

Set Aside the Old, Put On The New

In a recent letter from Edwin Louis Cole, founder of the Christian Men's Network, he shared how he continues to get letters from those with continuing patterns of failure in their lives. He says that the problem is obvious. They have sought the Lord, and pray for the "power of God" to break the "power of sin" in their lives, BUT do not seem to realize they need the "power of God" to break the "pattern of sin" in their lives. They experience the presence of God in power, BUT do not abide in the Word for the establishing of a NEW PATTERN of thought, word, and deed. We too see this same pattern of continuing failure in the lives of many of those whom we offer biblical counsel.

In Ephesians 4:22-24 we are taught with regard to our former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

So, many may address the sin in their lives through confession and repentance, BUT do not tenaciously address "old patterns" of behavior in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus they do not establish "new patterns" of behavior that are pleasing to God.

What can WE do to produce "new godly" patterns of behavior?

First, WE must discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness (I Timothy 4:7). Part of that discipline requires that WE take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (II Corinthians 10:5). Many of us expect that God will do it for us. WE must always remember that change starts with us doing our part and finishes at the Cross where God has done His part.

Next, WE must aggressively purpose not to conform any longer to the pattern of this world, BUT be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

But how do WE renew our minds in order to make godly changes in our behavior?

The Bible states that WE are to hide the Word in our hearts that WE might not sin against God (Psalm 119:11). WE are told that the Word of God is living and active and will produce change in us if WE allow it (Hebrews 4:12). WE are also told that all scripture is God breathed and is useful for correcting (II Timothy 3:16) and that His Word will never return empty, it will produce the change that He desires (Isaiah 55:11).

If WE know what God's Word has to say, what is required of us?

James 4:17 tells us that one who knows what he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. WE are reminded once again, if WE obey Him it is an indication of our love for Him (John 14:21). The key to obedience is faith which comes from hearing the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17). If WE hear the Word, obey the Word, faith will be produced and our works (behavior) will reflect Christ-likeness (James 2:22-25).

So, if WE do not discipline and saturate our lives with the Word of God, WE will continue to walk in "old patterns" of behavior that only lead us to defeat. If WE do not make Him a priority as He requires of us, then the penalty for our sin is continued failure and powerlessness in dealing with the "old patterns" of behavior that are deeply rooted within us.

Let's agree together that with God's help WE will aggressively deal with the sin in our lives, BUT beyond that, WE must deal with the "old patterns" of behavior that hold us captive. WE must, as the Bible states, set aside the old way of doing things in the power of the Holy Spirit and put on the new way that glorifies the Lord and leads us to consistent victory over sin and our old ungodly behavior. SET ASIDE THE OLD, PUT ON THE NEW!