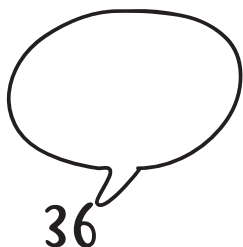


INSPIRATION

To be loved as deeply as God loves us is unfathomable. Just to contemplate what He went through so that He could have a relationship with us can fill us with gratitude and a fierce love in return. But His is a love that demands a response. It demands loyalty to Him. Can we love Him and still follow the one who made himself God's enemy? Can we walk with Him and walk with the one who defies Him? With God, we are called to choose sides. What will you choose? Obedience? Or "just this one little thing"?

In 2 Timothy we are warned that there will come a time when we abandon sound doctrine and listen to that which tickles our ears. In other words, we will leave the word of God for what makes us feel good. We will believe lies about the word of God because our desire to be with Him, is not enough to let go of our sins. We convince ourselves that if the world, or even better, an errant "pastor" says it's okay, then it must be okay. But do we actually take the time to dig into the word to see what God said about it? Do we really want to know the truth? Or are we content to believe in a God who exists to accommodate us?

Does God condemn the sinner? Absolutely not! But He does still condemn sin... **All** sin. Everything He ever said was a sin is still a sin. But God has made sure we can always reach Him. He makes it very clear that a complete relationship with Him requires a complete turning from our sin.



And though He is very adamant about our sins and our sin nature, His love still reaches us.

APPLICATION

You don't have to look very far to see children of God who have decided to pick and choose the words of God that they will live by. Maybe we convince ourselves that it was the God of the Old Testament who could not abide sin. We think, "Jesus died for all our sins, and that means we're covered. And because sin is covered by the blood, we are okay if we sin." Maybe we believe that the God of the Old Testament has adapted to us - that He will see how we have changed in what we believe is permissible, and that He will change accordingly and deem that what we are doing is no longer considered a sin. Or that as long as we follow this particular commandment and that one, that He will overlook others. We believe this to be "good enough". Are we then making ourselves gods and making Him irrelevant?

The truth is that God cannot (will not) tolerate our sin. He is a holy God and cannot live in harmony with the wrongs that we do. So if our choice is to hold tightly to our sin, to rebel against His holiness, we are choosing a life apart from Him.

If the punishment for sin is death (Romans 6:23), and we accept that Jesus died the horrible death of the cross so as to cleanse us from our sin so that we could have a life with Him, then we can understand the lengths He would go to in order to free us from sin. But if it is acceptable for us to stay in our sin, then it was unnecessary for God to go to such lengths for us. And that makes what He did foolish. But we know the truth.



You don't have to do everything I've told you.

CONTEMPLATION

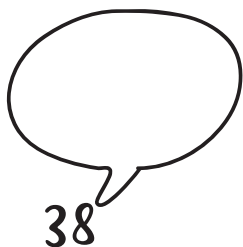
1. Study what God has to say about sin. Compare it to what others are telling you. Choose which one you will believe.

2. Ask God to show you if there is any sin in your life. He is faithful to do so.

3. Is it evident by the way I live that I love God more than I love the world?

4. What areas are the most difficult for you to surrender to God? Think about why it is so hard to give it up. Consider what you need to do to surrender.

5. Find an accountability partner, someone who will not just tell you what you want to hear, but will be very honest with you about the word of God.



ELABORATION

Jesus was radical when it comes to taking a stand against sin. In Matthew 5:30 Jesus says “if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off.” Was Jesus really telling us to mutilate our bodies? No. But Jesus was making sure that we take a stand against sin. There may be things in our life that we consider important. Jesus wanted his followers to know, that it does not matter how important we think something is if it causes us to sin or stumble. Jesus’ words instruct us to take drastic action against anything that may cause us to sin. Have you ever had to make hard choices and give something up because it became a stumbling block? Why did Jesus take the time to speak to us about sometimes giving up important things?

Further Reading - Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 4:8-20; I I; Peter 1:13- 25; Hebrews 3:7-19; Hebrews 6:1-12

PRAYERS & PRAISE



You don't have to do everything I've told you.