

What's Holding You Back? "Procrastination" (Part 1)

Intro: I really enjoy Oregon Trail history. I love the Oregon Trail Museum in Baker city. Stood in the wagon tracks. I enjoy reading pioneer stories and diaries. It's all fascinating to me. One of the interesting facts about the Oregon trail is that it was nearly impossible to get lost. WHY? Because the trail was littered with debris. Pioneers simply brought too much stuff for the journey. The longer they were on the trail, the more non essentials they threw away. The 2000 mile trail was literally cluttered with beds / dressers / clothing / pianos / pots and pans / books / whatever people had to do to make the journey lighter.

- To me, this is just great imagery of our spiritual journey with Christ. Sometimes things just weight us down and hold us back and we have to lay them aside in order to move forward.

Heb. 12:1 "...let us strip off every weight that slows us down... And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us." (NLT) Just like the Pioneers!

- There are many factors that weigh us down, slow us down and simply hold us back from becoming the people God wants us to be and doing what God wants us to do. The desire is there...the longing is there...but we just feel held back by forces that seem out of our control. How do we break free from these forces and truly run the race we were meant to run? How do we strip off every weight like this verse says?
- For the next 6 weeks we are going to identify these hindrances and learn how to overcome them. Today we are going to discuss a weight that everyone struggles with at times...something that holds many of us back...procrastination.
- Procrastination is simply...."to put off intentionally and habitually something that should be done." Why do it today when I can do it tomorrow?
- Until we learn to overcome procrastination, this issue can handicap your entire life, hinder your future, damage your relationship, and rob you of joy. It is truly a force that holds many of us back!
- Today I want to give you 6 steps for overcoming procrastination.

I. Identify The Important Things You Keep Putting Off

Matt. 23:23 "...For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things." (NLT)

The point here is that Jesus expected these people to understand what was really important in life! There is a hierarchy!

- Define what's really important that you keep putting off.
 1. We all procrastinate things like cleaning the garage, shampooing the carpet, painting the bathroom, etc... If these are the only things you struggle with, well this message

- may not be for you. Those issues probably won't hold back your life. (Lisa asking me to fix the toilet seat – explain)
2. I'm talking about identifying the important issues of your life that you keep putting off, such as...fixing your marriage / time with your kids / getting your finances in order / what about the decisions you made last Sat –Sunday –(Innovate –Participate – Cultivate – Celebrate?) going back to school / getting in shape / overcoming that habit / overcoming the hurt from your past / overcoming procrastination at work.
 3. We need to define the important things...things that can alter the course of our lives
 4. Often, we are living at such a hectic pace we never slow down long enough to do this. Therefore...slow down for a moment and define these things!
- Describe how God would have these issue change
5. If you have defined what's really important, then these things are probably important to God as well. What would these areas look like if you didn't procrastinate? What would your marriage look like / your relationships / finances / job / etc...
 6. To overcome procrastination you can't aim at nothing. If that's what you shoot at that's what you will hit! Describing what the change may look like gives you a direction and a destination. What's the goal?
 7. Get out a piece of paper / on your computer / and make a list of the important things you are putting off and the goal of what you'd like them to be.

II. Dedicate Your List To God

Phi. 4:6 "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done." (NLT)

1. Take your list before God and give it to Him. Pray through each and every item. Admit these things are holding you back / ask for His forgiveness / and make a commitment before God that it is your desire to see these things change. Acknowledge that only God can help you have victory over these issues that have habitually held you back.
2. The reason we fail so often at seeing our lives change is that we attempt these things in our own strength. We try to change ourselves with our own power. This doesn't work. Depending on ourselves is what got us in this mess.
3. If our lives are genuinely going to change, we must learn to depend on God. Life change isn't about how much will power you and I can muster. It's about how much of God's power we will depend upon.
4. This has to become a daily prayer commitment. Not some one time, "lord help me" type of prayer, but a dependence on God every day for the strength to change something you cannot do!
5. Overcoming the things that are holding you back must be a spiritual process not a human process. There is power for life change if we are willing to go to God, depend on Him, and tap into Him.
6. Power to change your life is a relational issue. So when you are dedicating your list to God you are recognizing how much you need the relationship with Him in order to

change. This becomes a daily, continual pursuit. For some of you, this could be a first time pursuit.

- Transformation happens in the context of this spiritual relationship.

III. Allow Others To Hold You Accountable

Ecc. 4:12 "A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken." (NLT)

1. This has got to be one of the greatest reasons for our failure. We believe we can change in relational isolation. Yet, God just didn't design us this way. Real and lasting change takes place in the context of loving relationships.
2. Therefore, in order to be successful at overcoming procrastination, we must share our list of priorities with another person...in fact, 2 or 3 is even better. Our lives need to resemble a triple braided cord. We break easily because we are isolated!
3. These other people may also have some good counsel for you to follow. They may have already overcome some of your same issues. This is where we have to swallow our pride and allow other people to help us grow.
4. Our pride is just a huge barrier to life change. Our pride keeps us in relational isolation. Our pride takes us out of the context where God changes our lives. Our pride causes us to resist God's process of transformation...which is relationships!
5. These are people who don't just check up on you. They are there to support you / believe in you / pick you back up when you fail / not let you quit / and pray for you continually.
 - Home groups
 - Celebrate Recovery (hurts / hang-ups / habits)
 - Men's Group / Women's Studies

IV. Choose One Issue At A Time

Phil. 2:2 "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." (NASB)

Phil. 3:13 "No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead." (NLT)

- One of the keys to life change is having a singular purpose.
1. Sometimes after we make a list of all the things we want to change it becomes a bit overwhelming. Then we either never start because the list seems impossible or we charge ahead on some great crusade to change all the areas our lives all at once. Both result in failure.
 2. It's imperative that we choose one issue at a time to work on. This protects us from getting overwhelmed, discouraged and quitting.
 - It's like knowing that you need to clean your garage / shop / yet when you look at it, it's in such a disaster, you don't even know where to start. It's overwhelming...so you never begin.

3. I think many people look at their lives like this. It all just looks so overwhelming that they never start the process. It all seems so impossible. They are discouraged before they even begin. Maybe this is how some of you feel today.
4. God doesn't expect you to change your life all at once. Relax! He knows that life change is a life-long process.
5. Therefore, what is one key area of your life where procrastination is holding you back? Go back through your list and prayerfully pick one thing.

V. Develop A Plan

I Cor. 9:25-26 "All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing." (NLT) I'm not pretending...I have a plan! I have purpose!

1. Now that we have our one issue to overcome, we must develop some type of plan to follow otherwise we will never get past good intentions. How many attempts at life change have died right here.
2. If you have been procrastinating in your marriage, what are the concrete steps you are going to take to move in a new direction? Remember defining what you wanted it to look like in step #1? Now you have to create steps to get there. You have to get past good intentions!
 - Take the Love and Respect class
 - Develop a date night once a month
 - Turn TV off and talk for 30 minutes a day
3. If you've been procrastinating with your kids...what are you going to change?
 - Once a week family game night (no phones / computers / TVs)
 - Getting on the same page with your discipline
4. If you've been procrastinating spiritually
 - Pick a daily time to read your bible and pray
 - Take that next class you've been putting off
 - Get involved in a home group / or a ministry serving
5. You may need to allow other people to help you develop this plan. You may not be able to think through enough steps on your own. This is where you allow your friends who are supporting you to speak into your life.
6. If we never develop some practical steps to move towards our goal, our lives will never change!

VI. Refuse To Quit

Heb. 10:35-36 "So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised." (NLT)

Phil. 3:14 "I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us." (NLT)

1. Our lives change more because we simply refuse to quit than because we do everything right through the process. This must be our mentality. Procrastination is not an easy force to break. It will require some hard work, some getting back up after failure, some tenacity to keep moving forward. BUT, the rewards are worth it.
 2. This is a force that controls many people's lives. It's not going to be overcome without some struggle. We have to have the mentality of pressing on regardless of the struggle.
 3. I remember being so discouraged once over my struggles and failed attempts at life change that despair started wrapping itself around my soul. Do you know that feeling? It's just a darkness that's hard to describe. "Lord, what's wrong with me?"
 4. I remember just weeping, telling God; "I don't know if I'll do the right thing tomorrow or not, but one thing I resolve to do...I will NOT quit! I will NEVER throw in the towel. I will press on.
 5. In fact, in hindsight, I believe God is more pleased with this choice, this mindset, than if your life changes tomorrow or not. Refusing to quit is a statement of faith that I believe heaven applauds...and God richly blesses.
 6. Sometimes we have to quit looking at the spiritual score sheet...stop looking at all the failed attempts...and simply by faith refuse to quit!
 7. Some of you are so discouraged that you don't even want to try again. Then this is for you. Don't throw away your confident trust in the Lord. There is a great reward for simply not quitting. What is it? Life change! Transformation! A life not controlled by the weight of procrastination, but by the spirit of God!
- So, is procrastination taking a toll on your life? Is it holding you back from becoming all that God wants you to be? Is it time to finally overcome it?

Identify the important things you keep putting off

Dedicate your list to God

Allow others to hold you accountable

Choose one issue at a time

Develop a plan

Refuse to quit

- Will you turn to God today to help you overcome procrastination?