

creed

humanity + divinity

Last weekend we discussed the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, our situations and others. Often these stories lead us to respond with words, non-verbals, actions and inactions that degrade the people we should love and thus we degrade ourselves. This week we're beginning to understand this pattern and learning to change the foundational attitudes and beliefs that cause us to respond negatively. Let's tell a better story about ourselves, our situations and others.

Day 1: A Prayer for Yourself

Read Colossians 3:12-17. In your journal or on a piece of paper you can carry with you, rewrite Colossians 3:12-17 as a prayer for yourself. For example you may write "God, as one of your chosen people, I know I'm holy and dearly loved. Help me to clothe myself with an attitude of compassion, kindness, humility..."

Read Psalms 55:17. **Pray** the prayer you wrote at three different times today **Consider** sharing with a friend or your group the journey you're on this week so they can pray for you.

Day 2: Believe in Change

Read Corinthians 5:14-18. **Pray** the prayer you wrote yesterday. **Review** the *The Lie About Change - The Hopeless Cycle* from the weekend message. Is there anyone with whom you feel trapped in this cycle? Do you believe change is possible? I know the "Christian" answer is yes, but what do **you** really believe?

Ask God to give you the faith **not** to view this person from a "worldly point of view." See 2 Corinthians 5:16. **Pray** for this person. **Ask** God to help you begin to see yourself, your situation and him/her with fresh eyes that will give you a new attitude.

Day 3: Tell a Better Story

Read Romans 12:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 10:5.
"We remember events in narrative; we day-dream in narrative; we love, hate, and believe in narrative. We have family stories, cultural stories, religious stories... they all form the narratives that help us make sense of the world and our place in it. We believe these to be truth which results in the way we think, feel, and act. We are shaped by our stories. In fact, our stories, once in place, determine much of our behavior without regard to their accuracy or helpfulness. Once these stories are stored in our minds, they stay there largely unchallenged until we die. And here is the main point: these narratives are running (and often ruining) our lives. That is why it is crucial to get the right narratives."

James Bryan Smith - *The Good and Beautiful God*

Do you agree with that quote?

Read Philippians 4:4-8 and Philippians 2:4-5.
Is your attitude toward the person for whom you've been praying, the attitude you'd expect Jesus to have towards that person? Is any part of your belief about this person out of balance? Does it exaggerate a weakness? Is this keeping you from seeing the good in this person? Have you given yourself permission to him/her in such a light as to justify your own negative attitude, actions and behaviors?

Pray Psalm 139:23-24. Do you agree with the quote below?
"You sow a thought, you reap an action. You sow an action, you reap a habit. You sow a habit, you reap a character. And it destroys you." Rick Warren
Pray for the person you identified on Day 2.

Day 4: Write a Better Story

Read Colossians 3:15-17. **Pray** the prayer you wrote on Day 1. **Consider** the person you began praying for on Day 2. Start making a list of things that are right about them. - things that are valuable, things for which you should be thankful, things you once loved about him/her that you've forgotten. If you're telling yourself that you can't identify several good things about this person, you're saying more about how you're **seeing** this person than **about** this person. Remember, this person is created in the image of God.

Read Hebrews 10:25; Hebrews 3:13 and 1 Thessalonians 5:14.
Have you given up on the person you've been praying for since Day 2? Can you bring yourself to find compassion for him/her for those attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that are not yet redeemed by Christ and that he/she continues to let degrade his/her humanity?

Day 5: Find a Better Way to Respond

Read Ephesians 4:29-3 and Ephesians 2:21-22.
Pray the prayer you wrote on Day 1.
Ask God to give you the ability to respond to the person you've been praying for since Day 2 based on what he/she could be if redeemed by Christ and living in a healthier expression of his/her humanity.

Take steps to use better words, non-verbals and actions. As you begin to actively respond to this person in light of the new perspective you've sought all week, don't expect him/her to be different right away. If the relationship is broken, it will probably take some time to experience healing. Don't let his/her lack of humanity trip you up and throw you back into a wrong attitude or false belief. You should also consider seeking a counselor together to break the negative cycle.

Read Ephesians 2:22.
Pray "God, give me the faith to believe a better story - give me the courage to love. God, change me. Father, make Ephesians 2:22 a reality in our relationship."