

Sunday Morning Message

April 22, 2018

First Love / First Works

Overcoming Evil with Good

Text for Today's Message – Romans 12:1 & 2; 9 – 21; Ephesians 4:17 – 32; Psalm 1:1 - 2

Congregational Reading – Romans 12:17 - 21

Introduction

Throughout the Bible there is a principle given to God's people that will help them to stop being who they used to be before they were saved, and start being who God wants them to be. This principle is called the principle of replacement. It is very simple to understand, but perhaps not so simple to implement in our lives. Basically it involves purging wrong, sinful, or harmful behavior, and replacing them with right and helpful behavior; behavior that is pleasing to the Lord.

Read through texts:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." (Romans 12:16)

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Romans 12:19)

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:21)

God wants us to remove some things from our lives and replace them with good things. Removal alone is not likely to last. For change to be permanent, the bad behavior or sinful habit must be replaced with good behavior.

Illustration – Music – we need to replace bad music with good music.

Illustration – Food – we enjoy what we are used to eating, but we could become retrained to eat other things.

Illustration – Diets – bad eating and exercise habits need to be replaced with good eating and exercise habits.

[Explain the concept of dehabituating and rehabituation]

Read Ephesians 4:17 – 32

Read Psalm 1:1 – 3

Steps to Rehabilitation

1 Identify the sinful or harmful practice in your life.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us," (Hebrews 12:1)

The Bible reveals things that are clearly sinful in our lives. These must be removed. Lying, cheating, gossip, immorality, drunkenness, murder, etc.

But, there are also some things, which may not be clearly identified as sin in the Bible, but they may keep you from fulfilling God's will for your life. These things are weights and once God reveals them to you as harmful for you, they become sinful for you.

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

Illustrate – eating out at a restaurant is not a sin, but if you are in debt and behind on your bills, it is not a helpful thing for you to do.

2 Confess it to God as sin, and then ask him to help you overcome it.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

The word, "cleanse", in this context is separate from the word forgiveness. If you are saved, God has forgiven all of your sin – past, present, and future. However, God wants us to forsake our sinful practices, and when we identify and confess the sinful practices in our life and confess them to God, He will help us to cleanse (purge or remove) the sins from our life.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13)

Confession implies a willingness to forsake. Don't just keep confessing sins that you have no intention of quitting.

Illustrate – Alcoholic – 1st step is admitting that you have a problem.

3 Forsake the Sin and Replace it with Good

Dehabituate and Rehabituate – break the old habits and form new ones.

The sinful habits that you have in your life are for the most part second nature to you. You do them without thinking about them. In order to break them, you have to consciously and consistently implement a biblical alternative.

The scientists say that on average, it takes 21 days to break a habit, and perhaps another 21 days to develop a new one. So, in roughly a month and a half, you can get victory over the harmful practices in your life, replacing them with wholesome ones.

Illustrate – Brushing your teeth.

Conclusion

The concept of replacement is easy to understand, but admittedly it is difficult to put it into practices, particularly with some sinful practices that have become a stronghold in your life.

This process works in reverse also. It not only helps you stop doing things that are harmful, but it helps you do the things that are right.

This is something you have to really want to do.

You may need to enlist the help of an accountability partner or see a counselor.

You may need to put up a lot of fences in your life.

Illustrate – Pornography is a such an addictive stronghold in many men’s lives that they may need to make some serious changes, such as getting rid of a smart phone, cutting off your internet service, etc.

You will need to carefully analyze your life and determine what is drawing you to that sin in the first place. Learn what your triggers are. Do you drink when you are stressed out? Do you overeat when you are discouraged? What situations cause you to lose your temper? What is keeping you from being consistently faithful to the House of God. Identify these triggers, and figure out how you are going to not let them push you across the line into sin.

You may want to focus on one problem at a time.

Illustrate – Restraint Management

If you are saved, God has forgiven your sins and you are on your way to Heaven. Justification is immediate. However, sanctification is a lifetime process. Gradually, God is recreating you into the image of Christ. But, you are not passive in the process. God expects you to be actively involved. The Holy Spirit of God who lives within you, will convict you about certain areas of your life that need to be changed. Start the process of dehabitation and rehabituation. Put off and put on; out with the old and in with the new.

You can do it with God’s help.