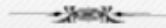


Lost & Found Center Teaching Series



SEED YOUR CHANGE

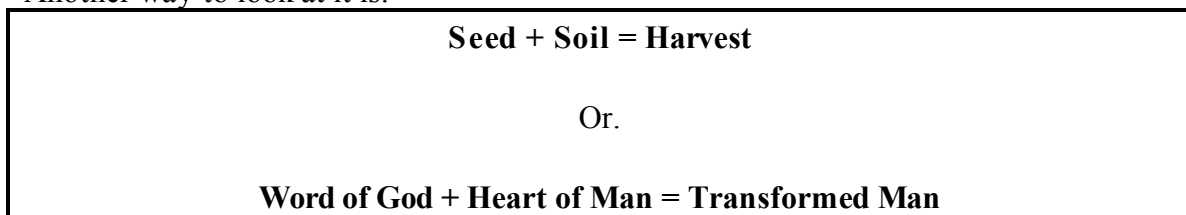
Change is the Goal

Everyone wants to change. As believers in Jesus Christ we struggle with so much sin and bondage and oppression. We try to change out of the strength of our own character or the determination of our own will but we cannot. We pray to God to just miraculously change us and He does not. In the end, many of us give up on changing retreating to the “this is just how I am and God still loves me” argument. Others claim they have changed when actually they haven’t. They believe that talking about change somehow triggers true and lasting change in their lives. But it does not. Is change really possible? Well, Jesus told us a parable and in it he gave us a blueprint for true and lasting change in our lives.

Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear." Matthew 13:3-9

Let’s unravel this parable. The sower represents God. The seed represents the Word of God. The soil represents the heart of man. Lastly, the harvest represents the resulting dynamic produced from the seed in combination with good soil. The harvest is what proceeds out of the heart of man. Here is the first key. The harvest is our thoughts, feelings, words and actions resulting from the word of God in us. The harvest then represents the new you. The harvest represents a core change of who you are.

Another way to look at it is:



Taking One Step Back

Jesus has revealed a basic truth about the development of man. Although the application is about the things of God it is much broader than that. The seed does not have to be the Word of God. The seed can be anything learned in any and every way you can learn it. The harvest or fruit represents the learning or life experiences that found enough soil in you to affect you. The truth is that everyone walks around displaying his or her harvest.

A person's harvest is their thoughts, feelings, words and actions that are the result of the seeds of their life learning and experiences. No matter who you are, you have been seeded with something and you display that harvest for all to see.

So we could expand the equation to look something like this.

Your learning and life's experiences + Your Heart = The Current You.

The current you is your thoughts, feelings, words and actions. The current you is the fruit of what has already been seeded into your life. So can you see who you are right now?

Good Tree Bad Tree

Jesus made this even clearer with another parable along the same vein.

"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. Matthew 12:33-35

Good trees produce good fruit and bad trees produce bad fruit. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit. Why, because it is too late. The seeds have already taken root. The only thing we can do now is to change the seed. Out of this parable is also a very critical line that explains why the focus should be on seeds.

For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. Matthew 12:34b

Remember the fruit is the resulting thoughts, feelings, words and actions. We speak out of the overflow of our heart. We think out of the overflow of our heart. We act out of the overflow of our heart. Who are in our heart is who we really are. Proverbs explains this nicely.

As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man. Proverbs 27:19

Why was it impossible for these "brood of vipers" to say anything good, because what comes out of us is the result of our HEARTS. Can you see it? Jesus is just reiterating that it is futile to expect good fruit from a bad tree. Similarly, it is futile to expect good fruit when the underlying seed was bad.

The Religious Problem

The problem with religion is that similar to the above parable, the very emphasis is to change bad fruit to good. Religion focuses on behavior. On the surface this seems like a good idea but look back at the formula.

Seed of your life's experiences + Your Heart = The Current You.

Think of the issue this way. The current you is the fruit of what has already been seeded inside you. You can't successfully alter the current you by just working on the fruit. It is just too late. You can't just say to people stop doing this or don't do that and do this instead. Can you see the futility of this approach? This is what most religion is based upon.

We've all heard of people who cracked under the pressure of sin. The tension of trying to live externally the direct opposite of what was inside them eventually became too great. What really happened was they became masters of disguising the fruit of what was inside them – at least for a time. As believers we need to be rescued from this tendency to work on the fruit and the accompanying tension that goes with it.

God's Way – Inside to Out

God's way is always inside to out. His approach is different. God doesn't focus on fruit. He starts with seeds. Remember the parable. The sower is God and He goes around laying seed. Seems like He could go around transforming fruit but that is not the way He does it. He starts with seeds.

Here's God's goal for you:

"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." Jeremiah 31:33b

If the laws of God are in our hearts then we won't need to focus so much on behavior because the fruit or our behavior will follow. Righteousness comes from seeds. Righteousness is right thoughts, feelings, words and actions. Righteousness is never then an act of the will to obey some standard of behavior. When righteousness starts from seeds then righteousness becomes a natural expression of who we are. That's the best way to live.

(I pray that you will be) filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:11

God's goal then is that out of our hearts there will be the fruit of righteousness. If it is coming from your hearts then it will be authentic. What originates from your heart is the real you.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

When fruit is produced out of your heart like this, the Bible says there is no need for any law. When this type of fruit is coming out of you through your thoughts, feelings, words and actions there is no set of laws that can be produced that you can break.

This is the goal of God for you. Change the fruit by starting with seeds.

Okay I Get It, So How Do I Change My Heart?

Going back to the parable, the harvest is the resulting dynamic between God's word and a heart ready to receive it. That means the new you is really based upon collaboration with God. Here is where the road can be tricky because there is a ditch on each side of the road.

Look at the diagram below of the road to the new you.



Notice the **All You Ditch**. This is a concept that God is not going to help you and that you are on your own. This is wayward thinking. Thinking that you can really do it. That everything is under your own control. And that it is just up to your will and desire. Those with strong wills succeed and those with weak ones fail. Religion often lives here. Let's stay out of this ditch.

On the other side is the **All God Ditch**. This ditch seems okay because it addresses head on the first issue. If it's not all about me, then it must be all about God, right? Then our ability to change should be solely in God's hand. We can do nothing. Why even try. Let God change me when He is ready. Wrong. Religion lives here as well.

Going back to the parable, the harvest is the result of the dynamic between the Word of God and the heart. That is the center of the road where you have a part and God has a part. And we know that God always does his part.

Your Heart is not Your Mind

This is a critical thing to understand. There is a distinction here. Remember the equation:

$$\text{Word of God} + \text{Heart of Man} = \text{Transformed Man}$$

The heart and the mind are not interchangeable. The person you are is based upon your heart not your mind. Is this just playing a semantic game? Absolutely not.

There are many things that enter in your mind. Good things and bad things. Everything you interact with is passed through your mind. You are not the sum of all that information. There are things however that have passed through your mind and taken root in you and like the parable they have brought forth a harvest. There are things that have gone into your mind that are now a part of you. Those things have made it into your heart.

Can you control what goes into your heart? No, not really. If that were the case there would not be so many self-help books on how to change. The way to change is the dynamic created by the Word of God with the heart of man and the Holy Spirit.

Things Trapped in Your Head

There are so many great things that are trapped in our head that if we could only make that transfer to our heart, it would have a profound and dramatic affect on who we are.

Be honest. There are many things we know to be true. We know in our mind. The reason we don't do them is because we only know them in our mind. Most of the time we can't distinguish the difference between what's in our heart and in our mind until there is a little pressure.

Example. Soldiers go through intense training to be brave under enemy attack. Being brave would be to fire their weapons when they were fired upon or to follow orders. Effective training would try to simulate the environment as reasonably close as possible. However, it is not until actual combat occurs that the military finds out which ones are brave. They may all know what to do in their mind but what comes out under extreme conditions is what is in the heart.

How frustrating is it for us to know the right things to do yet consistently do the wrong. How frustrating is it for us to know the incredible hope we have in Christ, the spiritual riches we have laid up for us, and the incomparable power that supports us and yet consistently not live a life worthy of the Lord.

Here's nice example to bring this concept home.

The Bible says we have been saved by grace by the blood of Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins. We have been released from all condemnation and stand righteous before God. This is the truth. The fact is we are really and truly righteous. This righteousness is based upon what Christ has done. Any limitations of that righteousness are limitations in the power of the blood sacrifice of Jesus. But, there are no limitations.

Okay. So what if a couple of angels appeared right now before you and said, you have been summoned before the very throne room of God to stand before the presence of the Almighty. Would you go? Would you be afraid? What you know and what is in your heart make a big difference.

The goal then is to move the core truths about God from your mind to your heart.

How Do I Proceed?

By the time we get to here we've established a few ideas.

1. From the parable we establish the formula for change is:
Word of God + Heart of Man = Transformed Man
2. Who you are in your heart is who you really are.
3. What flows out of your heart are your thoughts, feelings, words and actions – the real you.
4. What flows out of your heart is the result of what has already been seeded.
5. It is impossible to change what is flowing out without changing the seeds.
6. Our change is dependent on the dynamic combination of the seed from God and our heart. It is not all about God nor is it all about us in this process.
7. Your heart is not your mind. Your mind follows your heart.
8. The goal is to move important truths about God from your mind to your heart.

The Two-Part Heart Process – A Good and Understanding Heart

Jesus does pull his disciples aside and explain the parable. He describes how the dynamic of the harvest works.

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. Matthew 13:23a

The harvest then is produced when a good heart hears and understands the word of God. So there you have it. All we need is a good heart that can receive and understand the word of God and then we can change. But glance back at the road diagram and see that we don't accomplish this by ourselves. We use God's help.

The Good Heart

The rest is really not that complicated. Getting to this point is the key. Developing a good heart in us is what God is all about. The Holy Spirit is ready to do this. What is it that we have to do? We need to be open to his work; to ask him to cleanse our heart; to simply ask him to search our hearts; to ask him to expose us; to invite him to work in us; to give him access to our hearts; to be on the receiving end; and to be deliberate in asking and in trusting him.

This is the only true work that is ever required in the kingdom, asking, seeking, and trusting.

Pray something short like this:

Lord I just want to be open with you in the work you do on my heart and cooperate in any way. Create in me a place where your word can grow and thrive.

Understanding the Word

Understanding the word is another thing that God is always ready and eager to do. Can you think of any two things that the Lord will be more eager to answer in the lives of a believer than developing a good heart and understanding his Word? These are prayers that the Lord is just waiting for us to ask him and the Holy Spirit is ready to get to work on. Again our part is just asking, seeking, and trusting.

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26

God always does his part.

Pray something short like this:

Lord God I desire to make your word the anchor of my life. I ask for your help in understanding it in a way that makes it a part of me. Lead me to the verses that you want me to focus upon right now. Teach me ways to get the word into my heart.

Wrapping Up

Yes, true and lasting change is possible. God who is the designer of man has laid out the process. The secrets of the word of God always seem to be obvious yet we always seem to miss it. May the Lord help us on this one and give us the right seeds for our lives right now.

Word of God + Heart of Man = Transformed Man

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Matthew 13:23

Notes

Lost & Found Center - Teaching Series

For Questions or Comments please respond to lostandfoundcenter@yahoo.com and visit www.lostandfoundcenter.org for additional information.

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