

Repentance and Recovery

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[0:00] Well, in the past couple weeks or so, we've been focusing on what happens in the life of an individual after they've been confronted with truth by those who love them enough to come alongside them and share the truth with them after they've been struggling or while they've been struggling with addictions.

Whatever those addictions might be, not just alcohol and drugs that would be the ones that we'd normally think of, but many other things that we would tend to use for purposes for which they weren't created by God and using those as substitutes to accomplish something that we should be getting from God.

We want peace, safety, security, etc. in our lives. Well, we're designed as God's creatures to worship Him and to pursue Him in His ways, in His counsel, follow His counsel.

And those things are a result of the work of His Holy Spirit who works in us, leads us in that way, produces that. And then we work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and keeping in step with those desires He places within our hearts and looking for ways in which we can really live out those words, those actions, those desires that really come from the Spirit of God.

And last week we took a look at one of the initial expressions of what true repentance looks like and that was in our expression, verbal expression of confession of sin to God.

[1:41] I mentioned how it just seems like the natural follow-up as a result of the Spirit's work in our lives to speak to God, to admit our sin to Him and to call on Him for the help that we need.

Can I move this down a little bit then every time I look? You know what I'm talking about. Okay. So those inner changes that are taking place, those changes in what we love and what we think about God and ourselves and His creation around us really affects us.

And it's going to lead to changes outwardly, as I just mentioned, with confession of sin to God. Psalm 32.5 says, Then I acknowledged my sin to you. I did not cover up my iniquity.

I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the guilt of my sin. So that reality of what has taken place inside, David wanting to express that outwardly to God.

No longer do I want to cover this up. And it actually makes no sense to think that we're actually covering up from a God who is omniscient and knows everything.

[3:02] So that's part of that deceptive thinking. So what David's doing here is just living in the reality of who God is. I said, I'll confess my transgressions to you and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

So there's that relief, that peace and rest that comes from doing the things that are reasonable in our relationship with the Holy God after we've sinned.

So true repentance also moves us to restore broken relationships with other people. Now here I'm going to make a big skip in some information.

Because the second part of that lesson last week dealt with confession of sin to others and seeking to restore those relationships. And that's information that we went over a number of weeks ago when I think it was we listened to some tapes by Ken Sandy.

And he provided the seven steps in confessing your sin to others that are very helpful. And I've got that in my notes from last week.

[4:10] If you want that information, just let me know. I can email it to you or you can go on Peacemaker Ministries' website. They also have those listed there. You can get his book, The Peacemaker, by Ken Sandy that has lots of helpful information.

That's been one of those books that I've gotten and I've held on to over the years because it's one you go back to over and over again. Just learning, well, how should I respond now in this situation?

They also have a book, Peacemaking. I can't remember the exact title. Peacemaking in the Family as well. That's a little bit more targeted toward those conflicts that take place in the family.

And some steps that we can take to labor toward peace in our family. So lots of opportunities for you to get that information. So I'm going to defer to those resources and move on to what I really want to cover this morning.

Because true repentance even will also have steps beyond that initial confession of sin. The way those new desires work out.

[5:20] Of course, it translates really into a whole new way of living. There's a new orientation to my life now. And that new orientation is I'm the person of Jesus Christ.

Living out these truths that I came to believe in the gospel message. And many other truths that I'm going to learn in the scriptures. And so repentance really is an ongoing process.

We call it sanctification. And this growth and godliness that's taking place in our lives. And as we're growing in godliness, we're learning some things that really were part of my life in the past.

That no longer should be a part of my life. In fact, they were contributing to my life. Life of sin. A life of independence from God.

And now I'm learning new ways of living. Ways that are from the wise counsel of God to us as his people. And as I learn those new principles, those new truths, I want them to be a part of my life out of this new desire to love God and love others.

[6:33] And those principles, the way of wisdom reaches into every sphere of my life. I'm not making this distinction between what happens to me and how I live at work or school or at home, at church.

The Christian life and God's counsel reaches into every area of our lives. And I think there were times in my life, probably your life as well, that we got to that place where we weren't really carrying these truths with us throughout every aspect of our day and our lives.

And of course, in our culture, as things have gone throughout history, there's this separation between what is true, what is of God, and what is not of God.

It's just grown more and more. So that to see God and his truth and principles in these various spheres of life, it's very unusual. I mean, you don't go to work and have the supervisor or whoever's in charge tell you, well, we're going to train you how you should do your job.

And in that training, there's some biblical principles of how you glorify God in your work. You don't hear that. You don't experience that. That's how much truth has been separated from our daily life.

[7 : 58] Well, as Christians, we're seeking to turn that around so that we see the wisdom of God for life in every sphere of life and live that out.

And so we see this contrast of what needs to be put off, what is part of the past life, and what's part of my new life, and how repentance is supposed to work in the scriptures over and over again.

And 1 Timothy 4, 7, and 8 is one of those verses, as Paul was writing to Timothy, a minister of the gospel. He says, have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales.

And so there were certain things, even in his ministry, that shouldn't be a part of how he conducts ministry to those that he's serving. But then on the other side, there's this other focus that Timothy was to have, and it says, rather train yourself to be godly.

And that can be translated, well, now instead of this, orient your life, orient your ministry in this new direction. There's a new orientation you have for your life and your ministry.

[9 : 08] And it all goes in this direction of godliness. He says, for physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things.

You see the comprehensive nature of that. So godliness reaches into every sphere of our lives, and there's advantage to the individual in what they're doing on a daily basis to orient their life in all spheres in this direction of godliness.

So I'm thinking about, well, how do I conduct my work? Or how do I go to school and learn and relate to my neighbor and work at home, mother, wife, husband, on and on we could go in such a way that I'm headed in this direction of godliness.

Ephesians 4, 17, really all the way through to chapter 5, is another set of verses that describe this, as Paul, in previous verses and chapters, really focused on their new position, their new standing in Christ Jesus to these believers.

And then in chapter 4, verse 17, he says, So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as Gentiles do. I mean, that's pretty strong teaching he's given to these people.

[10 : 29] Out of love for God's glory, their welfare, he's helping them understand this is something that has to be part of your life. And what has to be part of your life is that this is not part of your life.

I insist on it in the Lord. You no longer live as the Gentiles do, the unsaved believers. That culture, that thinking, that way of doing things that was so much a part of your life, at least those things that were contrary to godliness and all that's associated with Jesus Christ, you know, that no longer should be a part of your life.

And he explains why. He describes it as futility in their thinking. So there's a wrong way of thinking that's taking place in the lives of us when we were unbelievers that led us to live in such a way that wasn't characteristic of a person who is in Christ Jesus.

And he describes further in verse 18, they are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

And in the rest of the chapter, verse 22, it says, therefore put off the things that were part of their old life associated with the old man to be made new in the attitude of their mind and then to put on the new self that's created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

[12 : 00] And then it gives them various examples of what that would look like. Listen, in the past when you spoke lies or falsehood, no, put that off. Instead, speak the truth.

If you found that you were given to sinful anger, no, put that off. And instead, put on practices that would solve problems in a way that would honor and glorify God and good for you and solutions.

If you are one who are stealing in the past, don't steal it anymore, but rather work with your hands and give to those who are in need. And on and on it goes. Even reaching into issues and attitudes of the heart, bitterness, forgiveness, don't put those off and instead replace them with love and service to others.

And then in chapter 5, in verse 3, or starting with verse 1, he says, be imitators of God. So, no longer live as an unbeliever.

Don't imitate these people. And then all this other teaching in chapter 4, chapter 5. The bottom line is, and the summary of this is, be imitators of God in Christ Jesus, therefore as dearly loved children, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

[13:22] So you see this put off, put on process that's taking place, and this to be taking place in the believer's life. Just a couple more verses, Romans 12, 1 and 2.

We're familiar with these verses, where again, the Apostle Paul writing, helping people understand and see this great contrast. He's taught them of the mercy of God and salvation.

And then in verse 1, he says, therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, in view of God and what he has done in your life, understanding that reality of what's taking place, now offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God.

Don't conform any longer to the pattern of this world, whether it's a pattern in our thinking or a pattern in the outworking of what that thinking looks like, instead, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, and then he goes on and on.

Then you'll know what is that acceptable and pleasing will of God. So this contrast, again, that he's showing in helping the people understand, this is what it looks like for the person who's come into this relationship with God and Jesus Christ and has these new desires and how that works out on a daily basis.

[14:45] In very specific ways, we are looking for how we can now offer the members of my body, my hands, eyes, my brain, my thoughts, and whatever is part of me, now offering that as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.

And then the last set of verses in Titus 2, 11 through 14, the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions.

So we see that, what used to be, again, a part of my life that I still experience to some degree as a Christian because when I became a Christian, those desires didn't disappear, they're still there and are waging war against my soul, trying to get me to turn away from the one who is my master and the wise counsel that he provides for me.

But now, when I recognize those desires, now instead I say no to those, no to ungodliness and worldly passions.

And then the other side, to live self-controlled, upright, godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness.

[16:15] So what we're doing actually is cooperating with what Jesus sought to do in sacrificing himself on the cross. When we're looking for ways in which we reorient our lives in this direction of godliness, we're seeking to live out what his purpose was that he was seeking to accomplish on the cross.

He went to the cross, offered himself to redeem us, to buy us out of that slave market, to get that bondage, and to have a people that would be for himself, a people that would find their pleasure in loving him, in walking in ways that would honor him.

Let's see. To redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

So what we're considering even this morning is what does that eagerness look like? When I'm eager to do what is good because once I'm regenerated, have a new heart, desire, love for God, the Spirit of God is going to be faithful to his ministry in planting within us desires, leadiness in ways that we should go.

What are we going to do in response to that? What does it look like for me now with these new desires? Certainly it isn't I just sit down and wait for some dust, sparkly dust to fall on me and now I've got this new life.

[18:03] No, there's going to be something that we're going to do. And so this individual who's been struggling with these addictions and us as we struggle with ours and we know that this is not where I should be.

This has more control over me than it should be. When I can't say no to something and give in on a habitual basis, something is wrong here. I'm not living in the reality of the freedom that I have in Jesus Christ to say no to something like this.

I'm misusing this created item that God has provided in this world. What has to happen? I know this is wrong. And so in love for God and others around us and out of an eagerness to do what is good as it says in this verse and out of this desire to no longer live like an unsaved person, I really am looking for how can I reorient my life in this direction of godliness.

And some of the things I'm going to share this morning, it's not an exhaustive list in any way. But we want to take a look at some of the practical things that we can do initially for how I can restructure my life.

What are some of the things in the past that I've carried over into my life that really need to change, that aren't contributing to my new walk in godliness and toward godliness?

[19:38] A quote from Brad Hambrick in his lessons Overcoming Addictions, the longer you've struggled with an addiction, the more things in your life become associated with the addiction. Activities, location, times of day, and people are just a few of the everyday things that get associated with the addiction.

One important way to manage your temptations is to rearrange your life to eliminate or limit your exposure to these temptations. Sometimes we have to be strong by actively resisting.

James 4, 7, Submit yourselves then to God, resist the devil, and he'll flee from you. But more often than not, we should be strong by wisely avoiding temptation.

Romans 13, 14, Rather clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. So we're now thinking of, yes, there's always going to be certain things I cannot avoid, and we'll talk about how we can approach those items or situations, those times of life.

But there are some things that we can take steps to avoid that will help us resist temptation ever coming up in the first place. And so that's what we're trying to look at this morning.

[21:00] Now when we think of individuals who have, again, been addicted to substances or activities, pornography, alcohol, drugs, and even some other substances as well, there might be times, and there are times, that it would be good and beneficial for that person to find, say, a residential program.

He needs a real, close, strict environment in which they can establish some new habits. And there are places like that available that fit this biblical orientation and teaching that where addiction starts and this emphasis and focus on enslavement and bondage.

Just a couple that I've got written down here. One in, I think, I'm not sure about this last one. I didn't write down where this one is located.

One in Lafayette, Indiana, through Faith Church in Lafayette, Indiana, called Vision of Hope. This is a residential program for ladies and they have, within the last year, started a residential program for men called Bethany Farms.

There's another ministry called Twelve Stones Ministry in Brown County, Indiana, for men, women, or families. It's not as long a period of time as these other residential programs are, but still is a residential intensive counseling time for people who need that time away and that real focused time.

[22:49] Another place for those in bondage to sexual immorality, Pure Life Ministries, that is a ministry for men. They have other programs available through their ministry that focus on those who say would be married to an individual or families who have an individual.

I know some people who have gone to this program and people who serve at Twelve Stones! and the other ones at Faith Church in Lafayette. Just the ones that I know of.

So there are those places out there that are available that help a person really examine their lives intensively and give them an environment which they can begin to practice some of these new habits and reorientation of life that they need before they get as they work back in gradually to regular life outside of a residential program.

But let's go on and really focus on identifying some potential outer influences to sin. And again much of the information I'm presenting this morning comes from Brad Hambrick's material on overcoming addictions.

And the first area that he mentions is the area of relationships. We have to recognize that no one in our life is neutral. People we are in relationship do have influence in our lives.

[24:16] Another quote not from Brad Hambrick but from another resource the overwhelming majority of addicts testify to the power of friendship as the single most important factor in their recoveries from addiction.

And so even in this we're focusing on and emphasizing the importance of the body of Christ. How do we come together as a body of Christ in helping each other overcome in these areas that we need reorientation and new habits of life.

What we can do is make a list of people you have relationship with who either contribute to your freedom from addiction or your bondage. Consider ways and make plans for how you can connect more with those who contribute to your freedom from addiction.

And if possible, break off relationships with those who encourage you to return to your addictions. 1 Corinthians 15:33 Don't be misled.

Bad company corrupts good character. I mean, it's very simply put, it's the truth that we know people have influence in our lives, whether for good or for bad. bad company will corrupt good character.

[25:30] Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. So you take note of that word companion, that entails a close relationship.

So there's times for those kind of relationships, but when it's in regard to a person who is not seeking to be a follower of Jesus Christ, you need to be careful of how close of a relationship that is that you're conducting with that person.

That you want to be an influence, but what is the best time, what is the best way that you can be an influence in that person's life? These are strong exhortations to us and really do have direct implication on how much we will interact with people that might be on this list.

And again, as I say, while you do want to be an influence on others who might be struggling the same way you are, it might not be the time to do it while we're seeking to develop these new habits, orient our lives in this new direction of godliness.

Brad Hamrick says, the loving thing to do is to be an example of the freedom of Christ that Christ can provide and the choices necessary to pursue that freedom.

[26:53] You don't love those people well by making their life seem okay or sabotaging your own recovery. You love them by being a light on a hill.

If they want to take the same journey, they need a mature guide. You're not that person yet. Trying to be more than you pretend to be will result in more pain for both of you.

So you need to be careful that in that process of this relationship, you may need to push that relationship aside and not be involved in that relationship.

That is sending a greater message to that person of the worthiness of God and Jesus Christ than you could ever send by coming close and denying the way of godliness that you need to be walking in because that in reality is telling the person, evidently, this Christ is not worthy to be followed.

And what we want to establish and want them to see is there is something greater than what you're loving here. And my love, although I want to be here with you and help you, right now my greater love and ambition is for God and Jesus Christ and moving in this direction that would honor him.

[28:14] I would love for you to come along with me if that is what your desire is. But even then you're going to have to examine. And the importance of bringing other people in the whole process of establishing these new guidelines.

So again, the importance of right relationships. Are you establishing those kind of relationships? Open enough, humble enough to admit, listen, I am struggling in this area and I cannot do this on my own.

I find it too easy to give in without accountability of others. Would you please help me in this area?

And working with people in that way. A lot more we could develop from that, but we need to go on. Another thing to look at is what we entitled Roots and Routines.

Addictions make themselves at home in the rhythms of our lives. We're people, God has made us to be people who develop and live by habit.

[29:22] And that's good. I'd have a hard time driving down the road if I wasn't a creature of habit. It would take me much longer to tie my shoes if I wasn't a creature of habit.

I'd think about that or I'd get the Velcro ones instead. But that kind of thing, God has made us to be those kind of people, but because of the effects of sin in us and on us, we can develop ungodly habits.

And so out of this new desire to live for God and his glory, reorientation toward godliness, I'm looking at what are some of the roots and routines that I established back here that make it easy for me to give in to the thing that I've used in a sinful way.

Determine whether temptation emerges at predictable times in the rhythms of life. Are there regular points of the day, the week, or month when the struggle is stronger? When we turn to the idolatry substance or activity at certain regular parts of the day, use of the substance has become part of our routine.

Again, there are certain times or places we made it easy to use the substance or to participate in the sinful activity. In order for the addiction really to be life dominating, these routines become very well established.

[30 : 46] As I said earlier, it becomes a habit for us, something that we begin doing without even thinking or it's easier for us to do because we've habituated ourselves to do it at that time or in that place, that location.

So as you look back and sit down with a friend and go through your routines, the routes, the places that you go to and that you found that you were using this substance or participating in this activity in the past, identify those places and those times and then we're going to make a plan for how we can use that time differently or maybe even avoid those places.

A person who's addicted to pornography may every day on his way to work have passed an adult bookstore and found it easy to turn in there.

Well, even if he has to drive ten miles out of the way now, he's going to take a different route in his day so that he can avoid avoid that temptation that's so easy to go back to in the past or it could be with anything else that we might be doing through our day.

Excuse me. And this is where your plan has to be tailored to you. You need to talk with your spouse, your support group, pastor, or counselor to advise alternative life rhythms to eliminate or mitigate these influences.

[32 : 24] for those that cannot be eliminated, you need to make your support network aware of the occasions when temptation is likely to be heightened. Raising awareness in your support network is an important way of feeling less alone in moments of temptation.

So if there's been things in your home that you've hidden from your wife, your husband, whoever, now you're going to tell your spouse, listen, this is what I've done in the past.

I've hidden this item over here and check, just check those places once in a while. Just because I don't want to be doing that anymore.

It's not good for the direction I want to go and I'm counting on you to help me in this way. Or please don't bring that into the house. And so it's maybe times when the spouse is denying themselves certain things that they could have within the house.

Just out of love for their partner, their spouse, because they know it presents a temptation to the other individual that they love and they're there to help. And so there's going to be certain things that they'll avoid and do without just to help that other individual.

[33 : 41] Well, let's move on. What about the home life? We've talked a little bit about that already. Our home should be places of rest and refuge, but because addictions often degenerate to private activities, home often becomes our place of greatest temptation.

You restore your home to the refuge God wants it to be when you radically remove and disclose all access to, again, alcohol, drugs, pornography, whatever it is.

So you're going to remove any and all substances in your house that you use in your addiction. Now, those of us that struggle at times with food, you can't remove everything, but there are certain things that you might find that you tend to go toward in that addiction, that food addiction that you can do without.

Tell those in your household, I've already mentioned that, where you used to hide items, so you can quickly begin to see how home will either be a great protection from or a contributor to our patterns of addiction and why it's hard for home to be a neutral influence.

Home is where we get to relax and not be on anymore. At work, I heard somebody give a testimony once on Wednesday night how they're so alert at work to speaking, to working in a way that would honor and glorify God and present a good effective witness, but when the individual goes home, he finds that he's being short with his wife and responding sinfully.

[35 : 26] So it's all of a sudden, I'm not on anymore. On in the sense that my whole ambition, my desire is to look out for ways that could be, things I could be doing and saying, etc., that would not be honoring to God.

So I want to be sure that my ambition at home, work, wherever I am, is to honor, to glorify God and being alert to those sinful desires that are there seeking to destroy my soul.

So we're going to look at what are some of the aspects of home life that contribute to your addiction children, and seeking to put them off and eliminate them as much as possible, so that they are not those allurements to the sinful flesh, things, again, that I used to use habitually in a way that weren't pleasing and honoring to God.

I'm going to take wise steps to reduce the potential influence they have in my life as I'm seeking to reorient my life in this direction of godliness.

Well, I see it's almost quarter after, so we're going to have to stop there. Any thoughts, questions? Got two minutes here, rather than me starting another section of the notes here.

[36 : 56] Okay, well let's be praying for each other. The Spirit of God would help us do this kind of examination, restructuring in our life, out of real hunger and desire to glorify Him and to love one another.

Let's pray. Father, this morning we do thank You for the fact that we are not living independent of You.

Father, that You've awakened us to what life is and awakened us to Yourself and Your glory and to Christ and where our true affections need to lie.

Father, we would not even be here this morning if You had not been doing this work in our hearts. And so we pray and trust in Your ongoing work of sanctification, Father, that there wouldn't be things that we're still hanging on to, still deceived in our thoughts and loves for things that are out of line.

But Father, that You would help us to love You above all and then to understand how we can structure our lives in a way that would really enable us to walk in this newness of life and freedom that is ours in Jesus Christ.

[38 : 22] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.