

Theme: False Christian Assumptions

Assumption 2 "If I'm spiritual enough, I'll have no pain or sin."

Ted was discouraged. In fact, he felt so depressed that he wondered if he really were a Christian. To fight against his feelings of depression, he increased his Bible study and listened to all the spiritual life tapes he could get his hands on. But he only felt more depressed. Because of some things he had been taught in church, Ted believed that his feelings of depression must be the result of a spiritual failure.

Like many Christians, Ted subscribed to this false assumption: "If I'm spiritual enough, I will have no pain or imperfections." People who live under the cloud of this assumption see only two options: 1) try harder at the spiritual disciplines; or 2) give up on the spiritual life altogether. Perhaps the best-known individual who learned this spiritual lesson was Job.

A. The example of Job

B. Ways we try to avoid pain

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

C. Not all negative feelings are sin; but what happens if/when we think this way?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

D. You will suffer pain. You will sin.

1. Sinfulness is normal
2. Negative feelings are normal, not sinful, when they arise from a sin against you.
3. We need to deal appropriately with both sets of feelings
4. The gospel is grace, and we must grow in it

The Bible teaches that we will have pain, that we will sin, and that, because of the grace of God, we are free to face these things (Hebrews 10.22-26). Furthermore, because God accepts our fallenness, we can too. We don't need to hide from it anymore. We must take our pain and imperfection to God and to each other where we will find healing that leads to love and good deeds.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you ever believe that once you became a Christian you should not experience any more pain – that you would somehow be perfect?
2. Have you ever found yourself avoiding sinful tendencies and pain within yourself by denying it, doing works, or condemning it with the law? What kind of fruit did it produce in your life?
3. What emotions do you believe “good” Christians shouldn’t feel? What feelings are not godly, not the fruit of the Spirit, and therefore “not to be felt?”
4. Denying our sinfulness is natural. Who wants to claim ugly sins such as bitterness, envy, or hatred? But what about negative feelings that are not sinful? What negative feelings (pain, grief, anger, sadness, fear, etc) do you sometimes feel?
5. If you are taught that spirituality means no pain or sinfulness, you will bear a variety of bad fruit. What will you do to replace that crop with the good fruit God longs for you to experience?

For further study/discussion

Read 1 John 1:8 and Mark 7:20-23

Being an imperfect human being is normal – it is reality. Failure is also normal. When you find in yourself the things Jesus mentioned in Mark 7, don’t fear them, own them. God is gracious. We need to accept the presence of badness within us.

Read Psalms 62:8 and James 5:16

We must confess and forsake our sins. We must also take our pain – our sadness, grief, hurt, abandonment, woundedness, and rejection – to God and to others where it can be loved and healed. After we have received grace we must give it in the form of forgiving those who have wronged us.