

## What's New?

The other day I took my kids' new school pictures into the office. Once a year I pop the new pictures into the special frames they made me (after I show them around the office that is). And every year when I take the back off the frame I remember that the pictures from many previous years are still in there... just covered over by the most recent photograph.

When it comes to children, "what's new?" is pretty obvious. I look at those tucked away pictures and see that two or three years bring an amazing change to a little girl. A more grown up face, a different hairdo, more adult teeth, ears pierced... all sorts of changes. When it comes to adults the changes are harder to see. We ask each other "what's new?" all the time and don't seem to get much information even then!

***"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:17-18***

The most important changes in people are not the superficial ones. The big changes happen down deep in the soul. Accepting Christ as Savior is like being born again...we are a *new creation*. The change shows itself to everyone around us by the things we say and do. It's impossible to miss.

Now that's a great answer to "what's new?"



From The Mountaintop to the Valley

**Cost**

John Houseman starred decades ago in the movie and television show "The Paper Chase" as Professor Charles Kingsfield. He later did a long series of commercials for the Wall Street firm Smith Barney that ended with the tag line "at Smith Barney we make money the old fashioned way... we earn it."

There are probably people we work with or know from our social circles that seem to get ahead more on dumb luck or because of who they know rather than by hard work. It's tough to sit back and watch it happen. But in an honest moment I wonder if we really would want to change places. There is something incredibly satisfying about getting ahead the old fashioned way... by earning it.

God is more pleased by our hard work and effort as well. He once commanded David to go and make a sacrifice at the threshing floor of one of his citizens. When David arrived at the home of Araunah he tried to simply give his possessions to David to use as he needed. But David knew this was not the better way.

*"No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing." 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 24:24*

David knew then that a sacrifice is only really a sacrifice if there was a price paid. Our success today is only really success if we earn it...

Thanks for all you do.



**Brian**

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Volume 5, Number 6

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## **I Tell you the Truth**

Most of the cardio training equipment in a YMCA is pretty smart...it can tell you how long you've been exercising, how far you have traveled, your heart rate, and even how many calories you have burned. All the equipment asks is two questions most of us prefer not to answer...how old are you? And how much do you weigh?

It's hard to fess up sometimes and put in the right information. But if we don't the feedback we receive won't be accurate. We won't get credit for as many calories as we ought. And the heart rate monitor won't warn us when we are over exerting. We get the maximum results when the truth is involved.

Within the four gospels Jesus is quoted as saying. "I tell you the truth" 78 times. Of course every time he spoke he was telling the truth. But in these instances he was saying something that was counterintuitive and extra emphasis was used. The listeners who took that emphasis to heart and put Jesus' words into action received the maximum results on their changed lives.

We can read those same words today and put them into practice in our own lives. Jesus' words might force us to answer questions we would prefer not to. But by facing the truth of our own condition we can receive the maximum positive result.

I tell you the truth!



Thanks for all you do.

**Brian**

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From The Mountaintop to the Valley

**The Rules Will Set You Free**

Our first reaction to a set of rules is to see them as a restriction, as something that limits our freedom and keeps us from having all the fun we “deserve”. In reality, rules and regulations are frequently put into place to protect us from dangers we can’t see, or from the potential recklessness of others. Imagine one of those big indoor water parks without any rules...kids running wild... people cannon balling into the lazy river...people swimming in jeans and hoodies... no life guards. See how rules can be helpful?

***“I will always obey your law, forever and ever. I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.” Psalm 119 44-45***

The writer of this Psalm found freedom in God’s law not restriction. Like a child playing in a fenced-in backyard he knew exactly how big his safe place was, he knew that harmful things were kept on the outside and he knew that his Father had a good view of what he was up to.

Jesus showed us that we could never attain the perfection needed to be in God’s presence merely by following the law; we need the grace that comes with faith in Christ as our savior. But the teachings in the Old and New Testaments are still the fence that allows us to have all the fun and freedom we can stand!



Thanks for all you do.

Brian



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