

PRAYER AND INTENTIONAL EVANGELISM

Slice of P.I.E. Newsletter

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We hope this newsletter is an encouragement to all. Our goal is to try to include quarterly resources for the things that we all need to think about. Whether we all agree or not, some of the issues will help us to be, at the least, informed.

We here at Dunkirk Baptist Church wish to be a resource for you and your family. We are a safe place where we can grow together as family and friends.

Please join us Sundays at 9AM for Sunday School, available for all ages; and Worship service at 10:30AM. To contact us, email pray4u@dunkirkbaptistchurch.org.

God

Are Christians Hypocrites?

Before we jump into this conversation, let's first define the term hypocrite. To be a hypocrite is to be an actor – pretending to be someone or something you are not. Now let's define a Christian hypocrite. Someone pretending to be holy without truly being holy. Do Christians pretend to be holy without actually being holy? Some do.... But some lawyers and politicians disregard the integrity of the law and the American judicial system. Some doctors see patients as dollar signs with little regard to the Hippocratic Oath. And some parents see their children as a responsibility rather than a blessing. The fact is, hypocrisy is embedded into society – not just the Christian community.

That said, let's discuss the idea of Christian hypocrisy and the reality of holiness. Aren't Christians supposed to be holy and sinless? What happens when a Christian does something not-so-holy? Perhaps not-so-holy behavior, also known as sin, is where the heart of Christian hypocrisy is rooted. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23). This verse isn't targeted towards those "outside the church doors." Sin isn't a Christian code word that distinguishes "us" from "them." Sin includes everyone. Even the churchgoers. Moreover, the verb have sinned in Romans 3:23 doesn't even mean past tense. It means that there is no point in our human lives in which we can look at ourselves and claim holiness and perfection. Ever. We all miss the mark – which is what sin is. We all fall short of the standards that define God. Christians included!

Therefore, holiness has to come from God. It's not a result of self-achievement, motivation or personal sacrifice. Romans 5:8 tells us, "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." In other words, as not-so-holy sinners, Christ made the ultimate sacrifice to save us! While we still fall short of God's glory, His holiness is now shaping our lives. The "we" that Romans 5:8 identifies is everyone. Christ's sacrifice, and offer of holiness is for all people. Those of us who fall short and miss the mark through not-so-holy, sinful lives. The only thing we need to do to experience His holiness in our lives is to admit we can't be holy through our own merit because of our sin. Ask God for forgiveness and allow Him to begin to change us.

Sin doesn't distinguish the Christian from the non-Christian. In God's eyes, everyone falls short and needs His help. To be Christian means to accept His free offer of forgiveness from the not-so-holy things we do and to allow Him to create in us a new, holy life.

If you would like to talk to someone further about how you can experience God's forgiveness and transforming holiness please feel free call us at Dunkirk Baptist Church at 301-855-3555.

COMING - NEXT EDITION: *What's the Purpose of Going to Church?*

Family

The Institution of Marriage is Good!

What a marvelous concept marriage is. It was designed by the Creator in the Garden of Eden as the first institution, even before He created government or the Church. It was His gracious gift to humankind. Who can comprehend the mysterious bonding that enables a man and a woman to withstand the storms of life and remain best friends "'til death do us part?" Admittedly, marriage isn't always successful, but this is how it was designed.

Let's look one more time at the divine plan spelled out in Genesis 2:24: "For this cause, a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh."

Family

The Institution of Marriage is Good! (con't)

With those 22 words, we find the origin of the family, which presaged the dawn of civilization. Despite today's skeptics who claim that marriage is an outmoded and narrow-minded Christian notion, the desire of a man and woman to "leave and cleave" has survived and thrived as an institution through times of prosperity, famine, wars, peace, epidemics, and every other circumstance and condition. Marriage has been the bedrock of culture in Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, South America, Australia, and even the Arctic. If it were not divinely ordered, it wouldn't have endured and flourished through the millennia.

Given this history, one might begin to suspect that something unique is operating within human nature that draws the sexes together, not just occasionally for purposes of reproduction as with animals—but to satisfy an inexpressible longing for spiritual, emotional and physical union. Indeed, how can it be doubted? Clearly, our Creator placed this desire for intimacy and companionship deep within the souls of men and women.

Let me speak candidly to those who might have grown disenchanted with their spouses and are contemplating a way out of what feels like a "loveless marriage." If that describes you, divorce might have emerged as an option. You might be fantasizing about finding someone "out there" who could be everything you need him or her to be. Perhaps another relationship will satisfy the "soul hunger" inside. Beware! There is danger down that road. You might exchange one "less-than-ideal" partner for another. If he or she has been divorced, you might wonder why. The one to whom you are attracted could also still be married. Then an affair looms. Even if you find a new mate, you might not be what he or she expects of you. Marriage on the rebound always brings surprises. Someone said, "The grass is greener on the other side of the fence but it still has to be mowed."

What will you do if you marry someone new and begin to get bored again in a few years? Will another divorce be the answer?

Probably not. Some years ago, researchers from American Values in New York conducted a longitudinal study of marriage that still stands as a landmark. It sought to answer the question, "Does Divorce Make People Happy?" The investigators interviewed 5232 adults, among whom were 645 who reported themselves to be unhappily married. Five years later these same unhappy individuals were interviewed again. The findings were astounding. Among those who initially rated their marriages as "very unhappy," but remained together, nearly 80 percent considered themselves "happily married" five years later.

Surprisingly, (or perhaps unsurprisingly when we consider God's design), the opposite was found to be true for those who divorced. The researchers concluded that divorce frequently fails to make people happy because, while it might provide a respite from the pain associated with a bad marriage, it also introduces a host of complex new emotional and psychological difficulties over which the parties involved have little control. They include child-custody battles, emotionally scarred children, economic hardships, future romantic disappointments, and so on. This helps explain why of all the unhappy spouses in the initial survey, only 19 percent of those who divorced or separated were happy five years later. This is in stark contrast to the 8 out of 10 of those who stayed married and said they were "much happier" five years down the line.¹

These studies are not dated currently, but they are the best evidence we have that divorce appears not to produce happiness, while sticking it out often does. They also suggest that the God-ordained institution of marriage is beneficial to men and women in society, and that divorce is a damaging deviation from our Creator's divine plan. I want to hasten to acknowledge at this point that divorces don't always reflect a desire of spouses to be happier. Many families are horribly dysfunctional and are tragic beyond words. They may involve physical abuse, unfaithfulness, and addictions. My wife, Shirley, had an alcoholic father who did everything wrong. I am well acquainted with seemingly impossible situations that tear homes apart. Please don't interpret what I have written as minimizing or overlooking the wrenching pain or the complex issues that bring families down. If I have implied anything of the sort, that is not my intent. I do believe, however, that some people "give up" on a marriage far too quickly, and there may be even greater pain for them by moving on. Perhaps some of these families can be saved if given time, Christian counseling, spiritual guidance, and a desire to make it work.

If you and your spouse have a relationship with Jesus Christ and will diligently seek His help, you'll find that He cares for you. He created the institution of marriage and He wants it to succeed! Ask Him for wisdom, grace and healing of wounds that still exist. Then, forge ahead in His power, remembering that "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

James C Dobson PH.D
 Founder and President
 Dr. James Dobson Family Institute

1. Waite, Linda J (January 2002), Does Divorce Make People Happy?, Institute for American Values, 2002. Web
2. ibid
3. Unites States Census Bureau (October 22, 2014), 10 Percent of Grandparents Live With a Grandchild, United States Census Bureau, 2014. Web

COMING UP - NEXT ISSUE: "7 Ways to Keep your Marriage Healthy"

Health

"A Message to Women" *Why Do I Feel Insignificant?* (Author Julie Clinton)

The opposite of security is insecurity, and the only way to overcome insecurity is to take risks." (Theodore Forstmann)

Growing up, most girls struggle with their looks and feelings of self-worth. Remember the horn that popped up on the absolute tip of your nose—the one you were sure everyone in the whole school could see from 50 feet? As women, we still often feel less than adequate. Bad hair days. Fat days. Not feeling loved, cared for, appreciated, or worthwhile. We work hard to keep our lives and our families' lives balanced. But the rewards often seem limited—very limited. And when we're not rewarded, we can sometimes feel as if what we're doing is meaningless and that we are worthless. If we are not careful, these feelings can lead to poor decisions, mistakes, and regrets.

We are insecure when we are not confident or feel unsafe. But that safety has nothing to do with the environment we're in or the people around us. Instead, it has everything to do with how we see ourselves. Most of the time, the way we see ourselves is based on our performance or on the way we think others see us. That's a prescription for disaster. Our focus must be on Christ and what He sees in us.

Why? Because you begin to build your self-worth by understanding how much God really loves you. But unfortunately, most women don't believe that God really does love them. Even if we say we believe it, we don't live as if we do.

We say we believe these things. Yet, we do things that contradict what we say we believe. If we really believe we are fearfully and wonderfully made, why are we constantly comparing ourselves to others?

- "Look how thin she is."
- "She is so organized."
- "I wish I were as close to the Lord as she is."

We do ourselves and those we compare ourselves to a grave injustice. Rarely do we compare ourselves to somebody we think inferior to us. We measure ourselves against those who we see as better than us or those who have something we want.

Comparing leads to coveting, to envying what others have. Wishing you had her money, her looks, her body, her good fortune, her favor. I've done it myself. And this insecurity is like a cancer that consumes the heart. You start to feel sorry for yourself and jealous of the life others live. When this happens, resentment and bitterness can take root. We can even become angry at God for making our life less appealing than others' lives.

The only way to stop the cancer of insecurity from spreading is to find contentment, to live out the truths of who we are in Christ. Here's how:

Look back and be honest. Where do your insecurities come from? Were you bullied growing up? Did you somehow get the message that you just aren't quite good enough? Did you always have to perform to be loved? Did family dysfunctions or secrets cause you to live in fear as a child? Have repeated disappointments led you to believe you just don't have what it takes?

You can begin to release the hold insecurity has on you by being clear about what you are insecure about, accepting responsibility for it as your own, and turning it into a positive motivator for thinking about yourself in an admirable way.

Be thankful, pray, and think. Freedom comes by way of godliness and by living according to Philippians 4:8: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

Thinking on what is pure and lovely, admirable and noble, empowers you to think accurately about who you are. When you're feeling insecure and you start comparing yourself to others, you need to stop, recognize what's going on, clean up your thought life, and move forward.

See the value of others. Comparing yourself to others can be instructive when you use it as a constructive motivator for positive change in your life. It's also instructive when you're willing to examine it and ask, "Why do I feel this way?" More importantly, you have to answer the question honestly and then listen to what you learn about yourself through the answer. As you dig deeper in the Word and see all that God has created you to be, your insecurity will also fall away. Your status as a child of the King will begin to eclipse the specifics of life that led to your insecurities in the first place. You will see yourself and the events in your life in a whole new way when you understand that regardless of how insecure you feel, how bereft or lost you feel, or how painful life gets, God created your innermost being and knit you together in your mother's womb. Meditating on His confidence in you will help your own self-confidence.

When insecurity threatens, remember that you are fearfully and wonderfully made.

COMING - NEXT EDITION: "*Health: A Message for Men*"

FINANCES

“Why Your Teen Needs a Job” (Author Maek Gregston)

There was a time when working as a teenager wasn't just normal—it was expected. Whether you were flipping patties at the local restaurant or sacking groceries on weekday afternoons, most teens had a job outside of school. But a lot has changed over the years, and the average teen today has no idea what it means to be in the workforce. This detachment from real-world responsibility goes hand-in-hand with the immaturity and entitled nature we see in so many kids of this generation. But our teens want and need real opportunities to grow, to mature, and to take more responsibility in their own lives. And one of the best ways to do that is by working a job.

The Fundamental Importance of a Job:

The lessons that our kids learn by having a job go well beyond the simple dos and don'ts of fulfilling a task. For starters, holding a job will inevitably turn them into better listeners, because it isn't enough for them to think they know what their boss wants, or to guess what their client needs. They have to be attentive to other people, and they have to be willing to take direction. Simply saying 'no' and walking off to another room isn't usually an option in the real world, and the sooner our kids realize this, the better.

Another great gift of having a job is the development of life skills and motivation. There's a tendency in our culture to give kids whatever they want, when they want it, all the time. And so our teens grow up without having any needs. If we were to simply stop giving them everything and start letting them meet some of their own needs, we would actually be providing them with a far greater gift. It's like the old saying, "If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." Sometimes, by trying to give too much to our teens, we actually deny them the very skills and motivation they need to thrive in the real world.

When our teens take on a job and start managing their own work, they're also introduced to the management of money. The number one problem that newlyweds deal with in the first year of marriage is their finances, and that issue often bleeds into many other areas of the relationship. Learning how to manage money—how to save, how to give, and how to make more—is absolutely crucial for your child's future. As their parent, it's your job to help make sure they learn these lessons early. Now, when our teens don't live up to the expectations of their job and start neglecting their responsibilities, what happens? They get fired. That may seem scary, but the truth is that even in losing their job, there are still some major lessons to be learned. Being fired is a powerful way to learn about consequences, dedication, and resilience. Through securing, maintaining, and even losing a job, our teens establish a greater sense of responsibility they cannot learn anywhere else.

One of the Greatest Gifts a Job Can Offer:

Finally, perhaps one of the greatest gifts that a job can offer our kids is the ability to start learning about themselves. No matter what type of work they start off in, they'll begin discovering what they actually like, what they're capable of, what they're interested in, and what they don't want any part of. A job gives our teens an opportunity to really answer the question, "Is this what I want to do with my life?" Perhaps their first job makes them realize they need more education or experience to accomplish the things they want. Or they may discover that working with food (or animals, or people, or whatever the case may be) doesn't really suit them. It's one thing to look at the future and imagine what life could be. But when our teens take a step into that future and start tasting the reality of what they're considering, they can develop a motivation for change that's based on truth and certainty. No amount of after-school activities, social clubs, sports programs or music lessons can replace the education and life skills gained at work. And even though most kids aren't terribly eager to start punching the clock, it's our job to encourage them to get up, get out there, and take this crucial next step in defining their future!

Conclusion:

Parent... it's amazing to me how teens begin to change once they're paid to do a job. They learn to listen to someone else, they learn the value of a dollar, they understand what it means to work rather than feeling entitled, and they learn what it means to serve others. These lessons can only be learned by holding a job that gives them a taste of what their future life will be and gives them the encouragement to prepare themselves for that future. Your teen can learn life lessons from someone other than you, while at the same time validating what you've been trying to teach them for years. And they will one day thank you for pushing them to become financially responsible and breaking their sense of entitlement.

COMING - NEXT EDITION: *"Two Ways to Turn Work Into Worship"*