

HOW DO PEOPLE CHANGE? PART 1

Introduction

- A. Counseling is about helping people to change.

- B. The change we as biblical counselors seek is unique. *Col 1:28; 1 Tim 1:5*

- C. Unbiblical approaches to change (sanctification) will impede your spiritual growth.
 - 1. Mysticism.

 - 2. Deliverance ministry.

 - 3. Self-improvement formulas.

 - 4. Moralism. *Rom 5:20; 8:3; Gal 3:3; 4:9*

 - 5. Passivism.

 - 6. The recovery movement blends several unbiblical approaches.

D. The Bible sets forth a balanced perspective on how change takes place. *Rom 6; John 15:1-11*

Change Begins by Understanding and Applying the Gospel

A. Some wrongfully start with the imperative - what we must do for God, which leads to moralism.

1. Scripture begins with the indicative, what God has done for us in Christ, as the ground for imperatives. *Rom 1-11; Eph 1-3; Col 1-2*

2. Specific New Testament exhortations are grounded in the gospel. *Eph 4:20, 24, 32; 5:2, 25ff; 6:6; Rom 15:2-3, 7*

3. Of course this implies that only Christians are able to change according to the will of God. *Rom 8:5-8; 14:23; Heb 11:6*

4. What about cases in which unbelievers appear to change (i.e. lose weight, quit smoking, no longer drunkards)? *Matt 12:43-45; Rom 14:23; 1 Cor 10:31; Heb 11:6*

5. The change we need is inward and Godward. *Mark 7:14-23; Col 2:20-23*

B. We and our counselees need to comprehend that who we are in Christ is the basis for the changed lives we want to live. *Rom 6:11; Col 3:1ff; 2 Pet 1:3-4*

1. Some think of the gospel exclusively for justification, but don't see its relevance for sanctification. *Gal 3:3*

2. The gospel is just as important for your sanctification as it was for your justification.

3. Some nouthetic counselors move too quickly to the imperative, without placing enough emphasis on who we are in Christ and how the gospel relates to change.
4. Many counselees have a false identity and label themselves according to their past sin rather than their new identity in Christ. *1 Cor 6:9-11; 2 Cor 5:17*
5. The first imperative in Romans is to consider your identity in Christ - remember who you are. *Rom 6:11*
(also see vs. 3, 6, 9)

“ the gospel is just as important for your sanctification as it is for your justification ”

C. Understanding your union with Christ is the key to your growth in holiness. *Rom 6:1ff*

1. Paul anticipates an objection. *Rom 6:1-2*
 - If salvation is by grace, apart from works, why bother to be holy since the more we sin the more God's grace is displayed? *Rom 6:1; 5:20*
 - The gospel, rightly understood, promotes holiness. *Rom 6:2bff; 1 Thess 4:3; Titus 2:14*
2. You can't go on sinning because you are united to Christ. *Rom 6:2b*
3. Your old self has died in union with Christ. *Rom 6:2b-4a, 6; Col 2:12; Gal 2:20*
4. You died to sin in the same sense in which Jesus died to sin. *Rom 6:8-10; Heb 7:27; 9:12*

5. You are a new person, united with Christ in His resurrection. *Rom 6:4b-5, 8*

6. You have been set free from slavery to sin to serve righteousness. *Rom 6:6-7, 9b, 15-22*

7. This is true of every believer.

8. Now, live in light of who you are. *Rom 6:12-13*
 - The fact that you are united with Christ does not mean that it is no longer possible for you to sin. *Rom 7:14ff; Phil 3:12*

 - The point is that the power of sin over you has been broken.

 - Nor does it mean that you no longer need to pursue holiness and fight sin.

9. How does this work itself out in practical terms?

- D. Other ways in which the gospel contributes to change (sanctification).
 1. We are able to bear fruit only through our union with Christ. *John 15:1-11; Gal 2:20*

2. A key to change is to recognize that Christ is better than idols which tempt us. *Isa. 55:1-2; John 4:10; 7:38; 6:35, 48-51; Gen 39:9b; Prov 9:1ff*

3. Comprehending God's love and grace to us motivates and enables us to show love and grace. *1 John 4:19*



Booklets

Newheiser, Jim, *Help! I Want to Change.*