



fledge: to grow the plumage necessary for flight



Lost Words: Sin Beyond Commands

In the last *fledge*, I wrote about a boy that missed the important thing because he was distracted the lesser thing. And oftentimes, the more important thing is how we use such meaningful and intentional words like sin, faith, and love. In this *fledge*, I will begin to unpack the meaning of 'sin.'

Standing before a couple hundred teens in New England, I asked them to define "sin" for me. A rumble moved over the audience, several shouted out answers, and then one blurted, "Anything we think, do, or say that displeases God." Everyone nodded, excited that someone finally got the right answer articulated for everyone.

I paused. "You've told me what sin does, but you still haven't told me what sin is." The silence loomed as many

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of these Christian kids reared in church and Christian schools realized their answer wasn't good enough.

It is these moments of living a question that,

Sin wrecks us—our bodies, our souls—leaving us on the sideline of life...

I believe, helps us own the question. It will make the answer sit in our souls more deeply than just reading it in an information book.

Sin certainly displeases God. It should also displease us, if we know what it is. Sin wrecks us—our bodies, our souls—leaving us on the sidelines of life with self-absorption and lacking a healthy outlook. It keeps us from loving our neighbors or our friends in the ways that really matter. It keeps us from loving God.

Now, let me tell you about two groups that approach these kinds of questions differently. **Group One** says that when God tells us to do something or not, we should obey because he says so.

Group Two says that God gives us commands because the commands fit the way he made us to be.



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Let's suppose we bought a carton of milk. Both of these groups believe we should respect the expiration label on the carton. However, **Group One** says we should respect the date on the carton because the farmer put it there, without any question as to why the label is there. **Group Two** says we should respect the date on the carton because the farmer put it there for a reason. **Group Two** would explore the nature of milk and how long it takes to go bad. **Group One** is simply concerned with the date. **Group Two** is concerned with the date AND the reasons for the date.

We have both of these groups all over the place today. In society, **Group One** says we should obey the law exactly as it is written. **Group Two** says we should understand the purpose of the law in order to understand the point of the law and how to obey and enforce it more effectively—and know when it may not apply to our situation.

In the church, the same thing happens. **Group One** says we should do what our pastor says or simply do what a Bible verse says. While **Group Two** wants to know 'why' God gave certain commands so they can better understand them.

Both sides have their strengths and weaknesses.



The strength of **Group One** is that they follow laws without question. They just do it obediently.

I don't want a list of "dos and don'ts" or "laws" that don't make any sense.

The weakness of **Group One** is that they don't know when they've

misunderstood or misread the intention of the law in the first place because they don't ask 'why.' They may be imposing ideas and laws on people as the risk of hurting people. And they often think that unless there is a law against an activity, an activity must be right—and vice versa.

The strength of **Group Two** is they understand the spirit of what lies behind certain laws of God and man.

The weakness of **Group Two** is that sometimes it is hard to get to the why behind the laws of God and man and will easily dismiss a law if they don't know a reason for it.

Okay, now, which group are you?



I am more a member of **Group Two** than a member of **Group One**. Yet, I do believe that if we don't know the reason for a certain law of God or man, it is best to follow it as we continue to explore why it is there. And sometimes following reveals new reasons along the way.

Now we are closer to a definition of sin—*beyond commands*. I don't just want an explanation of who likes or doesn't like sin. I don't want lists of "dos and don'ts" or "laws" that don't make any sense.

I want to know what sin is and how it affects my life.

In the next *fledge*, we will explore further what sin is, as well as look at an excerpt of my book, *Living with Questions*.

Got questions/comments?

Feel free to **email us**.

or

Join us for Ask! LIVE Wednesdays 6-9PM pacific

Bring any question or puzzling life situation



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