

Normalizing Righteousness – Part 5

Sunday, October 6, 2019

A few weeks ago I introduced the idea of Normalizing Righteousness based on the concept of Social Normalization or the process through which ideas and behaviors that may fall outside of [social norms](#) come to be regarded as "[normal](#)".

From the world's perspective this means that ideas and behaviors that are contrary to God's Word have, overtime, come to be accepted as normal and acceptable. On the other hand, what God has declared to be good and right is now regarded as outdated, abnormal and even wrong

It is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophetic declaration...

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.

My challenge has been to reverse that process by making righteousness a normal part of our everyday lives

We talked about the process of normalization...

- **Stop treating it as something abnormal**
- **Start Living it out in public daily**
- **Stop Being Ashamed**
- **Start Inviting Others to Join You**

Next, we said that there must be a willingness and talked about Jesus' willingness to transform our hearts and minds as he saves us, delivers us, cleanses us, sets us free, forgives us, and makes us new.

- **He WANTS us to be clean (righteous)**
- **He DOES the Work (Cleansing)**

There must also be a willingness on our part...

- **We need to ASK**
- **We need To WALK in It**

Then we turned our attention to answering the question "What is Truth?" As we sought to get **God's definition of normal, His ...decrees and instructions, and that show us the way we are to live and how we are to behave.** (Exodus 18:20)

NORMAL IS...

- One God and One Way to Heaven
- God in First Place
- Clean and God Honoring Language
- Prioritizing Church and Spending Time with God
- Love, Respect and Submission in Relationships
- The Sanctity of Human Life
- Sexual Purity in All Its Forms
- Financial Integrity
- Truthful & Respectful Speech
- Thankfulness and Contentment

Last week we said that in order to Normalize Righteousness we would have to DEFEAT THE LIES that twist what Righteousness is. We do that by

- **Confronting the Lies**
- **Recognizing the Source of The Lies**
- **Immersing Ourselves in The Truth**
- **Trusting God for The Impossible**

Today I want to close out this series with one more thought about Normalizing Righteousness.

KEY TEXT

Mark 8:31-38 New International Version (NIV)

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. **32** He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **35** For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.

36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? **37** Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? **38** If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

NORMAL ISN'T EASY...

1. It's a confusing world

You can find a multitude of opinions on any subject you want. Many people will claim to have the right answer and many of them will say they are Christians. Peter had been with Jesus day and night for quite some time and yet, he was confused by the things of the world which had a different plan than Jesus. It isn't always easy to know what is right and what is wrong. We must work at it. Study the scriptures, mature in our faith, ask God for direction.

Matthew 16:13-16 New International Version (NIV)

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Separating cubic zirconia from real diamonds takes close inspection and sometimes even a test. Since diamonds are significantly harder than cubic zirconia, the two rocks can be tested side by side. The test is simple: heat up the rock with a candle flame and then drop it into a cup of cold water. The false diamond will shatter; the real diamond will remain perfectly intact.

2. You'll be going against the cultural grain

Normalizing righteousness means we will have to swim upstream so to speak. It will not be easy to fight the urge to do what everyone else is doing.

Exodus 23:2 New International Version (NIV)

2 “Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd,

- *Among millennials in America 53% believe the Bible is not literal just helpful*
- *Among Evangelicals 53 % believe everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature.*
- *52% believe God accepts the worship of all religions.*
- *73% believe Go Jesus is a created being. (Barna Study)*

Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber a popular minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In America (ELCA) Made the following statement last summer in front of 30,000 teenagers at an ELCA youth conference.

"If the teachings of the church are harming people then we need to rethink those teachings."

Further she said that the traditional teachings of Christianity are *"utter B***S***"*

Mocking an "Affirmation of Baptism" vow which states *"Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?"* The Response is: *"I renounce them."* Bolz-Weber asked the crowd of teenagers: *"Do you renounce the lie that Queerness is anything other than beauty?"* Witness said the crowd of young people screamed, *"I renounce them!"*

3. You have to take a stand

It's hard to firmly take a position on what is right and what is wrong. Jesus told the disciples to take up their cross and follow him. One of the pictures here is that of a pole that is firmly planted in the ground and upon which hangs something of importance for all to plainly see. This was the point of Crucifixions, a point that was made even more poignantly as Pilate nailed a sign to the cross upon which was written, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of The Jews" in three different languages

We too will be put on display for what we believe. We must be willing for our beliefs in God truth to be exposed to the world.

Matthew 5:14-16 New International Version (NIV)

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.

If we are going to take a stand, we must trust the Word of God and the God of the Word with all being (Tim Wildmon)

4. You may feel like you're standing alone

The enemy likes to make us feel isolated and alone. In doing so, he discourages many to give up, to give in and to join the crowd. If you take a live coal from the fireplace and put it by itself, it will soon go out. But it can keep its heat and even ignite other materials if it is kept in the fireplace near other coals. Don't forget that you are not alone.

- You have likeminded believers
- You have the church
- You have The Holy Spirit

Hebrews 13:5-6 New International Version (NIV)

5 ...because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." **6** So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

Like Joseph *your faithful endurance may even save others* (Gary Wilkerson)

5. You will face misunderstanding, ridicule, resentment, hatred and persecution

Luke 10:3 New International Version (NIV)

3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

John 15:19-20 New International Version (NIV)

19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

20 Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

John 16:33 New International Version (NIV)

33 "...In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Illustration: *Southern Asia Community - March 25, 1988 more than 3 years after planting a church a pastor shared a meal with his wife. Earlier in the day after a time of fasting and prayer at the church the pastor returned home to announce that he thought he would die very soon. Soon afterward someone approached the house. The Pastor went outside while his wife picked up their 11-month-old baby and prepared to follow him. Just as she started toward the door, she heard the gunshot. The Pastor came back into the room, followed by two men with knives and guns. He had already been shot in the face. As his wife hid their*

son behind her, the men stabbed the pastor right in front of her. Once man shot him in the chest. The pastor was martyred by Buddhists willing to take extreme measures to make sure the gospel did not take root locally. They were unsuccessful. His wife continues to lead that church, which became a thriving congregation that witnessed countless miracles and salvation decisions.

6. You have to change your way of thinking and living

Whoever wants to save their life will lose it but whoever loses their life for His sake will save it.

Last week we said that we need to immerse ourselves in the truth. We need to have the same attitude that Moses had when he begged God, I want to see your glory. Moses wanted to be immersed in the presence of God, to know him intimately. God put him in the cleft of a rock and covered him with His hand passing by declaring who He was in Moses presence. Moses saw God and was so changed that his very outward appearance reflected that glory.

While in the presence of his Creator, Moses learned God's truth and love, He knew these things - intimately. Many today know the Lord from afar; few know him intimately, personally. Your Lord invited you to know him well - and not just from a distance. He calls you to come close, to live in his presence, to dwell in his truth as you come to know that truth from the Bible.

Don't forget: *The Bible is God's written message to all people. It helps us better understand who God is and how to make Him part of our lives.*

1 Peter 2:2 New International Version (NIV)

2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

Will this be pleasing to God? Make this the ruling factor in all you do and say.

7. The Challenges are huge

Though we set out intending to live for Jesus, all too soon our mind entertains wrong thoughts, our tongue utters words that hurt, our feet bring us places we should not go, and our hands move in self-serving directions. It's as though the parts of our body are waging a war against the good we would like to do (Romans 7:21-25) In the disciples case, they yielded to fatigue and fell asleep soon after Jesus, in agony and distress, asked them to watch and pray.

In the midst of daily life, with all the cares, worries and fears, He invites us to partner with Him to make an impact where we are. It isn't difficult and doesn't need to be complicated. We simply obey and He moves

VIDEO: Botham Jean's Brother Offers Forgiveness