

USER MANUAL

22nd in a Series on Ephesians called, "Messages to the Misfits"

Passage: Ephesians 4:25-29

Laurie and I recently bought a new printer. We have rearranged some furniture in our house into a more logical and useful setup, but the new plan had one downside. We did not have a place for a printer that was next to the computers. No problem, we figured. New printers are quite reasonably priced and they are all wireless. You can put the printer almost anywhere in the house. Our kids all have wireless printers that they use without even thinking about it. So we set up our new printer and then set about connecting it to our wifi network. The directions told us to go on line to a website where, it was claimed, we would be given steps to follow that make getting your printer established as easy as 1, 2, 3. Oh what tangled webs we weave when first we practice to deceive. If this was as easy as 1, 2, 3, then I don't know how to count. The process actually was as easy as counting backwards from a trillion, in Russian. At this point I wish to play the grumpy old man card and ask, "What nimrod decided that user manuals with clear directions should be a thing of the past?" Oh, we'll do everything on line. Uh huh. That's Geek speak for "we're going to provide you with totally confusing and useless instructions that will result in more aggravation than you ever imagined was possible. And at the end of hours of frustration you will have accomplished exactly zero."

We followed the steps carefully, but we noted a strange thing. Things in real life weren't quite like what the supposed instructions described. And at the critical stage, the thing just failed totally. You know that nimrod who thought of getting rid of user manuals? He also decided that calling the company that made the printer and talking to an actual human being who could help would be a waste of everyone's time, and thus unnecessary. Just try to find a phone number you can call for help in any of the scant information included with the product or on the company's "help" website. You will be sorely disappointed. That information is more carefully guarded than anything at the NSA. I guess they could give you a phone number, but then they'd have to kill you. Oh, but you can ask your questions online. Yes, and get a canned answer preprogrammed by some techie somewhere that has exactly nothing to do with the actual problem you are having.

All of that to say that we found ourselves completely lost at sea with no idea whatsoever what we should do. It's unpleasant to find yourself totally stumped with no idea what to do or where to turn to get help. Oddly, our printer dilemma reminds me of the situation of the Christians in Ephesus to whom Paul wrote. Most of them were Gentiles who had been steeped in idolatrous false religions. The idea of one Almighty God was new to them. They knew nothing of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, or of the ancient Mosaic Law. They had likely never heard of David or the prophets of Israel. They'd previously known nothing of a promised Messiah. Some of the moral teaching of the Christian faith was like an alien language to them. They had, however, realized that something was wrong in their lives, and that they were looking for answers. When they heard the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ they found the answers they needed. They put their faith in Jesus. As Paul said in the previous verses, they put away their old life and had now put on new life in Christ.

But what did that mean? This new life in Christ did not come with a user's manual, and there was no 800 number they could call for help in knowing how to operate it. They knew this life was new and different, but how was it different? How were they supposed to live in ways that were not like the old ways of their previous lives? They had no tracks to run on. They had few, if any, examples of how followers of Jesus live. They had no New Testament to guide them. They didn't even have knowledge of the Old Testament that could at least point them in the right direction. What they did know was that their culture would not help them at all. In fact it would push them in the wrong direction. Paul proceeded in Ephesians to spell out ways a follower of Jesus lives. He gave them specific directions in how to live. Without those directions they would have been like Laurie and me, lost, and having no idea what to do next.

As it turns out, today many are in a position similar to those Ephesians. They have no clue what they should be doing. We often hear that we should do whatever the "right thing" is. Just do the next right thing. It's curious that our culture says that, because it also insists there is no absolute right and wrong. Do you see the problem? That means there is no right thing. If there is no right, what should I do? Oh, just trust your gut, go with your heart. Your heart will always guide you to what the right thing is. Oh yeah, that's a great plan. Let's imagine the scenario when Laurie and I were totally stumped with our new printer and had no idea what to do. Suppose that someone said, "Just do the right thing." We would have said, "We'd love to do the right thing, but we haven't got a clue what that might be." "Well just go with your gut." My gut was saying, "Get a nice big hammer and smash that printer into tiny bits of plastic." Would that have been a wise and helpful choice? Conner Betts in Dayton and Patrick Crusius in El Paso both went with their gut, doing what it told them to do. That resulted in the deaths of 32 people and the wounding of 51 more. Yeah, that "just do what your heart tells you and you will never go wrong" idea appears to be severely flawed.

We need help figuring out how we are supposed to live. The Ephesians had managed their lives on their own terms until the gospel came along. They previously had trusted their gut, they went with whatever their heart told them to do and it had been a train wreck. They had been doing whatever they thought in the moment was the next right thing and in their honest moments knew that as a result they were a hot mess. So they needed some truth about what the right next thing always is.

OBEY THE FOUR TABOOS

So Paul gives them some direction on what the right thing is. In this part of the letter he gives them four "don'ts," four things not to do. I think of the "don'ts" Paul gives us in this passage as the Four Taboos. I know, that sounds like the name of a quartet of singers from the 1960's. The Four Taboos are making a comeback. After a successful run at the Worst Western Casino Motel and Gas Station in Laughlin, Nevada, the Four Taboos are embarking on a tour of Indian casinos and county fairs throughout the country. Here are the Four Taboos that are important for living this new way in Christ.

We often say that the gospel is not a thing of do's and don'ts, it's not a bunch of rules. Yet here are some don'ts. But these are not rules. They are kind of like a user's manual for the life of following Jesus. *Whether we do these things or not, whether we do them well or not, is not the determining factor*

in whether we are loved children of God. They do impact how successfully we live. They have a direct effect on how much of the life of God, how much joy, peace and fulfillment we experience. But our obedience to these proscriptions has no bearing on our position as children of God, members of his eternal kingdom. Hear that well. These are not rules we must obey in order to be accepted by God. That issue is already decided in Christ. They are like the instructions in a good user's manual, designed to tell us how we can make the most of this life that we have been given. We've been given the life. It won't be taken from us, just like if you've bought a piece of electronic equipment and you don't follow the directions of the user's manual it won't be taken from you. It just won't work well, or maybe at all.

Some people might say, "That's the problem with religion. All those don'ts. That's so negative. Who wants to live a life with so much negativity?" Back in 2011 Laurie and I went with our adult children, who were single at the time, to Disney World, for six days. We had a blast. One of the rides the kids insisted we go on was called Mission Space in Epcot Center. At the time I didn't know the complete history of this ride. I knew NASA helped them design the ride and that it was created to give people a little taste of what space flight feels like. I didn't know that it made so many people sick in its earliest days that they changed it so there are two versions of it, the full on version and a dumbed down version for those prone to motion sickness. It is essentially a centrifuge that whirls riders around at high speed. As you approach the ride there are constant warnings that pregnant women and anyone prone to motion sickness or claustrophobia should not go on the ride. When you get on the ride you are strapped into a seat in a small compartment looking at a small screen right in front of you. Then they give you some don'ts. They give them clearly, firmly and repeatedly. Don't close your eyes, and don't look away from the screen even for a moment. When that ride started what I wanted to do was close my eyes. The first few seconds I thought I'd made one of the worst decisions of my life. I just wanted to close my eyes and shut it all out. But I firmly resisted the temptation. I did so because I had heard those "don'ts," and knew they weren't given to limit my options and make life narrower. They were given because if I did any of those things I would create what the ride operators euphemistically refer to as a "protein spill." That's their term for barfing your insides out. The don'ts were given to help me enjoy the experience instead of making myself roaring sick. So I obeyed those rules with a religious fervor that was second to none. The result was I didn't get sick, didn't ruin my whole day, and actually enjoyed the experience. The don'ts were intended to help me enjoy the ride. That's what these don'ts are about, helping us enjoy the ride, making the most of life and not making ourselves and others around us sick.

DON'T LIE

Paul says in this new life we should put off falsehood and speak honestly. Literally he says, "after putting off the lie, keep speaking the truth." He begins with lying because it is a constant in human relations. In fact you could translate this command, "Stop lying." Paul just assumed they were doing so, because it is what humans do naturally. All of us do it. Maybe you once saw the television show *House*. The central character was an incorrigible but brilliant doctor named House. Dr. House said continually, "Everybody lies." He was repeatedly challenged, told he had a far too negative few of human nature, but he never once budged. Everybody lies, and time after time he was proven correct.

Lying is such a part of our culture that we don't even notice it. Skecher shoes had a model called Shape Ups that they advertised would help wearers tone and strengthen their muscles, lose weight and

improve their cardiovascular health just by wearing them. It had to be true because Kim Kardashian was the spokesperson for them. Turns out their pants were on fire. They ended up having to pay the Federal Trade Commission \$40 million for their claims, because they weren't true. What do you call it when you make claims for your product that are not factually true? Advertising! Well, yes, but it is also called a lie. Activia yogurt, a division of Dannon, told us that Activia is scientifically proven healthy, that it has been clinically shown to improve digestive health. Which would be great if it were true. But in fact that has not been clinically proven. They got a \$35 million fine.

Back when we younger Laurie appeared in a few TV commercials. One of them was for a carpet cleaner. It was a good product. In fact we still use it. But in this commercial Laurie portrayed a woman who had to use the product to clean a stain on her carpet. At the end there was a shot of the carpet after it had been cleaned, and it looked perfect. But Laurie saw how the commercial was actually made. She saw that the shot of the carpet after it had been cleaned was actually a shot of the carpet before it had ever been stained! The product actually works, but they essentially lied about what they were showing to guarantee it looked the way they wanted it to look. That kind of thing is just taken for granted in the ad industry.

There are so many dishonest messages sent to us by advertisers. Driving this car will turn your life into an adventure and make you more attractive to the opposite sex. Drinking this beer will guarantee that you will have lots of wonderful friends and good times. Wearing this perfume will make you irresistibly alluring. The advertising game these days is mostly about lying to people, and we just take that for granted.

I was reading an article recently which ranted that President Trump was lying. My first thought was, "No, a politician lying? It can't be! That's never happened before." I take everything I hear from any politician with a full shaker of salt. What's more disturbing is I don't trust anything I read or hear in the media because they are worse offenders than politicians. Hearing some media source crying that the President is lying would be like the New England Patriots football team complaining that some other NFL team was cheating.

Do you know any parents that purposefully teach their young children to lie? No one does that, right? Does that mean, then, that no young children ever lie? Even asking the question is laughable. How do kids know how to lie? Where do they learn that? Do you take a class in school about how to lie? No one teaches them, it's just inherent in us. Kids don't have to be told to do it, nor taught how to do it, they come up with it on their own.

There's a scene in the old classic Christmas movie *A Christmas Story* that reminds me of this. You are familiar with the scene. It is the one where Flick, a friend of the main character, 8 year old Ralphie, has, on a dare, gotten his tongue stuck to a metal flag pole. The bell rings, all the kids run to class, leaving Flick all alone, stuck to that pole. In the classroom the teacher Miss Shields, notices that Flick is missing. She asks if anyone knows where Flick is. Ralphie innocently looks around as though he has no clue about the whereabouts of his friend, and you hear him narrating, "Flick? Flick who?" He knows if he tells the truth he might get in trouble, so he essentially lies.

When we lie it is usually about protecting ourselves or about getting something we want. We know we won't get it if we tell the truth, so we lie. There is a classic example from the life of David in 1 Samuel 21. David is on the run from King Saul, who is paranoid to the point of insanity, and is determined to kill David, though David is actually loyal to him. David ran to the town of Nob hoping to get help from a priest named Ahimelek, who lived there. Ahimelek is afraid. Verse 1 says he trembled when he saw David. He knew David was persona non grata in the royal court so his coming was trouble. He asks why David is alone. He wants to know why David has shown up at his house. David is desperate. He needs food, a place to hide for a day at least. In verse 3 David answered, "The king sent me on a mission and said to me, 'No one is to know anything about the mission I am sending you on.'" Ahimelek is relieved. Ah, David is on a secret, undercover mission from the King. All is good. The word about Saul labeling him a traitor is part of his cover story. So Ahimelek proceeds to give David shelter, food and a weapon. The only problem with that is David flat out lied. He wasn't on a mission from Saul. He knew if he told the priest the truth, he would get zero help from him. He faced a dilemma. Tell the truth and trust God to take care of you, knowing it would mean the priest wouldn't want any part of you. Or decide it's up to you to protect yourself and tell the priest whatever you have to in order to convince him to help. David took option B. He blatantly lied to get what he felt he had to have.

The result of David's lie comes in the next chapter. Saul finds out that Ahimelek helped David, when Saul wanted him arrested. The priest explained the situation, but all Saul cared about was that he helped a man Saul labeled as a traitor. So in verse 16 we see what happened. "The king said, 'You will surely die, Ahimelek, you and your whole family.'" That's terrible. It gets worse. In verse 19 we see that one of Saul's henchmen, a man named Doeg, "put to the sword Nob, the town of the priests, with its men and woman, its children and infants, and its cattle, donkeys and sheep." Every living thing in the town died, and it was David's fault. One man of Ahimelek's family escaped. David told him, "I am responsible for the death of your whole family."

It is easy to think, "But I'm not a liar. This doesn't really apply to me because I tell the truth." Paul raised this issue because he knew that in the culture of that day lying was a way of life. It is a way of life for all human beings, because down in our core we are committed to taking care of ourselves. We will say whatever we need to say to protect ourselves when threatened, to promote ourselves when we feel we need acclaim, and to obtain that which we know we must have to survive.

DON'T GIVE IN TO ANGER

Next Paul says "be angry, but do not sin." Grammatically that is an imperative, so it sounds like he is commanding us to be angry. However, one scholar I read said this about the verse, "It is usually agreed that the first imperative in this formulation should be construed as having concessive force and that, in the syntax, parataxis is employed instead of a subordinate concessive clause." Oh, uh huh. Of course. What was that supposed to mean? All it means is that Paul was not commanding anger, but merely conceding the fact that humans will get angry. The command actually is only about the "do not sin" part. Paul was saying, "I know at times you will get angry, but when that happens do not sin."

Anger is an ever present feature of the human condition. It seems to be more of an issue than ever before in our society. I read a story about an incident that took place in Minnesota recently. A 27-year-old man named Justin John Boudin was at a bus stop, waiting for the bus that would take him to a class. According to witnesses he was apparently offended by something a 59-year-old woman did or said that he felt showed lack of respect to him. He got upset and began yelling at her. He was yelling so much that she was frightened by him. She took out her phone to call police, so he punched her in the face. A 63-year-old man tried to intervene and Boudin hit that man with the folder that was holding his class homework. The class Boudin was going to was an anger management class. I would say he is not ready to graduate.

Anger is the normal human emotional response to hurt or disappointment. A few years ago we tried to buy an appliance from a store in the area. They did the usual thing of scheduling a delivery time in a 4 hour window. We waited for them, but they never showed up and they never called. We called, and their customer service person was apologetic and said, “I am so sorry. We need to do something to make this right for you as well as reschedule it.” They did reschedule, and once again did not show up. They did that three times. Finally they showed up, but their delivery people identified a problem with the unit and said it could not be installed. By this time I was irate. I went to the store, explained to the people what their company had done to us. The guy I talked to said, “Yeah, that’s really bad. We owe you.” He called the manager, who listened to my story, apologized, then said we could just start over and buy a different unit. I said, “Don’t you think you should do something for us to make up for all the trouble you’ve caused us? Two of your own people have said you should do something to make this right.” He said, “There’s nothing I can do, except say I’m sorry.” I was angry. They had inconvenienced us, made repeated promises they did not keep and in the end failed to deliver the appliance we were trying to get. Honestly, I had a right to be angry. When someone treats you poorly it is the natural response.

Unfortunately as we have seen in recent weeks, the core of the human condition is that we all feel, even when we know in our heads it is not so, that we are the center of all things. We want everything to serve our needs and desires. And the problem is that people and the world around us stubbornly refuse to do that. They do not see us as the center of all and do not cater to our desires. The result is that life is full of disappointment and hurt, and from that comes a lot of unresolved anger.

There is an infinite amount of anger floating around among humans. Some of it is unreasonable, but a lot of it is because there is a massive amount of hurt in the world. People are hurt by unkind words, by mistreatment, by neglect, by rejection, by opposition and so much more. Notice what Paul says in verse 22. “Do not give the devil a foothold.” Our anger gives the enemy of our souls a unique opportunity to wreak havoc in our lives. A few years ago while we were on vacation I managed to cut my leg on some coral. Unfortunately a wound like that can have microscopic bits of coral in it, plus it provides an open door for bacteria that teem in warm ocean waters. That wound became infected and stubbornly resisted healing for several weeks, even though I was taking antibiotics to treat it. The open wound provides a foothold for the bacteria. There have been cases of people getting bad cuts from a coral reef, having the wound get infected, getting septicemia from it and ultimately dying.

Our anger is like that open wound. It is a door for Satan to wreak havoc in our lives. In our anger we lash out with unkind, thoughtless or hurtful words. We let our anger fester into a malignant bitterness that eats away our own souls, blocks our relationship with God and destroys our relationships with others. It absolutely destroys any hope of joy. Our anger can cause us to want to get revenge and to harm other people.

An obvious thing about anger is that anger creates more anger. We see this in the enmity between some people groups that lasts for decades and even centuries. One group inflicts harm on the other. That harm creates anger and a desire to strike back. Revenge is sought and hurt is inflicted on the other group, who now are angry and begin to seek revenge right back. It's a never ending cycle.

But anger is a problem at the personal level. The very fact that a person is angry at me, causes me to be angry at them for being angry at me. One time when we were on vacation we were staying in a place overlooking the beach. It was a gorgeous evening, and we turned the lights off so we could see the magnificent stars better. But Laurie bumped into a table and knocked a glass off, and it shattered on the floor. I said, somewhat frustrated, "Laurie, you should have been more careful. Now we've got broken glass all over the floor." She took my frustration as anger at her, understandably, and just the fact that she thought I was angry at her made her angry at me. Somewhat defensively she responded, and I could detect the anger in her voice. I had not been angry with her, but now I was, because she was angry with me when I wasn't the one who caused the problem in the first place.

James 1:20 says, "human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires." Our anger will not produce righteousness. In fact, Klyne Snodgrass, who wrote an excellent commentary on Ephesians, said, "Anger is largely a self-centered emotion." I'm guessing he knows about that first hand, because growing up with a name like Klyne Snodgrass surely provided him with plenty of occasions when he was hurt and felt that angry response.

DON'T STEAL

I'm not going to say a lot about this because it is fairly obvious that if you steal from someone, you are not loving them. You are seeking your own desires and are taking what belongs to someone else to serve your own wants. God says that love is always the right way to relate to others, and stealing is the antithesis of love.

Retail businesses in the USA lose \$2.4 billion to shoplifting every year, which works out to \$6.6 million a day! But here's even worse news. Those same businesses lose \$4.8 billion a year to employee theft! That's a total of \$7.2 billion lost to theft!

Writer and pastor Craig Brian Larson relates that his son is the assistant manager of a fast food store in the Chicago area. He told his dad about the most entertaining part of his day. It happens when customers who clearly are financially well off ask for a plastic water cup, then take it over to the soda machine and start filling it with soda they haven't paid for. He likes to go to them and say, "I'm sorry, I didn't realize you wanted a drink, and we were supposed to charge you for soda. Can we go over to the

counter and ring that up for you?” He says it’s fun to watch them turn red in embarrassment. He also says it happens with unfortunate frequency.

Rather than stealing, Paul says, we should work, “doing something useful with their own hands.” And note why we should work. It is “that they should have so much money that they could buy everything they dreamed of and be set for life.” Oh, wait, I think that is what the verse says in an alternate text. That is the RMP, the Rick Myatt Perversion. Paul says the goal of our working is that we “may have something to share with those in need.” Wait, he’s saying the point of working, the goal, is to be able to give to other people? Well that’s a very different approach. Stealing is all about taking care of self regardless of the cost to others. Stealing says “Life is about me, I’m all that matters, and others don’t.” God’s way is working to give to others no matter what it might cost me. That is a total departure from the normal human way of doing things.

DON’T USE SICK LANGUAGE

Paul says in verse 29 we should not use any unwholesome talk. It is common to think he is talking about bad language. But look at what the contrast with unwholesome talk is. “But only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” So unwholesome talk must be talk that does not build others up, that does not benefit them.

The word translated “unwholesome” meant “rotting” or “decaying.” If something is rotting or decaying it is not healthy. Paul’s concern was with words that are unhealthy because rather than benefiting people that hear them, they discourage them, they hurt them or make them angry, they distract them from the truth and confuse them with illusions or lies, or they tear them down.

As I was thinking about this and realized there are three things that can happen when I hope my mouth. One is that thoughtless words can come out, just stuff that I haven’t really thought through and maybe even are a waste of breath. Another is that what I say might help a person, help them feel loved or appreciated, words that might encourage them or inspire them. But the other thing that can come out is words that dishearten, anger, hurt, or frustrate hearers. That last category is unwholesome.

In Matthew 12:36 Jesus said, “I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.” Well that grabs my attention. God is going to ask me to account for every word that comes out of my mouth. Doesn’t that make you think, “I’m not going to say anything”?

Words are so powerful, both negatively and positively. Proverbs 18:21 says, “the tongue has the power of life and death.” Have you ever noticed that in Genesis 1 God is depicted as speaking and causing things to come into existence? God said, “Let there be light,” and light came into being. That’s because the ancient Hebrews believed that to speak is to create something. You create a unit of energy with powers all its own. It’s like firing a bullet. Once it has left the gun you no longer control it. It is different from a bullet in that bullets can only destroy. Verbal projectiles can destroy, but also can heal, build up and give life.

I remember an incident from years ago when Laurie went to a women's event. When she came home she told me at one point the speaker at the event made some comments about what a godly husband should do, then said something along the lines of, "of course, our husbands are human so none of them does all these things." Then she told me, "I thought as she was saying that, 'actually my husband does all of that.'" Do you know what those affirming words did to me? They did two things. First, they made me love and appreciate Laurie even more than ever. I felt her comments were more reflective of her gracious spirit than what I actually was. But second, they made me want to live up to the image she had of me. I wanted to be a better man and better husband than I had been, because I wanted deeply to have her faith in me be justified. Those words built up. And I am repeatedly heartbroken by hearing husbands and wives denigrating their spouses, pointing out every possible shortcoming. Those are words that do not build up.

APPLICATION

DON'T MAKE THIS A TO DO LIST

The normal response to encountering a list of commands like this is to turn it into a laundry list of things we're supposed to do. What we typically do with a list is always try to measure how well we are checking things off the list. That turns the Christian life into that list of rules we were concerned about to begin with. We start to think what makes us approved in God's eyes is how well we observe the Four Taboos. In other words, we stop living by grace, and we get all the negative consequences that go with that.

If you are a believer in Jesus how well you avoid the Four Taboos has no bearing on how much God loves you or on your standing in his eternal kingdom. What it does impact is how much of the life of God you will experience and bring to others. It is about how well you will operate and enjoy the new life in Christ.

RECOGNIZE THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

There is a common cause of all of the behaviors Paul has told us to avoid. Why do we lie? Advertisers lie because they want to get money from you. David lied because he was afraid if he told the truth he might be turned into Saul and executed. We lie because we don't trust God to provide for us and protect us, so we do whatever we deem necessary to provide for ourselves and protect ourselves. It's all about having ourselves as the focus of life.

Why do we get angry? It is because we don't like what someone has done to us. They have not respected our importance, or they have hurt us in some way. Remember that anger is an intrinsically self-centered emotion. We get angry because of something that has been done to ourselves. Why do we steal? Because we want something for ourselves. Why do we use rotting, unhealthy words? It is because we are focused on ourselves, not on loving other people when we speak. Why do we speak thoughtless or hurtful words? Why do we tear others down? It is because we are trying to feel better about ourselves or build ourselves up.

In all of these things the central issue is that we are living for self. This is the old life that we have put off, a life totally focused on self. The new life is focused on Christ and his glory. We have put this on when we put faith in Christ. Paul is just fleshing out for us in practical terms what this new life looks like. What we should focus on is that we have put on a new life, and it is as we live in this new life, in the way of Christ that we will experience life.

KEEP FOCUS ALWAYS

What is our life about now? Once it was about self, but now it is about glorifying God. It is about remembering that he is the center of all things, he is the reason that we exist, and he is the point of it all. So when it comes to speaking, the goal is not taking care of ourselves, but glorifying God. When it comes to times when we have been hurt or offended, the goal is not protecting ourselves or getting back at those who have hurt us, but it is to glorify God. When it comes to gaining things for ourselves, we do it in such a way that we bring glory to God, not just get what we want.

That's easier said than done, isn't it? Recently our granddaughters spent a day at our house. At one point Ella wanted to play school. She wanted me to be the teacher and she was a student. So I was supposed to come up with a lesson. She is only 3 so she can't even read. I thought about what I could teach her about. I threw out a few suggestions. "What would you like me to teach about? Maybe Mickey Mouse Clubhouse, or Rapunzel (her favorite Disney princess by far)?" She answered, "How about God?" Oh, yeah, him. Maybe I should have thought of that. Laurie overheard this exchange and said, "Good job, Pastor." Somehow it is easy to fail to keep him as the central point of life. Yet that is what will free us up to respect the Four Taboos. If we fail to keep our lives about him, we will inevitably violate the Four Taboos.

REMEMBER FAITH IS THE POWER

How are we going to live this new life? We have to believe, we have to have rock solid trust that God is taking care of us. We have to believe that what God supplies is enough. When David failed to believe that God would protect him from Saul, he decided he had to protect himself. He focused on self, and the result was he broke one of the Four Taboos, which led to deadly and devastating consequences.

Trusting God, believing he is with us, loves us and will provide what we need, believing that what is best in life is to glorify him, is what will empower us to live the new life and resist the temptation to violate the Four Taboos.