

Holy Habits 2-27-00

Last week I preached on the great need for us to die daily to our selfish ways and our own agendas and allow Christ Jesus who lives within us, to manifest His life through us. We so need Jesus himself to be our life, to operate in His power and life in all that we do. We know that without Him we can do nothing! We can run around and accomplish things but without the Lord they are only temporal things at best. So do we make it a habit to yield to his life so that something can be done that lasts, something of real value?

When we come to Christ we all come with ingrained habits. We take our natural man and place him on the cross with Christ. We are then new creatures with resurrected power. Ro 6:1-14 Look at verse 12 again, "Therefore do not let sin reign". We can let it continue to reign even though it was crucified with Christ. We can let sin master us even though we died to our sin nature. You didn't lose your will when you came to Christ. You should submit it to Him but You have the choice not to. You see our minds are still in need of being renewed. Still we must put to death what tries to resurface of the dead old nature. Col 3:1-10 It sounds like a contradiction – You are dead, therefore put to death, you used to walk in these ways, but now you must rid yourselves of these things.

What is happening here is that positionally your old man is considered dead. God sees your old nature as done and over. He makes your spirit alive with His presence in us and we have a new nature. But with that nature comes his presence and power to live according to it. He did not give you desire without ability, and the ability is his own resurrected life. It takes us back to the two salvations. We are forgiven and will spend eternity with God. Yet there is that other salvation from this present evil world. Even a new creature in Christ can be distracted from his call, dragged into compromise by his untamed desires and suffer the consequences of sin. Is that not experientially true in all of our lives?

That is why one of the fruits of the Spirit is self control; that we might discipline our will – the soul – to conform to the direction of the new life in our spirit. We can choose not to sin by the power of the risen Christ within us. We can let Him respond to the temptations of life. As you watch a Christian grow, what is happening is you are seeing him learn to yield to the HS and the Life in him. He is developing godly habits as opposed to his old ungodly ones. As he goes on in grace those habits that helped him change his outward life get lost in the life of the Lord Jesus. Holy habits can become a god, but when they do the Lord interrupts them and teaches us that we can allow them the flexibility to meld into the life of Christ.

Let us get very practical. We have talked about the need to be in the Word daily. One of the best ways is to set apart a time when you can be alone and

really let the word speak to you. That is a holy habit. Now say a neighbor comes with a need during that time. Then we see if the habit is a god or tool to keep you soul in submission to your spirit where Christ reigns. The habit is not the end it is the means to help toward the end.

I want to say what Holy Habits are not. They are not a formula for blessing, do this and you will get something. They are not works that earn some kind of favor with God. They are disciplines to assist us in transformation. Ex: We read the word and the HS can quicken to us what we read causing us to act differently. There are people who read the word daily but do not let it into their lives. They do it because they are suppose to and are respected for it, or think they earn some kind of credit in their heavenly bank account. See the diff?

We should all desire to be disciples, not just one of the multitude. A disciple is a learner, one who follows the Master and learns from Him, is transformed into the Master's likeness in the process. We are getting to the serious stuff here. There is a burden on my heart to see us grow up, to see Christ formed in us. We must be intentional about it. We need it, our families need it, our city needs it, the world needs it – They need people who live the life of Christ.

Over the next month I am going to lay out for us an intentional plan for spiritual formation through holy habits. How you apply them is completely up to you and how the Spirit is leading you. I just ask that you be honest with the Lord about your need and obedient to the HS when He leads you. You can exhibit this fruit of self-control and form these holy habits that will be instruments to be renewing your mind – that will, as O. Chambers says, "keep your soul fit." This is a background of holy habits and the need for them, but let us go on to the backbone of holy habits – accountability.

We all need someone who we can talk to and that will help us stay accountable. John Wesley had 1000s of small groups doing it. We could do it in small groups but I think we are all enjoying our time in the word, and poor Rodger and Nellie are kept up to after 10PM as it is. After prayerful consideration and what I believe to be the leading of the Spirit here is what I want to suggest to you. Your participation is completely voluntary. I would like you to take it to the Lord and ask Him yourself. If each of us could find someone inside or outside this group that they are comfortable with and that has the same desire to be accountable and then meet with them weekly, lunch, before dinner, early morning, whatever works for the two of you. Last resort would be a phone meeting. It must be someone who desires to grow in Christ, someone who you can trust to be confidential. It should be known at the start that no one else will ever be told what is said between the two of you, not as a prayer request or even a hint of a need.

When you get together, ask each other what real steps the Lord has been asking you to do. For many of us it may be the challenge of being daily in the word. So you could ask them to check on your faithfulness to that commitment. I'm going to challenge you with some other things that may become a part of it. I told most of you how Mariko asks me if I have had sufficient prayer time.

Let me also suggest though that it be someone of the same sex, someone outside your family, someone who will be consistent to meet with you. Elders should meet with elders unless you are mentoring someone that is fairly mature, for often your burden will be someone in the fellowship. You should ask the Lord to direct you to that person and then watch how the Lord answers. In your time together you can pray for each other's needs as well as your consistency in obedience to the Holy Spirit. You might begin by asking what the HS is leading you to do. The answer may be the same for some time until you form that holy habit. This is where we begin. Finding someone to pray with, that will hold you accountable. If the first person doesn't work out ask the Lord to lead you to another.

If we don't do that you know what happens? We hear something in a sermon or as we read the word and we have every intention of doing it. We may even write it down and make a plan. But if we don't have someone to keep us accountable, 9 times out of 10 the cares of daily life crowd out that leading of the HS and we end up with the thought as a distant memory. "Oh well, maybe some other time in life we'll get to it." Probably not, the Lord directed you to that instruction because it is something you need right now. And when you know you are going to see John or Jane this week and they will ask you, it gives you that little extra push to get to it. The prayers of that partner are a powerful aid in helping you form that holy habit.

So that is the first holy habit I present to you, accountability. Now I am going to keep you accountable to find an accountability or prayer partner. If you don't believe the Holy Spirit is leading you to do so just tell me so. That's ok! The Lord Jesus is your Great Shepherd and I trust you to get your directions from Him. If it takes awhile that is ok too. I want you to be led to the right person.

Let me sum up. We all know we need to be more Christ like. It will happen slowly and eventually but I believe we all desire to be faithful to the HS and His leading. The faster we allow change the better. To do that it would be helpful to have a brother or sister to pray with us and keep us accountable. Let the Lord lead you to the right person, you may already know who it should be. Youth – this includes you too. Be sure you find a strong believer who wants the same thing. Pr 27:9,17 1Sam 23:16, 2Sam 10:11,12, Job 4:3,4 Is35:3,4 Heb 10:24

Questions? Comments?