

Joke: THE HUSBAND STORE

Did you here about the store that just opened in New York City, it's called the Husband store. It's a place where a woman can go to choose a husband. The instructions are at the entrance and they describe how the store operates. It says. . .

You may visit the store ONLY ONCE! There are six floors and the attributes of the men increase as the shopper ascends the flights. There is, however, a catch: you may choose any man from a particular floor, or you may choose to go up a floor, but you cannot go back down except to exit the building!

Enticed, a woman goes to the Husband Store to find a husband...

On each floor there is a sign on the door. . .

Floor 1 - These men have jobs. She thinks not bad but I think I could do better. She decides to go up. She reaches floor 2 and reads. . .

Floor 2 - These men have jobs and love kids. This is incredible I want kids, but decides there has to be more so she goes up again, reaching floor 3 she reads. . .

Floor 3 - These men have jobs, love kids, and are extremely good looking. "Wow," she thinks, but again feels compelled to keep going. She goes to the fourth floor and the sign reads:

Floor 4 - These men have jobs, love kids, are drop-dead good looking and help with the housework. "Oh, mercy me!" she yells out, "I can hardly stand it!" Still again, she decides to go to go up to the fifth floor, when she arrives there she reads the sign which says. . .

Floor 5 - These men have jobs, love kids, are drop-dead gorgeous, help with the housework, and have a strong romantic streak. She is so tempted to stay, but they have been improving each time and so once again tempted for more she goes to the sixth floor and reads the sign. . .

Floor 6 - You are visitor 3,261,496,012 to this floor. There are no men on this floor. This floor exists solely as proof that women are impossible to please.

Thank you for shopping at the Husband Store.

Let me ask you a question, Have you ever met anyone that planned to be overweight? Their New Year's resolution was to gain 50 pounds. Me either.

I don't know anybody that has a five-year goal to be bankrupt. I don't know anybody that wants to wreck their marriage, or wakes up and starts the day with a plan to do something stupid, something sinful, and then try and hide it, lie about it, and lose the trust of the people that they love the most.

I don't know anybody that plans to wreck their life. And chances are really good, when it comes to you, you're not planning to make stupid decisions either.

Yet here's the thing, most people also don't plan not to do stupid things. And that's what we're going to talk about today and I believe it has the potential to impact your life in a powerful way.

Let me start with a review of what we covered last week. We talked about the power of our decisions, because for the most

part, we need to understand that the quality of your decisions determines the quality of your life.

The problem is, however, although we have good intentions, many of us are simply not very good decision makers. And if you were with us last week, we shared how it is important to draw a line in the sand before you even reach the sand. Decide today what you will do tomorrow, decide now for the later.

The idea is to determine now what you will do so when the situation arises so that you are not deciding based on your emotions in the moment, but rather what God has placed in your heart to do.

Instead of waiting until the moment to give into some temptation, or let our emotion take us to a place that we don't want to go, we're deciding in advance what we're going to do when the situation arises.

I mentioned that when we know who we are, we'll know what to do. I also mentioned we are making resolutions about ourselves and this week we are looking at being ready. . .

I am ready. . .say that with me. . .I am ready

When we determine ahead of time what we will do, our decisions won't be based on what feels good in the moment, but on who you want to be for the rest of your life. They're based on values, because when our values are clear, our decisions are easier.

Let me ask you another question, how many of you have ever given into a temptation and you regretted it afterward?

I'm not asking if your living with regret, I told you last week not to camp there. But have ever given into a temptation and you regretted it afterward? Don't raise your hand.

Truth is, however, If we are being honest with ourselves we all have been there.

But why did you give into that temptation?

Chances are, in most cases, you gave into that temptation because you weren't ready. You weren't prepared. In fact, scripture says over and over again, telling us we need to be prepared, because our enemy is roaming around seeking for someone to devour. And he is going to attack.

And the truth is he knows when to attack, he waits until your discouraged, frustrated, angry, let down, hurt, offended, or bitter? In other words when you are the most vulnerable.

He doesn't come after you when you feel confident, prayed up, looking around every corner and ready for him. He waits until you're the most vulnerable.

The apostle Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 16:13. . .

1 Corinthians 16:13 (TPT): Remember to stay alert and hold firmly to all that you believe. Be mighty and full of courage.

Paul is saying don't let your guard down. Be ready, put on the full armor of God. Because the enemy is coming to try and trip you up.

Paul said that, Jesus said this in Matthew's gospel. . .

Matthew 26:41 (NIV): 41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

"Watch and pray." Why? So you're ready. "So you don't fall into temptation, "because your spirit wants to do the right thing. "Your spirit is willing, but your flesh is so often weak."

That's why you need to decide now to watch and pray so that you can be ready. So that your not caught off guard. That's why we need to dress everyday with the full armor of God.

Once again Paul writing to the church in Ephesus. . .

Ephesians 6:14–18 (TPT): Put on truth as a belt to strengthen you to stand in triumph. Put on holiness as the protective armor that covers your heart. 15 Stand on your feet alert, then you'll always be ready to share the blessings of peace. 16 In every battle, take faith as your wrap-around shield, for it is able to extinguish the blazing arrows coming at you from the Evil One! 17–18 Embrace the power of salvation's full deliverance, like a helmet to protect your thoughts from lies. And take the mighty razor-sharp Spirit-sword of the spoken Word of God. Pray passionately in the Spirit, as you constantly intercede with every form of prayer at all times. Pray the blessings of God upon all his believers.

I want to share two reasons why you need to be watching and praying.

Number one, we have a spiritual enemy who is on a mission to steal, kill, and destroy anything and everything that matters to the heart of God. And in case you don't know, you matter to the heart of God.

The Apostle Paul again tells us why we need to be on guard. . .?

2 Corinthians 2:11 (TPT): 11 so that we would not be exploited by the adversary, Satan, for we know his clever schemes.

Paul actually went a step further in the passage and said you need to forgive.

Listen church you need to understand that if you walk in unforgiveness you open the door for the enemy to attack and since you know his clever schemes. . .Forgive.

You also need to understand the enemy is real and he's studying you. He knows where you're weak. He knows when you're vulnerable. He knows how to attack you, to take you out of God's will, the best time to make you trip up, and to hurt you and the people around you.

So we're going to be ready. Look at your neighbor and tell them be ready.

Reason number two we need to watch and pray is because we tend to think we can handle a lot more than we can actually handle.

Listen to Paul's warning. . .

1 Corinthians 10:12 (TPT): So beware if you think it could never happen to you, lest your pride becomes your downfall.

Paul was telling us, the moment you start to think it's no big deal. I got this thing, It's nothing. When you think you're standing firm, be careful, because when you're overly confident, those are times that people tend to fall.

And that's why we often end up in a place that we don't want to be, because we made decisions that didn't honor God.

Why do we tend to overestimate our ability to fight off the wrong things?

I think one of the reasons is because we have no idea how much energy it actually takes to resist temptation. Fighting off temptation, it drains us, both spiritually and mentally and we become fatigued.

The part of our brain that controls willpower, wears out. It becomes so much easier just to give in.

Maybe you have heard of this thing called peer pressure.

It's like your willpower diminishes. Does anybody work with or know any crazy people? All day long they are making you crazy, and you're wanting just to let them have it, but you're trying to do the right thing. Live that godly life we are called to, be the light and salt we are meant to be.

And so, you fight it off. You want to say something, but you don't you fight it off all day long.

Then you go home and you yell at your spouse, take your frustrations out on the people you love the most. You made the right decisions all day long, and you come home and your willpower starts to wane.

Truth is, our self-control, our willpower, it's a limited resource. After while it needs time to replenish.

You need to understand the devil doesn't want you to live out your destiny. So he's watching, waiting for the opportune time.

And you may not believe God's Word, but the devil does. He knows you are more than conquerors. He knows you can walk in victory. But if he can convince you otherwise. . .

So what we need to do is decide in advance to be ready.

And I want to share with you three keys to fighting temptation.

And we're going to determine three things today that will prepare us for tomorrow.

What are we going to decide?

First, we're going to decide today to move away from the line.

Second, We're going to magnify the cost.

And third, we're going to determine in advance a plan of escape.

We're going to move away from the line. magnify the cost, and plan the escape.

We're going to be ready, because our spiritual enemy is wanting to steal your identity, kill your destiny, and destroy your potential.

The first thing I want to talk about is how we need to determine ahead of time to move away from the line.

(USE PAINTERS TAPE)

I'm going to put down a line, and on this side of the line, it represents sin. This is not God's will, it's wrong, it's dangerous.

This side is the right side. This is the God-honoring side.

This side is sin. This side is right.

What do we typically do when there's a line somewhere, what do most of us tend. . . maybe even like to do?

We like to go right up to the line. Walk to the edge of the cliff.

Let me explain it this way, before I became a follower of Jesus, I didn't really set any boundaries. With anything. Dating, partying, hanging out with friends, whatever. I just was like Nike and just did it.

Then I started my journey as a believer. I knew I was supposed to honor God in all I did. And truth is, I had no clue really what that meant. I was more interested in what I could get away with. Remember, I never set boundaries. So I started asking well can I still kiss the girls, rub their back. How much can I do without crossing the line?

What I wanted to do is get right up to the line, go as far as I possibly could without crossing over to the dark-side and dishonoring God. Because I truly did want to please Papa.

Anybody else relate to this?

But what's funny is we may do that with some things, but other things, the things we know are really dangerous, we would never do that.

If after a storm a power line is down. We don't walk up to it thinking I wonder how close I can get before I get zapped. We just don't do that.

We stay as far away as possible from the line.

So here's the thing church, we understand that the enemy is out to steal, kill, and destroy. You do realize that by now right?

So, what we need to do is when we know there's a line that if we cross over would lead us into a place of sin, of compromise, we need to move the line away from that area of our lives.

Steve Ferrar once said, "Sin takes you farther than you want to go, keeps you longer than you want to stay, and costs you more than you want to pay."

You scroll Facebook or Instagram (and I'm not saying those things are sinful in and of themselves) but after four hours of watching your interesting friends, you learn not all of them are as interesting as you first thought, and you realize you could have spent that time in a much better way. You move away from the line, you limit that time to 30 minutes instead of 4 hours.

You had an addiction, I don't care what it was. Gambling, drinking, pornography, whatever it was. You move away from the line.

You don't keep running to the casino, going to the club, or clicking on that site. You move away from the line. You may even need to get an accountability partner to help you move away, but you move it nonetheless.

Maybe your thinking great pastor, your telling me I'm supposed to give up all my fun to follow Jesus. I thought Jesus said I could have life in abundance why are you trying to be so restrictive. I'm not.

Hear this church, you don't have to give up anything to follow Jesus. I will never tell anyone to stop smoking, drinking, partying, or anything to come to church here.

I'm I saying to keep on sinning and living a life that is not God-honoring. No. That's not what God desires.

But what happens is, as you follow Jesus the Holy Spirit begins to show you things that help you live the abundant life Jesus has for you. He transforms you into His likeness and those things just don't seem as fun anymore.

Psalm 16:6–11 (NIV): The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. 7 I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. 8 I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, 10 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. 11 You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

"The boundary lines for me personally, they've fallen in pleasant places. Surely I have a delightful inheritance."

That is not limiting church, that is freeing. And so the things I once did, I don't do anymore. The way I walked changed, the way I talked changed. Why? Because I'm a new creation.

Move back from the line a step or two. If you walk the fence you may fall on the wrong side.

The second thing we need to do is magnify the cost.

Truth is church anytime we're tempted to give into temptation, there's always a risk. Always a cost.

When you're tempted, and you will be tempted even Jesus was.

Hebrews 4:15–16 (TPT): He understands humanity, for as a Man, our magnificent King-Priest was tempted in every way just as we are, and conquered sin. 16 So now we come freely and boldly to where love is enthroned, to receive mercy's kiss and discover the grace we urgently need to strengthen us in our time of weakness.

So, what we need to do is decide in advance to stop, ask yourself, what could go wrong, because something can always go wrong.

So when we get close, we're right here and we're thinking should I or shouldn't I. Should I step over? The answer in case your unsure is NO!

You ask yourself what is the worst thing that could happen?

And you may already know the answer to that. We could lose our reputation. We could lose our ministry. We could lose our integrity. We could lose our job. We could lose a loved one. We could financially find ourselves in a wreck. We could compromise our relationship with our kids and with God.

Understand church Scripture tells us that you will be sinning against the Lord, and your sin will find you out.

It's going to come to light sometime it always does.

So, magnify the cost. Determine now what not to do, so you or someone you love won't be hurt later.

For me, I don't want to lose the trust of the people that God has entrusted me with and allowed me to speak into their lives. I don't want my kids to lose respect for me, I don't want my name posted in the news for all the wrong reasons, I don't want my

character as a man of God to be shredded because I was unwilling to count the cost.

I'm not willing to lose all credibility because of five minutes on the other side of the line.

Church, recognize the enemy is trying to trip you up. So be ready, be watching, be on your guard, so when he does attack you can move away from the line.

We're not going to be stupid and be right here next to the line saying to yourself I hope I don't get in trouble, we're going to move away from the line. We're going to magnify the cost, and the last thing we're going to do is we're going to plan our escape.

We are going to determine ahead of time to stop before we get in that position in the first place.

I know you might be thinking well pastor that's easier said than done. And that might be true but this is also true. . .

1 Corinthians 10:13 (TPT): We all experience times of testing, which is normal for every human being. But God will be faithful to you. He will screen and filter the severity, nature, and timing of every test or trial you face so that you can bear it. And each test is an opportunity to trust him more, for along with every trial God has provided for you a way of escape that will bring you out of it victoriously.

That Scripture reminds of a scene from the Lion king. Talk about Simba roaring at Hyenas and daddy Mufasa shows up.

What we need to do is determine ahead of time how we're going to get out of any temptation that the enemy brings to us. We're going to plan our escape. But also realize Papa is right behind

you fighting letting out His Mighty roar as the Lion of Judah for you.

Joseph is a great example of this idea of planning the escape.

Scripture tells us. . .

Genesis 39:2–6 (NIV): The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, 4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. 5 From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. 6 So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome,

Joseph was well-built and handsome. . .sounds a lot like your pastor doesn't he?

Ok, whatever. . .anyway Potiphar's wife took notice as well and said. . .

Genesis 39:7 (NIV): and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

That's pretty direct don't you think?

And imagine just how easy it would've been for Joseph to give in.

I mean think about it. He isn't in his homeland. His brothers have no clue where he's at. His father thinks he's dead. They are all alone surely nobody will find out, she's certainly not going to tell, and he might be thinking I'm young and single ready to mingle, besides she made the move, she's the one flirting, so it must be okay. Right?

Or he could have done what some of us do. He could have given in because he wasn't happy with God, because he wasn't doing anything wrong when his brothers beat him up and put him in a pit. He wasn't doing anything wrong when his brothers sold him into slavery.

And so often we feel like, well since God didn't do what I wanted Him to do, what I was expecting Him to, then I'm not going to do what He wants me to do.

Church hear this, this is of utmost importance, never use your disappointments to justify your disobedience.

That's good preaching, let me repeat that, never use your disappointments to justify your disobedience.

Joseph had determined in advance that he was going to honor God. Always. She came onto him and he faithfully resisted. He looked at her and told her, no deal.

Maybe he's thinking your husband trusts me. Look what he has entrusted to me. How can I sin against him? More importantly, how can I sin against God? And so he resisted, and what happened when he resisted?

The Bible says she stopped and never tempted him again. Nope that's not at all true.

Do you know what happened? She kept pursuing him day after day.

Looking good Joe, feeling lonely? Day after day she made her moves.

And church in much the same way, day after day, the devil is pursuing you trying to trip you up. And so, we need to determine now our plan of escape so we are not stuck wondering should I or shouldn't I later?

Maybe you hear this story and think well, Joseph, that brother was strong.

Truth is, I don't think he wasn't any stronger than you, he was just ready. He had his escape plan already in place.

I love this look what Scripture tells us. . .

Genesis 39:11–12 (NIV): One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. 12 She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

He left his coat in her hand, and ran out of the house.

Because he knew it was better to have a good name than a good coat.

Hear this church, some of you need to let go of the things that are holding you back, or holding you down, because some things have the potential to get you in trouble. Yet instead of running out the door we wonder how I can get back what we left.

I've decided my name, my integrity, my character is more valuable than any possession I can obtain.

Joseph determined in advance if she grabs me I'm running, because I'm not strong enough in myself to resist her flirting forever so I will run from it that's my way escape.

And as I read just a few minutes ago when you are tempted, and you will be tempted, our God is faithful. He will always give you an escape. Every time.

There is no temptation the devil will bring your way, which God hasn't given you escape for. There's no lust. There's no financial temptation. There's no breach of integrity. There's nothing in which God hasn't already said, there's a door, there's another way.

So decide now ahead of time. Move away from the line, magnify the cost, and plan the escape.

Let me try and bring this to a close, bear with a few more minutes.

How does the enemy attack you? Is it in your pride? Maybe you justify sin because you're mad at God? Well, if God, hadn't done that, I wouldn't be doing this.

Do you find yourself compromising financially, because you put your security and trust in your possessions over the One that says I will supply all your needs according to My riches in glory?

Do you lie sometimes to make yourself look better? Do you gossip about people to make them look bad? Do you judge others way to quickly? Are you carrying unforgiveness or bitterness around with you in your heart? Do you find yourself

giving into lustful temptations over and over again, looking at things or acting in a way that you know is dishonoring to God?

Do you find yourself taking God for granted? You used to be passionate about the things of God, but something happened and you're not as passionate as you used to be.

Do you find yourself compromising around your friends, you're one person at church, and you're somebody else around some other people, so that you feel like you fit in more?

I have determined, before I'm tempted, I'm going to magnify the cost, determine what's the worst could happen, and then ask myself why would I even go there?

And then ahead of time plan my escape.

Because as I mentioned last week when our values are clear, our decisions are easier.

And so, when that moment, when we're tired, hungry, angry, overwhelmed, too emotional, or depressed, and you're more vulnerable, your decision when you're tempted, won't be based on the emotion in the moment, but on the values God placed on your heart.

If you and I will commit all of our ways to God, our relationships, our friendships, our finances, our witness, our words, our thoughts, if we commit all of it, not just the areas we feel comfortable giving Him, He will establish our plans.

And since we know His word is true, we determine now, ahead of time, when I'm faced with whatever it is, I've already determined, to choose to honor God.

Let's pray

Prayer, Father in Jesus name help us by your Holy Spirit to be ready, to be on guard, watching and praying, to put on the full armor of God. Help us honor you in all we do and say. Give us the strength to move the line so that we count the cost, we are faithful to give us a way out if we are willing to heed Your direction. The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But you came to give us life in abundance. Papa help us walk out our calling with integrity, and character. In Jesus name.

Join us next week as we look at the key of consistency.