

“FOUR NECESSARY STEPS TO REACH GOD’S GOAL”

Ephesians 4:22-24; James 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 10:13; Ephesians 4:10-13
 Message by Pastor Carlos Castañeda ~ Grace Church ~ 7/16/17

It is a privilege for me to be here, the message that the Lord put in my heart to share with you is simple, and it is not new but **it is** very important.

This morning I want to share with you four steps that we need to take into consideration, these steps are necessary in our lives if we want to do God’s will. We know for a fact that God loves us. We know that since the beginning of time he had a plan and part of that plan is to have a relationship with his creation. We also know that the Bible says in Ecclesiastes that it is very important for us to fear God and to keep his commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

We know that he wants us to love him, he wants to be number one in our lives. The Bible says in Ephesians (1:4) that he chose us before the creation of the world. Well at that time he had a specific goal and today he wants us to be reminded of said goal. I imagine that you already know about this goal.

We find this goal in Ephesians 4:11-13 it says: ***So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.***

In other words, one of his most important goals is for us to become Christ-like. I don’t know if you know this, you probably do but I’ll say it anyway. It is necessary for us to remember this: God wants you and I to be like Jesus, to be like him in the way he spoke, in the way he reacted, in the way he loved, in the way he talked with His Father, in the way he obeyed the Father, in the way he preached the Gospel, in the way he had priorities, in the way he forgave.

In simple words, in the church there should be many people who can advise others the same way Paul says to the Corinthians {1 Corinthians 11:1} Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.

In order for us to reach God’s Goal we need

The first Step: Living as a New Creation (Ephesians 4:22-24)

*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to **put off your old self**, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to **put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.***

Basically this verse is telling us that the old self is corrupted and that we need to put it off. Make note of this, it is not God who will put it off, it is not the pastor nor the Elders. All of us individually need to put off the old self.

But it is not just putting off the old self but also putting on the new self which is created (**this is very important**) It is created to be like God, listen again. The new self has been created by God to be like God.

But what does that mean? To be like God How?

The answer: **In true Righteousness and Holiness.**

If we want to reach God’s goal; which is, all of us attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, we need to live as a new creation. Pursuing the true righteousness and holiness. This is about us being righteous in our way of life and being holy in our lifestyle. This is an everyday decision in the life of a Christian. You have to choose every day to live a holy life, to live a righteous life.

For those who are familiar with the AA meetings, we need to live one day at time. Every single day is a battle and we need to fight against all temptations. We need to be careful and seek His kingdom as if it were our last day on earth.

Every day you make decisions, sometimes big decisions, and sometimes small ones. Well in all those decisions you have to choose to either glorify God with your deeds or to live a selfish life that seeks only your own satisfaction or your own goals. Someone can say, it is difficult, yes it is difficult but you are not alone, you have the Holy Spirit in you.

1 Corinthians 12:13 says

For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—**and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.**

This means that you can do it, you can choose to live a life as a new creation glorifying our Lord in everything you do. You have the power of the Holy Spirit in you!

But it is your decision, it is not something that God will do in you. You have to make the decision to put off the old self and to put on the new. Like I said before it is a decision you have to make every day when you get up in the morning.

Just the same way when you have a dentist or a doctor's appointment. When you wake up that day you decide whether you will go to the dentist or not. With the Lord it is the same, every morning you have to choose to glorify the Lord or glorify yourself.

This decision will determine how your life is, this decision will determine how content you are in life, this decision will determine how close you are to reach God's goal.

Now the Second Step is that we need to:

Be Doers of the Word (James 1:21-22) Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

well this verse is in direct connection to the first one where it says that we have to put off the old man. James says that we have to get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent. Again it's something that we need to be concerned about.

Let me explain why we have to be concerned. When we have a worry or concern in our lives this worry or concern, usually jumps up to be our number one priority.

I don't know if it is just me, but when I have something that worries me, I don't sleep, I am constantly thinking about it and it consumes my time, my thoughts and my sleep. Well the first verse in Ephesians and this verse from James it should be a preoccupation that leads us to put off the old self and to put on the new self, and that we get rid of all the moral filth and the evil from our lives. Obviously first, we need to accept the Word.

You could hear the greatest preacher in the world, and if you don't accept the word that this preacher is preaching. Nothing will happen in your life. We need to accept the Word so that when we accept the Word, we believe the Word and the result will be that we are going to be doers of that Word. We are going to be able to do what the Word says. Once again a decision for everyone here.

You are the one who chooses to be a doer of the Word, this should be done every day in your life. Remember that the goal is to be Christ-like, Jesus Christ was a doer of the Word during His ministry on earth. Doer of the Word means that you will love God with all your strength and you will love your neighbor as yourself. Doer of the Word means that you will conduct your life according to what the Word says to

do. It doesn't matter if you are with people or you are alone. You will glorify God because you love him with all of your heart.

You will pray not because the pastor says that Christians need to pray, you will pray because you want to talk to your Father. You will love your neighbor not because the pastor says for you to do that but because you want to do what the Lord tells you to do. You love him so you want to please Him. You will seek His Word not because you want to read the Bible in a year but because you love the Lord with all your heart and you want to know him better.

When you become a doer of His Word then you are getting closer to reaching God's goal which is you becoming like Christ. It is not a religion anymore, it is something that you enjoy, that you seek because you want to please God.

One more time it is a decision, your decision, you are the one who chooses to be a doer of the Word.

Now the third Step:

Fleeing from Temptation (1 Cor 10:13) No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it..

It is not a secret that Christians need to be in battle as soon as they wake up. There are trials, there are temptations. Christians need to be alert all the time to avoid their old self to take control of their lives. Part of the first step is to pursue righteousness and holiness. Jesus Himself told the apostles that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (Mark 14:38). When you start accomplishing the first and second steps to reach God's goal, is when this third step is somehow easy.

There's a phrase that my wife doesn't like, every time I say this she complains, she says she doesn't like how it sounds. The phrase is: "We sinners, sin because we like to sin" There is no doubt that the temptations that come to us are the result of our evil attraction.

Let me phrase it in another way so I can explain myself better. We are attracted to certain things in life, and depending on our attraction to those things the temptation comes. Example: An alcoholic is attracted to alcohol, a Drug addict is attracted to drugs, in my case all my life I was attracted to drugs.

Before I received the Lord, someone could come to me and offer me alcohol, whiskey, tequila, and any other liquor and my reaction would be NO, eww. I don't like it. Alcohol was not what attracted my flesh. But if they bring me drugs, the result was going to be completely different. Automatically I would be tempted with drugs. What I am saying is that we are tempted because we like something, because we are attracted to that something. This means that I need to fight against myself in order to avoid falling into temptation.

When I received the Lord as my Savior I had to fight against my flesh constantly because the addiction was extremely powerful. For almost a year attending the worship services, I felt blessed. But as soon as I get home my flesh was craving drugs and sometimes I was even crying while doing drugs because my spirit says this is not right and my flesh was taking control. I had to fight, and fight every single day.

We should receive comfort when we read this passage. The verse is clear it says that God is Faithful: And God is faithful; **he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.** But when you are tempted, **he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.**

Putting this verse in a realistic way, when you and I sin, we have chosen to sin. God won't let us be tempted more than we can bear and he also gives us a way out. So we have the opportunity to choose to run away, to flee from temptation. To be holy. To be set apart for God in every decision we make. It is not just to think that I am Christian and so God will take me away from Temptation, it is a battle, an internal battle we need to go through constantly. Paul says in verse 12 of 1 Corinthians 10: "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"

Paul says, be wise! Take precautions. Guard against temptation. And guard against over-confidence, what Paul refers to is "confidence in the flesh." Be confident but in God's Spirit within you and rely on him over your own strength. The moment we start thinking we can do this Christian life very well, that we are experts in the Christian life is when we are bound to fall. It's just a matter of time. And we need to understand that we need to take falls seriously. It's something we don't want to do! A fall carries serious consequences. It's true physically, but also spiritually.

Paul tells the Philippians (2:12-13) **...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,** 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Well this is working out our salvation, to flee temptation, to resist the devil, to surrender to Him, to pursue God's goal. We are not alone, God is with us all the way, but is not God who chooses. It is not God who decides for us, we are the ones who need to decide to reach God's Goal. To be Christ-like.

Then comes the last step #4:

Get on Board with God's Goal (Eph. 4:10-13)

He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Every single one of us can have our own goals, our own vision. Some people have the goal to be rich, some people have the goal to retire in Hawaii (I am in this group), some people have the goal to live in peace for the rest of their lives, some people have the goal to obtain possessions, material things. I had the goal before coming to this country to get as much money as possible in order to live a life with all the possible luxuries I could dream of. God changed that goal for me.

Everyone is pursuing something in life. Well the question for you and me is:

Are we pursuing God? Is God a priority in our lives? How important is God in our everyday life?

Am I retired from God because I already served most of my life? Am I retired from God because I need to be busy building my own kingdom?

What role does God play in my life? Is he the provider? Is he the healer? Is he the one that I worship on Sunday but somehow it seems I cannot take Him home with me?

The goal of every Christian should be to live a life as close to Christ as possible, using His life and the lives of the Apostles as our examples so that way we can continue growing and growing with the goal of God. Attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. We need to get on board with God's goal.

This is a full time job. It is not a part time, it is not just Sundays, it should be all the time that we need to be preoccupied with becoming like Jesus. It is a constant thought process of what would the Lord do in

different situations. It is a constant thinking about what is best for the kingdom in the decision I am making now. It is a constant changing our way of thinking in order to be like Christ. It is a constant revision of what I said, what I did, what my reaction to someone at home was, or in the street, at my school, or even in the market.

Brothers and sisters God tells us through Paul in Ephesians 5:1

Follow God's example...

There is no way we can be on board with His goal if we don't take the time from our busy lives to think about that goal. Have you ever questioned yourselves about this?

Am I reaching the goal God intended for me to reach? Do I live like Jesus? Do I react as Jesus? Do I love the ones around me as Jesus would? Do I seek righteousness in my life constantly? Is it important to me to become Christ-like? Do I think about this? What am I doing to reach God's goal?

We already know what that goal is

He wants all his sons and daughters to be Christ-Like

This is His goal. Ephesians 4:10-13 says

That Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service,

All of this with the goal to reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Maybe you are already pursuing this goal in your life. If it is so, keep up the good work.

If you are not pursuing this goal. Then it is time for you to start. When we get up in the morning when we are at school, when we are in the market, when we are on vacation, anywhere we are at, whoever you are, however old you are, whatever country you were born in. Our goal should be to be like Christ Jesus. We need to take these steps if we want to get closer in reaching God's Goal.

We need to examine our lives, and we need to surrender the throne to Jesus.

We need to have the same goal as God has; we need to get on board with Him. We need to become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ!

Let's Pray...