

Theme: False Christian Assumptions

Assumption 8 “If I make right choices I will grow spiritually”

As Laura listened to the sermon on Sunday morning she grew more and more discouraged. She had come to church yearning for help. At 31, she was back in another hurtful romantic relationship and still didn't own her life. She couldn't stand up to her mother, who manipulated her life, and couldn't follow through on diets. She was weak-willed in most areas of her life. As the pastor ended his sermon he said, “It all comes down to choices. People choose to do what they want to do. If you really want to live for God, you will. By an act of will, you will stop sinning, choose God's ways over your own, and make right choices. Go from here today and make right choices!” Laura's heart sank. She had tried to make right choices for years, but didn't have the willpower to do it. If this was God's offer, then she had no hope. Slipping out of church, she glumly drove to her boyfriend's house. At least she wouldn't be alone.

A. Just say NO!

Why doesn't it work (all the time)?

B. Internal conflict

C. How do we grow?

1. Bad out, good in
2. Right vs. pure intentions
3. Spiritual growth leads to right choices

Discussion Questions:

1. Willpower fails. With the best intentions, we choose one thing (by an act of the will) and then do the opposite. Like Paul, we don't do what we want to do and we hate what we do (Romans 7.15). If making right choices is our only hope, we are indeed hopeless. Jesus calls us to love God with our entire person, not just our will or intellect (Matthew 22.37). What does this picture of an integrated person say about why we can't overcome compulsive behavior by simply deciding to?
2. Spiritual growth involves both cultivating the good and weeding out the bad. Too many of us usually work only on one of these tasks. We must, however, add what good things we need as well as uncover the bad things – both internal and external – and turn from them. What happens when we only deal with one of these tasks?
3. Making right choices is a result of spiritual growth. In fact, the ability to make right choices is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5.22). Look at the list below of choices we can make. Explain how these choices assume weakness and humility.
 - Confess our sins
 - Give up the notion that we can save ourselves
 - Submit our inability to God
 - Ask for help in searching for our faults
 - Repent
 - Take account of our needs and let others meet them
 - Make amends
 - Forgive
 - Invest and practice talents
 - Seek God
 - Seek truth
 - Love one another

Instead of trying to make right choices, surrender your inability to God, be humble, be unable, and allow Him to begin the process of spiritual growth in you. As you cooperate with Him, in due season you will produce fruit!

For further study/discussion

Read Romans 8:1-4 and Galatians 5:16, 18

The transforming power we have within us is not our human willpower but the power of the Holy Spirit. God triumphs over the power of sin with the power of His Spirit. It is then up to us to tap into this life-changing power by connecting to God through prayer and connecting to the members of His body. This is how we receive the grace and truth necessary to be transformed into His image.