The Gospel, Christian Life, and Mental Health

Dave Sanders 11/10/20

Sermon Summary

On his second message in our Northcross Church Mental Health Awareness month, Dave Sanders emphasized three critical aspects of a serene life: gratefulness, appreciation and laughter.

Collectively, they are bound in one word: positivity, the aspect of having a positive attitude to the vagaries of life. If you really believe such attitudes are important for good mental health, then you need to craft a manner to enforce them in your outlook on life.

"A merry heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

Dave returned to his key idea from his first message: **you will become whatever you focus on**. Dwell on misery, you will become miserable. Look for the positives in your life, and you soon begin to act that way. Should you, instead, punish yourself, you will become filled with bitterness. One thing in life is certain: you have a choice as to how you cope with problems, pain, ingratitude and the like. Look for the good or the benefit of a problem and **mandate** that position in your life.

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance" (James 1:2-3). Be **grateful** for that "stink" situation you find yourself in. What can you learn from dark situations such as tragedy and trauma? Is there something good you can take from it? If you cannot, then stress will take over. Your head has to be your best friend. Train your head to look for the good **things** in a bad situation:

"Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

Train your responses to look beyond the pain. Encourage and train your brain to look for the good – including the good options – and learn from past mistakes.

If you buy into negativity, options begin to shut down. Rarely will a negative option be the correct viable decision. Looking outwardly from the problem calms the soul. The soul will say to you, "I can be okay." **BUT – if anxiety leads to harm, seek professional help.**

"For as a person thinks in their heart, so are they" (Proverbs 23:7).

Laughter triggers endorphins in the brain. These release pleasure thoughts and feelings. Laughter also switches our perspective on events. It has dramatic beneficial effects on the lining of blood vessels. Blood pressure is reduced. Stress causes the reverse: a tightening of the blood vessels with a consequential increase in blood pressure. The hormone DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone – $C_{19}H_{28}O_2$) is exclusively released from the adrenal gland only when the body is "happy". Heart disease, obesity, cancers, immune compromised systems, all have their roots in prolonged periods of negativity. The more you laugh, the better your body. A happy and serene state is also a natural pain killer since it robs the negativity that produces pain in the body. It destroys revenge, bitterness and hate. Bitterness makes it harder to forgive somebody; laughter makes it easier.

Tears have a different composition depending on whether you are laughing or crying. Tears from laughing contain healthy substances; tears from grief contain unhealthy substances. Never underestimate the power of laughter. Ask yourself, what is it about a friend who always makes you happy through laughter?

Pastor Mark Wallace's Addendum on Gratitude

People are endowed with reason; it is what makes them distinct from all other creatures. This single fact should make us grateful to God. We are His special creation.

1. God requires our thanks. In giving thanks, we remember Him. Blessings abound on God's people (Deuteronomy 7:12-8:10). But if His people forget to give thanks, then unpleasant consequences follow (Deuteronomy 8:11-20).

2. Gratitude keeps our attitudes focused on God. It reduces our self-centredness. If we backslide, we must refocus on God. Our **mandate** is to be **God-focused**.

3. Gratitude develops our trust in God. We all experience seasons of pain alternating with seasons of joy. This is part of life. God requires us to give thanks in **ALL** things (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

The gospel – God's Word – is the only place we can go to find true peace in this world.

Discussion Questions

1. Practice saying aloud, the word: **Dehydroepiandrosterone** until you can say it correctly.

2. Gratefulness, appreciation and laughter are phenomenally important to good mental health. Why are they so important?

3. Is positivity ever **not** helpful? Can you think of examples? Does Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 apply here?

4. How do you go about mandating yourself to positive thoughts, specifically in the areas of gratitude, appreciation, and laughter? Provide examples.

5. When you are faced with tragedy or trauma, how do you go about finding the positives in it? Tell us about an example in your life.

6. Why does God require our thanks? Isn't He bigger than that need?

7. What is the harm in self-centredness?