

12-31-2011, COTR Texarkana

Title: Change

Purpose: Provoke people to make the changes necessary to become the person God wants them to be

Spiritual Truth: If we make the right changes we'll become the person God wants us to be.

Text: Heb 12:1-2

Topic: New Year, Change, Spiritual Disciplines, Priorities

Change

I. Introduction

A. Video Sermon Spice *"What would you change about your life?"*

1. The man on the street question was, "What do you want to change about your life"? Some people were happy with everything but most people realized there was something they needed to change to have a better life. The last response was the most profound. His goal wasn't just about health, money or status but *"to be everything God wants me to be"*. I can't think of a better goal for 2012.
2. As we get ready to start a New Year I want to ask you a question, *"What kind of person does God want you to be and what do you need to change to get there?"*
3. Today I want to tell you how to become the person God wants you to be. I won't tell you who you should be. That's up to you and God to figure out but I will tell you how to get there.
 - a. Stop doing the wrong things.
 - b. Stick to the basics.
 - c. Start doing the right thing.

B. Spiritual Truth: If we make the right changes we'll become the person God wants us to be.

C. Title: Change

D. Purpose: Provoke people to make the changes necessary to become the person God wants them to be.

II. Stop doing the wrong things

A. Hebrews 12:1 (NLT)

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses..., **let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up.** And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.

1. If you want to get to the right place you can't be headed in the wrong direction, e.g. if we're going shopping in Dallas we don't take I-49 to Shreveport.

B. The Christian life is like taking a trip. God wants us to take our life in a specific direction but satan doesn't want us to go there. He has two tricks he uses: vs. 1 *"weights to slow us down and sins to trip us up"*.

1. *"Weights slow us down."* Weights are anything that complicates our lives, consumes our time and distracts us from what's most important, e.g. consuming hobby, a 24/7 job, a garage full of possessions, etc.
 - a. Weights aren't sinful activities but can distract us from becoming the person God wants us to be because they consume our time, our \$ and wear us out.
 - b. There's only one thing to do with weights like this; get rid of them.

- i. What weight is satan using to slow you down? What are you going to do about it!
2. **"Sins trip us up"**. Satan tempts us to get off the right path to go the wrong way. This is called sin. Sin will stop God's plan for you. He knows if he can trip us up with sin we'll never become the person God wants us to be.
 - a. What sin is satan using to trip you up? 2012 is the time to stop doing the wrong things. Let me tell you how:
 - i. 1st you've got to be willing to change. Pleasing God must become more important than the pleasure sin brings.
 - ii. 2nd you've got to act on your decision. Find the next exit and turn your car around. Put a filter on the internet and give your wife the password; cancel the TV stations that pull you down, etc.
 - iii. 3rd if the sin you're battling has become a spiritual stronghold and can't make the change on your own then get some help.
 - iv. **James 5:16 (NCV)**
¹⁶ Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so God can heal you. When a believing person prays, great things happen.
3. We've got to treat satan like a telemarketer calling at dinner. The only way to get rid of him is to hang up the phone.
 - a. When you start to get rid of the wrong things you'll make huge steps toward becoming the person God wants you to be.

III. **Stick to the basics...Christianity 101**

1. I read a sign at a dentist's office that illustrates this: Only brush and floss the teeth you want to keep. That's basic dental hygiene.
2. There are 4 basic spiritual disciplines to help us be the person God wants us to be
3. At COTR we say "Connect to God, friends, ministry and the world."

B. We connect to God by spending time with Him every day...daily devotion

1. **Matthew 14:23 (ESV)** [Context: after miracle of feeding 20,000]
²³ after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.
 - a. This was the rhythm of Jesus' life: time with God, ministry to people, time with God.
2. If we spend time with God every day reading the Bible, praying and worshipping we'll become the person He wants us to be.

C. We connect to friends by being involved in church life...fellowship

1. **Acts 2:41-42 (NCV)**
⁴¹ Then those people who accepted what Peter said were baptized... ⁴² **They spent their time learning the apostles' teaching, sharing, breaking bread, and praying together.**
2. The Christian life was never intended to be lived alone. God wants us to live life together with other Christians. We call it church.

D. We connect to the world by sharing our faith and doing missions work...witnessing

1. **Acts 1:8 (NLT)**
⁸ **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."**

E. We connect to ministry by using our time, talent and treasure to serve the Lord...ministry

1. **Matthew 4:10 (The Message)** [Context: 40 day temptation]
¹⁰ Jesus' refusal was curt: "Beat it, Satan!" He backed his rebuke with a third quotation from Deuteronomy: "Worship the Lord your God, and only him. **Serve him with absolute single-heartedness.**"
 - a. If you stick to the basics... daily devotion, fellowship, witnessing and serving you'll become the person God wants you to be in 2012.

IV. Start doing the right thing...live with eternity in mind

A. Most of our thinking is focused on short term things, e.g. what am I doing this weekend, what's on TV tonight, who's going to the Super Bowl? Even if you're thinking about the next 20-30 years it's not enough.

1. Most people spend their time thinking about things in this life while God thinks about eternity. We see life as the performance; God sees our life on earth as a warm up for eternity.
2. We all have one life to live. Jesus has given us a race to run and promised to reward us if we finish it. It just makes sense to live with eternity I mind.

B. Live on purpose and plan to finish strong

1. What will I do in 2012 that will last for eternity?
2. How many people will go to heaven because of me in 2012?
3. **2 Timothy 4:6-8 (NLT)**
⁶...The time of my death is near. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. ⁸ And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And **the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.**
 - a. It's not how you start the Christian life that matters; it's how you end it.
 - b. Some people end their life backslidden; some serve the Lord "just enough to get by" while some set their eye on eternity and run with purpose.
 - i. Elder Fred Harris is an example to follow. He's staring at 80 and running hard after God. He serves the Lord with passion; he loves his wife; he's committed to His church.
 - ii. What kind of race are you running?
4. Movie "Secretariat"...he usually ran near the rear,final race for the Triple Crown, facing the fastest horse in America. The bell sounds and he begins to run...
5. We've only got 1 life to live. The choices we make will affect us for eternity. Jesus has given us a job to do. He promised to reward us if we do it.
 - a. Don't waste your life on things that have no eternal value.

V. Conclusion

A. Start 2012 the right way. Decide to be everything God wants you to be? You can if you:

1. Stop doing the wrong things.
2. Stick to the basics.
3. Start doing the right thing.

B. Response: What is the HS saying to you about change in 2012? I'd like to pray for you.