

Getting Rid of Things That Control Us

Message 3 of 4 in the series: "Pulling Weeds"

A. Jesus wants us to live abundant, fruitful lives.

"This is to my Father's glory, that you **bear much fruit**, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

John 15:8 (NIV)

"...the Holy Spirit produces **this kind of fruit** in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23a (NLT)

Note: The key to living a fruitful life is surrendering control of our lives to Jesus and depending on Him for our identity, comfort, purpose, meaning, etc. "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. **Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit.** For apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5 (NLT)

B. The devil wants us to live empty, frustrating, pain-filled lives.

"Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." 1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)

"The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy." John 10:10a (NLT)

Note: The devil wants to ruin our lives by deceiving us into becoming dependent on anything other than Jesus. (alcohol, illegal drugs, painkillers, gambling, porn, food, money, social media, sex, etc.). "'You won't die!' the serpent replied to the woman. 'God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.' The woman was convinced. **She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it.** Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness."

Genesis 3:4-7a (NLT)

"So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. **Don't be drunk with wine because that will ruin your life.** Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 5:15-20 (NLT)

Note: True love always involves a choice. "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15 (NIV)

C. We need to get rid of things in our lives that control us and keep us from surrendering every part of our lives to God.

"You say, 'I am allowed to do anything'—but not everything is good for you. And even though 'I am allowed to do anything,' **I must not become a slave to anything.**" 1 Corinthians 6:12 (NLT)

1. We must admit that we are powerless over our addictions and that our lives have become unmanageable.

"And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. **I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.**"

Romans 7:18-19 (NLT)

Note: We may be in denial. "The prudent understand where they are going, but fools deceive themselves." Proverbs 14:8 (NLT)

Denial: "My problem's not that bad." **Reality:** "How bad does it have to get before I get help?"

Denial: "I can handle my problem; this is a message for somebody else." **Reality:** "If you can handle your problem on your own, why is it still a problem? Why haven't you dealt with it already?"

Note: Denial always leads to crises/consequences. "A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences." Proverbs 22:3 (NLT)

“Don’t be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant.”
Galatians 6:7 (NLT)

2. We must believe that God is all-powerful and that He can restore us to sanity.

“Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? **Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.**” Romans 7:24-25a (NLT)

“I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is **the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead** and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 1:19-20 (NLT)

“For God is working in you, **giving you the desire and the power** to do what pleases him.”
Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

“For with God **nothing** will be impossible.” Luke 1:37 (NKJV)

3. We must decide to turn our lives and our wills over to God.

“Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, ‘**I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.**’ And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.” Psalm 32:5 (NLT)

“**Come to me**, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

4. We must seek help.

“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, **you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.** Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV)

“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. **When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.**” 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NLT)

“Confess your sins to each other and **pray for each other** so that you may be healed.”
James 5:16a (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 6:12 & John 15:5. How does an addiction prevent us from living spiritually fruitful lives?
2. Why do you think God gives us a choice to follow Him or go our own way? Why doesn’t He just remove everything that could ever become addictive from the world so we could only choose what’s right? (Genesis 3:4-7, Joshua 24:15, Ephesians 5:15-20)
3. Discuss the following statements:
 - We must admit that we are powerless over our addictions and that our lives have become unmanageable. (Romans 7:18-19)
 - We must believe that God is all-powerful and that He can restore us to sanity. (Romans 7:24-25, Ephesians 1:19-20, Philippians 2:13, Luke 1:37)
 - We must decide to turn our lives and our wills over to God. (Psalm 32:5, Matthew 11:28-29)
 - We must NOT live in denial. (Proverbs 14:8 & 22:3, Galatians 6:7)
4. Spend some time as a group praying for people you know whose lives/careers/families are being ruined by addiction using the statements in question #3 as a guide. (James 5:16)
5. How important is it for people struggling with addictions to seek help? (Galatians 6:1-2, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4) Why do you think many Christians struggle silently with hidden addictions instead of getting help?

6. Resources for people struggling with addiction:

Alcoholics Anonymous: 6:00pm Thursdays, Community Room A (aa.org)

Celebrate Recovery: 6:15pm Mondays, Journey Church (myjourneychurch.com) (celebraterecovery.com)

Al-Anon: for family members of people with a drinking problem (al-anon.org)

Gamblers Anonymous: (gamblersanonymous.org)

Awaken: for people struggling with addiction to pornography (awakenrecovery.com)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: (samhsa.gov)

7. Read and discuss the following prayer for serenity:

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.” Reinhold Niebuhr