

Theme: False Christian Assumptions

Assumption 6 “Shoulds are good”

Henry grew up reading the Bible every day because He loved it. From fourth grade on, he would read his Bible every night. When Henry got to college, He joined a discipleship group that enforced a daily quiet time. Every week the group would ask, “Are you having your quiet time?” He began to dread the question, and suddenly when he didn’t read his Bible or pray every day he felt guilty. Reading his Bible, which he had always loved doing, had become a requirement with negative consequences. Henry had moved out of a world of “want to’s” and into the world of “shoulds.”

The word “should” expresses obligation, compulsion, and duty. It implies that we have no choice; that if we do other than we should, we are bad or condemned.

A. Why we think we are not free (“have to” vs. “want to”)

B. When we’re under the law...

1. The law brings wrath
2. We are condemned
3. We are separated from love
4. Sin increases
5. We gain no benefit

C. Shoulds as standards

D. The real problem (and solution)

E. “The freedom to live” and “A life of freedom”

1. Love and relationships
2. Performance

Discussion Questions:

1. How do the “shoulds” keep us from fulfilling our purpose as Christians, to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength?
2. Why do we have a tendency to put other people under the law by criticizing them and being angry with them when they fail our expectations?
3. What should govern how you live? What have you been doing because you should be doing it and not because you want to be doing it?
4. How can you change your “should” to a “want to” (see Romans 8:1-2)?

Once you break free from the “shoulds,” you will start to live, finding true freedom to desire God and His life.

For further study/discussion

Read Matthew 22:37-40

Our goal as Christians is to love the Lord our God with everything we’ve got. But we cannot really love Him until we are free to *not* love Him. Serving God from a sense of obligation rather than from genuine love is a problem. We must perceive our freedom to choose, and freedom comes through grace. Though we are saved by grace through faith, we can still be very much under law in our life experience. Living under law produces the feeling that if we do not do as we should, we are bad or condemned and deserved to be punished. To the degree that we experience guilt, anger, and loss of love when we do not do as we should, we are still under the law.

Read Hebrews 12:2

Coming out from under the law means changing our “have tos” to “want tos.” But we may not always feel like doing what is right; Jesus certainly didn’t feel like going to the cross. But He did it because He wanted what it would produce: a redeemed body of people who have freely chosen to love Him. Likewise, we may not want to do individual deeds of obedience, but we do want the end result of our deeds. Many times we must do what we don’t want to do in the immediate moment in order to get what we want in the future. Maturity expects delayed gratification. That is the true “want to.”