

When I bought my first house in Gladstone—I had a big apple tree in the back yard
It obviously needed to be pruned so I hired someone that knew trees to prune it for me
I asked him about spraying the tree because the apples were wormy
He said not to spray it—for one thing, it is hard to adequately spray such a big tree
It is better to fertilize the tree because healthy trees don't have worms
He put fertilizer in the ground all around the tree at the drip line—it worked!
Good apples—4 kinds—mostly Gravenstein apples, great eating and good applesauce

Jesus says the principle applies to people—not just apples
We're tempted to fix ourselves from the outside—to make it look good
We talk about good behavior as if it can be externally controlled for ourselves and others
But Jesus tells us this method doesn't work well, any more than it did for apples

Paul talks about the problem in Romans 8:3 and 12:1-2 The Message
The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it...
The law and rules don't really change anything—and often leave us frustrated
So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life--your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life--and place it before God as an offering... Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out.

Jesus says, *"You must begin with your own life-giving lives."*
It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts
The doing will flow out of the being, so, focus on the being, NOT the doing
In fact, like the apples, the real being will come out in what you do
...like it or not ...even if you try to hide it ...the truth will spill out

Jesus goes on to say—Don't just be polite with me and tell me what I want to hear
"Yes, sir. That's right, sir." —But then do your own thing
It's not about adding some good ethics to your life—better behavior

Rather work the words of Jesus into your life
Jesus likens adding ethical behavior to homeowner improvements to your standard of living
...a new coat of paint right on top of what is there, in order to make it look nice!
Same house in Gladstone—the inside of the house was freshly painted when I bought it
But it peeled badly over the oil floor furnace because it wasn't prepped correctly
Oil and grime from the oil furnace in the floor had coated the ceiling over the years
It looked good when freshly painted, but it didn't last, and the paint peeled

Again, let the truth of Jesus permeate your very being—don't just paint over the top
Work itself into every cell, so that it becomes who you are at the very core of your being
Let it be your foundation

Another parable... A smart carpenter digs deep and lays the foundation of his house on bedrock
When the river bursts its banks and crashes against the house, it doesn't go anywhere
There's a mess to clean up—but the house is still there
Dumb carpenter built the house but skipped the foundation
It collapsed like a house of cards against the force of the river

I'm told that land in Israel/Palestine is hard clay—especially in the summer when it's dry
Some say it is as hard as bronze
But that hard clay can literally turn to mud when there are unusually bad rains
Builders must dig down to the bedrock every time—no matter how far down it goes
Sometimes bedrock is at the surface, other times it is under 10+ feet of hard clay
Which in Jesus' day was all dug by hand
There are reports of people building small, one-story stone houses on the hard clay
It all works fine until it doesn't
As the clay starts to liquify in places, the stones pop out and the house goes

Truth—there are no short cuts in following Jesus—to follow Jesus means doing it Jesus' way
There are times when it is hard work—but in the end, it is solid and lasting
It's what makes us sturdy
We must follow Jesus' way of love and compassion—of living centered in God
If the church really followed the teachings of Jesus—we would look radically different

Jesus cautions us that some of our Bible studies are like the dumb carpenter
*"If you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life,
you are like a dumb carpenter who built a house but skipped the foundation."*

Don't measure the power of God in a church by the number of Bible studies it has
Eugene Peterson, is the translator of The Message Bible
I understand someone asked how translating the Bible had changed him
He replied that the Bible isn't hard to understand
He challenged people to disband our Bible study groups
Instead we need more BOG's— Bible Obedience Groups
Groups that meet to talk about how we live out what we know about God
We could spend a lifetime on what we already know
Letting go of quick fixes and temporary solutions—band-aids
Digging down deep with God and finding solid ground
Finding fertilizer that can change us from within
Following Jesus' radical invitation to follow His Leadings

Quaker woman Caroline Fox, age 21 in 1840 went to Meeting for worship
She was consumed with depression, anxiety and a sense of failure
In worship she had an opening that she recorded in her journal...
*"I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit,
'Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be granted thee.'"*

Paul puts it this way in his letter to the Colossians 2:6-7 The Message
My counsel for you is simple and straightforward: Just go ahead with what you've been given. You received Christ Jesus, the Master; now live him. You're deeply rooted in him. You're well constructed upon him. You know your way around the faith. Now do what you've been taught. School's out; quit studying the subject and start living it! And let your living spill over into thanksgiving.

It's both hard work and amazingly simple—begin with what you know, but persist in allowing transformation
What do we have to let go of? How do we move from external to internal? What is the bedrock?