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**Part 4**

**How to Break Out of a Rut**

What’s up Calvary? I want to welcome each of you to part 4 of our series “Redefined: The true definition of success.” A great big welcome to those of you joining us online!

Please grab your Bible or Calvary App and flip or click to…

**James 2:17 "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."**

We know God wants “success” for us. The tension resides in the fact that we don’t always define success the same way He does.

How do you define success?

How you define it matters.

Let’s be honest, everyone wants success. I’ll bet you’ve never awakened in the morning to a thought like: “I sure hope I fail today [in my marriage, business, ministry, finances].”

You might think success is measured by how you look, by what you have, or by who you know. Did you know these are false measurements of success?

What if God doesn’t connect success to any of that at all?

Truly successful people are people of action. They know how to get things done. Someone once said, "Even if you're on the right track, you're going to get run over if you just sit still." It's very important that you learn to become a self-starter, become a person of action.

Our theme verse, **James 2:17, says, "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."** Notice the word "action". Part of life means not just believing, but also doing. Unfortunately, there are very few self-starters in life. The fact is, we tend to settle into ruts.

Maybe you’ve heard this saying, “A rut is simply a grave with both ends kicked out.” Thank God Jesus offers you resurrection power to get you out of a rut and to lift you out of a grave.

How do you get started on the road to success? How do you break out of a rut? What does it take to get you moving? What gets you up and doing something about your life? There are many different things that motivate us but there are three common ones:

* Pain. It isn’t when we see the light but it's when we feel the heat that we get moving. We get desperate. In the story of the prodigal son, he had to hit bottom. When he did “he came to himself.” We rarely change until we get desperate. The pain may be physical (we delay going to the dentist until the pain's unbearable) or it may be emotional (we finally get sick and tired of being depressed, arguing, worrying all the time, tired of feeling bad ‑- fed up.) So, you do something about it. **Proverbs 20:30 says, "Sometimes it takes a painful experience to make us change our ways."** Pain motivates.
* Pressure. Pressure motivates us to get out of a rut. You go to the doctor and he says, "Lose 50 pounds and quit smoking or you're going to die!" Your boss says, "Improve your performance or you're fired!" Your teacher says, "Get an A on this test or you fail the class!" That's pressure. Pain and pressure are tremendous motivators, while they last. The problem is, once the pain and the pressure subside, we go back to our normal ways. We go on a diet until we lose the weight but that doesn't permanently change our eating habits. We cram for the final until the final's over, but that doesn't change our study habits. Sometimes pressure comes from circumstances. I Kings 17 is about Elijah, "God said, `The brook will supply you with water to drink' so Elijah went and stayed by Kerith Brook. After a while, the brook dried up then the Lord said to Elijah, `Now get up and go.'" Do you see it. The Lord said “Get up and go.” God had told Elijah, "I'm going to take care of your needs. I'm taking you to a hotel called Kerith Brook. Room service is provided by ravens. Free running water in your room." Everything was going great and Elijah was satisfied and successful, happy, and comfortable. Then it said, "The brook dried up." Has that happened in your life? Didn't God promise to take care of our life? All the bills are piling in and the brook's dried up! The fact is God often uses finances to push us in a new direction.
* Perspective. Paul, on the Damascus road, got a flash of insight, an inspiration, a new vision. **Acts 9:3-6, "Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice `Who are you Lord?' Paul asked. `I am Jesus now get up and go into the city and you'll be told what you must do.'"** That may not be dramatic for you, but most of us change when we get an "Ah-ha!" moment! "That's it! That's my problem! That's why I haven't been making it in life!" Every week I have people tell me, "Last week after hearing the gospel I caught a vision of how God sees me and what He wants me to do. I'm so excited about changing! Now what do I do?"

Let’s talk about it. HOW TO BREAK OUT OF A RUT according to Scripture. Six steps to get you moving. This is going to be very practical stuff.

1. **Assume responsibility for your own life.**

There are three kinds of people in life. There are accusers, there are excusors, and there are choosers.

Accusers blame everybody else. Their favorite phrase is, "It's all your fault!" They love to pass the buck. We've been doing this for a long time -- from the very beginning of creation we've had accusers -- people who want to blame everybody else for their failure. Adam took it like a man; he blamed his wife.

Then there are excusors. They have an excuse for everything -- they justify their failure. Rationalizations. "The reason I'm not making it is because...when I was a little kid my mom held me under the water in the bathtub and I developed all these resentments and therefore I'm a failure at life." George Washington Carver said, "Ninety nine percent of all failures come from people who developed a habit of making excuses." The fact is: Accusers and excusors are really just losers.

There's a third kind -- choosers. They accept responsibility for their own happiness and when they make a mistake, they admit it. Proverbs 28:13 "A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful, but if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance." Stop blaming others, stop making excuses, when you’ve made a mistake in your life -- when you've been in a rut -- admit it. If I admit the areas I'm wrong in I get another chance. But if I fail to admit the areas that I'm weak in I’ll never be successful.

The first step in breaking out of a rut is to assume responsibility for my own life. Don't blame someone else. Who are you blaming for your unhappiness, a husband, a wife... a boss... a parent… a pastor? If you want to break out of a rut, assume responsibility for your own life. Choose to be happy. Choose to be blessed. Choose to be content.

1. **Believe you can change.**

Stop saying "I can't" and start saying "I can". The person who says, "I can't" and the person who says, "I can"- who's right? The fact is, they both are. Attitude determines ability. That takes a reprogramming of your mind. Romans 12:2 "Let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of mind." Success starts in your mind -- how you see God and how you see yourself.

God came to Moses, and Moses said, "You've got the wrong guy! I'm a nobody. You can't use me." God came to Gideon, and Gideon said, "You've got the wrong guy! I'm the youngest kid in the poorest family in the smallest tribe!" He had an inferiority problem. God came to Jeremiah, and Jeremiah said, "I'm just a teenager!" You see, it's typical when God wants to use somebody, the first thing we do is put up excuses saying, "I can't! You've got the wrong guy. I can't do it!" God had to build their faith first. And that’s why I preach the gospel! Faith comes by hearing it over and over again. Keep on hearing it! It’s building your faith. It’s changing what you believe.

**Mark 9:23 "Everything is possible to him who believes."**

What would you like to change about your life? Whatever it is, first you've got to accept responsibility for it. Then, second, you've got to believe it can be changed. If you don't think it can be changed, forget it!

1. **Clarify what you really want.**

You write down specifically how and what you want to change. That's how you break out of a rut. You've got to write it down. A famous psychologist said he had discovered through many years of practice that the most helpful thing he could do in helping people find happiness is to help them establish personal goals. There are less than 5% of Americans that actually have their goals written down. Yet that same 5% are the top achievers in the nation. Clarify what you really want.

**James 1:8 "A double minded man is unstable in all he does."** He's saying that the problem is, a lot of people can't make up their minds. They don't know what they want. They can't decide what they want in life. I meet a lot of people in life who are half in and half out of their marriage. They can't decide whether they're going to stay with it or whether they're going to get out of it. They can't get out of it and they can't get on with it. And they're miserable. Why? "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." If you really want to break out of that rut, clarify what you really want in the marriage. And then commit yourself to it and start saying, "Lord, thank you for being enough for me. Change me." Not, "Lord, change my wife/husband/kids" but me. The only way we ever change other people is by changing ourselves. When I change and I start responding in a new way, not in the typical, predictable, habitual patterns, then all of a sudden, my wife/husband/kids has to change because I don't relate in the same way anymore. If there's a negative behavior going on in my marriage the first thing I need to ask is "How am I reinforcing it?" Nobody continues in a negative pattern without a payoff. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." Clarify exactly what you want in your life.

1. **Don't wait for ideal circumstances.**

A lot of people are saying, "I'm going to change but the time isn't right yet. I'm waiting for... (you fill in the blank)" and they have their excuse. Don't wait for ideal circumstances. **Ecclesiastes 11:4 says, "If you wait until the wind and the weather are just right, you will never plant anything and never harvest anything."** The farmer doesn't say, "It isn’t perfect crop conditions; therefore I'm going to wait." If he's always looking at the clouds, always checking the weather, always wondering, “Is it time to plant? Is it time to harvest?” he's never going to get anything done!

Don't wait for ideal circumstances. The Living Bible says, "If you wait for perfect conditions, you'll never get anything done" Some married couples need to apply that to their love life. They're only romantic ... You've got to have a nine-course dinner and candlelight before you get in the mood. Life goes on! Whatever you're going to do, you've got to do it in less than perfect circumstances most of the time. Why don't you settle down and spend more time with your husband/wife? "I'm going to once things settle down." It's never going to settle down! Why don't you spend more time with your kids? "I plan to once our schedule gets a little less hectic!" It ain't going to get less hectic. It's only going to get busier. If you're going to do it, don't wait for perfect circumstances. They won't come.

Perfectionism does a couple of things to us.

* It produces procrastination. "It's not the right time"
* It paralyzes potential. "If I can't do it perfectly then I'm not going to do it!"

If you want to get out of a rut, assume responsibility for your own life, believe it can change, clarify what you want, and then don't wait for ideal circumstances.

1. **Exercise your body.**

**1 Timothy 4:8 says, "Physical exercise has its value".** Most people are simply too tired to change. It isn’t a matter of knowing what they ought to do, it's "I'm just too tired!" Fatigue is a major cause of procrastination. "I'm just too tired!" is their basic problem. The fact is God made our bodies for movement. He made us for activity. We live in a sedentary society where most of the day we sit on our blessed assurance doing very little. Absolute inactivity. That's called death! God made your body for activity. One of the reasons some of you can't get your act together in your marriage, in your home, in your family, wherever, is because you are just too tired to make the changes. Have you noticed when you go to a hospital now how quickly they get you up walking after surgery? As soon as the last stitch is in... "off the table, walk into your room!" Doctors know that inactivity kills. The quickest way to get healed is to get moving.

Parallel: If you want to get out of a rut, the quickest way is to get your body moving. Something happening makes something happen. You feel better, you look better, you live longer. But there's spiritual reasons too. The Bible says that, God created your body, Jesus paid for your body, the Holy Spirit indwells your body -- you better take care of it! Exercise your body.

To get energy -- and that's what you need, to change -- you've got to expend energy. My first advice, if you come for counseling because you're depressed, is to start walking. It will help. Some of the most spiritual advice I can give some of you is start taking better care of your body. That will make a difference in your life.

Assume responsibility for your own life, “Believe I can change,” Clarify what you really want; Don't wait for perfect circumstances because they're never coming, Exercise your body because physical exercise will give you the energy to do what you need to do to make the changes in your career, your life, your family, whatever.

1. **Fire away. Do it now!**

Husband: "I'm aiming to change!" Wife: "It's time to pull the trigger!" People are always aiming, "One of these days I'm aiming to make a difference in my life." Great. Pull the trigger! Three words that can change your life -- Do it now!

**Proverbs 27:1says, "Never boast about tomorrow. You don't know what will happen between now and then."** I shouldn't presume on the future. I'm not even guaranteed the next hour, much less the next 24 hours. So, whatever I'm going to do, I'd better do it now. I can't boast about tomorrow. None of us are guaranteed tomorrow. One of these days is really none of these days. It's just not going to happen. When you say, "one of these days" you're really saying "none of these days".

The greatest tragedy in life is to waste your life. "One of these days..." "Someday, I'm going to make something of myself." Everybody's got great dreams, but dreamers are a dime a dozen. It's the person of action. Faith without action is worthless. You've got to get it in gear. Get moving.

What does it take to get me moving? Pain? Pressure? Guilt? Fear? Has my brook dried up? Are you saying, "Lord, I'm not going to make it? The resources are gone." Successful people are self-starters because they have a mission that motivates. They've got an overarching purpose to their life.

Self-evaluation using these six steps.

Are you blaming anybody for your unhappiness? It's pretty easy to do. What excuses am I giving for not growing up? Have I learned to accept responsibility for myself and say, "Regardless of what my wife/husband/parents do I'm going to live for the Lord? I'm going to make my life count."

How about believe? Have you been telling yourself, "I'll never change! That's just the way I am! I can't change! That's just me!" That's a great excuse! Begin by letting God transform your mind on the inside.

How about clarifying what you want. Do you have a prayer list? One that says, "God, these are the changes I'd like You to make in my life..."

Have you been waiting for perfect conditions to start a new habit, to begin that new career, to become a Christian? "When the time is right!" Don't wait!

All of us need to take better care of our bodies.

What do you need to start doing today? What do you need to start doing this afternoon? "Lord, I need to start... complementing my wife more ... spending more time with my kids because they're not always going to be kids ... I need to read my Bible every day ... I need to get started on that dream I've had for five years but I've been afraid to get my feet wet and I've held back, I've never gone for it ... "

The worst mistake I can make in life is to delay committing myself to Jesus Christ. **1 Kings 18:21 "How much longer will it take you to make up your mind?** If the Lord is God, worship Him!" **2 Corinthians 6:2 "Today is the day to be saved!"** not tomorrow. Some of you have been thinking about it for weeks, months, maybe even years. Today is your day! Today, when I give my life completely to Christ then He gives me the power to make all those other changes that I need to make.

Ask yourself three questions: What do I really want to change in my life? What is my plan to do it? Write it down. When am I going to get started? There's not a better time than right now.