

Behaviors That Bind Us

by Charles Stanley

The sermon explores how childhood experiences and immature behaviors bind us, leading to discontentment and emotional struggles in adulthood.

Duration: 18:44

Scripture: Proverbs 22:6, Matthew 6:19-20, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, 1 Corinthians 13:11

Topics: "Behaviors"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of teaching children that their sense of security comes from a relationship with God, rather than material possessions. The speaker also discusses how a distorted view of God can be formed through negative experiences with parents, particularly fathers. One example given is when a child feels like they can never measure up to their father's expectations, leading to feelings of inadequacy and a distorted view of God as a taskmaster. The speaker encourages listeners to understand the behaviors that bind them in life and trace them back to their root causes, in order to find healing and freedom.

Transcript

...disturbed, unsettled, and full of discontentment. No matter what they have, who they have, what their position, what their prominence, what their status is in life, they're still discontent. Now, a lot of people are able to cover that up rather well, and so they move along in life and smile on the outside, but deep down inside, they're still full of discontent.

On the other hand, there are those people who don't even try to cover it up anymore. They just act out, live out. It shows on their countenance they're very discontent in life.

What is it? Even though they have been saved by the grace of God, they're still discontent. Somehow, deep down inside, something seems to bind them. Something seems to have a hold on them that seems to dictate their actions and their attitudes.

It's not what they like. It's not what they want. It's not what they ask for.

They just can't seem to identify what is it on the inside of them that drives them, that seemingly at times forces them to act in a way they don't want to act. They find themselves responding and turning around and looking and asking themselves the question, Why do I act this way? Why do I respond the way I

respond? Well, that's what I want to talk about in this message entitled, The Behavior That Binds Us in Our Life. Those behaviors that bind us in our life.

Those actions and attitudes that you and I can't understand. Somewhere along the way, we have to trace them back to some cause and some particular source. We're talking about behavior patterns that bind us in our life and keep us, what? Discontent, unsettled, oftentimes anxious, and for the most part, very unhappy.

So I want you to turn, if you will, to the first Corinthians 13th chapter, this first epistle to Corinthians. And you know this is the chapter in all the scripture about love. The chapter, the supreme chapter about love.

And Paul has been describing what love is all about. And then he comes down to this latter part and he says, beginning in verse 11, he says, When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child. When I became a man, I did away or put away childish things.

Now in that single verse, Paul helps us to understand, oftentimes, what is the deep abiding discontent that comes into our life. Now, let's think about it for a moment. Here's what's happening.

The Corinthians have gotten out of balance in their understanding of spiritual gifts. And so at this point, they have come to the place that they think in a very childish fashion. They're being spiritually immature and emotionally immature.

And if you go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 3 for a moment, and you notice in this third chapter, when he begins this epistle, he gets to the third chapter and he begins to chastise them for the same thing. He says in chapter 3, verse 1, And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men or spiritual men and women, but as to men and women of the flesh, as to babes in Christ. He says, I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not even yet able to receive it.

Indeed, even now you're not able to receive those things that should be a part of your life, but because of your spiritual immaturity or emotional immaturity, you can't accept it. He says, For you're still fleshly, for since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly and are you not walking like mere men? And so what is he saying? He says, Spiritual, you're not mature. So over in this 13th chapter, what is he saying to them? He says, Now, when I was a child, I acted like a child.

I spoke like a child. You could tell I was a child. He said, When I grew up, when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Now, all of us, probably at some time in our life, have or act childish. And so what does that have to do with those things that bind us? And that's what I'm going to talk about, because what I'd like to do is to identify in a few moments what those things are. And I want you to think about it for just a moment, because let's trace all of this back.

When you and I were born, God gave us, of course, a mind, a brain, heart, spirit, and all the rest. When you and I came into this world, we began to be programmed. Some people might say that you and I began to be programmed even before we were born.

But let's say that at birth you and I began to be programmed. That is, our mind was programmed. What was it programmed with? It was programmed with either the affection or lack of affection from our parents.

That is, in this grid system of ours, it's like the strong impressions that came from our parents and those who were around us. And as we grew up, those teachers, for example, that taught us, and people who were our relationships and so forth, all of them began to place into our little minds ideas, thoughts. They became a part of our feelings and became a part of our personality.

So that all of us were programmed, pre-programmed, listen, not necessarily against our will, but involuntarily. Therefore, the apostle Paul said, putting away childish things. He was primarily speaking of spiritual things, but also of emotional things.

And I think there are many people who are Christians who really love God, who really want to be what God wants them to be. And yet they have those things that go on in their life they can't identify. They don't even understand why they act the way they act.

How many of us have said, God, I don't know why I said what I said. I don't know why I acted in that fashion. God, I don't know why I act that way or respond that way.

I don't know why this goes on in my life. Well, it's one thing for something to happen, but if something goes on and on and on and on, we should take at least a moment to stop and ask ourselves the question, Lord, am I being controlled by something that I'm not aware of? Is there an emotion, a feeling? Is there something that happened back yonder in my life somewhere that I am responding to that in this present situation? And so all of us who've grown up to be men, all of you who've grown up to be women, the little girl is still there, the little boy is still there. And if you and I want to be whole persons, we have to learn to identify those childish things in our life and learn how to deal with them.

So what I'd like to do is to identify some of these, certainly not all of them, but to identify some of them, talk about them just for a moment, and then let's talk about how to deal with them, because I can tell you that you can deal with them. God can set you free, and I'm grateful to God. I can tell you, I'm certainly sure in my own heart that I'm not free of all of mine, but I'm grateful to God as I look back over the years and see how He has identified issues in my life that I've had to deal with and realize where it came from.

Listen, once you trace it to its source, listen, you're on the way to being delivered from those emotions that bind us, behavioral patterns that cause us all kinds of discontent. Because, you see, if you're continually responding to present-day situations out of your past childhood, then you're going to cause all kind of hurt and discontent to yourself and those around you. You're going to cause hard feelings.

You're going to cause misunderstandings. And you're going to be discontent and unhappy with yourself. Why? Because you don't want to act that way, and you would say, I don't know why I do.

I want to show you why you do. So let's talk about what some of these things might be. Well, there are lots and lots and lots of them.

And so let's just begin with this. One of those ideas that gets impressed upon our grid system very early in life is measure up. Measure up.

And so what happens? Child comes along, and no matter what he or she does, they can't quite measure up to the father's expectation or the mother's expectation or both. And so what happens? A little girl grows up thinking, no matter what I do, no matter how hard I try, I can't ever please my mother. And how often have I heard this from men and women alike? I grew up in a situation, no matter what I did, I couldn't please them.

When a kid tries his best, and he doesn't measure up, here's the effect. In that grid system, as a result of that kind of instruction and teaching, that child goes through life. No matter what I do, it'll never be enough.

And you can absolutely destroy a child's initiative. When they grew up in that kind of a situation, no matter what I do, it's not going to work. It's not going to ever be enough.

They berate themselves. They feel very, very guilty. They feel inadequate in life.

And oftentimes feel extremely rejected. Why? Because, you know, if you can't blame your, if you can't, if you can't, if you can't believe in, and you can't really and truly please your parents, I mean, of all the people in the world, I believe a kid wants to please his father or his mother or both. Certainly both.

If you want to destroy anybody's initiative, you just keep telling them, measure up, measure up, measure up. And the thing that makes it so painful is, especially when the measuring rod or the measuring tape is so absolutely, listen, when it's so foggy and unclear, and you ask them to measure up, and you know what? They never know when and if and how they could ever measure up. In their grid system, that child, when they become adults, it affects their life and their relationships.

And what happens is it creates anger, it creates resentment, it creates hostility. People either want to give up, and oftentimes things that they do, that become very vengeful, is because they feel they'll never measure up no matter what. So what do you do? You give them a challenge, you give them a job, and they turn it down.

Why? Because they think, I'll never measure up. Second thing I want you to notice, and that is a desire to have our needs met immediately. Well, what happens to a little child when a little baby is born? If that baby is wet, what do they do? They cry.

They get hungry, they cry, they yell, they scream, and they carry on until what? Until you give them something to eat. And so that's a natural, normal way, I suppose, that they get our attention. But what happens? Now, there's nothing wrong with a child crying when they're hungry, or when they're wet and messed up their diaper, and so they don't like that.

So they cry, they get attention. You know what happens? People grow up, and unless that child learns early in life, you can't have everything you want when you want it. There's nothing wrong with cleaning up the child.

I'm not talking about that. But when that child grows out of that babyhood, and when they don't get what they want, they scream and yell and holler until the parents give it to them. The tragedy is when a parent, when a mother or a father yields to the screaming and the hollering because they want it now, when they've passed babyhood, here's what happens.

They grow up. And that little child within them, when they want something, they want it now. And so what happens? Children grow up, teenagers, they want it now.

They want a car now. They want fine clothes now. They want their father or mother's credit card now.

They want freedom now. They want liberty now. They want sex now.

They want alcohol. They want everything else now. They've got to have it now.

If a parent does not discipline that child early in life to teach them this truth, you can't have everything when you want it. There is a correct time and a wise time for everything that God provides for us. You know what happens? They grow up.

And because they can't have what they want, then they lie about it. Then they steal. And all kinds of things develops in a person's life when they grow up with a childish attitude, if I want it now, I want it now, and I'm going to have it now.

And I grew up when I cried and yelled and screamed, and through enough bits, my parents gave me what I wanted, so therefore, I'm going to keep on howling and screaming when I'm an adult. Now, they don't holler and scream the same way they did as a child, but my friend, the truth is, their actions are the same. If I can't have it now, I'm unhappy.

I leave. I walk away. A third attitude, childish attitude, is temper tantrums.

Now, you think, well, we get over that in our adulthood. Not necessarily. People still throw fits.

They still do the same thing. Listen, if I don't get what I want, what happens? Here are kids playing together, and you've got this ball, and I've got this bat, and whatever it might be, and, oh, we're not going to play my way? Give me my ball. I'm going home.

Or little girls playing dolls, and somebody doesn't like what the other one's doing, they just take this, and they go home. So what happens? You grow up with that. If I can't have my way, I throw a fit.

You know what? There are a lot of people, they don't get their way, they throw fits. Now, sometimes those fits are very quiet. Sometimes people walk out of their marriage, can't have their way, can't have my way, I'm leaving.

And you know what? All that is is spiritual, childish immaturity. Throwing temper tantrums, got to have it now, or if you don't play it my way, I leave. And this is probably one of the basic problems with people oftentimes, oftentimes walk away from their job.

And every once in a while somebody says, I just walked away. Why'd you walk away? Well, they did thus and so and thus and so. Well, has it ever occurred to you that God may have been trying to say something? Well, you know, I just couldn't stay in, I couldn't hang in there for that.

Well, you see, it's very unwise to respond to the present situation, circumstance out of my childishness. Because that's the way I used to respond as a child, does not make it legitimate for me to respond today to this present situation when oftentimes, listen, you and I can be the objects of other people's anger and bitterness and resentment and hostility when they're really doing it to someone else. Listen, we're all products of our environment.

That's why it's so very important that you and I create the environment in our family with these children so that they respond, listen, they grow up with a sense of affirmation and a sense of self-esteem and a sense of self-worth because when they get older, they're going to act out. We all are going to act out in, listen, there will be something that triggers, something back there in the past that caused this pain. Once something, listen, even similar, it'll trigger that.

And what are we going to do? The little boy is going to come out, the little girl is going to come out and they're going to respond and they're going to think, forgive me, I don't understand why in the world I responded the way I did. That is the reason for it because of those kind of attitudes. Well, what about, for example, people who grow up in an atmosphere of fear? Well, the parents say, you know what? I just don't think we're going to have enough.

Probably not going to be able to pay the bills this month. They cut the lights off. We can't go anywhere, can't have bacon.

In other words, a child grows up, fear, fear, fear of not having enough. A man said to me some time ago, he said, I grew up in a family and my mother said to me, the poor house is always around the corner. You know what happens? When a child grows up, fearing not having enough, they will naturally, normally be very materialistic because the parents have put in their grid system, you've got to have enough, you've got to work hard, you've got to save, you've got to make money because, listen, the poor house is right around the corner.

It is a terrible way. Well, everybody doesn't put it in those terms, but this whole idea of materialism, this is where your security lies, this is where your emphasis is. And so what happens? Wealth takes the place of God.

And yet, you know, the Bible says it's like a bird. You know, here today, gone tomorrow, it comes quick and you can lose it quickly. And so what happens? They lose a few times and despair and remorse begins to set in.

You see, we must teach our children that our sense of security is not in things, but it's in a relationship. You see, it's not so much what you do, it's what you implant within that child's mind and heart. They're going to grow up and they're going to keep on acting out those feelings.

What about a distorted view of God, for example? Well, how does a child get a distorted view of God? Is it because the parent says, God's ugly, God's mean, God's bad? No, here's what happens. Child grows up and relates to his or her father. The major person in their life is dad.

Don't like my dad. And how many times have I heard this? My dad never hugged me. Dad never told me I did a good job.

Dad never put his arms around me. And sometimes a girl would say, my dad never told me he loved me, never told me I was pretty, never seemed to care, never hugged me, never remembered my birthday. So what happens? They grow up.

What kind of impression has been built into this grid? I'm not important. The most important person in my life, not important. So they grow up and we say, God's a good God.

But you see the little child who gets their impression about God from their father, you tell them that God is good. Listen, I've talked to enough people and I've talked to enough people to know that most people do not think in terms of God being a good, loving, gentle, kind God. They see Him as a taskmaster.

They see Him as a God of justice. They see Him as... ..can dig up enough junk. In our past, it's like a bowl of poison soup.

Who wants to look at all that? Now, if you're looking back to see what the source was, and then you deal with it, that's one thing. But just going to some council and they disturb, well, back yonder your parents, and back yonder this, and back yonder that. Well, you know, back yonder, nothing.

I mean, after all, listen, we're living in the present. We assume responsibility for the past. We forgive ourselves, we forgive the person, and then what happens? We say, God, I want you to make me a whole person.

I want to be an adult believer. I want to be an emotional adult. I don't want the childish things binding me and enslaving me any longer.

And I'm claiming by faith your release and your liberty and your freedom. And then, listen, you aggressively go after those things from the crop up in your life, and God will free you up. Dr. Stanley identified several potentially...

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