

Eight Good Habits

2. `Make Love a Reflex, Not Something We Schedule

Preached: 9/19/2021, Germantown;

Message: Love Must Be a Reflex, Not Something we Schedule

We are in a series of sermon studies this weekend on Habits. A few weeks ago, I came across an article on ChurchLeaders.com, written by Neal Samudre. The title of the article is: **8 Habits of Christians Who Live Out Their Faith Every Day, Not Just on Sunday.**

Habit; NOUN

1. a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that is hard to give up.

Samudre is concerned that too often we push our faith to the margins of our life.

The danger of today is that in this excess of choice, we'll choose everything and let the things that matter drown in our flooded schedules.

*This is what has happened to many of us. We've let our faith become **a Sunday thing**, not a 24/7 thing.*

He set out to look at the lives of people who seem to be able to **live out their faith every day**. Their faith was not just a **Sunday Thing**. He discovered 8 Habits in their lives that he set out to practice in his own life. His list of Habits will be the outline for our studies over the next several weeks.

I think we all understand the importance of living out our faith every day. Following Jesus is not a Part Time Commitment. We often hear criticism from those who are not yet believers that Christians are not consistent the rest of the week after Sunday. The way we live our faith on Monday, Tuesday, etc. is a witness to others. So what are the characteristic of someone who takes their faith seriously?

The first habit that we talked about last week, is that we must develop the practice or habit of Carving out times for Restoration in our daily schedule. Take some time – 15 – 30 minutes to be alone with God and listen for His voice and direction. That was part of Jesus' life. The disciples wanted Jesus to be busy "doing" stuff – miracles, driving out demons. But **Jesus was listening to another voice**. In His time of quiet or restoration, he heard the voice of His Father. He was reminded of His purpose – to preach the gospel of the Kingdom. We need to take time to listen for that voice that guided Jesus.

So how did you do with that first habit this week? I must confess that I did not do as well as I wanted to. It takes a lot of effort to re-organize your day and make sure you block off time for being Restored. I will keep working at it.

The 2nd Habit that Samudre found in the lives of people who Live out their faith every day has to do with **our practices of love and service**:

He writes: **People who live out their faith don't see service to others as a special designated time.** In other words, **Love should not be something we schedule. Love should be a reflex.** When you go to the doctor for a physical, one of the things your doctor will check is your reflexes. The doctor will have you sit on the edge of the exam table and tap your knee with his little triangular shaped hammer. When he taps your knee at the right spot your leg will kick out. Hopefully you won't kick the doctor in the face. You can try, but it is doubtful that you will be able to control your leg. **It's an automatic reflex.** According to Samudre, that's the way our practice of love and service will be. When we are confronted with a situation, an individual in need, we will be loving. We won't have to think about it. We won't have to have a meeting to plan what to do. We will just do it. It will be automatic. **We can't NOT do something loving.**

Samudre says that's not always the case. He writes: ***In our small groups we set aside time where we will work in the soup kitchen. We designate blocked off times to do an act of love. And then we return to not practicing it daily. ... We can't make this distinction with service any longer. Christians are meant to exude this serving love every day, and the more we entertain this perspective of service being something special we do, the more we divorce it from our daily lives.***

Let's take a look at this passage from Romans 12. We understand the importance of being loving. The Bible is filled with commands to be loving to others. This passage emphasizes **the nature of the love** we are to demonstrate. **What will love look like?**

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Love must be sincere. Studying the Greek word that is translated "Sincere" provides us with some helpful direction. The word is "**anhupokritos**". It is a form of the word "**hupokritos**". If you listen to that word, you hear the word **Hypocrite**. In the Greek language the word **hupokritos** refers to a **Stage Actor**. Someone who is pretending to be something he is not. Jesus uses the word Hypocrite often in his rebuke of the religious leaders of the day. They strutted around pretending to be something they were not – righteous, holy. Now in our verse, (Rom 12:9), Paul uses this form of the word, which includes the prefix AN, which changes the meaning of the word. **Anhupokritos** means **Un hypocritical**. So love that is sincere is love that is **not deceitful**. It is love that has its origin in God. It is love that is demonstrated in "brotherly love" (Philadelphia). It is love that honors others about ourselves. Peter in his first letter comments about Love: ***Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God*** (1 Peter 1:22-23).

So, for the follower of Jesus

love should just flow out of us

. Love that is sincere is love that we cannot turn on or off like a switch. When we are confronted with a situation, we just do something loving. Putting love into action is not something that has to take thought or reflection. We just do it.

One of the greatest examples of this kind of love is demonstrated by the Good Samaritan in the story that Jesus told. When he came across someone who had been robbed and beaten and left for dead, his response was to provide loving care. Two others had seen the man and they walked right on by. But the Samaritan stopped. He touched him. He bandaged his wounds. He took him to a safe place where he could heal. And he promised to be responsible for any expenses related to his care. He lived our faith. The Samaritan didn't see service to another person as something that needed to fit into his schedule.

So the challenge for us is to develop this habit, this practice of demonstrating love whenever we have the opportunity to do so.

What keeps people from practicing love as a reflex?

- Too costly
- Our busy schedule
- Fear – we will be contaminated
- We don't want to keep them from being responsible for themselves
- We just don't want to

How do we practice love as a reflex (habit)

- Develop Christlike Character – the Fruit of the Spirit
- PRAY – Ask God to open our eyes to the opportunities He brings our way
- Pay attention to our surroundings

CONCLUSION: As you hold a mirror up in front of your life, what do you see? Do you see reluctance, to express love and service. Or do you see acts of love flowing out of your heart as an automatic reflex. Act first, ask questions later.