**Greater Than All - wk 22 – Everyone??**

**BigStuf – the undertow and drift - moving further down the beach - Keeping our eyes on the drifters. This the challenge of this section.**

**Hebrews = Jesus, God in the flesh, creator of all - greater than all things, religious systems and the only forgiver of sins - True faith perseveres – so don’t give up!!!**

**Heb 12:1-3 - throw off the hindrances and sins that slow you down and run the race of faith! Look at trials as opportunities to grow.**

**Hebrew 12:12 Therefore, (since your struggles are not meaningless, and our difficulties are not random but for our good to mature us) strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. (Weak from fighting and running the race - Get strong again) 13 “Make level paths for your feet,” (Pro 4:26 - lit. get back on track) so that the lame (the spiritually injured, hurting, wounded, and stumbling) may not be disabled, (knocked out for good) but rather healed.**

**This is a challenge to help & encourage those who are struggling**

**12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. 16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless (profane) like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. 17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.**

**This is about responding to those discouraged. Often times using our discouragement as an excuse…**

**Notice - The Excuses We Make**

**He addresses all these responses when feeling discouraged or tired**

**Using discouragement as an excuse to neglect people**

**Avoiding people – isolating yourself – hibernating**

**Using the excuse – well I’m just tired but you’re not…**

**Using discouragement as an excuse for a bad attitude**

**An excuse to treat people badly and be negative**

**An excuse to be bitter and hateful with others**

**Using discouragement as an excuse to neglect your pursuit of God**

**An excuse for apathy in our pursuit of God – scripture / prayer**

**Usually the 1st spiritual discipline to go is – church**

**Using discouragement as an excuse for sinful behavior**

**An excuse to sin – to compromise your values and beliefs**

**An excuse to pursue unhealthy temp pleasure / gratification**

**I deserve this, it has been hard.**

**Trials which are meant to draw you to God are often used as excuses to push Him away. Maybe you know someone like that.**

**Hebrews 12 gives practical insight on how we can encourage the spiritually struggling - a challenge to believers.**

**LOOKING INWARD**

**Well, I’m not at a place to help others. When will you be? This is about working on yourselves while we are working on others.**

**Make every effort to get along with people**

**12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone…**

**Honestly, we won’t get along w/ everyone, but we are to make every effort to try. Grace, patience, prayer, forgiveness, kindness.**

**Well, I like them, I will try. But, I don’t like them…**

**Remember Hebrews is written to Christians being persecuted and struggling. They are encouraged to try to live at peace with them.**

**Romans 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.**

**We are to do our best and leave the rest to God to deal with.**

**Kindness and patience are the produce of someone who sees people through the eyes of Jesus.**

* **What is your attitude with others?**
* **How do you treat people? Everyone?? Even your spouse…**

**Make every effort to a live a holy life**

**14 Make every effort (pursue)… to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.**

**This is tricky & challenge. Tricky do we make ourselves holy? No. Challenge - to live a life that is different from others.**

**This is about walking right before God and walking right before people. Pursuing peace with God and peace with men.**

**Echoes the greatest command (Matt 22:36-40 - Love the lord your God with… and love your neighbor as yourself.)**

**\*\* This is not about making yourself holy for salvation. It is impossible for us to be perfect - sinless. That is Christ work – we receive by faith.**

**Philippians 3:9 - “....be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, (rules) but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith... (Holy in Christ)**

**(Heb 10) But in Christ we are made holy and being made holy**

**But Hebrews - 14 Make every effort… to be holy; (pursue Sanctification - NASB)**

**This Lit means – pursue a life that is different!!**

**We are called to live honorable lives - as determined by what God says is holy. Pursuing God’s character and standards!**

**Ephesians 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.**

**If we are to help others who are struggling – we are to work on how God has called us to live. Be the example – authenticity.**

**Philippians 1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent…**

**Whether I am with you or not, whether you are with other Christians – live a life worthy of Jesus!**

**What is sin? Galatians 5:16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

**These represent things that contradict God’s character a word.**

**Flesh fruit vs Spirit Fruit – Galatians 5 – It is vital to understand that our holiness is dependent on the HS!**

**We are to walk in holiness before God and to care for others – this is the fruit of someone walking with Jesus.**

**If approached by someone who lives an authentic life and is humble, gentle, patient, gracious, loving- would you receive it?**

**Hebrew’s ads says, “…without holiness no one will see the Lord.” This is about attaining perfection. If we don’t pursue this diff life – it is a reflection and a sign of a lack of relationship with God.**

**Making a real difference begins with a different you**

**In your home - marriage - workplace – in church. The change begins with a change in you**

**Problem is people want change, but they don’t want to change. They really only want others to change… it begins with a look inward.**

**That is why the chap begins with - 12:1 “cast off every hindrance and sin” God working in you is vital if we are effectively do the next part… 12:13 …so that the lame (the hurting) may be healed.”**

* **Does your life reflect the will of God?**
* **Does your life reflect what God calls holy?**
* **Do you live a life worthy of the calling you have received?**

**I am not perfect, but I am pursuing peace with people and holiness**

**We look inward, to look outward, so we can help the struggling.**

**While we are learning to treat people right and live a life that honors God (Looking Inward) – we are to… LOOKING OUTWARD**

**Encourage others to hold tight to God’s grace**

**Heb 12:15 See to it that no one (lest anyone…) falls short of the grace of God**

**We are to pursue holiness and live a life that honors God – but don’t let it turn to legalism – don’t forget the amazing grace of God.**

**Eph 2:8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”**

**Sometimes a pursuit of holiness can turn into control, manipulation, performance, and legalism. \*\* My experiences with legalism and performance driven church.**

**John 8:36 - So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**

**To live in Christ is freedom not bondage. Conviction not condemnation**

**The difference: Condemnation = God is done with me. Conviction = God is inviting me and calling to come to him.**

**To come w/ humility, confess our sin and receive forgiveness.**

* **I want to encourage you pursue holiness - but - don’t turn it into legalism - hold tight to the grace of God that forgives when we fail.**

**\*\*Afflict the comfortable (holiness) and comfort the afflicted (grace)**

**Encourage others to be forgiving**

**12:15 See to it that… that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.**

**“Bitter root” – holding a personal hurt cannot be seen at first but if it grows, the fruit it bears can cause trouble to others.**

**Legalistic lives (grace void living) often hurt people in churches – leading to bitterness – negative hearts**

**It starts w/ a root (inside) and eventually drops bitter spoiled fruit.**

**This is when some use discouragement, disappointment, hardship, and trials as an excuse for bitterness toward God and others.**

**Hypocrisy in actions and bitter attitudes by Christians become an obstacle for many unbelievers. “Christians living reckless lives are – “Like hidden rocks, they are the terror of navigators. It is hard to steer clear of them: and there is no telling what wrecks they may cause.” (Spurgeon)**

**Maybe your bitter with a person or religion (that is not Jesus)**

**Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. (Who are you fighting with right now?) 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

* **I want to encourage you to see the grace of God for you and the grace of God for others. A bitter heart will spoil your fruit - Forgive**

**Encourage others to live sexually pure lives**

**12:16 See that no one is sexually immoral…**

**The writer just challenged the readers to look inward (live holy lives) and then says encourage others to do the same.**

**If I say one thing here and then live a double life and have an affair. Have I lost credibility and any spiritual authority?**

**Sexually pure lives – what does that mean? Sex as God designed it.**

**It is simple = 1 man – 1 woman - in marriage. (This is not popular…)**

**This issue is a big deal in the Bible (for God) because it confronts God’s clear will and design – it affects our lives and the lives of others. Some sins are private –**

**But sexual sins committed with others – can often have painful affects on others and you. (1 Cor 6:18)**

* **I want to encourage you - pursue sexual purity – as defined by God not culture. As defined by the Bible not popular opinion.**

**(Last one) Heb 12:16 See that no one… is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. (Genesis 25) 17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done. (explain)**

**Encourage others to live a humble life before God**

**Godless = profane, to trod on / complete disregard of God’s will.**

**Esau came in tired, hungry and discouraged and for a moment of pleasure and satisfaction – sold out what was sacred – he gave up his birthright to feed his belly - and lived with the consequences his whole life - growing more and more bitter.**

**Profane (Lat. Pro-fanum) outside the fane (holy place – temple). Esau preferred to live outside the presence of God. Blinded by his belly he “trodded” on God.**

**When you sell out your faith for temporary relief – you are revealing a disregard for God and inviting God’s judgement.**

**\*\* The answer to this is to walk humbly in awe before God.**

* **I want to encourage you - don’t trade your faith in God out for some temporary pleasure. (A date, a night out, an experience, a moment of bliss for a life or regret – it is not worth it)**

**This section can be giving in one sentence -**

**Encourage each other to pursue perseverance, peace, and purity.**

**Prayer**

**\*\* God convict us of sin – and draw us close to your mercy. By your Spirit help us to live what we proclaim before others so they will know your great grace.**

**\*\* Maybe you have been hurt and discouraged and bitterness in setting in. Time to forgive and walk in God’s grace.**