

Ruin To Renovation - Sermon #10 - Dying to Self

Study Questions for Groups & Individuals

ICE BREAKER:

If you could design your own house without concern for money, would it be rustic like a log cabin, or super modern home, or something in between?

OPENING PRAYER: Let's pray for our partners in the Middle East!

(1) Read the following testimony out loud together (from Horizons International whom we partner with in Lebanon & Syria). Discuss the difference in witnessing here in America as to Iraq. Pray there are more Timothy's, and for spiritual strength to withstand persecution as they continually witness to their friends & family.

"My name is Timothy. I am the oldest of five children and grew up in a happy family in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. My father is a leader of our tribe, and my family are very committed Muslims. After high school, I moved to Baghdad for a short while, then went back home, bought a grocery store, and went to university.

When ISIS took control of Mosul, many refugees fled to my city including Alyas who became my friend. He was always talking about Jesus and God's love. As ISIS control expanded, Alyas and I decided to fight to protect our people. After two weeks of fighting, Alyas was killed right beside me. I went home and sat in shock for two months. I felt empty. I had done everything to be successful and happy, but I wasn't.

One day I was thinking about what Alyas told me about God, so I decided to buy a Bible. As I read, I felt a new joy inside. Another Christian friend, Habiba, helped me learn more about Jesus. One day my brother saw me reading my Bible and told my father. My dad beat me and burned the Bible. I bought another one and hid it, but he found it. This time he brought a gun to kill me, but my mom intervened. I moved to a hotel. After two weeks, he invited me to come back home and promised not to hurt me. But then I heard him tell my sister to bring his gun, so I ran away. Eventually my Christian friend helped me move to Lebanon. Even there I wasn't safe because my family could hire people to find me. So I changed my name.

Two months later, I found Horizons International and started serving with them in 2016. I have helped with sharing the gospel via social media, sports ministry for kids, photography/videography, and translating and dubbing for the Kurdish ministry. I also volunteer in the Kurdish church in Beirut. My life completely changed because of Jesus. I still can't talk to my family, but now I have a family in Christ. And I'm serving my people by sharing the gospel with all the Kurds. I want to thank Jesus because He saved me."

(2) Please pray for the **Syrian Women's Conference** coming up in early June. Pray for exactly the right women to make up the American team of 20 who will go to serve. A number of churches are planning to send women on the team. Pray for exactly the right Syrian women to be selected to come and be disciplined, trained, and refreshed. Pray for the \$50,000 needed for this project. Committed to date: \$10,000.

DISCUSSION:

Open by simply reading this quote to prepare yourself for tonight's study...

“For as the surest source of destruction to men is to obey themselves, so the only haven of safety is to have no other will, no other wisdom, than to follow the Lord wherever he leads. Let this, then, be the first step, to abandon ourselves, and devote the whole energy of our minds to the service of God.”

- John Calvin -

Romans 12:1-2

VERSE 1 - *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers & sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God — this is your true & proper worship.*

1. How do these verses begin with a biblical worldview of the body & what characterizes that view?
2. Compare the biblical worldview of the body, with the common Gnostic worldview of the body in the first century.
 1. *Gnosticism in its simplest definition was the thought & practice in late pre-Christian & early Christian centuries distinguished by the conviction that matter is evil & emancipation comes through gaining ‘Gnosis’ [special knowledge]. This created extremes. Those who wanted to punish the body & bring it under submission. And those who thought it didn’t matter what we did in the body since it was unimportant, so ‘anything goes’.*
3. How do we see Gnostic thought in modern society? And how damaging is it, especially in the long term?
 1. SIDENOTE: If anyone wants to study Christian thoughts further on the subject of our bodies & spirituality, read: *‘Love Thy Body, Answering Hard Questions About Life & Sexuality’* by Nancy R. Pearcey.

VERSE 2 - *Do not conform to the pattern of this world,*

1. What are ways in which you typically conform your mind to what society & culture dictates without thinking?
2. Are there outside factors which help aide this conformity?
3. How can ‘fasting’ help with this? (*fasting in the sense of giving something up in order to better commune with God*)

...but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test & approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing & perfect will.”

1. This is something done to us by outside intervention; it’s in the passive voice. What are the tools which God has given, and how do they benefit us in this journey of faith?
2. Share some stories of how God transformed & renewed your mind through these avenues or tools.

1. ‘Tools’ in your discussion can be general like ‘God’s Word’, or you might share a story about a specific verse in His Word, *“God changed me through meditation & understanding of 1 Corinthians 10:13....”*
3. God intervenes from the outside by His revealed Word, Spirit & the Body of Christ (the local church). How do we make ourselves available (abandon ourselves, submit) to God’s transforming Spirit through these avenues daily? Describe some of your practices past & present...
4. It’s through this submission & relational interaction with the Lord that we understand his will. Understanding doesn’t precede submission, submission precedes understanding. We submit first in trust that God will reveal his reasons & ground our understanding in time.
 1. Does this bother you?
 2. Is it difficult to submit to the Lord without first understanding everything?
 3. Would you rather have full understanding of things first, then have to submit?
 4. Why do you think we have to submit & follow first before full understanding comes? What does this do for us? And would it work the opposite way?

Read aloud Ephesians 4:21-24 together

21 when you heard about Christ & were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness & holiness.”

1. Repentance is defined as a ‘turning away’ from our sin in both outward behavior & inward attitudes. Turning away from the Old Self, and putting on the New Self. Turning away from Sin, and turning towards Christ.
 1. How’s this practically done in your life?
 2. How does the Body of Christ (your local church) help in this?
2. 1 Corinthians 6:11 & Ephesians 5:25-27 speak of Christ’s washing us clean with the Word of Truth...how does this happen, and what does that mean?
 1. Is it nice to know you’ve been ‘washed clean’?
3. Philippians 2:12-13 says...*2 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed - not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence - continue to work out your salvation with fear & trembling 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*
 1. v13 states that it’s God working in us, while v12 states that we have a part to play. Explain how these two things work together in relationship.