

Text: James 4:7-10

Title: "RE-DO"

Introduction: Alright, we are talking this month about the Greek word, "Sozo". The New Testament of our Bibles was originally written in Greek, because that was the common language of the known world in the middle of the 1st Century. The writers knew that if they were going to carry out their marching orders by Jesus: "Go into all the world and make disciples, teaching people about me ... in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth..." they had to be able to communicate "to the ends of the earth." Greek was the best language to do that in.

"Sozo" in Greek translates to "Salvation" in English. BUT, in Greek, it's not just about salvation in the next life (dancing on golden streets), but experiencing "JOY" in this life. Jesus said that He came so that we could experience complete JOY here in this life. HOW? By allowing ourselves to be saved in all of the arenas of our lives ... relationships, emotions, finances, faith, job or career, etc. "Sozo" is what we are offered by Jesus ... a rescue mission in each area of our lives, so they can be made healthy again!

For this series, we are using the Book of James. James was probably the first book written of the New Testament (46-49CE). James was Jesus' brother (son of Mary), who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah until after Jesus was resurrected (Acts 2?). After Peter, James took over leading the Christian Church in Jerusalem and was very bold and direct when it came to the faith. The Book of James is filled with truths about how to be a Christian and how to be part of the Church (movement for Jesus Christ).

So, what we are after is "Sozo" – How many of you feel like something is missing in one or more areas of your life?!? Jesus has an "APP" for that! God desires for each of us, as a loving Father, the BEST in all areas of our lives.

Last week, we talked about this and that in order to experience all the best that God wants for us ... His children ... we need to live these areas of our lives the way God says to live them. HERE'S THE PROBLEM: the problem is that what we hear in the world all of the time is not really the way God wants us to live. God's Word says that we are to live this life for one reason: to serve God's Kingdom! The world says, for the most part, that we are to live this life for one reason: to serve OUR OWN KINGDOM!

Problem = YOU CAN'T DO BOTH AT ONCE! James calls us "Adulterers" and says that "friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God." Friendship with the world is about doing what the world (humanity that does not live for God) says is important to achieve success ... money, fame, stuff, "it's all about me", etc. Friendship with God is a unified movement with a singular purpose: building the Kingdom of God! Inviting people to get to know Jesus Christ!

Last week we were reminded that when desire to do what the world says is good, we seek pleasure for ourselves and our loved ones at the expense of other people and at the expense of being obedient to God! It's hard to balance "maximize pleasure and minimize pain (world)" with Jesus, "take up your cross daily and follow me."

LET'S PRAY!

At this time, I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will find our Scripture for today and on the other you will see a brief outline to guide us to where we are going. You will see that there are some blanks to fill in. I hope you will fill in those blanks and jot down whatever you hear or see today that affects you in your life and faith journey. Remember, writing it down helps us remember better what we have heard. Then, I hope you will take this home and hang it on your refrigerator to be reminded of what we've learned today. Take time to read the Scripture again, etc. For those of you who are listening on line or IPODING, our program is available online to download. Then, you too can fill in the blanks.

Today, we are going to focus on the area of personal finances ... How many of you would like a little "SOZO" in the area of money? Most of us watched last year as our retirement or our investments were cut in half or maybe even more than in half. We thought that we could trust our money; but I'm not sure we can...

Why are we talking about finances in Church you ask? Why? Because our finances affect many areas of our lives. Studies show that over 50% of Americans are "Lost" when it comes to their personal finances. Over 50% of all divorces are over the tension that comes from handling personal finances. Because Jesus knew that money and possessions was the #1 Rival to loyalty to God and Jesus spoke about money and possessions more than any other topic in our Scriptures. 27 of his 43 parables dealt with money and possessions. That's why!

If we are going to experience "Sozo" / a rescue / a peace / a joy in that area of our lives, I suggest that we listen to our Scriptures...

READ JAMES 4:7-12 NOW!

Initially, it may not appear that this section of the Bible deals with money, but it applies to our finances much the way it applies to many areas of our lives.

So, here's what we want to start with: Let's say that we desire for the end result in each area of our lives to be that JOY that Jesus talked about. We recognize that we need rescued, we need wholeness / healthiness in a certain area of our lives. The end result that we are looking for will be that our finances or whatever area of life that we choose will be RIGHT with God. God will be pleased with how we are conducting ourselves in that arena of our lives... we will be RIGHT!

Now, we need a formula to arrive at that desired destination ... here is the formula: Right Priorities + Right Actions = Right Results

That's what we are looking for... let's look at the steps to get there:

I. Right Priorities

- A. Let's go back to our Scripture. In those first four verses, James gives us three things that we need to do in order to get back (Re-Do) to the RIGHT PRIORITIES:
 1. *Submit to God* (v. 7a - humble yourself before God) = To Submit to God does not mean that we are going to take some advice from God.
 - a. Some of us want to keep living the way we want to keep living and maybe get a little advice here and there from the Bible and Church. Not how it works.

- b. No, it means that we surrender! We trade in our thoughts and plans for God's thoughts and plans. God's priorities become our priorities...
 - 2. *Resist the Devil* (v. 7b) = Well, why do we have to do that?!? Because wherever people are allowing God to work ... surrendering to God's will and God's ways, evil is going to attack! Guaranteed! Satan does not want you and me to follow God...
 - 3. *Repent* (v. 9) = Turn away from what you've done and actually feel bad about it.
 - a. How many of you have said that you're sorry for something that you really are not sorry for?
 - b. Other times, we hurt deeply for the things we have done and wish that we could reverse our actions and not hurt the people that we hurt because of our selfishness / self-centeredness.
- B. Here's the deal ... the worst kind of fool is the one that states a belief in God's existence, but does not take God's teachings seriously.
 - 1. I recently heard a statistic that disturbed me: the divorce rate is at 50%. The divorce rate for "Christians" is also about 50%. Here's the problem ... there are a whole lot of people who claim that God exists, but they don't listen to God for guidance in life!
 - 2. As a society, "hedonism" is the rule, not the exception. Hedonism (coined in 500-400BC by a follower of Socrates) says that the pursuit of pleasure is the primary goal in life. We call it "MATERIALISM". Materialism is about "me and my pleasure first!"
 - 3. Materialism = meaning and security come from money and stuff!
 - 4. Case Study = Christmas. We've turned Jesus' Birthday into a time that we think it must be about me! We'll talk more about that soon ... but, it's Christmas; it's not YOUR Birthday!
- C. James says, "...for your loyalty is divided between God and the world (v.8b)." Not good!
 - 1. Following Jesus is more than believing that God exists ... the demons believe in God.
 - 2. Following Jesus is about being sold-out! We follow in ALL His ways ... His values = our values, His priorities = our priorities.
 - 3. Please know that this is not a game. I'm going to say this as plainly as I can. When you decide to go "sold-out" for Jesus Christ, you will be attacked! Satan/Evil will find a way to tempt you to go back to life being all about you again!

4. You sell-out to Jesus and you will hear again and again how dumb that is ... “You DESERVE to have this and that!” “One time won’t hurt anything.” “Who’s going to know?”
 5. Being a Christian / a true follower of Christ is not for wimps and pansies! You have to be tough enough to stand strong for what you believe. Please understand though, that as we “come close to God” ... “God will come close to you (v.8a).”
- D. Okay, so Right Priorities is about putting God first. This applies to our finances ... it won’t be easy to experience “Sozo” in this area, but it will be worth it!

II. Right Actions

Notice this is not “right principles” ... we have to actually DO these things, and not just think that it’s the right thing to do!

- A. Planned Giving to God
 1. 1st things 1st! Everything that the Bible says about finances plays off of this – Give your first and best to God. Matthew 6 says to “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” and you will have everything you need! We can’t seek 1st God’s Kingdom and our kingdom at the same time!
 2. In Malachi 3 we read about the “tithe”. What is a “tithe”? A tithe is NOT whatever you decide to put in the offering plate!
 3. Malachi reads that we are supposed to bring the 1st 10% of whatever we make into the home storehouse (home church). Then it says that God claimed through the prophet Malachi that the people were robbing God! What? They were not bringing in the 10% that God asked for...
 4. “Well, why does God get 10%?” Let’s face it. All of our money and possessions are from God and belong to God ... we just get to be stewards/caretakers of God’s money! Arguments = Inheritance (who made sure you were born into that family?), Hard Work (who gave you the natural skill and ability to learn skill to make money?), etc. God’s just asking for 10% back!
 5. I love this: people ask, “If God is so loving and all-powerful, why does God allow children to starve?” God doesn’t. We do. If we all brought 10% back to the church, there would not be a single person starving in this world. Studies show that there is plenty for every human being ... the problem is DISTRIBUTION! Remember, we are the STEWARDS!
 6. Do you wonder why there is such shortage in certain parts of the world (water, food, etc.)? A 2007 study by the Barna Group showed that of the people claiming to be “Christians”, only 9% actually tithed! “I believe in God, but I’m not going

to do what God asks me to do!” (BTW - It’s a lower percentage at BMZ!)

- B. Seek Wise Counsel
1. If you are financially lost ... debt, lack of retirement funds, etc. Find someone who can help!
 2. If a financial counselor is out, find a group of people you trust and hold each other accountable ... “God opposes the proud but favors the humble.”
 3. We will be offering a finance class in the winter or spring semesters here at BMZ...
- C. Write and/or Re-Write a Budget
1. Keep track of what goes out and where it goes... don’t spend more than you have.
 2. Our bills change constantly because of increases or added activities, so the budget has to keep being re-written when needed.
 3. Know what comes in and what goes out.
- D. Reduce Debt
1. Make a plan to get out of debt, so that you are no longer paying for the past and instead investing in the future!
 2. Many plans on-line ... snow-ball your credit cards ... least to greatest. Whatever your method, start it and stick to it and pray for strength and discipline to stick to it!
- E. Set Goals; Delay Gratification
1. If you have a major purchase coming up, set aside money monthly to get there.
 2. If you have debt set a timeline for when you want to be out of debt or how much time it will take to pay off each card or loan.
 3. Don’t buy impulsively. 30 day rule! If you absolutely have to have it, mark your calendar and in 30 days go back and get it ... you might be surprised that you don’t have to have it!
- F. Be Content (Philippians 4:11-12)
1. Wouldn’t it be great to be content with what we have? No matter what kind of car or truck our neighbor got; “Great for them! I love my car ... it’s paid for! No matter what the new IPOD or Cell Phone is, I’m okay with the one I have...”
 2. Imagine if we had a “Content Button” down here and I said, “If you push the button, you will be content with what you already have, not matter what your family or friends buy.”? Would you push the button? You’d have your kids push the button wouldn’t you?!? “Honey, get down there and push the button!”
 3. Paul challenges us in Philippians 4 to be content no matter what our circumstances (Paul was in prison ... not complaining!).

- G. Draw Near in Prayer
1. James says that we are to “Draw near to God...” not wave at God from across the room, but get close to God and count on God’s power to get it right.
 2. Last week we talked about God’s GRACE for 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc. chances. Stay close to God as we attempt to be RIGHT WITH GOD!

III. Right Results

- A. Right Priorities + Right Actions = Right Results
- B. When we do our finances God’s Way, we experience that “Sozo”—that complete health and wholeness in the area of money and possessions.
- C. When we get our finances right with God, other things in our lives start to come together too. Can you imagine how it would affect your relationships if you were debt-free and had your finances right with God?!?

IV. The Challenge

- A. 1st = Identify what area of your life (relationships, work, family, faith journey) or finances (debt, savings, tithing, giving, etc.) you are not doing the way God would be pleased with. Where are you trying to do it the world’s way AND God’s way?!?
- B. 2nd = Start taking action to get it right! Which of these 7 things are you not doing in your finances? Do you have the “Right Priorities” in the different areas of your life? Are you taking the “Right Actions” to move you closer to God? If not—CHANGE!
- C. Here’s the DEAL – God cannot and will not bless you when you are still trying to live this life without listening and responding to God’s way of doing things.
- D. Ask God to give you strength to keep at it until you are right with Him!

Let’s Pray!