

DOING DIFFICULT THINGS #2

(Matt 7:13-14)

- A. Jesus said the path to “life” everlasting is not an easy path to take.
 - 1. If we are to follow Him, then we must enter that “narrow gate” & follow that “difficult way”.

[In this second of two lessons, we will continue to discuss the difficult things we must do on the “way” that leads to eternal life.]

I. WORK OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

- A. **God called MOSES** out of his comfort zone (Exo 3:10-11).
- B. **God called GIDEON** out of his comfort zone (Judges 6:14-16).
- C. **God called PETER** out of his comfort zone (Acts 10:13-15).
- D. **God calls US** out of our comfort zone (Matt 25:14-30).

II. WORK BEYOND WHAT IS EXPECTED

- A. **The Sardis church** met only human expectations (Rev 3:1-3).
- B. **Philemon** could be counted on to work beyond human expectations (Philemon 21).
- C. **Christians** are commanded to work beyond human expectations (Matt 5:38-42).

III. TAKE ON WORK TOO BIG TO DO ALONE

- A. **Members** of a body cannot work alone (Eph 4:15-16; Col 3:15).
- B. **Barnabas & Saul** could not work alone (Acts 11:22-26).
- C. **Jesus** did not work alone.

IV. DO WORK THAT APPEARS TO HAVE NO IMMEDIATE BENEFIT

- A. **Before we will** be willing to do what we have already discussed, we must focus on the smaller works that don't appear to bring us an immediate benefit.

- 1. Daily study of the Word (Acts 17:11).
- 2. Pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17).
- 3. Attitudes (Matt 5:3-10; Jas 4:8).
- 4. Faithful attendance (Heb 10:25).
- 5. Hospitality & special care (Rom 12:13; Jas 1:27).
 - a. We might fail occasionally in these duties, but if failure becomes a habit then we will ultimately be useless to the Lord.
 - b. Would you want a doctor who never referred to medical books & journals, & never conferred with other physicians, & never attended any training classes?

B. **God has commanded** us to do certain smaller things that will, over time, produce amazing results, the results He desires to see in us – *conversely, not doing the smaller things will result in failure.*

1. These activities may be the hardest things we have to do because we don't see an immediate benefit from doing it.
 - a. One who reads & studies the Word daily, will find that he is prepared to confront temptation; & that he can teach others the way of Truth.
 - b. One who prays daily, will find that God is more responsive to & active in his life & in the lives of others for whom he prays.
 - c. One who works on his attitude will see that he has a greater influence for good on others.
 - d. One who is faithful in his attendance will find that he has a vital role in the church's work, which Christ expects him to do.

e. One who ministers to others will find that he has Christian companionship & that he is never alone when in need.

2. When we do these small things repeatedly over time, they aid in our spiritual development & in the edifying of the local church in love.
3. Though Jesus did many great things, He also did many small things in preparation for great work.
 - a. Subject to His Joseph & Mary
 - b. Attended synagogue on the Sabbath
 - c. Prayed to His Father before decisions
 - d. Praised, Petitioned & Gave thanks to Him
 - e. Visited the sick & afflicted
 - f. Grieved with the sorrowful
 - g. Taught the disciples personally
 - h. Discussed Scripture with strangers & outcasts

- i. These things, which do not appear to have an immediate benefit, were the building blocks of His great service to the Father – *in a similar way, they serve that purpose for us too.*
- j. If we are only concerned with doing those things that bring us an immediate benefit, we will never stay on that “way” to life everlasting.

[Step #4 in learning to do difficult things is to do the small works we have been commanded to do though we may not realize the benefit right away.

Finally, & maybe the hardest work we must do if we are going to do the “difficult” things that lead to life, we must...]

V. WORK AGAINST THE GRAIN OF POPULAR CULTURE

- A. [The Laodicean church](#) is well known for being the “lukewarm” church ([Rev 3:14-22](#)).

1. Their being “lukewarm” doesn’t mean that they were only partly zealous for the cause of Christ.
2. Jesus meant that they had been adversely influenced by their culture (their surroundings in the world).
 - a. Hot coffee will cool down & ice water will warm up to meet the temperature of the air.
 - b. In a similar way, the Laodiceans allowed their culture influence them to the point that they were no longer conforming to Christ but to world.

- B. [Look at the culture](#) of religion today that professes a connection to Jesus Christ.

1. There is much evidence to show that it’s moving closer to the world’s point of view about *origin, universal salvation, morality, divorce, abortion, euthanasia*, etc. – Why? People are afraid being called judgmental or narrow minded bigots.

C. **Working against the** grain of popular culture is the culmination of all the others difficult things we have discussed in these lessons.

1. Because, if we will work outside our comfort zone
2. ...and do more than we are expected to do
3. ...and work willingly with other Christians
4. ...and tackle work too big to be done alone
5. ...and do the small things that have no immediate benefit
6. Then, we will be going against the grain of popular & mainstream religious culture.

D. **Apart from Christ** ([Phil 2:5-8](#)) the apostles are our best examples of what it means to work against the grain of popular culture.

1. To continue to preach the gospel, they had to obey God rather than men ([Acts 5:29](#)).

2. They literally felt the backlash for going against the grain of their culture ([Acts 5:41](#)).

3. Yet, they rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

E. **We too can** expect similar treatment when we do something that counteracts our culture.

1. In fact, our very lives will counteract our modern culture; our congregation too will do the same.

2. We will be laughed at, looked down upon, ostracized.

3. We will seem to be out of the loop & behind the times.

4. To many, we will seem prudish, too straitlaced to really be happy in life.

5. People will not understand why we take such a hard line against a host of activities that our culture readily accepts & embraces with vigor.
6. And not only will we NOT be understood, we may even be hated for not going along with popular culture (*John 15:18-20; 3:19-21*).
7. We've learned pretty well how to deal with the rejection of the world, but the real challenge comes when our own brethren reject us for not conforming to their popular culture.
 - a. How do we respond? Take them to the Word of God. Ask them, "By whose authority..."

2 Tim 2:24-26 – And **a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 & that they may come to their senses & escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.**

CLOSING: JESUS FOREWARNED US...

- A. **God has called** us away from the "wide gate" & the "broad way" that leads to eternal "destruction".
 1. A path of least resistance, because it is a path that all but a few will follow.
- B. **God directs us** to a "narrow gate" & a "difficult way" that leads to "life" eternal.
 1. A path of great resistance, because it is a path that many will NOT follow.

We will end this study with a reminder of the incentive God has given us to enter the narrow gate & to take the difficult way to life (*2 Pet 1:5-11*).