

NOTE: Will need *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis

CHANGE: THE DECISION

THE PURPOSE OF THIS TEACHING - The level of commitment to change can vary greatly from person to person and an individual's degree of commitment can change over time. In this session, we hope to address those whose commitment was limited or qualified. We hope to get others to make a deeper commitment to change, this time clearly counting the cost. We want them to understand that change is a process that only begins when they commit to live their lives the

1. You are in the eighth week of NEW DIRECTIONS, and now we are talking about commitment to change. Isn't it apparent that you are committed to change by the fact that you enrolled in the program and have stayed in it thus far? That may be so, but we believe that after the first seven weeks our overcomers may now be ready to commit at a deeper level, and to commit truly counting the cost.
2. What is the decision that you are making by committing to New Directions? A decision to be addiction free? Certainly.
 - a. But, really, that's the goal. What are the changes you are committing to in order to become free in Christ? Looking back at how we defined addictions, you are committing to change your:
 - (1). Personal identity
 - (2). Areas of struggle
 - (3). Behavior
 - b. If you make the decision tonight to change all three of these things, when you wake up tomorrow, what is going to be different about you? Chances are, not much--at least at any conscious level. The fact is:
 - (1). Identity doesn't change simply because we want it to, or because we make a decision that it should.
 - (2). And for many--perhaps most--even our behavior often doesn't respond to our decisions as to how we will behave in the future. In fact, most of us can echo Paul in Romans 7:15, "For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."
3. What then is the real decision that we are making?

- a. It is the decision to walk down a certain path. And how can you identify that path? The path is clearly marked with a sign that says, not **CONTROLLING MY ADDICTION**, but **GODS WILL**.
- b. It is while you are on that path that the certain things are going to happen to you that will bring about the changes you long for. More about that in a minute.
- c. Your decision is to take this path rather than the other one that also has a clearly readable sign. It says, **MY WILL**. Your decision to take the path marked **GODS WILL**, is the decision to head in a **NEW DIRECTION**; that's what the title of this program means. It is to go by the narrow gate:

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Matt. 7:13-14

You are choosing life!

4. What do you think the most important event was in the history of the world? I don't believe it was the birth of Jesus, or His crucifixion, or His resurrection; I believe it was His struggle and surrender in the garden at Gethsemane. Listen to Matthew 26:36-46. (Read the full passage). When Jesus said, "Thy will be done," was the turning point in history. From that moment on the crucifixion and the resurrection were inevitable. That was the point at which Jesus chose the Father's will, no matter how terrible the cost.
5. It is the same way with you. Once you make your decision, you set in motion all sorts of events that, if our God is faithful, will bring you the freedom you seek. Your healing is going to be marked by a series of events that you can't make happen at will. But they are events that will only occur in your life while you are walking down that path marked **GODS WILL**. It will be while you are on this path that the Lord will:
 - a. Heal you from some hurt inflicted years ago.
 - b. Break some bondage to which you were truly a slave
 - c. Enable you to forgive someone who hurt you in the past; forgive them at the deepest level.
 - d. Bring you to a level of repentance over some sin; a level that will be life changing.

- e. Give you some revelation so that God's truth--perhaps a truth that you had heard a thousand times--will suddenly have such power that you will be forever changed.
 - f. Enable you to surrender at such a level that He can live out His life through you much more fully.
6. These are the elements of the healing of the addict: healing; deliverance; forgiving others; repentance; knowing God's truth; surrender. You can't determine when they will happen, but you can make the decision that will set you on the path on which you can be certain they will happen--because God is a faithful God.
7. Have you made that decision? Have you made the decision, counting the cost? What if it means:
- a. Letting go of the only means whereby you have been able to cope with life?
 - b. Accepting the fact that you may never use your substance of choice again; or at least that you may never be able to comfort yourself with those fantasies again?
 - c. Being willing to set out on a course that may lead you, you know not where, and you are afraid to go?
8. Most of you in this group have made that decision. That's indicated by the fact that you are in this program. But some of you may not have, or you may have made it with so many qualifications that you are still not really saying, "Not my will, but thine be done."
9. The qualifications may have to do with never having to deal with temptation in your area of vulnerability.
10. If you have not made that decision, or if it is so qualified as to be almost meaningless, make that decision this day. It will never be easier than right now, but it will be difficult. Jesus' sweat was like blood when He made His decision in Gethsemane.
11. You know, there are some of us who may not really want to be healed. In John 5:1-6, Jesus asked the man by the pool, who had been crippled for thirty-eight years, "Would you be healed?" Why would someone not want to be healed?
- a. Fear of change; fear of the unknown
 - b. Fear of responsibility; growing up

- c. Fear of failure
 - d. Fear of being out of control
12. Our greatest struggles, our greatest pain usually comes before we make the big decision. Afterwards, our feeling is often one of great relief.
13. Now I want to read to you a fairly lengthy passage from C.S. Lewis', The Great Divorce. I am almost certain you will identify with it.

Read from Chapter 11, beginning about halfway through with the paragraph that starts, "I saw coming towards us a Ghost who carried so something his shoulder." End where the horse rides up into the mountain.

14. I want to pray with you now.

Lord God, I confess that I'm afraid of change; I confess that I am afraid to give up control; I confess that there are things about my life that I don't want to give up. But, Lord, I trust you. I trust your goodness and I believe that what you want for me is better than what I want for myself. Show me now, Lord if there are any things that I am holding onto that are keeping You from doing what you want to do in my life. *[Pause for a few minutes]* Father, take that thing away from me and set me feet on the path that you have laid out for me; the path that leads to healing, but even more importantly, the path that leads to truly knowing you. AMEN.

15. Go over the homework assignment and suggest that they might start the process in their small group tonight.

Scripture Memory Verse:

Matthew 10:39 (NASB) "He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it."

Assignment for the Week:

1. You may have prayed to truly make an unconditional surrender to the Lord at the meeting, but whether you did or not, continue to pray and meditate in this area; to yield any parts of your addiction that you may still be holding onto. Prayerfully consider what you would do if you never experience significant healing from your addiction. Take a few days to do these things. Then, if you sense it is right, write out a prayer of surrender to the Lord in your Journal. Pray it each day this week and plan to come back to it anytime you may want to waiver.
2. No more work for you to do this week; this is quite enough.