

Holy Impact

Pulling Teeth

Good Morning, My name is Darrell Arnold, and I am the Director of Family Ministry here at FUMC|Bakersfield. It is my pleasure to share with you this morning as we continue our journey through our series on The Holy Spirit. **In the last five weeks, we have discussed the Holy Spirit:**

- 1) **Is a person**
- 2) **Has a defined role**
- 3) **Gives Christians supernatural strength**
- 4) **Gives gifts and produces fruit in the lives of Christians**
- 5) **Can be sinned against**

This morning we are going to be adding to our series by discussing how he (The HS) empowers us to transform our lives. With this in mind, I want to ask you, **“Have you ever wanted to change something about your life?”** Maybe you want to lose a few pounds; maybe you want a little less gray in your hair, perhaps you wanted to start a new career or go back to school after a long hiatus, maybe you want to dress more professionally, maybe you wanted to retire after a long and fruitful career and vocational journey. Where those changes difficult? **Personally, at this stage of my life, I have a tough time cultivating healthy changes this time of year.** You know why? (Produce Box of Carmel Delights & Put picture on the Screen) **These cookies are just so dang good! I could eat a couple of boxes in one sitting. I mean come on . . . if these are not manna from heaven, I do not know what is.** Now, I don't know if your change has to do with cookies, but whatever change you have tried to facilitate, did you realize how hard it is to change how you have live after you have been that way for a while? You get stuck in a pattern or a routine and do not think twice about it until it something helps you realize that change is required. Then when you try to change, you realize that this routine has more control over you than you do of it? When we get to that place, it seems as if enacting the simplest change, with an efficient benefit, can be like pulling teeth with a pair of rusty craftsman plyers.

Meaningful, Healthy Change

We a hard all have time making meaningful, healthy changes in our life. We know that we could drink more water and drink less soda. We know that we could watch less TV and we could read our bible more. We know that we could work less and invest in our spouse more. We know that we could stop making excuses and call our mother, brother, sister, father, etc. more. There is an endless list of small changes we could think of that would help us to live a complete life. However, before we start thinking about this too hard and distract ourselves by making a list of things to do. Let's define what a meaningful, healthy change is. **For our**

purposes today, meaningful, healthy change is a drastic altering of our spiritual, emotional, relational, or physical lifestyle. For most of us, those categories seem pretty basic. All of us can probably think of some meaningful, healthy physical changes we need to make in our life. We could undoubtedly exercise more and eat a few less Carmel Delights. Many of us know that we could probably take some steps forward spiritually; we could stop one social activity for six weeks and join a small group for Lent. Many of us know that our emotions can get the best of us, and we battle feelings of hopelessness about our life. We could take one lunch break a month and see a therapist or counselor. Many of us share a life-giving relationship with a friend or family member we haven't spoken to in months; we could take time to call them once a month. All of us, whether it takes a 10 second period of thought or 10 minutes deep dive into our life habits, can think of something we can do that would ultimately impact our lives for the better and lead us into a healthier life pattern. But, for some reason, we do not do it. Why is that? The simple answer is that we do not want to. We know the action will be good for us, but we don't want to do it. It is almost as if we are prone to avoiding healthy changes in our life simply because they might inconvenience us. Change might require us to be vulnerable, we might have to appear weak, and we might have to admit that we do not have our act together. Who wants to do that?

This reality creates a tension for us, and we are confronted with a choice. We can convince ourselves that we can change when we want, or we can accept that we are powerless to make sustainable change and need help. The good news is, if we can come to a place of humility, **we will find that we do not have to rely on our power to make meaningful, healthy changes in our life.**

A Holy Impact

Earlier in our service, we were blessed with a reading from Romans Chapter 8:1-11. This passage opens with probably the most powerful verse in the entire bible, but to limit its truth to that one verse would be doing it a great injustice. In this letter, we see the apostle Paul sharing a simple message with the church in Rome: **God wants to empower us to make a meaningful, healthy change by having a "holy impact" on our lives.** A unique characteristic of this text is that Paul is not writing to correct behavior or false teaching in the church. He is writing a gospel-based letter to encourage the Roman church to keep focusing on the message of Jesus and to continue to pursue holiness or a relationship with God. With that purpose in mind, let us consider this morning the question – How can we change our lives in such a way that the message of Jesus and our relationship with God become a driving force in our life?

Paul uses Romans 8:1-11 to compare two lifestyles – "The Flesh" and "The Spirit." In these 11 verses, Paul references life in the flesh ten times, and he references life in the spirit 11 times to drive this point home. This comparison speaks directly to the tension that we

discussed in the early part of this message and is ultimately the answer to the question, “How can I change?” From the beginning of our faith, Christians believe that our nature is such that we are eternally separated from God, and there is nothing we (humanity) can do to fix that. No religious sacrifice, No religious vow, No sacred action can restore us to a right relationship with God. However, Christians also believe that God is our creator, and we are made in his image. For many of us, this means we have a deep, and at times unrecognizable, longing to understand and restore God’s place our life. In other words, we recognize our need for a relationship with him. As a result of this tension, we are left with a choice: we can choose to embrace the path forward that God has put in place through Jesus and pursue his purpose for our life or we can resist that fundamental change and continue to live our lives in confusion and search of a mission. Romans 8:5-6 uses Paul’s words to sum this tension up for us. It states,

“For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is Life. Life vs. Death is a big difference, but it is also the one thing God has been exceedingly clear about. His deepest desire is for us to have a full and abundant life, but that can only happen if we change our lives and submit ourselves before him. How do we do that? Romans 8 tells us that if we want a relationship with God, we are going to have to make some fundamental changes to the way we live our life. It tells us that we must enter into a saving relationship with Jesus, the son of God, the only perfect human who ever lived, and the man whose life, death, resurrection, and ascension gives us access to Holy Spirit, God himself, who gives us the resources needed to make the changes God asks of those who follow him. **You see, it is Jesus who makes change possible, but it is the Holy Spirit that gifts us with the supernatural power to change our life.** This truth is the Holy Impact.

Encountering The Holy Spirit

God desperately wants to make a holy impact on your life, but that is only half of the equation. God is making you the offer, but you also need to reach out and embrace him. You need to be ready to put your money where your mouth is. If you do that, then you will experience the faithfulness of God in a new and fresh way: you will experience his power and presence in your life. **You will have an encounter with the Holy Spirit, God himself.** In reference to this great gift that God has given us, Oswald Chambers, a prominent Christian author had this to say,

“All that I do should be based on a perfect oneness with him, not a self-willed determination to be Godly.”

God doesn't want you to do it alone. He wants to walk with you. How is God moving you into a personal encounter with his Holy Spirit, into "perfect oneness" with him?

If you are here today and you had never made a decision to follow Jesus, you had no idea who he was, and today is the first time you ever heard of him, then I want to encourage you: You have the most natural path forward. You have to walk before you can run. You need to know this: **There is a God who loves you, wants a relationship with you, and wants nothing more than to have a chance to lead you through life in this crazy world.** He wants an opportunity to show you that this experience is better with him and that he will give you all the power you need to thrive in our stressful world. Through his son Jesus, he wants to offer you forgiveness, rid you of shame, and show you great life can be. All you have to do is say yes. If this is you, feel free to approach me or any of our leaders here after the service, and we can guide you through this process.

Now for the hard part, if you are a Christian, someone who has made a personal decision to follow God, you need to realize that this also means **God is going to call you to make some personal and challenging changes to the way you live.** However, he has promised to help you to remain present in your life and give you all the power you need. What is holding you back from a full pursuit of all that God has for you? God wants to see you be successful in your marriage. God wants to see you be a successful parent with your children. God wants to see you be a successful member of the team you work with. God wants to see you be a successful grandparent. God wants to help you find more meaning and purpose in this life you are living, no matter how old you are. Are you allowing yourself to follow his lead and be transformed by the power of his Holy Spirit? Are you aware of the Holy Spirit's presence in your everyday life? Are you aware of the fruit of the spirit in your daily life?

Wherever you are today, Know this: God loves you just the way you are, but he also loves you too much to leave you that way.

Holy Community

God wants to have a personal impact on your life, but he doesn't just want to stop there. Church, we serve a big God, a God who has looked at the vilest things we could ever imagine and said, "Nah, I'm bigger than that." The God Christians serve is bigger than any evil that plagues our world. The God we serve is bigger than any challenge our world can throw at our church. We have been commissioned to bring his word to our society, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will see this mission to completion. **Just as God wants to have a holy impact on our individual lives, he also wants to have a holy impact on our community.** Are we listening? What are we as a community doing to tell people of the great power that lives in us? What are we as a community doing to help people understand that God is bigger than poverty?

What are we doing to show our community that God is bigger than addiction? What are we doing to show our community that God is bigger than divorce? Than Child Abuse? Than Domestic Violence? Imagine what the world would look like if all of us did that? Church there is a world out there that is hurting, in desperate need of a savior and a strength that is greater than anything this world has to offer. God has called us to show them who he is and he has given us the ability to be the vessels He uses to display His power. All have to do is say, "Here I am. Send ME! God has given us the ability to have an impact; all we need to do is say yes.

Holy Spirit Prayer:

Holy Spirit you live in me. I invite you to work holiness in me. I am prone to selfishness and sin and sadness. My propensity to do bad make no sense sometimes, yet the living God lives in me. Come and allow me to take time to be holy. Let purity of thought and life be my standard. This, I ask in Jesus' most powerful Name. Amen