

Enemy of Sin

Follow-up to "Friend of Sinners"
August 10, 2014

Last week I spoke on Jesus as the "Friend of Sinners". **Our anxious, obsessive side needs to be reminded that Jesus is indeed the Friend of us sinners.** Problem is, **our complacent side goes, "Cool! I get to keep on sinning. Jesus is kind'a okay with it."**

I think it's a good idea to balance a message that emphasizes God's love for sinners, with His hatred for *sin*, this time emphasizing how dangerous and destructive sin really is.

Today, I want to talk about the Friend of sinners as the Enemy of sin. Last time, I asked if you're God's friend. Now, I'm asking you: **as God's friend: Which sins do you most enjoy?**

Our obedience isn't tested by the sins we're naturally repelled or repulsed by, but by the sins we unnaturally enjoy. The sins we make room for, make time for, and work overtime to justify.



Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. – Galatians 6:7-8 NIV



A couple weeks ago, a good friend of mine asked me to write a letter of wisdom for his twin sons' 18th birthday. Instant anxiety. Talk about *pressure!*

We're no longer friends; it was just easier that way. What should I say? What *could* I say that they'd care to hear, let alone *remember*? So, this is what I sent:

I grew up in a junkyard of wrecked cars. One of my all-time favorite off-limits areas was the battery pile: a small mountain of heavy, black, car-batteries, tossed haphazardly into a caustic, toxic, acid-dripping heap ... *of fun!* [It was 1970 and nobody cared about the environment yet.]

I loved climbing those unstable lead-acid blocks, popping off their brightly colored sulfuric acid caps, and pouring out the 'fizzy water', to watch it effervesce and listen to it hiss and pop. High times for an 8-year-old, on his own, in a wonderland of shattered glass and twisted scrap.

Of course, my father had adamantly warned me to *never, ever*, blah, blah, blah. He said the water could burn me or blind me. *Yeah, right.* Sometimes I'd press a steel wrench against the positive and negative poles until I found one that shot out sparks. What a charge! It might as well have been the 4th of July!

One evening, painful, intensely-burning sores broke out all over my legs. I immediately suspected an earlier rendezvous with the battery pile. So of course I said nothing, to nobody, and endured my ever-increasing anguish in secret.

I felt betrayed. **The thing I pursued for pleasure paid me back with pain.**

A few days later, out of the blue, my mom questioned how my legs were. “What do you mean?” I asked. She said, “You played in those batteries, didn’t you?” I hemmed and hawed and finally asked, “Who told you?” “Your favorite jeans.” She held up my softest Levis, fresh from the dryer, and destroyed with leprous white holes. Curse you, battery pile.

You’re on your own in a wonderland of shattered glass and twisted scrap. Choose wisely. Love and blessings on your birthday and beyond!

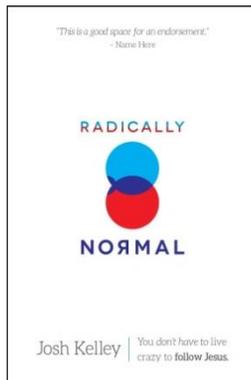
Why do you choose to sin? Because **at the time, we believe we’ll be happier doing what’s wrong.** That, of course, is a lie. It’s not just any lie – it’s a repackaging of the first recorded lie.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” **[God said this to Adam, before fashioning Eve from his side (Gen 2:16-17)]** “You will not surely die,” **[Oh, He is crafty!]** the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” – Genesis 3:1-5 NIV



You see what he’s doing? **The enemy’s tactic is to question God’s goodness.** “Here’s this great gift,” says Satan, “but God doesn’t want you to have it. He’s holding out on you.

Sin isn’t a random list of fun things God doesn’t want us to do. The Friend of sinners is saying, **“Here’s what’ll destroy you, and those around you; what’ll destroy your relationships with other people, and with Me. We’ll call it ‘sin’. Beware. It’s poison.”**



This is all in Josh Kelly’s book, Radically Normal. I was at Josh’s book launch here, last Friday; and I asked for permission to read the part he read. It’s from chapter 11, titled: Happy Holiness.

When I was young (but old enough to know better), I hated to stop playing when I had to go to the bathroom, so I’d just pee my pants. Cold days were the worst. I vividly remember that feeling of having to pee so bad but not wanting to go inside. **There were a few glorious moments when I enjoyed the relief and the newly acquired warmth. But the relief was short-lived.**

Soon the warm turned to cold, and then came the chafing of my skin against the cold, wet denim, followed by that distinctive smell. I continued doing that until the third grade, my only year in public school. The shame of peeing my pants on a field trip motivated me to start using the bathroom.

Sin is the moral equivalent of peeing our pants.

It begins as a short-sighted solution to a genuine problem or a short-lived pleasure at the expense of long-term happiness. I basically see God's rules like him telling us to use the bathroom. – *Radically Normal*, pg 110



Josh goes on, “If I could implant just one idea into everyone’s mind, what would it be? Just this: **God’s commands bring joy.** One idea to contradict that one lie. **I want people to believe at a gut level that God’s rules will bring joy, not misery.**”

Our actions reveal what we really believe. If we believed obedience brings joy, we wouldn’t need to be reminded to obey!

Ever obey God out of joyless obligation? That ain’t His fault!

We got’a stop seeing sin as something we get away with, and start seeing it as something we’re saved from. Because, and here’s a *big secret*: **sin is never something you get away with.**

It promises pleasure and then pays you with pain. So, choose wisely.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. – Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV

This passage doesn’t discourage critical thinking. Proverbs praises wisdom and clear decision making. It means, **when you and God are at odds, you choose to trust that Father knows best.**

It means, when God says the equivalent of “That ‘fizzy water’ will burn you or blind you”, you don’t wait for your jeans to prove His point.

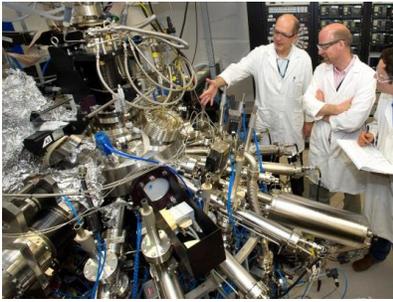


All sin is a type of unbelief. Sin is a profound statement of disbelief that He’s truly our Friend, and it’s a declaration that we’ll be better off by ignoring Him.

And that ain’t His fault. What more could He do to prove His friendship to us sinners?! One of the problems is that **we focus so much on stopping behavior; when, we should focus far more on trusting our Savior.**

Learning to trust God more than *ourselves* begins with one of the best, most honest, most powerful prayers in the Bible:

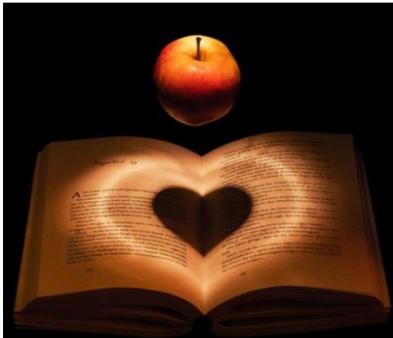
“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” – Mark 9:24b NIV



Josh talks about the concept of a consequence inverter, a device that would cause you to realize and actually feel the consequences *before* making the poor choice.

But, would you *want* such a device?

And, if you had one, how often do you think you'd persist in your poor choices anyway?



There actually *is* such a device; and, you're probably *already* utilizing it. We refer to it as God's Word and Spirit.

Let's be honest, **unless you've never seen a Bible, or your conscience is completely seared, deep down you sense the dangers, and you hear His whispered warnings.**

Trust. Lean not. Acknowledge His ways.

There is no sin that leads to life. You know this.

Happy are those who keep his decrees, who seek him with their whole heart ... – Psalm 119:2 NRS

You know this.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. – John 10:10 NIV

You know *all this*.

Question is ... do you believe it?

Will you trust it?

Will your faith pass the *acid test*?