

## **LIFE'S HEALING CHOICES**

### ***"The Reality Choice-Admitting Need"***

**Matthew 5:3**

#### **Introduction**

I want to begin this new series by asking you a few questions:

**Do you ever stay up late when you know you need sleep?**

**Do you ever eat or drink more calories than your body needs?**

**Do you ever feel you ought to exercise but don't?**

**Do you know the right thing to do but don't do it?**

**Do you ever know something is wrong but do it anyway?**

**Have you ever known that you should be kind and unselfish but instead  
you were unkind and selfish?**

**Have you ever tried to take control of your life, a circumstance or another  
person and discovered that you couldn't?**

If you answered "yes" to even one of those questions, I want to welcome you to the human race. You're human. And you're at the right church. This is a church where no perfect people are allowed!

Jesus came for imperfect people. Hear what He said:

***"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* – Mark 2:17**

The point of what Jesus was saying is that every person is a person who is broken, hurting and imperfect. Some realize it and receive help, healing and forgiveness. Those who won't realize it won't get the help they need.

Every person has dealt with or is dealing with a hurt, a hang-up or a habit in their lives. At some level, in one form or another, we all have hurts that haunt our hearts; hang-ups that cause us pain; and habits that mess up our lives, the real serious ones are known as addictions.

Life brings pain and confusion into our lives. But God promises comfort and healing for our hurts. In the book of Isaiah, God declares:

***“I have seen how they acted, but I will heal them. I will lead them and help them, and I will comfort those who mourn. I offer peace to all, both near and far! I will heal my people.”- Isaiah 57:18-19***

God makes 5 promises to us in those 2 verses:

1. If you are hurt, God promises to heal you
2. If you are confused, God promises to lead you
3. If you feel helpless, God promises to help you
4. If you feel alone, God promises to comfort you
5. If you feel anxious and afraid, God promises you His peace

God desires to bring healing to our lives that are broken with hurts, hang-ups and bad habits. That’s the basis for this new 8-week sermon series entitled, **Life’s Healing Choices**.

**Life’s Healing Choices** outlines 8 choices that will bring you and I freedom from life’s hurts, hang-ups and habits. But you and I have to make the choice.

**At one point in his ministry, Jesus came across a crippled man who was begging for money. Jesus healed him. But before he did, he asked the crippled man a question, “do you want to get well?” It seems like an odd question, but it was an appropriate one. If the man were to be healed, he could no longer depend on others to support him financially. He would have to take responsibility for his own life, get a job and earn a living.**

Jesus would ask the same question of us. Do we want to get well from whatever it is that is hurting us, hanging us up or messing up our lives? If we do, then we must make the healing choices that Jesus requires of us.

Regardless of whatever problem you are struggling with, whether it is emotional, financial, relational, spiritual or sexual....regardless of what you

need recovery from, the principles that lead to recovery are always the same and the choice is always yours to make.

***Life's Healing Choices*** are found in Jesus' teachings known as the ***Beatitudes***, found in Matthew 5:3-12. The Beatitudes are the attitudes that we need to be. We need to choose to have the attitude the Jesus says we need to have.

Choosing these attitudes and acting on them will bring healing into our lives. Each Beatitude begins with the word, "blessed". Blessed simply means happy.

We can have a happy and healthy life if we will make the healing choices that Jesus outlines in the Beatitudes. Healing is a process of choosing God's path to recovery, wholeness and life transformation.

Healing happens one choice at a time. The first choice is found in the first Beatitude- ***Matthew 5:3***.

This first Beatitude is a spiritual wake-up call for us. Being "poor in spirit" is not talking about physical poverty. It is referring to spiritual poverty. It is recognizing my sinfulness, my helplessness and my hopelessness without God.

***"Blessed are the spiritually helpless..."***. The first choice that we need to make is the reality choice...we must realize that we are helpless spiritually without God.

In order to make the reality choice we must first understand.....

## **1. The Causes of our Problems**

One cause of our problems is.....

### **a. Our tendency to do wrong**

Our tendency to do wrong is what the Bible refers to as our “sinful nature”. Paul wrote about the sinful nature and his own struggle with it:

***“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”***  
– **Romans 7:15 & 18**

Does that struggle sound familiar? We all struggle with that, to varying degrees, doing what we don’t want to do; not doing what we want to do. Paul struggled with his sinful nature. So do we.

We choose to do things that are not good for us, even when we know better. Then we attempt to fix our problems and often in our attempts to fix them, we only make them worse. The Bible says that there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end leads to death. We cannot trust ourselves and our human nature to lead us out of our problems.

**We have an 8-year-old living in our home. His name is Rocky. Rocky is our Minature Schnauzer. We got Rocky for Todd when Todd was 14.**

**Todd had wanted a dog for some time. At first, he thought he wanted a Lab. But as Dawn researched different breeds, we all decided that we wanted a Minature Schnauzer. And Rocky is a great dog.**

**But in her research on the Minature Schnauzer, Dawn discovered that the Schnauzer has a stubborn nature. Most of the time, Rocky is very obedient. But every once in a while his stubborn nature comes out.**

**Sometimes we can call Rocky to come and he will come right over. But other times, we call him and he just sits there and stares at us, like he is deaf and dumb...or that he is deaf and we are dumb. He just isn’t coming because he just flat out doesn’t want to.**

Each of us have a stubborn nature when it comes to being obedient to God. Sometimes we are obedient. Other times we are not. It’s called our human

nature. Our sinful nature. This corresponds to the second cause of our problems:

### **b. Our desire to play God**

At the root of our tendency to do wrong is our desire to be in control. We want to play God. We want to make our own choices, call our own shots and make our own rules. We don't want anyone telling us what to do!

This is nothing new. Trying to be God is humankind's oldest problem.

**In Genesis we read where God placed Adam and Eve in Paradise, the Garden of Eden. God gave them Paradise and then Adam and Eve tried to control Paradise. God had told them that they could eat of the fruit of any tree, except one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So what did Adam and Eve do? They made a beeline for the forbidden fruit, the only tree that was off limits.**

**The reason why this fruit was so tempting was the temptation that Satan presented with it. He told Eve, "partake of this fruit and you will be like God." Adam and Eve wanted to be God. So they ate the one fruit that God said they were not to touch. The end result is that they did not become God. Having been created in God's image, they fell short of God's glory when they gave in to temptation and sinned.**

Ever since then, mankind has tried to become his own god. At the root of our self-inflicted problems is our stubborn and egotistical desire to be God. We want to be the center of our own universe. We want to control things.

We try to try our image. We care too much about what others think about us. We don't want people to know what we're really like. So we put up fronts to appear better than we are.

We try to control other people. Kids try to manipulate their parents. Spouses try to control each other. In the world, people tend to use each other for their own selfish gain.

In our attempt to play God, we try to control our problems, esp. where addictions are concerned. We say things like, "I can handle it"; "It's not a problem"; "I don't need any help"; "I don't need to go to counseling".

**A TV repairman was asked about the worst kind of damage he had ever seen to a television set. He said, "The kind that results from people trying to fix their TVs on their own."**

The same can be said for our problems. The more we try to fix them, handle them and control them on our own, the worse they get.

Here's one more thing that we try to control. We try to control our pain. We spend a lot of time and energy running from our pain. We do a lot of things to avoid it, deny it, escape it, reduce it or postpone it.

We try to control our pain by eating or not eating; with alcohol, smoking, drugs, abuse of prescription medication; getting in and out of relationships.

Let me ask you a question before we go any further. Your attempt at being God, how's that working out for you? I would have to think that it isn't working out too well for you. You are trying to control your problems. If you were God, you could solve all your problems. But you still have your problems. You're not God.

We try playing God and we try managing our problems on our own. We only make matters worse. Let's take a look at.....

## **2. The Consequences of our problems**

**....and our attempt at playing God** The first consequence is.....

### **a. Fear**

**After Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit they tried to hide from God. But you can't hide from God, as they found out. God found them in the garden and Adam said to God- "I was afraid because I was naked so I hid."**

That's one consequence of our failed attempts at playing god. We're afraid that someone will find out who we really are and what we're really like....that we don't have it altogether...that we're not perfect. We live in fear. We're afraid that people will not love us and will reject us if they know what we're really like.

A second consequence is....

### **b. Frustration**

Trying to be General Manager of the Universe is frustrating. **Have you ever been to Chuck E. Cheese? If you have small children in your life, you have.**

**They have a game there called Whacka Whacka. You use a big mallet to beat down these little moles that keep popping up. You whack one down and three more pop up.**

That game is a parable for life. We whack down one problem and it comes back worse. We whack down another problem and two more pop up.

It is frustrating how unmanageable life can get. But our frustration is a symptom of a much deeper issue: a failure to acknowledge that we are not God.

Our frustration will lead to the third consequence.....

### **c. Fatigue**

Playing God makes us tired. Pretending we have got it altogether is hard work. King David experienced the fatigue of pretending he had it all together. He confessed what he felt like when he refused to own up to his sin:

***“When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.” – Psalm 32:3-4***

Denying sin and denying problems in our lives requires an enormous amount of emotional energy. Pretending to be someone you aren't is exhausting. If you are living in a constant state of fatigue, ask yourself, "what pain am I trying to run from?" "what problem am I afraid to face?" "what sin have I not dealt with?"

The ultimate consequence of our problems is.....

#### **d. Failure**

Playing god is one job where failure is guaranteed. It has a 100% fail rate. Proverbs 28:13 says:

***"You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up; then God will show mercy to you." – Proverbs 28:13***

We need to be open and honest about our weaknesses, faults and failures. Instead of trying to play god, we need to realize our need for God and allow Him to take control of our lives. This leads to our 3<sup>rd</sup> point.....

### **3. The Cure for our Problems**

Since pride is the driving force behind all our problems, the pride that says I want to be my own god; then the solution to our problems is humility before God. The Bible says that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. If we are going to be humble and receive God's grace, God's help, we have to do 3 things.....

#### **a. I must humbly admit that I need help**

**My favorite line from the movie, *A Few Good Men* is when Colonel Nathan Jessup shouts, "you can't handle.....the truth".**

The truth about the truth is we often times can't handle the truth about ourselves. We don't like the truth about ourselves. We try to deny it.

The first step to healing is to choose to face the truth regarding yourself and own up to it. That's why this first choice is called the reality choice. We have to get real with ourselves. We have to own up to the truth.

You and I have to admit- "I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing. My life is unmanageable when I try to manage it all by myself. I am a broken person who needs healing."

One indication that you are a broken person is when you say to yourself- "I wish.....I wish I didn't lose my temper so much....I wish I could be more kind and loving.....I wish I didn't struggle with this....I wish I could stop drinking....I wish I weren't so insecure."

What are you pretending isn't a problem in your life? If you want to be healed, you have to make the reality choice. You have to handle the truth. You must admit that you need help. Jesus said that the truth will set us free.

The second humble step that we must take is.....

### **b. I must humbly ask God for help**

I first admit that I need help and then I ask God for help. We won't conquer any of our problems by our own will power. How many times have you said, "I'm going to quit doing this. I'm never going to do this again. I am going to change." And perhaps you do quit for a while. But then you give in to the temptation and the addiction again.

The reason for your continued failure to overcome the problem/addiction is because you are relying on your own power. You won't get better by your own will power. You need God's power to overcome whatever you struggle with.

It is the poor in spirit who will receive the kingdom of heaven. It is those who admit that they are powerless who will receive the power of heaven to help them. Paul wrote:

***“We saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was good for then we put everything into the hands of God, who alone could save us, for he can raise the dead.” – 2 Corinthians 1:9***

Since God can raise the dead...and did raise the dead....when He raised Jesus back to life....then God can handle the problems in your life. He can enable you to overcome your problem.

**Trying to handle our problems on our own is as smart as refusing to turn on the light switch and stumbling around in a dark room. You’re going to stub your toe, bang your knee and fall over something. It’s much wiser to use the power of electricity that God has provided.**

Instead of trying to stumble around under our own power when it comes to dealing with the problems in our lives, it is much wiser to go to the power source. We need to go to God and humbly ask Him to help us. And He will. He has promised that He will help us. Remember at the beginning of this message that we read God’s promise from Isaiah- ***“I will lead them and help them.”***

After we ask God for help, here is the 3<sup>rd</sup> step we need to take.....

**c. I must humbly accept help from other people**

I admit that I need help....I ask God for help....and I accept help....I accept it from other people.

God helps us by putting other people in our lives who can help us. God has wired us in such a way that we don’t get well by ourselves. If you keep a struggle to yourself, you keep the struggle. You will not get rid of it by yourself. If you could you would. But you can’t so you won’t.

This is a Biblical principle, outlined for us in the book of Ecclesiastes:

***“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” – Ecclesiastes 4:9-10***

Pity the person who tries to handle his problems and manage his life all on his own. We all need encouragement from someone else and we all need to be accountable to someone else.

58 times in the New Testament the phrase, “one another” appears. We are to help one another....encourage one another....pray for one another....support one another.....and counsel one another.

Helping each other is one reason why we have church. Church is the biggest support group in the world. It is a spiritual support group.

You and I were not meant to go through our struggles alone. Let me suggest two ways that you can receive encouragement, support and help from others.

One is to join a small group Bible Study. In a small group, you will build relationships. You will pray for each other. You will receive support in one of our small groups.

Second is to find a trusted Christian friend to whom you can confide in one on one. You have to be careful to whom you tell your struggles. You don't want to tell someone what you're going through and then read about it on Facebook.

Find someone you know well enough to know that you can confide in them. Find someone you know who will keep what you tell them to themselves. Find someone you know who will love you unconditionally. This is important for complete healing to take place, as James wrote:

***“Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” – James 5:16***

You need to make yourself accountable to someone else. Revealing your feeling is the beginning of your healing....say that with me.....one more time.

Revealing your feeling is the beginning of your healing. There is relief and healing just in sharing. Why is that? Because the moment you do, the moment you humble yourself to the point of telling one another person what you struggle with, you receive God's grace because God gives grace to the humble.

You don't have to tell everybody what you struggle with. But you do need to tell somebody. Revealing your feeling is the beginning of your healing.

Healing happens one choice at a time. The first choice, the reality choice is often the biggest and the toughest choice to make. But admitting our need is the first choice in the healing process.

## **PRAYER**

Our ultimate admission of need and helplessness is to admit that we are powerless to save ourselves. The Bible says:

***"When we were unable to help ourselves, at the moment of our need, Christ died for us." – Romans 5:8***

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."  
Admitting that we can't get to heaven on our own is the first step on the pathway to heaven.

Because of our sin we are unable to help ourselves get to heaven. That's why we need Jesus and the forgiveness He provides through His death on the cross where He died for our sins.

This morning, I invite you to receive Christ. In faith admit that you need Jesus as your Savior. Ask him to save you. You can confess Christ and be baptized this morning.

If you are an immersed believer, but not a member here, but need the encouragement and support of a church family, we invite you to come join our fellowship this morning.