

BEVERAGES AND BIBLES

"Whoever drinks beer, he is quick to sleep; whoever sleeps long, does not sin; whoever does not sin, enters Heaven! Thus, let us drink beer!" - Martin Luther

This month: free will and sin

Get to know your neighbors and answer this question - When was the first time you said, "I'm turning into my parents".

Question: How much of our behavior and personality is inherited (nature) and how much of our behavior and personality is learned (nurture)

- "Every instinct that is found in any man is in all men. The strength of the emotion may not be so overpowering, the barriers against possession not so insurmountable, the urge to accomplish the desire less keen. With some, inhibitions and urges may be neutralized by other tendencies. But with every being the primal emotions are there." - Clarence Darrow
- "Attempts to explain behavior in mechanistic terms are commonly denounced as "reductionist" or "determinist." The denouncers rarely know exactly what they mean by those words, but everyone knows they refer to something bad...In either case genetics and neuroscience are showing that a heart of darkness cannot always be blamed on parents or society." - Steven Pinker
- "While genes are pivotal in establishing some aspects of emotionality, experience plays a central role in turning genes on and off. DNA is not the heart's destiny; the genetic lottery may determine the cards in your deck, but experience deals the hand you can play. Scientists have proven, for example, that good mothering can override a disadvantageous temperament." - Thomas Lewis

Question: What does it mean to say we have free will?

- “God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong, but I can't. If a thing is free to be good it's also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having.” - C.S. Lewis
- “A puppet is free as long as he loves his strings.” - Sam Harris
- “[Research] suggests that what we think of as free will is largely an illusion: much of the time, we are simply operating on automatic pilot, and the way we think and act – and how well we think and act on the spur of the moment – are a lot more susceptible to outside influences than we realize.” - Malcolm Gladwell
- “What would it look like for you to approach tomorrow with a sense of honor and privilege, believing that you have work to do in the world, that it matters, that it's needed, that you have a path and you're working your craft?” - Rob Bell

Question: What is sin?

- “God is the only being who is good, and the standards are set by Him. Because God hates sin, He has to punish those guilty of sin. Maybe that's not an appealing standard. But to put it bluntly, when you get your own universe, you can make your own standards.” - Francis Chan
- “For us, [sin] refers to something much more like the human tendency, the human propensity, to fuck up. Or let's add one more word, the human propensity to fuck things up, because what we're talking about here is not just our tendency to lurch and stumble and screw up by accident...It's our active inclination to break stuff, 'stuff' here including moods, promises, relationships we care about, and our own well-being and other people's as well as material objects whose high gloss positively seems to invite a big fat scratch.” - Francis Spufford
- “Sin is looking for the right thing in the wrong place.” - Augustine

- “People to whom sin is just a matter of words, to them salvation is just words too.” - William Faulkner
- “You can use whatever term you want: besetting sin, shadow side, strength and weakness. The very thing that makes you you, that makes you great, that makes you different from everyone else is also the thing that, unchecked, will ruin you. For me, it’s lust for life. It’s energy, curiosity, hunger.”

Question: What are the merits, or faults, in the idea of Original Sin?

- “I am not a saint, unless you think of a saint as a sinner who keeps on trying.” - Nelson Mandela
- “Our fall was, has always been, and always will be, that we aren’t satisfied in God and what He gives. We hunger for something more, something other.” - Ann Voskamp
- “Some rabbis say that, at birth, we are each tied to God with a string, and that every time we sin, the string breaks. To those who repent of their sins, especially in the days of Rosh Hashanah, God sends the angel Gabriel to make knots in the string, so that the humble and contrite are once again tied to God. Because each one of us fails, because we all lose our way on the path to righteousness from time to time, our strings are full of knots. But, the rabbis like to say, a string with many knots is shorter than one without knots. So the person with many sins but a humble heart is closer to God.” - Rachel Held Evans
- “Sin is whatever obscures the soul.” - André Gide

More Questions

- Are all sins equal?
- If nature and nurture means that we aren’t completely responsible for our faults, does that mean we aren’t responsible for our successes?]
- Throughout the Bible, sin is personal and systemic. Which kind of sin is easier for you to recognize? Which kind of sin is harder to change?

From the Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

"Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjacks' wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices. Grace is represented as the Church's inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits. Grace without price; grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. What would grace be if it were not cheap?..."

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock.

Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God."