

Power Hungry
June 8, 2014

Life involves constant change. Everything changes. God teaches us this through the four seasons of the year. My favorite time of year is autumn. But autumn comes to an end. The perfect temperatures become colder. I have to replace a light jacket with a medium weight jacket, followed by a heavy coat. I break out the sweaters and my ultra cold-weather hat.

But winter is not forever. This latest one gave us reason to doubt that. But it came to an end. The temperatures grew warmer. The spring flowers began their fashion show. Then the leaves came out and the grass began to grow. This week we had a taste of summer, and that taste is about to become a full meal.

God shows us that life is about change. Our bodies are constantly changing. No one prepares us for the changes. You seniors did not warn me what to expect when I turned fifty. You did not warn me that my body would become more brittle and susceptible to aches and pains. Or maybe you did and I just forgot! Life is constantly changing. Appliances wear out. Cars wear out. Houses get run down. And so do our bodies.

Cultures change too. Ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and philosophies, both new and recycled sweep in and out of vogue in public life. Our nation's founders were religious men and believed in the value of religion for preserving and strengthening the new nation. They would not recognize our nation today.

Life is constantly changing. Indeed the life of a Christian is all about change. The life of a Christian is one of constant change. We have a name for this change.

Sanctification is the process of change in the Christian life. To sanctify something is to give it to God.

As you give yourself to God, He changes you on the inside. He changes your heart and your thinking. He changes your will, your desires, your beliefs, your attitudes. God changes your character to match the character of Jesus. And from these changes, God changes your behavior.

Paul the missionary talks about this process of change in his letter to the Christians living in the city of Colossae. Note as we read this the before and after aspect of this process. He tells us to get rid of the old bad us and take up the new like-Jesus us.

Colossians 3:1 (NIV) Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Colossians 3:5-8 (NIV) Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

The Christian life is one of becoming more and more like Jesus and less and less the people we used to be. You must be intentional about this. But the power to bring about this change is God's power. So He concludes as follows.

Colossians 4:2 (NIV) Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Devote yourselves to prayer. Devote yourselves to prayer. Because it is a tall order to change oneself completely from one kind of person to another kind of person. It will not be easy. It will require the power of God. The power of God comes through prayer. And so we must devote ourselves to prayer.

Pray, giving yourself to the changes God wants to make in you. Pray for the courage to obey God's commands. Pray for the power of God to flow through your obedience. Pray for God to impact and change lives through your life. Pray for humility, for faith, for hope, for love. Pray your praise and thankfulness. Pray for God's will to be done through your church. Pray for God's will to be done through your family. Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Paul too expresses this need of prayer in his missionary service.

Colossians 4:3-4 (NIV) And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

He then reminds them of their part in sharing Jesus.

Colossians 4:5 (NIV) Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

Right where they are, in their homes, their neighborhoods, their community, on their jobs and in their schools, they are to be telling people what Jesus has done for them. Any day they may be presented with an opportunity to share Jesus. They must be prayerfully ready for each one.

This is where our prayers and our VBS efforts connect. We want to make the most of our Vacation Bible School opportunity this July. God will draw unchurched people here this summer. God is giving us a great opportunity. Prayer must be the foundation of us making the most of this opportunity. There is a lot of preparation work left to do. Prayer is the most important part of that preparation. Prayer is the most important thing we can and must do. That is why we are emphasizing prayer for VBS.

"Make the most of every opportunity." God has opened a door for the Gospel to be presented this July to families who otherwise would not be in a church. We must pray so

we can make the most of this opportunity. If you care about people going to hell, and you should, then you will pray. If you are thankful for your chance at heaven, and you should be, then you will pray.

We are going to put on the best Vacation Bible School we know how. We have years of experience. We have a committed and experienced team of workers. We have enthusiasm. We have enough quality materials and resources. We have a good place to meet in. We have adequate space, inside and out. But all of that alone reflects what we can do. All of that sounds like a lot, but it is useless for changing people's hearts. Only God can speak to hearts. Only God can stir a heart. Only God can convince someone that the gospel is true, and once understood as true, only God can convince that it is needed. We can speak to ears and maybe to heads, but only God can speak to people's hearts.

All of what we have and can do becomes a tool in the hands of God. Pray for the power of God to flow through these.

We can pray for help to do well what we can do. And we should. And we will. But our primary prayer must be for the power of God to work in the hearts of the children and parents coming to VBS.

We aren't doing this so that we can say we did it. We aren't doing this because it is tradition. We aren't doing this because it is fun. We aren't doing this because we need the exercise. We aren't doing this because we need a special summer project. We aren't doing this because our kids are bored during the summer and need something to entertain them. We are doing this because unless people hear the gospel, are convicted of their sins, and place their faith for forgiveness in Jesus, they will go to hell when they die. People need to be saved. Jesus wants everyone to be saved. We want everyone to be saved. That is why we must pray.

Devote yourself to praying for VBS, for the preparations, the execution, and the follow-up. Pray for the teachers and other workers. But pray most of all for the power of God to work in and through all that we do. Then we will see results that can only be attributed to God. God will get the glory.

Invitation

We are going to all this effort because people need Jesus. They need to hear the truth about their spiritual condition. That condition is that they are living in rebellion against God. This is sin. The consequences of sin is death and then judgment by God and then hell.

Is this you? Do you now realize your need for a Savior? Are you ready to believe in Jesus as the Savior you need? You can be pardoned of sin by receiving Jesus as your Savior and Lord. Jesus died for your sin, in your place. Believe and receive Him and you will be forgiven and will inherit eternal life in heaven.