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**God's Process For Life Change**  
**"Giving Back"**  
(Part 6)

**Intro:** Video: We all can come up with a lot of excuses for not serving...BUT...

- The final result of a transformed life is all about giving back. God brings about life change not just for us, but for the sake of others. God wants to use our lives to impact people. We are changed for a purpose. We best represent God when we embrace a lifestyle of giving back to others. God is a giver and His people must reflect His generous character by giving back and serving others. That's full circle transformation!
- How do I embrace a lifestyle of giving back? 4 essential qualities that must be in place so that our giving back / our serving is empowered by God and has eternal results.

**I. God Must Stay First**

- HOW?

A. Daily make Christ Lord

*I Peter 3:15 "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have..."*  
(NIV)

1. Notice that before we are ready to give an answer to others, Christ must be set apart as Lord of our lives. He must possess first place. Lordship precedes giving back to others. WHY?
2. Unless Jesus stays first in our lives, even our giving back to others gets off track. We begin to give back with wrong motives / for selfish reasons / stroke our own egos / our focus is about us rather than the needs of others.
3. Unless Jesus is the Lord of our lives He is not in control of our efforts. I have seen the right thing done in the wrong way and cause tremendous damage to people's lives.
4. For example: Sharing your faith – just like I Peter 3:15. How many times has someone tried to share their faith with someone without God's help and actually turned someone away from Christ?
  - A few years ago, there was a group of people from another church going door to door (Explain, what was said... - Oh well, you're going to hell anyway!"

5. There is such a natural tendency to automatically possess first place in our lives that we have to make a daily conscious choice to place Jesus there.
6. If God is going to stay first, then this is a choice we must make everyday. He doesn't automatically stay there. We must choose a secondary role. This is what it means to "set apart". It's something we must do daily. This is not a one time event, but a daily one.

#### B. Daily give up ownership

*I Cor. 6:19-20 "... You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body." (NLT)*

1. I realize we have discussed this before, but unless we choose this daily as well, God doesn't remain first. We must embrace a different mindset. I do not belong to myself...I belong to God.
2. If we do not daily give up ownership of our lives, we can never effectively serve and give back to others. WHY? Because our own selfishness gets in the way!
3. Giving back requires sacrifice / giving back is inconvenient / giving back means that you limit your own freedom for the sake of others / giving back means your needs become secondary many times / We don't belong to ourselves any longer. I don't have the right to just do whatever I want!
4. Until we give up the ownership of our lives, God is NOT first place and we embrace a lifestyle of convenience. I'll give back when it's convenient / I'll serve others when it's convenient. I'll see if I can work it into my schedule.
5. We let God borrow our lives occasionally, instead of owning them.
  - Let's say you wanted to borrow my truck. I'll make sure I'm not needing it / you'll tell me the times / use it and give it back. That's very different then if I gave you the title to me truck. I have no say.
6. Keeping God first is making a choice every day. It is reminding ourselves daily that I belong to Jesus. I do not have the right to just do whatever I want with my life. My life was purchased with His blood, therefore He has first say what I do with my life.

## II. Investment Must Be In Others (Rather than myself)

### A. We have a responsibility towards one another

*Gal. 6:1 "Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should help that person back onto the right path..." (NLT)*

*Gal. 6:10 "Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters." (NLT)*

1. The prevailing attitude today is that other people's lives are none of my business. Is that biblically correct? Absolutely not! We have a profound responsibility to one another.

2. Remember, we are transformed in the context of loving relationships. Our lives are changed because there are people making investments into our lives.
3. Sometimes that investment is for accountability and correction...sometimes it's just to encourage and to bless. It's not just the Pastor's job to hold people accountable to follow the right path. It's everyone's job!
4. We all have a responsibility to encourage each other to not quit / stay in the marriage / not gossip or be divisive / quit flirting with temptation / to forgive rather than resent /
5. I can't imagine where I'd be if I hadn't allowed others to make investments into my life. (Share) Sometimes for correction / sometimes to bless. I've seen believers too proud to receive both!
6. Who are you making investments in? Are there some people you need to lovingly help back on the right path? Others that just need a note of encouragement / or some way to bless them.
7. God has called us to make a difference in the lives of people. Where are you embracing this responsibility?

**B. We have a responsibility to utilize our gifting to bless one another**

*I Cor. 12:7 "A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church." (NLT)*

1. God has put something in you for the expressed purpose of investing in others. It is called a spiritual gift. The only reason you have this gift is to be empowered to give back to others. It's not for you...it's for others!
2. If we do not discover and employ our gifts, we hinder others who need my gifts. God created the church to be interdependent on each other. He didn't give one person all the gifts. He spread them out within the body so that we could invest in each other.
3. Therefore, if we do not give back and utilize what God put within us, we hinder the church. WHY? Because your gifting is irreplaceable! There is this attitude, "Oh, they don't need me. I have nothing to offer." That's a lie!
4. Next Sunday you're going to get a taste of this. It's going to be volunteer appreciation Sunday. You are going to see the difference that people are making here in this church.
5. I believe there is tremendous untapped potential here in this church. Potential that will bless and encourage others. Next Fall we are planning at launching a Saturday night service. We are going to need new musicians / vocalists / greeters / sound / multi-media / hospitality / nursery /
6. This is a chance for you to invest in others. This is the direction all true transformation takes us. Investing in the lives of others.

### **III. Victories Must Be Shared**

*I Cor. 1:4 “He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.” (NLT)*

A. God uses our experiences to invest in others

1. We all have troubles / pain / made mistakes / have issues we need to overcome / and when we experience God’s help and experience victory, He uses these experiences to encourage others.
2. These become our personal stories / personal experiences with God that has a tremendous impact on the lives of others. God comforts us so we can comfort others. Our experiences help others.
3. Many of you have stories how God has worked in your life. How God has healed your marriage / help you through grief and loss / overcame addictions / from depression to hope / helped you become a better parent / given you peace instead of stress / blessed you financially /
  - Sometimes I just need to talk to another pastor. WHY? Because he knows what I feel – I need the similarity - This is how Jim Velez and I became friends – explain -
4. God doesn’t want us to waste these experiences. These victories need to be shared. This is how we give back to others. People need to hear these about our experiences with a living God. WHY?

B. Our experiences give people hope

1. When I hear about someone else with a similar issue / pain / problem / that has come out the other side, I pay attention. This gives me hope. If God helped them, maybe God can help me too.
2. Often we lose hope in the middle of our struggles and pain. We see no way out and many times, we feel abandoned by God and misunderstood by others.
3. Before Foothills began, Lisa and I were going through a very painful dark time. We were at another church and this woman gave her testimony. She talked about the darkness and in order to see God, she had to be this close to see Him. That really spoke to Lisa and I. I can’t remember the sermon!
4. If you don’t share your experiences, you’re keeping hope from those who desperately need it.
5. This is one of the reasons why we are starting Celebrate Recovery – We want to give people hope! We want them to know they can come out the other side. We want them to connect with others who have similar pain.
  - Great article in the Molalla Pioneer about Celebrate Recovery – I so appreciate Tim Rice and Tom Porier telling their stories. Our victories give people HOPE!
  - As we begin to give back and invest in others, our...

#### IV. Example Must Be Consistent

*1 Peter 2:12 “Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbors. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will believe and give honor to God...” (NLT)*

- The example we live in front of others is very important. We must be conscientious about what other people see. To try to give back and invest in others without a consistent lifestyle, invalidates our claim of transformation.

##### A. Embrace truth rather than falsehood

1. This simply means we stop trying to be someone we're not. We dismantle the facades. We allow people to see the real ME. As long as we wear a mask and project a false image, we are embracing falsehood.
2. Authenticity and honesty is what has a major impact on others. As I think about all the people that God has used to have a major impact on my life it has always been those people who were real.
3. They didn't over spiritualize things / they were honest about life's pains and struggles / they were open about their weaknesses / and they allowed me to watch them wrestle with these life issues and how God fit into it all!
4. If we are willing to give back and invest in the lives of others, we must be willing to embrace a lifestyle of truth. This is so unusual in our culture that it is impossible for people to not notice. The impact is great!

##### B. Embrace consistency rather than perfection

1. It is not perfection that makes our lives attractive to others, it is our consistency. It is the fact that we live out transformation in every context of our lives (home / work / kids / finances / friendships / leisure /
2. We have to quit putting pressure on ourselves to be perfect. Perfect people make others feel guilty / you can't get close to perfect people / makes you want to wear a mask / they cause you to lose hope because what they project is unattainable. “I could never be like that!
3. Let's quit trying to be perfect. Let's focus on being consistent. Consistent people are flawed / they fail / they have bad days / BUT, they stay the course. They fall, but they rise again. **Prov. 24:16**. They refuse to quit! They readily admit their mistakes, but forge ahead.
4. I worked with a pastor years ago. We were driving in Portland – explain how he talked in traffic – Once he even told me that he didn't have to live the things he was preaching on every Sunday. “What I do has no impact on those who are listening to me.” Wow!
5. He failed to realize that his inconsistent life invalidated everything he was trying to give back to others. It is our lives that make the Gospel believable!

6. We must accept the fact that the more we give back and invest in others, the more our lives come under scrutiny. We must embrace that our lives are on display. It's life in the fishbowl. (We are the light of the world!)

Are you ready to start giving back? Are you willing to embrace the reason God changed your life was to impact others? Will you keep God first / Invest in others / Share your victories / Embrace consistency in order to validate the work God is doing in you? Will you give back?

- As we finish this series, I want you to know that all these principals have come from the Celebrate Recovery program. These biblical principals for Life Change are for all of us. We all have hurts / hang ups / habits. And it is God's desire to change us all and use us to impact lives around us.
- You can learn more about these truths by attending Celebrate Recovery beginning this Friday night. You can also pursue giving back by marking your blue card this morning. May we allow God's transformation to go full circle. May we be a people of servers NOT sitters!