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Presentation Transcript
Becoming Unleavened – Passover
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Most Christians who observe the Passover as Jesus did know that the festival is about the type of life we are to live once forgiven by God for our sins. We're not supposed to continue to live the same way we lived before. We're supposed to live like He lived.

Today, in honor of the season Jesus observed, we're going to take a look at a way to live our lives in a more Christ-like way. In other words, how to overcome sinful behavior and attitudes and take on a more adaptive, functional way of living. Now, as we get into this, I want to prepare you. It's not like anything you've ever heard at church. Yet, if you hang in there, you'll learn something. We're going to move away from posturing and talking about real change, and show you a way to do it at the deepest levels.

Let's look at the problem. It's in Matthew 15:17. I've quoted this scripture many times, because it's so instructive. The context is that the disciples have just been taken to task by the Pharisees because they didn't wash their hands before they ate, ceremonially speaking. It wasn't about cleanliness. It was about ceremony. Jesus said:

Matthew 15:17 – *Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."*

So Jesus is telling Peter here that bad behavior is first a thought – an urge, a desire – that comes from, what the Bible calls, the heart. So what does that mean in its context? Well, I've heard it said that, in the Bible, the heart is the seat of emotion. Actually, it's bigger than that. If you think it's the seat of emotions, you're right, but there's more to it. Here's a quote from Louw and Nida, regarding the heart. *The causative source of a person's psychological life, in its various aspects, with special emphasis on thoughts – that is, the heart, inner self, mind.* So it's about thoughts, but

it's also about emotions – our inner selves – the self-talk, where we talk to ourselves – our motives, our desires, our characteristics, and especially our beliefs. In other words, the heart is your whole mind.

So I also, before going on, want to talk a bit about the human heart. Most Christians I run into believe that the human heart is a terrible thing, based on the most common things Jesus said about it – or maybe I should say, the most well-known. I think those things that He said – like the scripture we just read – cause us to misunderstand, because we don't understand everything the Bible says about the heart. It just focuses in a few places on the problems that the heart has. Just because all our problems come out of the heart, does not mean that the human heart is all bad. We know from the beginning, when God created the human heart, He said it was good. So we should believe that. But the human heart has been subverted by our adversary, and that part of the heart *is* bad. That's what causes us our problems.

My own experience – working with parents for seventeen years and a therapist – is really quite interesting, to me at least. Of all the hundreds of parents I've met, there is only one that I have met that I considered to have evil intent toward her own child. Everyone else, for all their parenting mistakes, were doing the best they could, and even then, were not satisfied with that, and were making an effort to seek help so they could be a better parent. They didn't *want* to be bad. They didn't *want* to hurt their kids, and they knew they were, so they sought help. That's good, isn't it? That's not an evil intention.

God made our hearts. It's through our hearts that God connects to us. Our heart is the interface with the Holy Spirit. It's where God meets us. That's good, isn't it? So let's look at another famous scripture about the heart that leads people to believe it's a problem. It's accurate to say the heart has problems, but not that it *is* a problem. It causes problems, but where would we be without ourselves? In Jeremiah 17:9, it says:

Jeremiah 17:9 - *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick. Who can understand it?*

Now that word *sick*, what does that mean? What did God mean by this when He inspired the writing of this sentence? Well, the *Strong's* term is number 5297, and it means *diseased; an illness or condition which prevents people from achieving their full potential, or adversely affects their abilities; something that is added to our hearts – sickness is something that's not natural to us, but is added – that impedes growth, functionality, adaptability; keeps us from reaching our full potential; something that weakens us*. So there's something about the heart that's diseased. The implication here is, from the meaning of the word, that when humans were first created, they were not sick in this way. God made us healthy in every way. When God created us, He looked and said, "It's all good." He said that in the Garden of Eden. Of course, it's been downhill from there.

What happened? Well, the serpent convinced Adam and Eve that God had lied to them – you know, “You’re not really going to die. He just told you that so you wouldn’t eat of the tree and be in the loop with Him. God’s withholding the good stuff from you. He doesn’t really love you.” So they believed this lie. And they began to believe that God didn’t love them and that they were suddenly unlovable. They were little children, in one sense. Kids always believe it’s their fault. They tried to present themselves to God in a way that would make themselves acceptable to Him without admitting responsibility, They hid from God. They tried to deceive Him by projecting blame to others when He only wanted them to face up to what they had done.

So what we do with the awful truth is hide it from ourselves. We engage in self-deceit. So, while we deceive others, mostly we deceive ourselves, prompting God to say, through David;

Psalms 51:6 – *Behold, You delight in truth in the inward being, and You teach me wisdom in the secret heart* – that’s Psalms 51:6 – *you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.*

Since God delights in us being eternally truthful, part of being a Christian is about eliminating the lies we tell ourselves about ourselves, and about God and believing what’s true. This is harder than it might seem, however. We can notice that God tells us He will teach us His truth about ourselves in our inward being. How does that happen? Well, let’s continue.

I had a young mother tell me some weeks ago – speaking of her feelings of unlovability – “I know it’s not really true, but I *feel* it. That’s how I feel about myself – that I’m unlovable.” So how do we stop feeling unlovable? I mean, we are all clearly...it says in the Bible – it’s a biblical truth – we are all loved by God. So that means we *are* loveable to Him. So how do we stop *feeling* unlovable, as we have from early life, and begin to feel that we are loved by God and others around us? Well, that’s what we’re going to think about today. That’s just one example – how to believe the truth about ourselves and how God feels about us.

Now, what I’m going to talk about now, because of the nature of it, I don’t think many people will be able to fully retain this. There’s just too much unfamiliar details to retain it in such a short explanation. So don’t get frustrated. I’m not expecting you to retain it. I’m only showing this to show you what we can do, if we really want to past the damage that’s been done to us in life. If you decide you like the approach, you can follow up on it. I’ll show you how later.

Let’s go to 2 Corinthians 10:3 through 6:

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 - *For though we walk in the flesh* – you know, pinch yourself. You’re a human being, you’re walking in the flesh – *we are not waging war according to the flesh.* Watch the news and watch what goes on in the US Senate and the House of Representatives. They’re warring according to the flesh. *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.* Now it’s going to give an example of a stronghold. *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God* – one of which

could be “I’m not lovable.” The Bible tells you you are – *and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.*

That’s the war that we fight – at least some of us do. Most of us try to ignore it. So what is a stronghold exactly? Let’s spell it out.

Do you have some attitude or situation that causes you a lot of problems? Maybe your children do things that cause you to react in a way you don’t like. Well, that’s the way *we* think about it. It’s not that *they’re* causing us to act that way. We’re the ones doing it. Or, maybe we tend to lash out in anger when things don’t go our way, but just with certain people – maybe our boss, or one of our employees, or one our kids or our mate. So what’s the similar issue with all of these? Well, we’re not aware of what’s going on in our own minds and why we always react that way. We say, “He made me mad.” Well, no, nobody can make us angry. We do that all by ourselves. Our deceitful heart is covering it up. So we’re going to look at a way of praying that will help. God tells us He will reveal our heart to us. So, if we make any effort in that regard, it’s going to up the chances that we can learn more about what we need to learn.

I learned about something some time back – I’ve mentioned it before – called *transformational prayer*. You can check it out at transformationalprayer.org. There are videos, books, online teaching, workshops. You can look at that and see if you’re serious about change in that way. If you like the material, it would not be Christian to use it without contributing, so I would suggest that you do that, once you have derived benefits.

Now, in this model, there are seven areas of work. *All emotions* – that’s one. *Anger* has a special focus – that’s two – because it’s presence is like a sign or a siren to make us aware that something’s going on. It’s like a notice that there’s a problem. We’re going to think about *self-developed solutions*. We’re going to look at our *beliefs*. We’re going to look at the *truth* – what God says. And then we’re going to *pray* and ask God, in a very unusual way, *for transformation*.

So let’s think a little bit about the process of this – starting point. Let’s start with some problem you have of any sort. It could be a relationship problem. It could be a behavior – like smoking, or pornography, or drinking, or wasting time with computer games. It could be situation that happened in the past – a loss of any sort – the loss of a loved one, or a job, etc. You start with the emotions related to the event, because emotions are always signposts for us. They tell us something. If we’re happy, then that means everything is, for the most part, is good. Then, if we’re unhappy, angry, jealous, resentful, afraid, then there’s something to be worked on. So we ask self – once we’ve found a problem to think about or an occurrence – something that happened recently that we’re not happy about....

I had a funny thing happen yesterday at the Costco gas pump. Two cars cleared – you know, there are two pumps in a row – and so the guy in front of me pulled up to the first pump and I pulled up behind him. And I got out and gassed up my little car and it took him longer, because

he had a big gas-guzzling truck to fill up. So I pulled out to go around him, and I heard this crunch. And I heard this guy, that was gassing his car, yell, and he said, “You ran over my gas cap!” So I pulled forward and he uttered some other words of profanity as he was going to put his pump back in place. And I got out of my car and looked after I pulled forward, and his gas cap was lying there on the ground unharmed. So I picked it up and I handed it to him. He said, “Oh, I thought you ran over it.” He said, “Hey man, I’m sorry I got after you like that.” So he has an anger problem, right? Maybe a little bit of one. He shook my hand and apologized. So that was pretty good. Not really a bad guy at all. But he apparently thinks the worst a lot of time and just got upset very quickly.

So what we do when we start to meditate on one of these things is, we ask the self, “How does that make me feel right now – when I think back about it?” And you might not know, so you just sit with it. Just go inside yourself and think about how you feel. Next, ask yourself, “What comes to mind as I focus on how I feel?” Just sit with it a while if nothing comes up. Just be curious about what might come next. What comes to mind most often will be a memory. So there are three consecutive questions to ask about the memory. How does that memory make me feel? Why do I feel that way? And why does believing whatever about it make me feel that way? That’s pretty general, so let’s take an example.

You get fired from your job. And, if you’re using that as the thing you’re going to focus on, you say, “How does it make me feel?” “Well, it makes me feel angry.” Some people wouldn’t feel angry. They would feel sad, discouraged, or whatever. But, if you feel angry, then you would ask, “Well, why do I feel angry?” So then you sit with that and, again, you just think about why you feel angry. And in this example, I might say, “I remember when my father would never let me help him when he was working on his hobby.” Okay. “When that happened, how did I feel about that?” Angry. “And why did I feel angry?” “Well, because I didn’t like being excluded. It felt like I didn’t matter – like he didn’t love me” And why does believing you didn’t matter make you feel angry? “Well, I wanted my dad to love me, but I could not find a way to make that happen.” So it’s frustrating. Yes.

So most of the time, when we do this, it is suggested that we have someone to help us. So, if someone *is* helping us, that person would say, “Not that it’s true, but does it *feel* true that you didn’t matter to you father?” (That came from the person, because they just said that earlier.)

When we would say, “Yes,” then the next thing to do is to pray and to ask God, “What do you want me to know about my belief that I didn’t matter to my father?” And just sit with it. You know, most of us are just so busy running off our mouths when we pray that we don’t stop to listen. So this is when we listen. And after we hear something, or feel something – you don’t hear it actually, but perhaps in your mind – then we ask ourselves, “Does it still feel true that I don’t matter?” And, if the answer is yes, then we start all over again with the current emotion.

If the emotion is anger, then we handle that a bit differently. We ask, “Who or what are you angry with?” And, if the answer is, “Toward God,” then we ask two questions: Why are you angry with God? and why does it make you *feel* angry with God?” “Well, because I pay my tithes, so God’s supposed to protect me. I’m not supposed to lose my job.” So, at that point, we just start with that. Does it feel true that God should have protected you? And then we ask God, “What do you want me to know about that belief?”

Okay, if the anger is *not* toward God, however, then you go to what they call, in transformational prayer, the solution box. Solutions are our humanly devised, often self-deceptive attempts to relieve the hurtful emotion. So, if you sense any hesitancy about letting go of your anger toward your boss firing you, you could ask, “Do you feel a need to hang on to that?” “Yes.” “Well, what do you think would happen if you *did* let go of your anger toward your boss?” And so then the reason for maintaining your anger toward your boss is what? And then we go to the next step, which is the truth box.

See, I’m talking about this and you don’t have it before your face, but you can go to the Website and download these steps one by one, so you can walk yourself through the questions then and come up with answers for yourself. Then you just go to the truth box and proceed there. If at any time in this process you feel lost, which you will many times, just go inside yourself and ask, “What’s going on right now?” Then you go to the top of it and start with that. If it’s feeling, you go to the emotion box, which is at the top. So it’s like a protocol that you walk yourself through that loops back around and around and around, until you find out what’s going on.

So that’s a lot like the way psychotherapy works. I’ve talked about my friend whose son died when he was fourteen. He told me he did two years of therapy after that. I didn’t know much about therapy at that point. I had never done any myself at that point. And I said, “How did that help you?” And he said, “Well, after a while, you realize that things just keep coming back around. And then, after a while, you know what to do with it.” So this is a lot like that. It keeps looping back and takes you deeper and deeper into the issue that you’re upset about – that you’re self-deceived about.

So, I’m sure many people really aren’t serious enough about overcoming their problems to try anything like that, and there are other ways that God works with us – most of them are a little rougher. So, it’s strongly encouraged that we do what we can to understand ourselves and resolve our own issues with God’s help. So, like I said, I’m not expecting you to remember all of this. I only went through it to give you sort of a flavor of the process. If you want to learn *how* to do it, go to that transformationalprayer.org Website where you can download a copy of the process map. I don’t think they charge for that. In fact, I don’t think they charge for anything. They just ask for help. Notice also that the developers of this system did not devise it to be done by a person without a mentor or help. I only bring this up because I know some people will simply not ever allow another person to help them. But, if they would, then this would be a good thing. You could try it by yourself. See how it goes.

So learning to do this may help us learn how to get in touch with what's really going on inside ourselves, and strip away some of the deceitfulness that's there, and learn that if we just face our fears, eventually they can get resolved. And from my perspective, it's a way to encourage Christians to confront their own self-deceptions and false negative beliefs about self. Behavior follows belief. If we believe we are unlovable, then we unconsciously *act* to make that belief come true in our lives.

I'm working with a young woman now who had two parents that were, pretty much, self-centered people, and stuck on themselves, and didn't have time to think about their daughter. She was very outspoken about being neglected and caused them some problems about it, so they considered her a problem child. So they taught her that she was a problem everywhere she went, and that she was demanding, and always had to have what she wanted, when actually, they were just projecting themselves on to her. But she believed that she wasn't worthwhile as a person or worthy of love, so she would unconsciously select boyfriend after boyfriend who were narcissistic like her parents – some of them, I think, a little on the psychotic side – pretty abusive.

So behavior follows belief. If we are unlovable, then we unconsciously act to make that belief come true in our lives. If you ever get the sense that you're sabotaging yourself, that's where it's coming from. And that is *not* what God wants for us.

Now, coming back to where we started today – with becoming unleavened Christians – let's look at something Paul says about the Festival of Unleavened Bread and about the inner truth that we should seek. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:8:

1 Corinthians 5:8 – *Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven – the leaven of malice and evil – but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

So it's not simply about removing the leaven from our homes once a year. It's about becoming sincere and truthful people all year long – more and more so each year that we live. So this is my contribution to the greater group – one way to accomplish that kind of change.

I hope you have an uplifting festival and that it points the way for you to seek truth in your inward being this coming year.