

SCREEN: Get Healthy

Last month I told you that I resolved to get healthy this year.

And I told you because I read that sharing a resolution makes it more likely we'll keep it, because others can support us.

I also shared that I struggled with my resolution in the first part of January.

I took some time off, then went to Honduras so for a few weeks I didn't exercise and didn't watch my diet.

But after the mission trip I decided,

"My resolution really begins now and this time I mean it!"

Now I'm exercising, eating right, and seeing some progress with my resolution.

It's never too late to choose to get healthy....never too late.

I turned 60 in December.

My mom is 86 years old.

She does chair yoga at her retirement community, how's that for inspiration?!?

Healthy living is not just good for me, it's essential so I can serve God and others.

But the journey to wellness isn't easy; it involves pain and sacrifice *and* discipline.

For me it means making small choices every day:

like the time I get up in the morning and when I go to bed,

how I schedule my day and what I choose to eat.

Lots of small choices lead to success with the big choice.

SCREEN: I Choose main screen

This is week three of our message series titled, *I Choose*.

We've been learning about some fundamental choices

we need to make so we can truly serve God and others.

This week we're being asked to choose: *discipline over regret*.

Discipline over regret.

Let's turn to the readings.

So today was the second time in this series we heard from the Prophet Jeremiah.

Just a quick refresher: Jeremiah was called by God to tell the king and the people of Judah that they needed to change. They'd made a lot of bad choices and their spiritual health was lousy. But no one wanted to hear his message.

Jeremiah was the most unpopular person in Judah.

He was arrested, thrown in prison, beaten, and nearly died.

Jeremiah succeeded by choosing purpose over popularity...

God's purpose for his life over the comfortable life he wanted.

And because he made that fundamental choice,

here we are 26 centuries later talking about him.

Today Jeremiah offered words of encouragement to all those who want to serve the Lord.

He wrote:

**SCREEN: Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD,
whose hope is the LORD.**

**He is like a tree planted beside the waters
that stretches out its roots to the stream:
it fears not the heat when it comes;
its leaves stay green;
in the year of drought it shows no distress,
but still bears fruit.**

Now I love Jeremiah's image of the tree.

No tree becomes big and strong overnight.

It takes years for it to become healthy and mature.

A tree needs nourishment to survive.

And Jeremiah is teaching us how to make the right choices in life and be blessed by God.

He says, be like that tree beside the water, stay close to the Lord always, and you'll stay spiritually healthy and bear fruit.

In the Gospel today there were more blessings from God,
called beatitudes.

Jesus was speaking to people who were really poor (most people back then were),
and here's what he said:

**SCREEN: Blessed are you who are poor,
for the kingdom of God is yours.**

**Blessed are you who are now hungry,
for you will be satisfied.**

**Blessed are you who are now weeping,
for you will laugh.**

**Blessed are you when people hate you,
and when they exclude and insult you,
and denounce your name as evil
on account of the Son of Man.**

**Rejoice and leap for joy on that day!
Behold, your reward will be great in heaven.**

So again, there's that fundamental choice:
choose your life now, as hard as it can be,
be disciplined and one day God will bless you.

You may not experience blessings and material riches and ease and comfort today,
but God blesses his children with far greater things in eternal life.

**SCREEN: Discipline is choosing between what you want NOW
over what you want MOST.**

I've been talking a lot about discipline, what is it?

Here's a definition one pastor uses and I think it's perfect for this message:

Discipline is choosing between what you want NOW over what you want MOST.

What you want NOW over what you want most.

So it's choosing the pain of discipline today over
the pain of regret tomorrow.

You and I will experience a lot of pain in life.

And so much of it is beyond our control.

A health crisis comes out of nowhere,
you lose your job or have your salary cut,
your family is suffering, the economy is uncertain,
the government in turmoil, the Church is in crisis.
These are things largely out of your control.

But some pain is within your control and you need to choose the pain.

Let me give a couple examples.

In a family, kids have to choose the pain of obeying their parents today
or face the consequences tomorrow.

Here's another example: if you want to be financially healthy,
you have to choose the pain of living within your means today or
face a mountain of debt tomorrow.

To achieve any goal in life you must choose discipline now over regret later.

Discipline comes from the same Latin word for *disciple*.

A disciple is a student, a follower of the teacher.

To be spiritually disciplined means following God's way in your life.

This has the power to completely change the direction of your life.

And to help you, I'm going to ask two questions so you
can get clear about where you are headed in life.

SCREEN: What do you want most?

Question #1: What do you want most?

What do you want most in life, right now?

For some of you it might be like me,

"I want to get healthy."

Maybe it's, *"I want to get out of debt."*

Or, *"I need to spend more quality time with my family."*

What do you want most right now?

Name one thing and put it in your mind right now.

I even suggest you write it down so it's really clear to you.

Once you've named that one thing you want most,

here's the second question:

SCREEN: What do you need to choose now, to achieve what you want most?

If you want to get healthy, what can you choose now to start the journey to health?

You could make a doctor's appointment this week, join a gym,

get a personal trainer, find someone to walk with,

take your treadmill out of storage in the garage.

All things you can do now, this week.

If you said you want to spend more time with family,

schedule a date night or family night.

If it's get out of debt, a first step is to talk to your banker or an accountant.

And if you said you want to get closer to God,

start tomorrow with 10 minutes of prayer.

Anyone who has achieved success in life will tell you that it was

the daily discipline of lots of small, consistent choices that

got them to where they are now.

They will also say that they did not become successful on their own.

Who needs to be part of your discipline?

You need God and you need other people.

You can try to go it alone, but it's so much easier and you're more likely to succeed

with God's help and the support of others.

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Next weekend we'll conclude this series with two incredible opportunities

to choose discipline over regret.

The first is an invitation to offer a prayer of personal commitment to Christ.

The prayer is here on the takeaway (hold up),

If you haven't gotten one be sure to get one before you leave, they're at the exits.

Begin praying the prayer of commitment now.

Next week after the dismissal you'll be invited forward to offer your prayer either standing or kneeling....your choice.

You'll quietly offer your prayer and then leave your prayer in front of the altar.

We'll have extra copies next week.

I know for some of you this will be your first ever personal commitment offered in this way.

For others, maybe you've been committed but have gotten into a rut or feel stuck.

This can be a powerful, life changing moment, taking a step towards Christ.

And then, you'll need to take your next step.

After you offer your prayer, sign up for a Lenten small group.

For 5 weeks in Lent, meet for 90 minutes, with a small group of other parishioners.

Small groups pray together, discuss the series, and support each other.

Our Lenten message series is titled, *Everyone Always*, based on a book by Bob Goff of the same title.

It's his take on who and how we must love.

As Jesus commands, we must love *Everyone, Always!*

Those who sign up for a Lenten group will get the book next week (it's just \$5) and it will be available to everybody else the following weekend.

So a big weekend coming up, with great opportunities to choose God and your faith.

No one ever gets to the end of their life and says,

I wished I spent more time at the office!

No, the regret is: *I wished I'd spent more time with my family, my friends; wished I'd been more prayerful, more generous in helping others.*

I truly believe that if you do NOT do something now about that thing which you want the most, it could become your biggest regret.

Don't be that person.

Decide to change and take a step.

Choose discipline over regret. Amen. +