

Jesus Changes Everything-New Relationships

Week One—We talked about the New Self

Week Two-We talked about New Relationships

This week is about New Habits. We are shifting from an outward focus last week to an inward focus. We are going to do some self-reflection this week.

But first, let play a little game I like to call Strange Habits. Does anyone have a strange habit they'd like to share with the group? (example of my dad and his finger under his nose 😊) Today we are going to try out some very strange habits. I want you to pay particular attention to how these habits affect your normal actions, in this case, a simple conversation.

What was it like keeping your habit going for a few minutes?

How did your habit affect your conversation?

Do you think our real habits affect others? What about ourselves?

As I said, this week we are going to talk about New Habits. Jesus changes everything. When we have a saving encounter with Him, meaning we put our faith and trust in Him, every facet of our life is changed! Some suddenly, others may take time. Our heart (spirit) is immediately changed. We talked about that on week one with the New Self. However, we must remember that we still have the flesh. We still have a sinful nature and a corrupt body. That promise is not fulfilled until we go home to eternity with heavenly Father.

What are habits? They are essentially an outward expression of our heart, our thoughts, our feelings. Some habits may be harder than others to explain but they all come from somewhere. Like my example with my dad, that habit originated from me wanting to be like my dad.

So as Christians, how exactly are or should our habits be affected? Glad you asked. Let's begin with a situation that took place between a blind man and Jesus.

Mark 10:46-52 ⁴⁶ Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁹ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." ⁵⁰ And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."

⁵² Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

Let's start with the first 3 verses. As a blind man, what do you think his life was like? What were his habits? What did the blind man cry out? Why were these words significant? Who was Jesus' earthly dad? Joseph. By calling Jesus the Son of David, Bartimaeus was openly proclaiming that Jesus was the Messiah. They had been promised a Messiah that would come through the lineage of David. What did the others do when he was calling for Jesus? How did Bartimaeus respond? Have you ever had someone or something keep you from going to Jesus? How did you react?

Jesus Changes Everything-New Relationships

What sticks out to you in the next three? Why did Jesus ask Bartimaeus what he wanted Him to do for him? (If you listened to Bro. Rich's message a couple weeks ago, this should sound familiar.) Of course, Jesus knew what Bartimaeus wanted but asking this question allowed others to see that Bartimaeus was asking Jesus for something only He could do, heal him.

Last verse...How did Bartimaeus react to his sight being restored? He followed Jesus! Our response to Jesus healing us from our sin should be to follow Him. Do you think his habits changed from that day forward? Would it make sense for Bartimaeus to continue going to that spot on the road everyday and asking for money, begging every day? No! Then why would it make sense for us to return to our old habits when Jesus has changed us, set us free?!?

What are some habits that we may have had before we met Jesus and continue to struggle with today?

Bartimaeus had some obvious changes in his habits. When we accept Christ into our lives, how should our habits change?

Let's look at Colossians 3:1-17 but let's break it down into smaller, more digestible chunks.

Colossians 3:1-4 ¹ If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Paul is speaking to the church at Colossi. He's telling them, "if you have a relationship with Jesus, if you have shared in His resurrection because you believed on Him, your habits should change!" Our minds should be focused on Christ and the things of Christ. When you constantly think about something, how does it affect your actions? If I constantly think about food, which isn't entirely inaccurate 😊, it affects my behavior. I schedule things so I can make it to my favorite restaurant. I make sure I'm stocked up on the Little Debbie snacks I want every afternoon when I come home. I plan things around food instead of planning food around other things. Same principle applies with Jesus. If we are constantly thinking about Him ("setting our mind on things which are above, where Christ is"), our daily schedules, rituals, habits will change accordingly.

But we all know changing habits is much easier said than done. So, how do we do it? Let's look at the next few verses.

Colossians 3:5-11 ⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. ⁸ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, ¹¹ where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Jesus Changes Everything-New Relationships

Paul begins with a simple list but he doesn't just say don't do them. He goes a step further. He says to put them to death, execute them. Why is anyone ever put to death? Because they did something horrible that had long lasting, catastrophic effects on another person! These things do the same thing! Paul says to end them, kill them, take them out of existence in your life. He says, this is what you used to do before Christ! Stop going back to them! But how do we do this? "Put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge!" What does this mean? Someone read Romans 12:2. We do this by spending time in God's Word and in prayer! How can we ever know the habits of Jesus if we don't know anything about Jesus?

So, we've been told what not to do, how about what we should do?

Colossians 3:12-17 ¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. ¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

What is this "bond of perfection"? Love. What does this mean? Love: Christ's love for us and our responsive love for Him, enables us to do these things. They all connect back to love, real love, Christ's love. Verse 16 tells us to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." This is similar to setting our minds on things above! If Christ is so rich, or potent, in our hearts...if our thoughts and emotions and wonderings are all saturated with Christ, you can't help but let that love overflow into other parts of your life. When others come into contact with you, they have no choice but to be exposed to Jesus! (sponge pass game example—try not to get wet)

We will end with this passage before we head to small groups.

Hebrews 12:1-2 ¹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

These bad habits that have somehow resurfaced in our new Christian lives, or maybe never quite went away, are nothing but dead weight. They hold us down. They trip us up. They trick us into thinking we can find happiness or satisfaction from something or someone other than Jesus. Lay them aside! Put them to death! Set your sights on Jesus! As a runner, what's your main focus in a race? The finish line! Where is our finish line? Our finish line is in heaven and Christ has guaranteed our prize through what He did on the cross! Let's run with that finish line as our focus!