

**THE POWER TO CHANGE: WEEK #1**

**Getting Started by LOOKING Backwards...**

Last Fall we journeyed together as a church through a message series entitled “The Walking Dead”, based on the life changing truth found in Ephesians 2, ***“that we were all once dead in our sin because of our choices we’d become children of His wrath...without hope...BUT, BECAUSE OUR GOD IS SO RICH IN MERCY AND LOVE HE couldn’t bear to leave us alone and trapped in this condition.....so he sent HIS SON TO RESCUE US and pay the penalty for our sins to bring our dead souls back to life. He saved our life with His life and BY HIS GRACE gave us a secure seat next to Him in the heavenly realms!”***

It does sound too good to be true, but the good news of what God has done for us through His Son Jesus IS shockingly true. The POTENTIAL for this news is that it is the only thing that holds **THE POWER TO CHANGE** every area of our lives. From the relationships we hold with the lifeless dead things our hearts hold onto in this life, to the relationships we have with one another... replacing them with the only thing worth holding onto ....a life giving relationship with Jesus.

In today’s discussion we’ll look back and recap some of the major themes we visited in the Fall of 2017, based on “The Walking Dead” series and chapters 1-7 of the book **“GOSPEL FLUENCY”** by Jeff Vanderstelt. Your journey through the current series will be GREATLY ENHANCED if you pick up a copy of the book (available at guest services, through Amazon, or by audio online).

**DISCUSSION**

1. Have someone read through Ephesians 2:1-5. If you’re a Christ follower you’ve been made alive in Christ. What does that mean, that we were all dead in our sin but made alive in Christ?

Dead in what way? What does being alive in Christ mean? Do you sometimes “feel dead” and not fully alive? In what ways and why?

2. In the last series and as we have begun this one again, we have heard this repeated idea that **“WE ARE ALL UNBELIEVERS”**, that there are areas in our lives where we don’t trust in who God is and what He’s accomplished through Jesus Christ on our behalf. If you’ve given your life to Christ aren’t you a believer? Are you offended by that?

Let’s test this claim out with the following exercise:

Over the past couple of weeks have you struggled with anger, frustration, irritation, wanting to be in control, pride, insecurity, shame, guilt, impatience, self-righteousness, self-condemnation, forgiveness (self or other), failed to extend grace, love or mercy to someone, been unkind, ungrateful, whined and complained about someone or something, felt entitled or short changed in life, argued with someone to prove your right, worried, been anxious or afraid over someone or something, tried to “fix” yourself or others, felt lonely or unloved, found your emotions rising and falling on another person or life’s circumstances, thought a situation or person was hopeless, let anyone other than God define your worth, wondered why “adverse circumstances” were happening to you, thought the livelihood of your family was all on you, or felt overwhelmed by life?

If so, in those moments you were experiencing “unbelief”. Everyone of these thoughts and behaviors were “symptoms’ of unbelief, something you weren’t believing to be true about who God is and what He’s accomplished on your behalf through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The journey of FAITH in Christ is one where we are moving deeper and deeper into BELIEVING the truths about the Gospel of Jesus. The only way we can move deeper into our faith, is by identifying the LIES we currently believe, and moving beyond them into the truth... Basically this means we need to IDENTIFY OUR UNBELIEF...

Look at these examples and then see if you can identify some of your own...

**Example (A) CONTROL:** When I feel anxious or worried or afraid, then I try to take control over my life or I try to take control over the lives of others, I do so because I BELIEVE that...

- I know what it is best...
- I am the only one that can be trusted...
- the outcome I determine is ‘best’ is the absolute ‘BEST’

Basically, I believe I am God, and I would do a better job than He would in this situation. So, I should take control. This reveals that I am NOT BELIEVING God can be trusted with control. I am NOT BELIEVING that God is sovereign and in complete control of His entire creation. I am NOT BELIEVING that He loves me and those I love, and His plan is better than mine.

**Reflection Question:** Does God reveal to us in His Word, the Bible, that He IS sovereign? If so, can you point to places or events where that TRUTH is revealed and we are reminded that it is better to CHOOSE to trust Him, rather than trust ourselves?

A couple clues to help if you can’t think of any:

- Samson believes he is invincible and in complete control until he is deceived and captured, seemingly defeated, until his final act accomplishes his greatest victory... God brought to completion what He started in Samson.
- The Israelites are at the mercy of the Philistines and Goliath, and out walks little shepherd boy David to win the day for the name of God... David would not have been anyone's "plan A", but David was God's plan. God can be trusted.
- In the moment, Jesus' death and burial appeared as though God had lost control over His Son's life, yet it was His plan all along for redemption to sacrifice Christ. God's love for us was revealed in His complete plan.

**Example (B) SIGNIFICANCE & WORTH:** When we're worried or anxious about how we are perceived by others we've forgotten that other people's opinions of us are fleeting and subject to change and sometimes based on how we make them feel or what we do for them.

Basically, we believe that the opinion of man is more meaningful and important than the opinion of God.

Reflection Question: Does God reveal to us in His Word, the Bible, what it is that gives us significance and worth?

A couple clues to help if you can't think of any:

- God made us in His likeness and image and deemed from the beginning that what He had created was very good.
- EVEN THOUGH we've all tried to find our identity apart from Him, we were valued and loved to the point that He'd send His only son to redeem us and restore our identity as His sons and daughters.
- Only because of Christ we are fully accepted, valued, SIGNIFICANT & WORTHY. Our performance or other's opinions of us don't even begin to compare with the opinion of our Creator, Savior, and Father.
- God loves us as He loves His Son.

These are just 2 examples. As a group talk this through. See if you can discover the root of unbelief by taking a few more examples from the list of struggles above or the areas you wrestle with in life.

3. Read excerpt from the book:

*“Too often, when giving people answers to their questions or solutions to their problems, we give them something other than Jesus. If they are struggling with their finances, we give them the best budgeting plans we know of. If they are working through relational discord, we teach them communication techniques. If they are struggling with doubt, we challenge them to just believe, promising that all will get better if they do. But we fail if we don’t give them Jesus.*

*In some cases, we encourage them to read their Bibles or pray, which, of course, are wonderful things. However, if we don’t teach them to meet and know Jesus through their Bible reading and prayer, we are dangerously close to leading them away from Jesus through very good things. This is the heart of idolatry— taking a good thing and making it a “god thing.” We take something God gave us to direct us to him and love ‘it’ or depend on ‘it’ more than him. As a result, we fail to come to him through it.*

*I have met too many people who love their Bibles yet have no genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. They don’t really know him. They don’t really love him. They don’t worship him. Instead, they worship their Bibles. They are not growing up into maturity because they are not growing up into Christ. ...If we fail to give each other Jesus, we lead each other away from Jesus. We might grow in Bible knowledge, but not in love for Jesus. We might become the most religious pray-ers of all and yet be talking to the wrong god. We could have our finances in order while our hearts are completely out of order, because we are doing it all for the wrong reasons. We might be great at communication and conflict resolution, but if we are not reconciled with God through Jesus Christ, then our relationships will be shallow and temporary in nature.*

*Think of it this way— if we are to help one another grow up into Christ in every way, we need to learn how to speak the truths of Christ into everything— every aspect of life, every situation we face, and every issue we address. This is gospel fluency.” The apostle Paul inadvertently spoke of being “gospel fluent” in his address to the Ephesians (4:15) where he conveyed to them that the way we grow as Christians is to “speak Jesus” who is the truth in love to one another. **Paul knew that real change came about not by what we do but by what Jesus would do in us.”***

Discuss: Pull this passage apart, wrestle with it, and talk it through. What sticks out? What challenges you? Reflect on that final sentence and talk about your own life, how you have seen Jesus do specific things IN you that has transformed you.

# **PEOPLE WALKING WITH JESUS CHANGE... WHAT IS YOUR NEXT STEP?**

**Growth Project:** What "next step" might God be leading you to take to understand and experience more of the good news of the gospel and its implications to change your heart and transform your life? Who might hold you accountable for that next step?

***What is your LONG TERM Discipleship Strategy to KEEP Growing in Faith?:***

At Fusion we value discipling as modeled by Jesus himself, He had an inner circle of friends He kept close to walk through life's journey with. Our platform for this type of everyday discipleship is available to anyone through our DiscipleMaker groups where 3-5 men with men, and 3-5 women with women gather together regularly where there is the convenience of adjusting your schedules to be flexible according to the different seasons of the year, and of life. That flexibility is impossible in Community Groups of any size, but the result of a smaller group gathering for discussion also accomplishes something Community Groups never could.

DiscipleMaker groups are limited in size because they pack so much more power and growth because there is not time to fool around or get distracted. Rather they exist to advance the process of growth for a Disciple by placing you in an atmosphere where the GOSPEL is constantly be spoken into your life and others you care deeply for are encouraging each other to move from UNBELIEF to BELIEF in more and more areas of your life.

Please email or call Sharon, our Grow Director, and she will answer any questions you have about these groups, or she can help you get connected in a DiscipleMaker group so you can keep moving from UNBELIEF to BELIEF in Jesus Christ! And be given the resources for the journey that will lead you deeper into this GOOD NEWS!

Sharon Chaisson- Grow Director

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