**SELF-RENEWAL - 7**

**What Can I Do? (1)**

**INTRODUCTION** - We have spent several lessons discussing the importance of a proper mindset if we are to be renewed in our lives.  In this lesson, we want to notice some things we need to do in our lives that will encourage continued growth as Christians.  Much of God’s word directed toward growth addresses the Christian.  When the Christian is growing as he/she ought to, then the church will thrive (we will discuss that more in a couple of weeks) and other areas in his life will improve as well.

**I.  The Christian IS Expected to Grow**

A.      As we began this study we noted that we HAVE TO grow to be pleasing to God.

a.  **2 PET .3:18** - commands that we are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

b.  **MATT. 28:18-20** - The very idea of discipleship involves growth – A disciple is a student.  Students continually learn and develop.

B.       Growing in our minds is not enough.

a.  **JAMES 2:18** - It is our actions that demonstrate our real growth.  James tells us that we demonstrate our faith by our actions.

b.  **2 COR. 4:16**- Paul speaks about the inward man being renewed day by day pointing to this as an ongoing process.

c**.  PHIL. 3:14** - Paul “pressed toward the goal” for the prize. Do we give God our best effort?

d.  **2 COR. 7:9-11** - The idea of repentance illustrates this.  The actual word means “to think differently or afterwards.” (Thayer) While true repentance is a true change of one’s mind, it is manifested in changed actions.  Paul describes the action these brethren took to clear themselves as a result of their repentance.

e.  IF we want to truly change we have to MAKE UP OUR MINDS that we will do so and then we act on our resolve.  Remember the saying, “We do what we want to do!”

**II. Self-Renewal begins with self-examination -**

A.  All the lessons addressing how to think and how not to think are designed to develop a proper mindset so that we can begin to be what God would have us to be.

B.  Thinking about these things – we need to take a close, detailed look at where we are and where we ought to be.  If anything needs change this is ALWAYS where we have to begin.  We need to identify what is right and what is wrong.  What is working and what is NOT working.
If you look at your life and find yourself going in circles – you need to ask WHY?  This is not a casual glance at who you are but a deep probe.

a.  **2 COR. 13:5** - calls for us to “examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.  Test yourselves.”  How is your faith?  Is God really first?
If your spiritual life were put to a test, WOULD YOU PASS?  WHY or WHY NOT?

b.  **GAL. 6:4** - “But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”  Are you growing because of you or because of someone else?  Are you a 2nd generation Christian?

**III. Planning For Renewal -**

A.  Based upon the findings of our self-examination, we need to make plans so that we can change what needs to be changed.  Knowing what is wrong will not solve anything by itself.  The question is, HOW do we get to where we ought to be?  We need to make plans

B.       In life we have to MAKE PLANS!

a.  Successful companies set goals and then formulate a plan to achieve that goal.

b.  Good financial stability requires planning.  There needs to be goals, a budget and maybe strategies to achieve your goals.

c.   A godly family requires planning.  As you consider developing your relationships (husband/wife, parent/child), the finances, your time and other things.  Many marriages fail because a couple fails to count the cost before they commit.

C.       Why do we need a plan?

a.  Because we need to know how to get from point A (where we are) to point B (where we need to be). Why do we use maps?  So that we can make plans about a trip we need to make.  We know where we are and we know where we need to be but how do we get there?  There may be several routes – so you study the map and determine the best route for your situation.

b.  So that we don’t become overwhelmed.  Often the goals we need to set are very lofty goals.  IF we look only at finish line, we may become discouraged and think it is impossible to reach.  But if we make a plan it will set out easy steps to achieve that goal in time.  So rather than looking at that which seems out of reach, we just look at the next step.  In time you will reach your goal.

c.   **LUKE 14:28-30** - God wants us to make plans – Jesus speaks of building a tower and “counting the cost” before you begin.
**1 COR.. 3:10** - The very idea of building calls for planning - take heed how you build (consider Who the foundation is, etc.)
**JAMES 4:13-15** - Just don’t leave God out of your plans

D.      Some examples:

a.   IF we find that we are not growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord as we ought to – we need to develop a schedule so that we can learn.  This may involve setting a regular time aside to study, determine to do more preparation for Bible classes, ATTEND Bible classes, etc.

b.  If you realize you are not as close to God as you ought to be you need to develop a plan where you will become closer.  1) Determine what it takes to become closer to God (study the Bible regularly), 2)pray to Him more often and think about what you will ask for **JAMES 1:5-6**.

c.   Maybe you need to be more evangelistic.  Make plans to 1) learn how to teach others, 2)build time into your schedule to do personal work, 3)pray to God for wisdom and opportunities, 4)you may even need to change your interaction with others, etc.

d.  NOTE: These are broad strokes that perhaps at a later time we can develop in more detail, but my point is we need to consider what we need to do and then determine HOW to do it.

**IV. Remove those things that hinder renewal** -

A.  **1 COR. 15:33** - This has to be done before you can be effective in moving forward.  **1 COR. 5:6-7** and the power of a little leaven.
**GAL. 5:1** – do not be entangled again in a yoke of bondage

B.  Control your environment as much as you can – we have noted WHAT to think about and what NOT to think about.   For some this may be the most difficult step – because you HAVE TO change your life.  It is like giving up your favorite foods when you start a diet.  Having honestly evaluated our lives, we may have to quit going to the movies we have been going to, or watching the television shows we have been watching.  We may even have to sever worldly friendships because we know they are not healthy for our souls.  James 4:4 tells that friendship with the world is enmity with God.

C.  **MATT. 6:24** - Don’t forget what Jesus taught us that no one can serve two masters.

**V.  Where do I start?**

A.      Build on what you have

a.  We need to understand as we strive to renew our minds and lives is that it will not happen over night.  Growth is a slow and sometimes painful process.  In America it takes 18 years for someone to become an adult – and even then there are a number of years of maturing in the average life.

b.  **1 PET. 2:2** - This is equally true spiritually.  Even Peter understood that as he told us to ***“desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby***” NO passage of scripture demands instant maturity – just continual progress toward it.

c.  So a good place to start is where you are right now.  As you examine your life, you ought to be able to determine that (What are your spiritual strengths and weaknesses?).
Maybe you need to start with the simple fact that you believe in Jesus and you are a Christian.  You have faith in God.  Build on that by learning what it means to be a Christian.  (IF you need help, ask someone).
**2 PET. 1:5-8** - Describes how we start with faith and we add to that virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and so on.

B.  Don’t overwhelm yourself.  As you look at your life, you may determine you are not anywhere close to where you ought to be.  You may not even know the basics of God’s word.  You have never won a soul to Christ and you don’t know where to start.  The goal of spiritual maturity seems so far out of reach. LET me tell you, that IS what Satan wants you to think.
 Maybe you need to start with saying a prayer each morning as you get up and read a chapter of the Bible. If you are not doing that, it is a start.  In time, you can build to this. The key here again is to keep moving forward and progressing.  There will come a time when you OUGHT to be a teacher – **HEB. 5:12-14**

C.  **ECCL. 9:10** - Determine to be the BEST you can be.  Don’t EVER settle for mediocrity.  God won’t! ***“Whatever your hand finds to d do it with all your might…”***

**COL. 3:23** - ***“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.”***

**CONCLUSION** –

As children of God we need to grow.

Are we growing?

We must continually be putting measures in place that will promote self-renewal day by day.