

## Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 8-6-17

August 6 we will study Galatians 6:7-10. This will conclude our study of Galatians. Discussion questions are:

1. If you started out on the 30-day challenge to experience the fruits of the Spirit by asking God to give you opportunities to use your gift, and if you got discouraged and quit, which of the fruits of the spirit do you need to be working on now?
2. The first enemy of change mentioned this morning was “residue from the past”. What examples can you think of where someone got discouraged in their efforts to change because the residue of their past kept popping up?
  - a. What is our responsibility to a brother or sister who is discouraged by the residue of their past? (6:2)
  - b. How would you know if that is happening in someone’s life?
  - c. What are some practical ways to “bear their burden”?
3. The second enemy of change is “having to wait for the right results”.
  - a. When has God’s timing been a problem for you?
4. The third enemy of change is “unwillingness to do it God’s way.”
  - a. What are the areas in life where you find it difficult to do it God’s way?
5. Which of the following creates the most discouragement in your ministry with the church:
  - a. No observable results.
  - b. The lethargy of others.
  - c. Criticism from others.
6. What is Paul’s advice in 6:9 about keeping ourselves rejuvenated in kingdom work?
7. How do the lists of the “desires of the sinful nature” (5:19-21) and the “fruits of the Spirit” (5:22-23) apply to 6:8?
8. What does “sowing to the sinful nature” and “sowing to please the spirit” (6:8) have to do with the recurring theme of grace vs. law in Galatians?
9. When Paul mentions his boasting only in the cross (6:14) what kind of boasting is he contrasting? (circumcision?)

*Sermon:* DEFEATING THE ENEMIES OF CHANGE

Galatians 6:7-10

Susie called a friend and asked how she was feeling. “Terrible,” came the reply, “My head’s splitting and my back and legs are killing me. The house is a mess and the kids are driving me crazy.” Susie, full of compassion, said, “Listen, go and lie down, I’ll come over right away and cook lunch for you, clean your house, and take care of the children while you get some rest. I’ll stay till your husband Sam comes home.

“Sam? My husband isn’t named Sam.”

“Oh my goodness,” Susie exclaimed, “I must have dialed the wrong number.”

The voice on the other end of the phone replied, “Are you still coming over?”

We all get tired. We get tired, not just in the routine grind of life but we get tired spiritually. If you are tired you probably are a little cynical about Paul’s admonition, “Let us not grow weary in doing good.” – Galatians 6:9 Maybe you’ve tried to make significant spiritual changes in your life and it hasn’t happened at the pace you envisioned. So you quit. This morning we want to try and get a grip on some practical reasons some efforts to change spiritually not only don’t work but they leave us exhausted.

Changing your life is not as simple as making a resolution to do so. That’s where it starts—that’s the first step. But the process of getting from the desire to change something about yourself to actually seeing it happen in your day-to-day life takes time. And it takes tenacity...persistence.

You’ve heard about Thomas Edison and the light bulb. It took him more than 10,000 tries before he found the formula that worked. He succeeded because he kept trying until he got it right. The only way he could have failed in this endeavor would have been to quit.

You’ve heard the story of Colonel Sanders and how he pitched his secret recipe to more than 1,000 restaurants before one of them finally bought it. Colonel Sanders succeeded because he kept trying. The only way he could have failed would have been to quit.

If there is a particular change you want to take place in your life—a change that will make you a better person, a better Christian, a better parent, spouse, or employee, and that change hasn’t happened yet, keep this phrase in mind: It hasn’t happened yet—“yet” being the pivotal word. Two weeks ago several of you volunteered to try the 30 day challenge to experiencing the fruits of the spirit by asking God to give you opportunities to use your gift. Have you already given up? It’s only been 14 days. Did any of you give up after 1 day?

### **1. The first enemy of change is residue from the past.**

When you became a Christian you got a clean slate but that doesn’t change the fact that there is some residue left over that you have to deal with.

If you’ve been robbing banks, and then suddenly repent and ask God to forgive you, he will forgive you, but you still have to deal with the residue left over from your life of crime—you have to face the consequences. If you’ve been having an affair and then repent and ask God to forgive you, he will forgive you, but you still have to deal with residue your actions have left on your marriage. If you’ve been yelling at your children and belittling them every day for the last ten years, and you repent of this sin and ask God to forgive you, he will, but you still have to deal with the residue your actions have left on your relationship with your children.

Here's the problem. Many times when we make a resolution to improve a certain area of our life, we may be good for a week or two or a month or two and then we discover that in spite of all the effort we've put forth to change, we're still having to deal with the same old junk from the past.

You don't know Bryan but he is a guy who was terribly disorganized in the area of his finances. He was constantly bouncing checks, was repeatedly late on his credit card bills, and often had to park his car several blocks from his house so the repo man wouldn't be able to find it. He re-dedicated his life to Christ and soon began to get serious about straightening out his financial life. He made some drastic changes—started balancing his checkbook, moved from his expensive apartment to a cheap rooming house, and put a “For Sale” sign on his truck. Before he could sell it, though, he was in a wreck. No one was hurt, but he soon discovered that he didn't have insurance because his insurance check had bounced a couple of months earlier—before he began trying to straighten out his finances. Now, he was responsible for \$4,000 worth of repairs to the other person's car, plus he had to pay for the repairs to his own vehicle before he could sell it. About that time he got a letter from the IRS. They had found a mistake in a previous return and informed him he owed an additional \$1,200. He realized he needed to get an additional part-time job, but he didn't have transportation; he was having a difficult enough time getting to his full-time job. Needless to say, Bryan became totally discouraged. He said, “I have tried as hard as I can possibly try, but it's just no use. I don't know if this is God testing me or the devil torturing me, but I've got a monkey on my back and it looks like I will never get my finances straightened out.”

Bryan was experiencing what many people experience when they try to change - the residue of his past was clouding up the present. This is not some mysterious phenomenon; it's the Law of the Harvest. The Bible teaches it in Galatians 6:7, “A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

The insurance and IRS problems weren't God's way of getting even with Bryan. He was simply reaping what he sowed. There's an old joke that some people spend all week sowing wild oats, then go to church on Sunday and pray for crop failure. It just doesn't work that way.

Don't let the fact that you may still have some consequences to face become an excuse for giving up. Remember the Law of the Harvest. If you are now sowing good seed, you will eventually reap a good harvest. It's just a matter of time. Don't give up.

## **2. The second enemy of change is having to wait for the right results.**

Not only do we have to deal with leftover “stuff” from yesterday, we also have to learn to accept the fact that change doesn't take place overnight. Paul said, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” – Galatians 6:9

Note the phrase: at the proper time. That doesn't mean "at God's whim." Paul was not saying, "Listen, folks, you just keep being good. One of these days, when God gets around to it, he'll reward you." Paul is saying, "You will be paid when the payment is due."

Five guys attending seminary lived together in an old rent house. One of the guys, Bob, was often described as "fastidious." Do you know what that word means? A realistic definition is: "a nagging, demanding perfectionist that no one can stand to live with." Bob perceived his role in the household as making sure that everyone knew what their chores were and when the rent was due. Every month, toward the end of the month, he would approach each of the other 4 guys and say, "Okay, now, next week is the first. Do you have the rent money? Are you going to be able to pay it?"

They would all say, "Yes, Bob, we'll pay the rent on the first, when it is due."

If Bob saw the others during the day he would say something like, "Don't forget you've got the dishes tonight"—as if they couldn't read the chart outlining everyone's chores that he had put on the wall. One particular Saturday it was David's job to mow the yard, and he had also scheduled a car wash with his youth group. This worried Bob to no end. Friday night at dinner Bob began pressing David, saying, "David, are you going to be able to get the yard done? How are you going to do both the car wash and mow the yard? Won't you be too tired after the car wash to work in the yard? Our yard has to be done this weekend; the grass is growing out of control! What time do you think you'll be finished?"

David finally exploded. "That's it, Bob! I've had enough! Don't ever ask me again about rent before the first and don't ever nag me again about my chores before the deadline. I will do what's supposed to be done when the time comes to do it. Till then, leave me alone!" The other 3 guys stood and applauded David—and wondered why they hadn't thought of saying it before.

Don't be like Bob. Don't expect to see results before the time is due. God pays on time. If you continue to make an effort to do good, you will receive your payment—your harvest—when the payment is due. But you've got to remember: it takes time.

There are two things to keep in mind about the Law of the Harvest: 1.) You reap later than you sow; i.e. you sow in the spring and reap in the fall. 2) You reap more than you sow; i.e. you sow a tiny little apple seed and you reap (eventually) a huge tree that produces countless apples.

The harvest will come in on time.

This leads us to the third reason people are prone to give up in their efforts to create change.

### **3. The third enemy of change is unwillingness to do it God's way.**

The reason why people give up in their quest to improve their lives is because too often they try to create change using some other method than God's method. We just don't believe that God's way works best, so we try to accomplish things our way—and we inevitably fail.

It's like the person who wants to get ahead financially, so they invest in a get-rich-quick scheme. Or the person who wants to lose weight, so they start taking illegal drugs. Or the person who wants to succeed at work, so they start bending the rules to give himself an edge. These strategies never work, and when they fail, we're often tempted to give up and forget about it all together.

If you want to create lasting change in your life, you have to do it God's way. That's why Paul said, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” – Galatians 6:7 Paul is saying, “God knows what he's talking about. He knows what is best. Don't try to cut corners and beat God's system.” There's only one way to create lasting change in your life, and that is by committing yourself to being obedient to God, and sticking with that commitment as long as it takes.

There are no shortcuts to creating lasting change in your life, but there is a sure-fire long way of getting there: Get on the right path, and stay there until the harvest comes in. God is pleased with your desire to be a better husband, wife, parent, boss, employee, Christian, and so on. He's pleased with your desire to be healthier, more generous, more loving, more patient than you were before. As you move in this direction, you may not see results immediately, but you will see them eventually. It's just a matter of time. You will reap a reward for your efforts, so don't become weary in doing good, and don't give up. Hang in there till the harvest comes in.