

## Normalizing Righteousness – Part 2 (Willing)

Last week we began a series on Normalizing Righteousness

We said that... Increasingly we live in a world that has normalized behaviors that we once considered aberrant or morally wrong, especially from a biblical perspective. On the other hand behavior that is based upon biblical truth is quickly becoming viewed as abnormal, intolerant and even wrong.

### **Isaiah 5:20, 24 (NIV)**

**20** Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

**24** ...for they have rejected the law of the Lord Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One.

**Normalization**, or social normalization, is the process through which ideas and behaviors that may fall outside of [social norms](#) come to be regarded as "[normal](#)".

This process of normalization has influenced all areas of our society. From politics to, to pornography, to alcohol use, to poverty, to homosexuality, to marriage and divorce, to pre-marital sex and sexual immorality, to language and the use of obscenities , to recreational drug use, and even to behavior such as pedophilia and the list goes on...

the unthinkable , becomes the radical, and the radical becomes the norm.

In fact, yesterday during a Disney movie we saw a commercial on TV by Cottonelle Toilet Paper that started out by showing a guy and saying... "Down there care... because today you meet the parents..." the commercial ends by cutting to a picture of two guys standing one behind the other looking at each other and smiling and saying... "a superior clean that makes you feel like the kind of guy that HE takes home to mother."

Then last night, Sharon sent me an article and in it the author states...

*Starting in about 2014, social media, specifically Twitter, began to open my eyes and widen my world. I listened to and learned from people with different voices and experiences, and for the first time, I heard terms like "white privilege," "systemic racism" and "progressive Christianity." I had no idea that someone could be gay and also be a deeply committed Christian who has a high regard for Scripture. The people I*

*followed online challenged my conservative Christian worldview and I learned that following Jesus isn't nearly as narrow a path as I grew up believing. I started to doubt and question the integrity of the insulated Christian bubble still benefiting me. My faith was shifting, but slowly and privately.*

In contrast to this type of normalization, I said that I want us to begin to think about how we can normalize righteousness, Godliness and biblical morality in our everyday lives. Somehow we must demonstrate that living according to God's standards and will for our lives is not abnormal, aberrant or intolerant.

### **So how can we Normalize Righteousness...**

1. Stop treating it as something abnormal
2. Start Living it out in public daily
3. Stop Being Ashamed
4. Start Inviting Others To Join You

However, before we can begin to live normal lives of righteousness, something has to happen. A transformation must take place. A transformation that changes who we are, how we think and what we do.

Spiritually we may call this getting saved or born again, being set free from sin, delivered, cleansed, forgiven, being made new. It involves a process by which we can actually understand and live in the righteousness that God has created for us and which is normal, right and true

To illustrate what I am talking about, I want to tell you the stories of two individuals, both of whom lived lives contrary to God's plan and who thought they were living normal lives, until they encountered God and he transformed their lives

September 2019 – **Robert Lopez's** mother and her female partner parented him. His friends were gay. His family was gay. It was everything he knew.

*To outside observers, he was a well-raised, high-achieving child, finishing high school with straight As. However, he said, "[G]rowing up with gay parents was very difficult, and not because of prejudice from neighbors. ... I had no male figure at all to follow, and my mother and her partner were both unlike traditional fathers or traditional mothers. As a result, I had very few recognizable social cues to offer potential male or female friends, since I was neither confident nor sensitive to others. Thus, I befriended people rarely and alienated others easily."*

*"I was exposed to pornography at a very young age," Lopez (photo, right) told AFA Journal, "which then led me to gay pornography. And when I was 13, some older teenage boys got me drunk and basically taught me how to have [gay] sexual activity. You have to be taught because these acts do not come naturally the way heterosexuality does – it's not instinctual, it's painful."*

*By age 14, Lopez put all the "clues" together and surmised the boys who had abused him must have approached him sexually because he was gay.*

*"And as you slowly get deeper and deeper into the assumptions of gay culture," he said, "the more you distance yourself from people, places, and settings where you would cultivate a relationship with [the opposite sex], and it starts to feel like your assumptions are being confirmed."*

*"Shame is their currency," he said of the homosexual community and its entrapment. "They convince you the world hates you for being gay. And if you don't side with them on everything, you are going to be left alone."*

In other words, Robert's normal had been redefined by the culture that he lived in and to consider walking in anything outside of that culture would be considered abnormal. He lived in a world in which evil was good and good was evil. You can imagine that anything associated with the righteousness of biblical standards would in no way seem normal.

*Later on in his life, as things began to change and he started reaching out to the church world for help, he also found confusion as to what should be normal for the Christian life.*

*So, he moved on to Protestant churches, beginning with mainline denominations. "They were largely leaning toward acceptance of the gay lifestyle," he said, "and they immediately tried to talk me out of trying to change things.*

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*Lopez's mother died when he was 19, and he identified as bi-sexual for nearly a decade longer. But the happiness and freedom he thought would be attached to his admission of "gayness" were nonexistent. Then in his late 20s, he was diagnosed with cancer.*

*"I was forced to stop everything in my life," Lopez explained. "I chose to call my dad instead of my mother's surviving partner when I was in the hospital recovering from surgery."*

*As Lopez recovered in his father's home, he discovered he came from a long history of families with a mother and father.*

*"I realized I had been cut off from my history growing up, and it sank in that everything I knew and lived was a lie," he explained. "It was just fake – a postmodern delusion. And I suddenly felt liberated when I realized I didn't need to be bound by it."*

*"I met my wife about a year later, in the summer of 1999. We fell in love quickly and got married in January of 2001." "When I came to Christ," he said. "I stopped pornography and harmful indiscretions still lingering on the side."*

## **A River Versus a Stone**

Anna Kozlyuk  
August 19, 2019

***Merushe** didn't want to go to some Christian church. She'd been a Muslim all her life, and she'd die a Muslim.*

In other words being a Muslim was normal, anything else was abnormal and wrong.

*There was just one little problem: the church had children services with skits and stories from their Bible, and her darling granddaughter loved it.*

*What was a poor Muslim grandmother to do?*

*She'd endure anything for her sweet mbesë, even these Christians.*

### *Being Dragged to Church*

*Rruga-ura was hardly the touristy side of Albania's capital. The Roma and poorest Albanians generally washed up in this ghetto, and few ever managed to escape.*

*World Challenge's partners had started [a children's program through a local church](#), encouraging the ghetto's next generation to continue in school, helping them with homework and giving them a safe place to have fun in the evening until their parents came home.*

*All of which made them tolerable in Merushe's opinion.*

*She'd captained a kindergarten class for 38 years; and when times were tough and her own children were hungry, she'd sold her plasma and blood to makes ends meet.*

*She'd steeled herself for the hard life. Her husband was an alcoholic, and one of her two boys was in jail, accused of being a thief. He was innocent, but maybe this would finally rattle him out of his drug addictions.*

*Doctors had told her that her second son had Down syndrome. He was a sweet, gentle man; if anyone gave him trouble, Allah and the prophet have mercy on them, because Merushe would not.*

*Her daughter had done what few ever managed when she married and moved away to Spain. However, Merushe received news that her daughter's husband had tragically died. With nowhere else to go and crushed by this loss, her daughter decided to move back to Albania with a granddaughter.*

*Her beautiful mbesë.*

*So Marusha found herself trudging to the church, unable to resist the glitter in her granddaughter's eyes at the games with the other children and stories about Jesus.*

### Healing the Daughter

*Next the heathens got to her daughter. She'd been coming along with Merushe—good family always supported each other in trying times—and talking to the church workers.*

*Then lo and behold, her daughter said she'd asked this Jesus person to change her life. He was both God and the son of God who sacrificed himself to save them, according to her smitten daughter.*

*It was enough to make a good Muslim woman throw her hands in the air.*

*Merushe decided they would go to the local mosque every Sunday. Maybe that would clear her daughter's head.*

*Then her daughter said she'd seen Jesus, and he'd told her, "This is not the way, you should not go there. You have to go back." What's more, her daughter usually smoked two or three cigarette packs a day, but suddenly she stopped. She said she'd fasted and prayed to this Jesus, and he'd taken away her addiction.*

*Her daughter was indeed changing, growing more hopeful and happy. She'd also met a Christian man, and Merushe had yet to find anything too dreadful about the infidel.*

*It was time to seriously investigate whatever this church business was doing to her family.*

### Changing a Heart of Stone

*Merushe went to church like clockwork.*

*She sat through the sermons then marched up to interrogate the nearest church worker. She carefully observed how these people treated her granddaughter and disabled son. Even the Bible was not exempt from her exacting attention.*

*Little by little, like the Drin River carving its way to the Adriatic Sea, the Holy Spirit shifted into Merushe's heart, clearing out decades of sediment, sorrows and old pains.*

*She made her peace with Christ.*

*Dusting off her hands, she went straight out and began evangelizing to neighbors and friends. Eventually, she became the chairwoman of church's community outreach for children. Time for her town to know about the God of the Bible.*

Now let's turn to the scripture and see one more story about a man whose life was changed and what it has to teach us about Normalizing Righteousness

**Mark 1:40-42 (NIV)**

**40** A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

**41** Jesus was indignant. (filled with compassion) He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" **42** Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

Leprosy was not only a physical disease that destroyed people's bodies and caused them to be outcasts,

*According to the National Institutes of Health, leprosy is a disease that has been known since Biblical times that causes skin sores, nerve damage, and muscle weakness that gets worse over time. It is caused by a bacteria*

*The body's attempt to fight the infection leads to extensive tissue destruction and thus mutilation which gives the appearance of rot.*

it analogizes the destructiveness of sin in our lives and our need to be set free and healed from that destruction by the power of Jesus.

Here in the passage we see an important principle in Normalizing Righteousness. It requires WILLINGNESS

"If you are willing?"

Because the question comes from the man, our attention is first drawn to Jesus. As we look at the scripture in this passage and throughout the New Testament, I find that there are two aspects to Jesus answer, "I am willing"

### 1. He WANTS us to be clean (righteous)

This is His desire for our lives. He is not willing that we stay in our sin, our pain. For Jesus knows that no matter how much the world wants to normalize our sinful behavior and attempt to eradicate its destructive consequences; this is not what he created us for. This is not normal. In fact, it is about as far away as possible from the abundant and holy life that He created for us.

### 2. He DOES the Work (Cleansing)

It is important for us to understand that Jesus' willingness moves with compassion beyond the desire for us to be clean and actually performs the work of cleansing in our lives.

#### **Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV)**

**26** I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

David Wilkerson shares in his message "The Last Adam"

*To have fellowship with God, we have to become part... We have to be incorporated into him to become his seed in {a} new race. How is this accomplished? According to Paul, we are translated out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. This translation is a work of grace alone, and Jesus accomplished it for us on the cross. Paul states plainly, "[God] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13). Now, Scripture says, when the Father looks at you, he sees you in his Son. You have taken on Christ's nature.*

*You see, when Jesus died, he took the old Adam with him into the grave. When the Lord rose from the dead, he left the old Adam there. In God's eyes, that old man remains dead. He was crucified with Christ, along with all flesh. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).*

*Paul explains, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of*

*His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:4-5).*

*Our old man is legally dead in God’s eyes, and the new man, Jesus Christ, lives in us.*

Rest assured that he is willing. Willing to forgive you, willing to heal you, willing to set you free!

But there is a second truth found in this passage. A truth that focuses not on the willingness of Jesus but on our willingness. We can best understand this truth by turning the man's question around on ourselves. Are we willing?

## 1. To Ask

As I look at this man's story, I can't help but wonder, "what made him willing to ask. He could have just accepted his condition as normal. But something inside of him understood that leprosy wasn't normal. That's one of the reasons why I believe that it is so important that we as believers normalize righteousness.

### **Matthew 5:13-16 (NIV)**

**13** “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

**14** “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

**15** Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

### **1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)**

**12** Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

They may accuse us of living abnormally, but our righteous behavior has an impact on the world. An impact that demonstrates the truth and causes them to ask.

Are you willing to ask Jesus to cleanse you from all unrighteousness and to empower you by His Holy Spirit to live righteously in this world.

## 2. To WALK In It



I believe that Normalizing Righteousness requires that we not only be willing to ask, but that we be willing to Walk in it. Let's read a little bit further in this story...

**Mark 1:42-45 (NIV)**

**42** Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. **43** Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: **44** “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” **45** Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

It's not just our words that are important but our lives... Are you willing to Walk in the gift of righteousness that He has given to you as a "testimony to them?"

**2 Corinthians 5:15 (NIV)**

**15** And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

**Colossians 1:21-23 (NIV)**

**21** Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of [\[a\]](#) your evil behavior. **22** But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— **23** if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.