Jesus than you being made complete. He is fully committed to finishing the work He began in you. This is our present hope.

A few thoughts on the “brood of vipers”: the religious leaders weren't interested in repentance. They trusted in their adherence to the law and in their ethnicity as descendants of Abraham. Let me put it this way—they were comfortable at the table they were sitting at and weren't looking for anyone who might challenge their way of life. Sure, they wanted someone to overthrow Rome—to free them from Caesar. But there were two glaring errors in their thinking:

First, they didn't believe they needed a Savior.

Second, they weren't looking for transformed hearts—they wanted a political leader who would flip the table of power so they could sit in control.

Ouch! That stings a little bit. Or maybe a lot.

It *should* sting a little—that's usually how truth lets us know it's landed.

If we're honest, it's uncomfortably easy to recognize ourselves in that story. We're quick to ask Jesus to fix the systems around us, shift the power dynamics, or give us relief from whatever feels oppressive—while resisting the deeper work of repentance and heart change. We don't always want a Savior; sometimes we just want leverage.

But Jesus doesn't come to rearrange who's at the head of the table. He comes to flip the table altogether and invite us into a different kingdom—one that starts within us before it ever reshapes the world around us.

The start of the year is a perfect time to take a trip into the wilderness to meet with Jesus. As I sat down to write this newsletter, I found myself asking an important question.

John the Baptist was preaching repentance in the wilderness.

So what is being preached in *my* wilderness?

Is the message keeping me from living in the Kingdom of Heaven?

Or is it preparing me to live in the Kingdom of Heaven—right now?

*“Repent! The kingdom of heaven has come near.”*

Thanks for meeting with me at the study table. Next week on the podcast, Twila and I talk about the baptism of Jesus. Then we'll head out into the wilderness together to learn from the Redeemer.

Keep following the Table Flipper and leave the table flipping to Jesus.