
BECOMING WHOLE

Read: Philippians 2:12-13

When a friend fell off her bike and suffered a severe brain injury, doctors weren't sure she would survive. For several days she remained suspended between life and death. The first good news came when she opened her eyes. Then she responded to simple voice commands. But with every small improvement, anxiety remained. How far would she progress?

After one difficult day of therapy, her husband was discouraged. But the very next morning he shared these welcome words: "Sandy's back!" Physically, emotionally, psychologically, and mentally, Sandy was becoming the "self" who we knew and loved. Sandy's fall reminds me of what theologians refer to as "the fall" of mankind ([Gen. 3](#)). And her struggle to recover parallels our struggle to overcome the brokenness of sin ([Rom. 7:18](#)). If only her body healed, recovery would be incomplete. The same would be true if her brain worked but her body didn't. Wholeness means that all parts work together for one purpose.

God is the one healing Sandy, but she has to work hard in therapy to improve. The same is true of us spiritually. After God saves us through Christ, we must "work out" our salvation ([Phil. 2:12](#))—not to earn it but to bring our thoughts and actions into agreement with His purpose.

Application:

1. List one area that you have had to bring your opinions, convictions, or standards in line with God's Word:

2. Give an example of how you can work out your salvation this week: _____

Lights in the World

Read: Philippians 2:14-15

It's easy to see that we live "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" ([Phil. 2:15](#)). We are continually reminded that we live in a fallen world by our own sinful tendencies, by newspaper headlines that report horrifying crimes, and by a society that is growing accustomed to gross immorality. Against this backdrop of darkness, followers of Jesus are told to be "lights in the world" ([Phil. 2:15](#)). Yet our conduct often reflects a dim and distorted image of Him. That's why Paul warned us against "complaining and disputing" (v.14) and urged us to put our salvation to work with reverence for God (vv.12-13).

We may wonder why the apostle didn't mention something more scandalous than complaining. But relatively few of us are guilty of "headline" sins, while all of us have been guilty of the smugness, pride, and self-centeredness that erupts in murmuring and quarreling. And these "lesser" sins can be just as destructive.

Paul knew that we need to be spiritually alert to evil and nip it in the bud. By heeding these exhortations we will "become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault" (v.15). Then we will be sure to shine as lights in this dark world.

Application:

1. Why do you think God places such a high emphasis on our speech?

2. Name one way that you can use your mouth to be a "light" this week:

Stand Fast

Read: Philippians 2:15-16

As I waited to make a right-hand turn at a busy intersection, an ambulance appeared over the crest of a hill, speeding in my direction. Someone behind me honked, urging me into the crossroads. I knew the ambulance would be unlikely to stop and that it could have been disastrous to make my turn. So I kept my foot on the brake pedal and stayed put.

Spiritually speaking, we need to “stay put” and remain faithful to God despite pressure from others. King Solomon had to learn this the hard way. He began his reign by asking God for wisdom ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), and his prayer at the dedication of the temple revealed his loyalty (8:23,61). But he did not remain committed. He married many foreign women who eventually influenced him to worship other gods. By the end of his life, his “heart was not loyal to the Lord” (11:1-6; [Neh. 13:26](#)). Today, just as in ancient times, people may prompt us to shift our loyalty away from God and His truth. Yet with God’s help we can hold fast to the word of life ([Phil. 2:16](#)). If you feel pressured to enter a dangerous intersection of beliefs, study God’s Word, put on His armor ([Eph. 6:10-18](#)), and ask the Holy Spirit for help ([1 Cor. 2:10-12](#)). Then stand fast with your fellow believers in Christ.

Application:

1. Name a time when you felt pressured to do something contrary to God’s Word and will:

2. How does God’s Word help us to stand strong and stay put in our spiritual lives?

Encouraging People

Read: Philippians 2:19

Encouraging others is a vital ministry. But Paul’s letter to the Philippians illustrates that it can also be costly. Even though he was sitting in prison and benefiting from Timothy’s fellowship, Paul planned to send him to minister to the Philippians and learn how they were doing. He chose Timothy because all others focused on themselves rather than on Christ (2:21). A good report from him would encourage Paul (v.19).

Epaphroditus was also a man who practiced selfless encouragement. He was a representative from the Philippian church. While visiting and helping Paul he had become sick and nearly died. His greatest concern was not over his own critical illness, but that his home church had heard about it and he didn’t want them to be unduly distressed (v.26). We see in Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus the secret of true encouragement—self-giving without self-pity. It is clearly self-forgetfulness.

Do you want to be an encouraging Christian? Remember, the ultimate source of encouragement is not people but God. Go to Him for fresh encouragement— then go out and encourage others.

Application:

1. Name someone in your life that has encouraged you and/or helped you grow in the Lord:

2. Where might we be tempted to look for encouragement instead of going to God for encouragement?

Who Cares

Read: Philippians 2:20

A political leader, summing up the brokenness of our time, talked about a “Humpty-Dumpty world.” The intriguing phrase takes us back to a childhood nursery rhyme:

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall;
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king’s horses and all the king’s men
couldn’t put Humpty Dumpty together again.*

The message of that old rhyme is true to life. Man is broken and needs to be put together again. The Creator of the universe cares about our situation and has taken steps to restore us to wholeness. He came into the world in the person of Jesus Christ, and He fashioned the church as His body so that the members should “care for one another” ([1 Corinthians 12:25](#)). Timothy demonstrated that kind of care for Paul, and for other believers ([Philippians 2:18-22](#)). Caring is as basic as giving money to help destitute Christians or looking after aged parents; as simple as being patient and kind or visiting widows and orphans in distress; as obvious as paying a just wage to employees; or as unspectacular as giving a cup of cool water to someone who thirsts. That’s how our Savior would have us care for broken people in our Humpty-Dumpty world. Are we letting Jesus care through us?

Application:

1. Name someone in your life that is in need of care:

2. What is something that you can do this week to demonstrate your care for them?
