

Thank you for being here... it is so good to see each one of you. ...

**Philippians 3:5-7 (NLT)** I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. (6) I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. (7) I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.

Paul is saying I was circumcised, I am a citizen of Israel, I am from the tribe of Benjamin, I was a Pharisee, I demanded the strictest obedience, I was in right standing with God by obeying the law. I thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.

Let's talk about: **Learn, Unlearn, and Relearn.**

Alvin Toffler is regarded as one of the world's outstanding futurists. He famously wrote: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

Let me explain: Paul had to learn the law,(as a Jew it was required) but He had to unlearn being a Pharisee,(when he saw the light of God's revelation Acts 9) so He could relearn the Gospel. The Apostle Paul received the gospel not through human teaching, but directly through a revelation of Jesus Christ, as he states in Galatians 1:11-12.

So what we want to do today is two things:

- How we can unlearn some toxic beliefs.
- Second, can we relearn how to deal with toxic people?

Somewhere along the way many well-meaning Christian started teaching a version of morality that sounds good.

It sounds like this.....Stay away from alcohol....Avoid cigarettes....Don't listen to that.... Don't watch this.... Don't hang around those people.... be different from the world..now on the surface, there is truth in that...

As believers, we are called to be set apart...but if all we preach is what we are against, we've have an incomplete version of Christianity.

Because the problem isn't just out there.....The problem is in here...(the heart)

Jesus made this clear over and over. The Pharisees had their rules and their categories—clean and unclean, righteous and unrighteous, insiders and outsiders.

They knew exactly who the “bad guys” were. But Jesus redirected them.

Look at **Mark 7:21-23 CSB** “And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. (21) For from within, out of people's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, evil actions, deceit, self-indulgence, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile a person.”

In other words, the greatest threat to our kids isn't the party crowd at school or the liberal professor in their college or classroom. The greatest threat to us isn't drugs, alcohol or unhealthy web sites.

**The greatest threat is the sin already inside of us.**

When we train our kids and ourselves to think that evil is something external--- something to be avoided---rather than repent of.....

We create...self-righteous people..... Self-righteous people who say, we don't drink, smoke, dip or chew or hang out with those who do and we assume we are spiritually fine because we obey the rules.

But inside, our hearts can be nitpicky, easily offended, full of pride, bitterness, gossip, envious of others, and far from God.

We were told that “bad people” do bad things, but then we realize that even in the safest, most sheltered spaces, sin is still there—because sin is in us.

**The gospel doesn’t divide the world into good people and bad people.**

The gospel says we are all “bad people” in need of a Savior. **Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory or reputation of God.”**

That includes the church kid who never misses a Wednesday and the person who never attends on Sunday.

So what should we be teaching?

**Sin isn’t just about behavior—it’s about the heart.** We don’t just avoid bad things; we confront the sin within us. **(Jeremiah 17:9) NLT “The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked.”**

Jesus didn’t come to make us “better” ---He came to make us new. In other words....you 2.0 No! Christianity isn’t about behavior modification or sin management..... It’s about heart transformation!!!

**(2 Corinthians 5:17) NLT “This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun.”**

**Holiness flows from a heart that loves God---**not from a checklist of rules..... the goal isn’t to get someone who follows the rules.

The goal is to raise up people who walk with Jesus **(John 14:15) NLT “If you love me, obey my commandments.”**

**If we think evil is only external, we will spend our life either as a Pharisee or a Prodigal...**

Let's teach that sin is within and we all need a savior.....then hopefully we will all cling to Jesus.

**Let's raise disciples, not Pharisees.**

Let's teach the gospel.... Not just what's wrong with the world out there, but what's wrong with ourselves.

Let's teach that sin lies within all of us, and why Jesus is the only hope for any of us. Let's take the 12 steps of AA from the world and bring it back into church. Step 1. We admit we are powerless over....

Paul said, I learned the law, but had to unlearn being a Pharisee, so I could relearn the gospel ... .The Great Apostle Paul had to get toxic beliefs out of his heart....

Paul was converted. He immediately preached in Damascus. (Acts 9) He went away into the Arabian desert (Galatians 1) probably for the majority of three years, using most of this time with the Lord and re-studying the Torah in light of Christ. He learned, unlearned, and relearned.

Now how do we do that with the toxic people in our life. How did Jesus handle toxic people?

Look at this...

***The Pharisees went out and they plotted how they might kill Jesus. Aware of this Jesus withdrew from that place." Matthew 12:14-16*** [by the way have you noticed how bitter people like to get together in groups? They all hang out together and they support each other in their toxicity. tox-sis-i-ty

Ladies and Gentlemen.....All of us are going to go through problems and we're going to be hurt. Each time it happens, it hurts.. I'm sorry, but we live on a broken planet.

We're going to be hurt intentionally and we'll be hurt unintentionally. What really matters is how do we respond to the hurts in life?

We had a tough time at school, somebody breaks our heart. We have a health issue, we didn't get the promotion, whatever the hurt may be....God says, "My grace is sufficient for you."

**The only letter between bitter and better.. is "I"**

The Bible says this in **Hebrews 12:15:NCV** ***"Be careful that no one misses the grace of God [In other words be careful that you don't miss what God is wanting to give you. If you reject it, you miss it] so that no root of bitterness grows up among you."***

When we say "I can handle this on my own."

We're going to get bitter. Anytime we try to solve the problem ourselves without God, we're going to get bitter.

**Bitterness is the most contagious attitude there is.**

We've all seen where some aunt or uncle in our family got done wrong thirty years ago and they never got over it. And they're bitter about it. Every time they come to the family reunion they bring the bitterness with them.

Here's the problem with bitter people: they want everybody else to feel it too. Misery loves company.

**When we don't take our hurt to God we take it out on the people around us.**

Let me get real practical here. Some of you had somebody in your life who's really hurt you. Maybe it was a spouse.

That spouse came to you and they asked for forgiveness.

You said you forgave them but you held on to it. And you continue to hold it against them.

In our minds we have this scale between guilt and blame.

We can't handle a whole lot of guilt so we ease our guilt by blaming other people. "You did this." *But you did that...*

What they did..... may not be nearly as bad as what I did..... but at least I have someone to blame and I've got to keep the scales balanced.

If somebody comes and says, "I'm sorry. Please forgive me." *Boom!* All of a sudden there's nothing to blame any more.

Here's what happens: if somebody hurt you really badly and they came to you and asked you to forgive them and you said yeah but you still hold on to it.

Now every time that spouse comes to you and they try to do something nice for you, you go, "Yes, but you owe me."

Then they come and try to do something else good for you and you go, "Yeah, but you owe me."

Pretty soon they're just going to give up. Why....you're unpleasable. If that's happening in your life I want to be as honest as I can. You are killing your marriage.

It's not dying from the really big sin that the other person did. It's dying from the fact that you will not let them off the hook. You are unpleasable and you are killing the relationship. You've got to let it go.

**How do I let it go.....** You do what Jesus did with the Pharisees.

**Realize it's not about you.**

When somebody is toxic they're going to try to blame it on you.

But it's not about you. It's about them. As I said, we're as happy as we choose to be.

Every time we blame somebody else for our unhappiness, we're being lame.

Move away from bitter people....

Let me ask you in a very personal way. Who is it in your life – I'm not talking about marriage – but who is in your life you need to stop trying to get back.

Someone walked out of your life and you're wasting an enormous amount of energy and effort trying to get them back.

You need to let them walk. You need to let it go.

1 John 2:19 **"if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."**

Some of you are still trying to get the approval of your parents and they're dead! Or you're always trying to prove yourself to some brother or sister or somebody else.

Let me tell you something. If you haven't got their approval by now, I hate to tell you this but in all likelihood you're not ever going to get it.

But the good news: you don't need it. You don't need anybody's approval to be happy. Jesus didn't need the Pharisee's approval or even his own families...

Jesus had been out speaking to a crowd and He said some very tough things...

**"The disciples came to Jesus and they asked, 'Do You realize that You offended the Pharisees by what You just said?' Jesus said 'Ignore them. They're blind guides leading the blind.'" Matthew 15:14 NLT**

He says some people are just unpleasable. "Ignore them. Get on with your life. Refuse to play their game.

One of the Pharisees' favorite games was to try to trick Jesus with questions. They came to Jesus one time and said, "Lord, the law says that anybody caught in adultery should be stoned to death. What do You say?" He goes "Fine, whoever is without sin gets to cast the first stone."

Next question!

They came to Him one time and said “Lord, why don’t You prove You are who You say You are? Prove that You’re telling the truth.” And Jesus said, “I don’t have to do that. I know who I am. I know where I came from. I know where I’m going.” Next question!

Jesus did not defend, debate or back down from the Pharisee’s.

People think being meek means to be weak. In other words... you smile, you grin and bear it and you let people keep poking you in the eye. No. It’s not that.

The word “meek” literally means strength under control.

When a wild stallion has been tamed – it’s broken.

What does that mean? It means the horse still has a lot of energy. It could still run a mile or two. But now its strength is under control.

God doesn’t want us running up going, “I have my rights!” and we’re offensive and self-centered and we’re saying, “I deserve this.” God doesn’t want us to be aggressive.

On the other hand God doesn’t want us to be passive. “Poor me. Keep poking me in the eye.. NO!!! Healthy people are neither “bullies nor wimps.” They speak the truth in love.

In the Bible, there are only two people who are called meek. Jesus and Moses. Neither one of them ever backed down in the face of a bully.

Moses went toe to toe with Pharaoh, and said, “Let my people go!” Jesus went toe to toe with the Pharisee’s. Both had the courage of their convictions but both were meek.

We want to create a church of meek people. Not wimps. Not bullies. But people who know how to handle people the way Jesus did.



Let me wrap this up..... Like Paul... We have learned some things, but maybe we should unlearn, so we can relearn..... Paul said...get toxic beliefs out of your life.... and Jesus taught us how to deal with toxic people....

I learned all too well about guilt trips.... I am relearning Jesus says "There is now therefore no condemnation in Jesus Christ."

I learned how to perform... I am relearning Jesus says, "Come to Me if you're burdened and pressured and I will give you rest."

Here's our choice. Do we want to live our life with a toxic beliefs? Or do you want to live our life in a healthy relationship with God and People?

It's our choice.

Prayer:

God set us free from toxic beliefs and let us have the strength and courage to deal with the toxic people in our life. I pray this in Your name. Amen."