

A Deeper Journey

A Deeper Journey is designed for those who would like a guide that supports self-study and self-reflection related to a teaching topic.

Message Date: March 31, 2013

Message Title: *The Walking Dead: Over My Dead Body*

Review Colossians 2:13-23. What do you notice?

Living in guilt? Over my dead body!

“**Over my dead body**” means “ain’t no way” “not gonna happen” “not in my lifetime. We tend to take on a lot of guilt. When you review American culture, you find we are mired in guilt. We wear it, we sling it, we have it. Guilt is obviously a problem. Woody Allen said, “I used to steal second base and feel guilty and go back.” Guilt often not only influences our behavior, but drives it.

Describe a situation where your actions were influenced or driven by guilt:

A school district in Maine decided to give each of its 285 kindergarten students their very own ipad 2. An ipad. Really? You know what we got when I was that age? An Etch a Sketch. My talent on the Etch a Sketch included sketching stairs.

The inventor of the Etch a Sketch, Andre’ Cassagnes, died this past January 16th at the age of 86 years old. He named his invention “the magic screen.” The Ohio Art Company renamed it Etch a Sketch and began distributing it in the US beginning in 1960. Since that time, more than 100 million of the little laptops have been sold. What do you do when you mess up on the Etch a Sketch? You flip it, shake it, turn it back over, and there’s a clean slate. It’s unlikely that Andre’ had an idea that his invention would take off and become one of the most popular toys in history. It’s also unlikely that his “magic screen” would provide such a great illustration of grace. Guilt is deep. It makes a deep mark on the screen of our lives, but Paul says the death and resurrection of Jesus erases the blotches of sin and we can start over.

In Bible times, words were written on papyrus, a paper made from a plant, or on animal skins. The ink would not soak in – it just laid on the surface. Sometimes a scribe (writer) would just take a wet sponge and wipe off the mark to save paper and use it again. That’s the word used by Paul in this passage – “cancel.” All our sins, mistakes that are listed on the paper – Jesus wiped it clean.

Regrets over an earlier relationship? Shake shake. Remorse over a poor choice? Shake shake. Shame about the marriage that didn’t work? Shake shake. The habit you couldn’t quit? Shake shake. The temptation you didn’t resist? Shake shake. The courage you couldn’t find...

What in your life do you need to re-evaluate and apply God’s grace to today by shake-shaking?

Look again at Colossians 2:13: How many sins did God forgive? Not a few, or some, but all. Every sin you have committed and will commit has been forgiven. The certificate of debt is a list of sins that we would commit in our entire life. What has God done with it? Shake shake shake.

Find 2 other supporting scripture passages that also directly reveal God’s grace in forgiving sin:

Bonus: Find a scripture passage that establishes God’s sovereign right to be the forgiver of sin:

Living by rules? Over my dead body!

It may come as a surprise to you that Jesus does not want us to live by rules. We saw last week that living by rules is what Paul calls legalism – the biggest threat, the most devious and dangerous enemy of the gospel. Tullian Tchividjian described living in legalism as: “When what **we need to do** instead of what **Jesus has done** becomes the end game.”

We call it grace plus. Grace plus means that we're only truly saved if "little rules" are tagged onto the end of receiving grace. We don't talk about circumcision or clean foods in church anymore but we do make new rules that are used to determine how spiritual we are. For years, God was invoked in the South to warn against interracial dating and marriage. In my day, secular music and dancing were considered pathways to hell. When the boys were younger, the game Dungeons and Dragons was evil, and Smurfs were Satanic.

What examples of "little rules" have you encountered? What have you seen God linked to in order to "warn" others of a rule?

Rules aren't the point. Read Colossians 2: 16-17 and pull out how you see rules aren't the point:

Rules are for a world Christ-followers have left behind. Read Colossians 2:20-22. What do you see?

If you are a Christ-follower you have died to that realm called the world where rules and regulations were the way to live your life.

Rules don't cause growth. God does. Read Colossians 2: 19-23. What purpose do rules serve? In what way are rules limited in their ability to affect change and growth in a person?

People going all Church Lady on you? Over my dead body!

Review these verses: Romans 7:5; Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:1-6.

We are to realize that we are truly free in Christ. The Legalist will try to knock holes in that statement. Let's look first at Galatians 5:1 – Be like a punching bag. Hold your ground. Be like a toddler resisting that spoonful of peas. Be like the girls who told me "no" when I asked them out. Man, they had great resistance. I asked Denise what lines she used to dump on guys. "My dad won't let me." "I think of you as a brother." "I'm not attracted to you in that way." When it is all about rules, we begin to play certain roles:

We begin to judge and condemn others. Colossians 2:16. When it's all about rules you find yourself dressed in dark robes, behind the bench with a gavel in hand, law-books open, holding court on other Christians. What adjectives describe the attitude of those that fall into judging and condemning others?

We begin to act the umpire and kick people out of the game. Colossians 2:28. When it's all about rules you become the umpire. It's your job to make the tough calls. Safe. Strike. Out. There were umpires in Colossia, who saw it as their responsibility to disqualify others – they weren't spiritual enough. Why do you think they saw it as their role and business to become the umpire of the game for others?

We begin to act like a drill sergeant and make demands. Colossians 2:20. When it's about rules you play the sergeant—barking out orders, making others submit to your ideas, your interpretations, your way. This is what happens when we are preoccupied with rules. We become judges, umpires and sergeants. We see people not as objects of God's grace but as a group of convicts on trial, a team on the verge of losing, or a platoon needing to be disciplined.

Because there is no body in the tomb – focus on Jesus. Colossians 3:1

If you don't have rules, then how will I control myself? How will I behave? Take a moment and think through your initial impression, how DO you control yourself without rules? What drives you, restrains you, guides you if it is not a rule?

Bottom line: Rules tell you what to do and what not to do. They do not inspire, empower, guide and grow you. Jesus does. **The life of Jesus in us, inspires us and empowers us to do what is right.** (Galations 5:16-18)

List what you learn about the Holy Spirit in these verses:

What is the key to a fruitful life that honors Christ living in you?

As Terry Scroggins sums it up: "You don't cheat on your wife when she's with you. You cheat on her when you're out of town away from her. Since Christ has taken up residency in us, and he'll never leave us, he is always with us. That's what controls us, not a code."

Live by the rules? Over my dead body!

Prayer Focus

Jesus, how thankful we are that You are ALIVE today! You did not stay in the tomb. You defeated death and sin. You trump the rules. Help us to cling to you and live in You daily where we are inspired, renewed, and empowered to live fully each day – following You. Help us to immediately recognize when we begin focusing on what we need to do instead of what You have done for us and help us to refocus on You. Help us to choose life giving relationship instead of falling into the role of critic and judge. Give us wisdom to know the difference between healthy relationship and accountability to each other and closet judgment. Thank you, God for sending Jesus to tie the knot so that we could have a forever relationship with You.

Family Focus

This week, the students are celebrating that God made each of them to have a relationship with Him. They have learned from Psalm 139 that they are important to God and that He has made them His special project. They have also looked at how their hearts were created to need Him and know Him (Isaiah 43:7 and Isaiah 43:10) and that He has worked hard to make a way for us to have a forever relationship with Him.

The students talked about how Jesus tied the knot for us to have a forever relationship with God. They read Luke 24:9-12 about when Jesus's friends first found out He is ALIVE. We discussed that not only is Jesus the coolest man to ever walk the planet, He was better than a Super Hero because He beat death! For us! He beat death in a tough three day battle because He was determined to make a way for us to know God forever. Today, the students also had a Library Leader come to their small group and help them review facts about the Bible and find the places in the Bible (Old Testament: Psalm 139/ New Testament Matthew 28 and Luke 24) where our story is found. They also got to participate with a Service Station Manager in making a tied-knot quilt while discussing how Jesus tied the knot for us because we are so special to Him. The quilts that the students made will be used as baby gifts for new little ones to let them know how special they are to God (Psalm 139). And, lastly, in small group, students got to discuss what this story means for them personally and more about how we can live out this great news that Jesus is ALIVE. Basically, we had a lot of fun 😊

Follow up discussion questions for home:

1. What does the Bible say about how God feels about you?
2. Who tied the knot so that you can have a forever relationship with God? Why did He do that?
3. Where is the Old Testament in the Bible? What is the purpose of the Old Testament?
4. Where is the New Testament in the Bible? What is the purpose of the New Testament?

Reinforce at home this week that Jesus tied the knot so that we can have a forever relationship with God. God wants a forever relationship with us. And, review what we learned about the Old Testament: it is at the front of the Bible. The Old Testament shows us our need for Jesus. We have a need for Jesus. Review what we learned about the New Testament: it is the second 1/3rd or so of the Bible. The New Testament introduces us to the coolest man who has ever walked the planet. It shows us the way to get to know God better every day.