**Things I Wish Jesus Never Said – Week 2 – Take Your Sin Seriously**

**April 8-9, 2017**

Welcome to Week 2 of “Things I Wish Jesus Never Said.” Jesus said a lot of things… He made commandments, he asked tough questions, he taught in parables that hit home for all of us, he said things that make us feel good, he said things that challenge us, and he said things that we honestly don’t want to hear. Today, we’re going to look at another one of the statements that we probably wish Jesus never would have said.

How many of you remember the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge videos from a couple of years ago? ALS is known as Lou Gehrig’s disease and is a debilitating disease where your muscles shrink and you lose control of them so even simple things like smiling, swallowing, or speaking become very difficult. These videos went viral to bring awareness to finding a cure or funding research for ALS. You would donate money, challenge others to do it, and then dump a huge bucket of ice water over your head. Some people started getting really creative with their ideas. However, for some people, they didn’t really think through what could go wrong…like this guy. Watch this!

**(Leaders Note: Show “ALS Ice Bucket Challenge Gone Wrong” video)**

Yeah, that guy didn’t really take the potential consequences of that decision very seriously. Very cool idea with the bulldozer…NOT so cool result…probably a concussion with a ton of icy water dumped on him. Moral of the story…never use bulldozers in funny videos ☺

In all seriousness, the Bible talks a lot about a particular word: sin. Sin is defined one of two ways in the Bible: breaking one of God’s commandments or what I would call disordered love (loving something or someone more than God). Jesus took sin very seriously and talked often about leaving a life of sin and becoming a new person. In fact, he says something pretty crazy about what you should do to try and avoid sin. Let’s read it!

***Scripture:*** *Matthew 18:7-9 – “Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.”*

Jesus was serious about sin and he was serious about removing things from our lives that cause us to sin. He was so serious that he suggested that we cut off our limbs or remove our eyeballs…like something from a creepy/scary movie. Now, some of you might be thinking, “If I want to be a Christian, do I need to cut my hand off?!” No, you don’t need to do that. However, Jesus does use exaggerated language to make a big point about sin…and that’s our THP for today’s message.

**THP: Take your sin seriously.**

Our culture glorifies sin. We see it everywhere and not many people seem to have an issue with it. Greed, substance abuse, cheating, lying, idolatry (worshiping something/someone over God), racism, saying hurtful words to others, the idea that anyone can live however they want, etc. Things that would shock generations before us have become more common in music, movies, TV, government, schools, and, unfortunately, even in churches.

Have you ever thought about why people sin? Why do we do the wrong thing even when we know there are negative consequences? The reality is that all of us don’t desire to do the right thing all the time. All of us are capable of sin. We are imperfect people.

**(Leaders: Share a personal story where you faced significant consequences for sin. Be as open as you are comfortable to share.)**

Christ-followers are expected to go against the grain of the world, but somehow we have allowed ourselves to get caught up in our own sin and the sin of others. There are people there to help justify it for us. Maybe there were some friends who egged you on in a situation and told you, “It’s no big deal! No one’s going to find out! Nothing bad will happen!” Other times, we hold one sin higher than another. We say things like “Well at least I didn’t do (insert whatever you think is worse than your own sin)” or “I didn’t do what that person did, so it isn’t that bad.” We begin to DEFEND OUR SIN EVEN THOUGH IT’S WRONG!

In Romans 12:2 Paul writes, *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* He’s saying “Please don’t let the world convince you that sin, any sin, is ok. Instead let Jesus change you!”

Guys…Sin separates us from God.Every time we do something outside of God’s will, we sin. Every time we sin, we separate ourselves from God further and further. No one is exempt from sinning. All of us are capable of sinning and all of us do sin. Check out these two verses from the New Testament: John 8:34 says*, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin”* and thenRomans 3:23 says*, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

No sin is bigger or worse than the other and the Bible tells us that those who continue to live a life of sin and don’t allow Jesus Christ to change them will spend eternity apart from God. Forever. Our sin has consequences…both now and after we die.

We are all in the same boat. We have been separated from God by sin and because of that separation, death is the punishment. This is why we must take our sin seriously. It is a big deal. It isn’t ok for us to let sin go unchecked in our own lives or the lives of the others around us that we are called to love.

**Let me ask you a question…If you don’t take your sin seriously, can you honestly say that your heart is changed?** Jesus says that we can’t work ourselves into heaven because we have sin in our life, but if we claim him as our Savior, we will inherit the kingdom of heaven and spend eternity in paradise. That sounds a lot better than being without him forever! However, when we make that decision, we have to back it up with ACTION! Sin is hard to shake off no matter what the sin is. It kind of infects you. It causes addiction, and Satan uses anything and everything he can to keep that sin in front of you and dragging you down. Jesus went as far as suggesting that we start lopping off body parts if that’s what it takes to keep from being stuck in sin. I think his point is that when we repent (or turn away from sin), when we say that we know we have sin in our life and need Jesus as our Savior, we have to do absolutely anything it takes to keep ourselves from repeating our sin.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says*, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”*

If the old is gone and the new is here, we cannot continue to live in the same sin that Jesus said he saves us from. Here’s the good news about sin: Jesus Christ took our sin on the cross and died the death we should have received. 2 Corinthians 5:21 goes on to say *“He (God) made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

All of us have sin in our life. Just as our THP said, we need to take our sin seriously. If you’re here today and you’re a Christian, ask God for forgiveness for your sin. Start living a new way! However, I want to speak to those of you here who may not be Christians and you’ve never made a decision to leave your life of sin and become a Christian…a follower of Christ…a new creation! You’ve never taken that initial step and today, if you have heard this message and realize that you need to give your life to God and accept His forgiveness for you, I want to give you an opportunity to put your faith in Christ.

**I want every head bowed and every eye closed. If you are here and you’ve never made the decision to become a Christian and you would like to do that today, I just want you to raise your hand wherever you’re at. I’m going to close us in prayer and if you want to make this decision, repeat this prayer silently to yourself after me.**

***Dear Jesus, thank you for saving me. I know that I have done things that are wrong in my life. I can’t live this life on my own. I need You. Please forgive me of my sins. I commit to follow You for the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me no matter what. I place my faith and trust in You and You alone. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.***

If you just said that prayer for the first time, this is your first step as a new follower of Christ. That is awesome! It is the best decision that you will ever make! I want you to do three things for me if you made that decision…

-Tell someone (family, friends, leaders)

-Get a Bible (if you need one, let your leader know and we can get you one!)

-Get baptized during the next baptism service!

If you ever need someone to talk to, all of the leaders are available to listen to you and help you in any way that we can. Love you guys! Let’s go to our group discussions!