



October 30, 2017

feeding...gathering...carrying...leading. (Isiah 40:11)

Dear Church family,

We have an important conference coming up this Saturday to equip us to raise the children of our church in the midst of a sexually saturated culture. How can we help them to have the healthy sexual desire that God intends for them? Kyle Bowman of Regeneration Ministries spoke to us on Sunday about managing sexual desire and temptation. We as adults need to walk in healthy sexual desire in order to be able to help our children. Below are excerpts from Kyle's teaching.

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23

The first directive Jesus gives in Luke 9:23 is to deny yourself. The Greek biblical definition for "deny" means "to refuse to give thought to or express concern for—to disregard, to pay no attention to." I think this is a very different idea of what we think of when it comes to denying ourselves. Do words like suppress, stuff, stifle, repress, or squash come to mind? If we're being truthful, this method doesn't really work or if it does, it's only temporary. The biblical meaning of deny is not white knuckling or telling yourself over and over not to do what it is that you don't want to do. Suppressing or stuffing the way you feel makes a stoic. The stoic suppresses and avoids the pain of desire. They know that based on history, if they allow their desires to surface, they will go down a path that leads to trouble.

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At some point trying to stuff those desires will wear you down and you become a sensualist. The sensualist feeds on false intimacy. When the pain comes up, they self-medicate in order to relieve it. Many sensualists will fall into addiction.

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The place that we want to get to is to become a sojourner. The sojourner takes to heart the words of the apostle Paul from 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

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The sojourner learns to acknowledge the good of their desires knowing that they are a gift from God. The sojourner chooses to be vulnerable before the Lord bringing their struggles to Him. They learn that saying no isn't the end of the world and that life can be lived fully without abandoning themselves to their desires.

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Denying those desires that are contrary to the will of God moment by moment and day by day can be difficult. It is emotionally draining and can on many days seem unfair and futile. All you want is relief. So how do you respond during those times of suffering? Do you shake your fist at God? Do you become envious of others? Do you beat yourself up and tell yourself that a good Christian shouldn't be dealing with this kind of thing for this length of time?

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Jesus gives us direction for how we should respond in the midst of suffering. In the garden of Gethsemane, the Bible says that Jesus was grieved to the point of death and he fell on his face

and prayed and said My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. When he was on the cross He cried out to the Father and said My God, My God why have you forsaken me? In His suffering Jesus always engaged with the Father. Jesus could have easily told himself that this is what God wants from him, so he just has to man up. Because of his relationship with the Father, he was able to express the truth about what he was experiencing, and God wants us to do the same.

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It may seem counter-intuitive to say, "God, right now in this moment I want to look at images that I shouldn't look at. I feel like that would really make me feel better. But I know that this is not your best for me. Lord would you meet me in this moment and by the power of your Holy Spirit help me move beyond this?" God would be delighted that you invited him into your struggle. You need his help because the power of desire is too much for you to handle on your own.

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Only when we can deny ourselves by being honest and vulnerable before the Lord and pick up our crosses by inviting Him into our pain and suffering can we obey the last directive Jesus gives, and that is to follow Him. To follow Him doesn't mean I'll always respond in the face of temptation the way I should. But I can walk as one who is victorious because I know that I am more than a conqueror, and nothing will separate me from His love.

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We have a generation coming up that needs us to learn to walk in the freedom that God has ordained for them. We as adults need to be in a healthy place so that we can equip them to do so.

Our Hebrews study will feature Jesus as our high priest who helps us with temptation, so we will be able to build on this message as we celebrate communion next Sunday. I hope to see you there and at the conference on Saturday.

Pastorally Yours,
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