

Normalizing Righteousness

Sunday, October 13, 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 On the other hand, what God has declared to be good and right is now regarded as outdated, abnormal and even wrong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

Practical Ways to Normalize Righteousness

Key Texts:

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.

1 Peter 2:11-12 New International Version (NIV)

11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. **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.

Thoughts to Consider

1. There will never be an exhaustive list
2. These should continue to be works in progress
3. These are not meant to be legalistic rules that save us, or which are applied in judgement against others

CATEGORY: Love and Forgiveness

PRINCIPLE: God has called us to both Love and Forgiveness as a means of testifying to the world about His existence and His nature.

SCRIPTURES:

John 13:34-35 New International Version (NIV)

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Colossians 3:13 New International Version (NIV)

13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

PRACTICAL INCORPORATION:

- Our love must be selfless, sacrificial and unconditional
- Say the words often, live the words always
- Unbelievers have a right to determine whether or not there is a God by the way we love each other.
- Forgiveness is not optional
- Go through THE BAIT OF SATAN course regularly
- Read Lewis B. Smead’s book “Forgive and Forget”
- Pray for those you are trying to forgive daily that God would bless them

Etched in Black and White

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Last week's Monday Memo (**The Clanging of the Bell**) told a story about Corrie Ten Boom's struggle to forgive some friends who had taken advantage of her. Eventually, she forgave them to the extent that their friendship and fellowship were restored.

Many years later, an American friend who was familiar with the story came to visit her in Holland. They spent the evening together — Corrie, her American friend, and the ones with whom she had had the conflict.

At the end of the evening, as the group left, her friend asked, "Aren't those the people who let you down?"

Corrie replied, (rather smugly, by her own admission), "Yes. You can see it's all forgiven."

And then she said, "But they still don't see it like I see it. They still say there was nothing to forgive. They deny it ever happened. But I can prove it. I have it in black and white. I still have the letters and documents."

Her friend paused for a moment, and then gently asked, "Corrie, aren't you the one who said your sins are at the bottom of the sea? Why, then, are the sins of your friends still etched in black and white?"

She could think of nothing to say, except, "Lord Jesus, forgive me for preserving — all these years — the evidence against others."

Before she went to sleep that night, she removed those letters and documents from her desk and tossed them in the furnace.

Paul said that we are to forgive others as Christ has forgiven us. How does he forgive us?

"I—yes, I alone—will blot out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again." (Isaiah 43:25)

That's our goal in forgiving others.

One of the greatest gifts you can give to others is to leave the past in the past. When you forgive someone and let it go ... when you make the deliberate choice to think of it never again ... you set mercy in motion — in their life, and yours.

CATEGORY: Caring for and Serving Others

PRINCIPLE: We need to be God's hands and feet in this world

SCRIPTURES:

Caring for and Serving Others

Philippians 2:4 New International Version (NIV)

4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Galatians 6:2 New International Version (NIV)

2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.

PRACTICAL INCORPORATION:

- Put others first and check on people
- Look and listen in order to supply needs not asked for
- Help out with the Food Pantry Ministry
- Visit shut-ins, widows and those who have special needs

CATEGORY: Generosity and Giving

PRINCIPLE: We are blessed when we bless others

SCRIPTURES:

Proverbs 11:25 New International Version (NIV)

25 A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.

2 Corinthians 9:7 New International Version (NIV)

7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver

PRACTICAL INCORPORATION:

- Tithe Regularly
- Look for ways to be generous