

destruction. God told Moses: "Phinehas son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron the priest has turned my anger away from the Israelites by being as zealous among them as I was. So I stopped destroying all Israel as I had intended to do in my zealous anger. Now tell him that I am making my special covenant of peace with him. In this covenant, I give him and his descendants a permanent covenant of peace with him. In his covenant, I give him and his descendants a permanent right to the priesthood, for in his zeal for me, his God, he purified the people of Israel, making them right with me" (vv11-13).

5. To be sure, your act of obedience to God has the power to bring peace to your home, your community and possibly your nation. One man's act of obedience led to the peace of a nation as God spared them. How does God bless obedience?

Never discount the importance of obedience! This is real faith. This is what it means to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. How does God bless us when we are real with him and real with each other?

Sin is often violent and always destructive. Thus it requires swift and appropriate action. We would not thrust a spear into someone to combat sin, unless we were fighting a battle on behalf of our country, but how should we confront someone who is on the verge of ruining their life and members of their family? Most churches do not practice spiritual discipline. Yet, is it loving to see someone destroying their life and never say a word? Can we not lovingly speak truth into one another's lives? The theme of the early Wesley class meetings was: "watching over one another in love" — where brothers and sisters in Christ held one another accountable when sinful behavior was wrecking the life of those they knew and loved.

6. How different would our community be if we reclaimed this practice today of "watching over one another in love?"

One Year Bible Readings

Mar. 19: Numbers 28:16-29:40, Luke 3:23-38, Psalm 62:1-12, Proverbs 11:18-19
Mar. 20: Numbers 30:1-31:54, Luke 4:1-30, Psalm 63:1-11, Proverbs 11:20-21
Mar. 21: Numbers 32:1-33:39, Luke 4:31-5:11, Psalm 64:1-10, Proverbs 11:22
Mar. 22: Numbers 33:40-35:34, Luke 5:12-28, Psalm 65:1-13, Proverbs 11:23
Mar. 23: Numbers 36:1-Deut. 1:46, Luke 5:29-6:11, Psalm 66:1-20, Prov.11:24-26
Mar. 24: Deuteronomy 2:1-3:29, Luke 6:12-38, Psalm 67:1-7, Proverbs 11:27
Mar. 25: Deuteronomy 4:1-49, Luke 6:39-7:10, Psalm 68:1-18, Proverbs 11:28

No App For That

Text: Numbers 25:1-18

The Plain Truth

When we choose fake we get _____
instead of _____.

1. Fake is often _____.
2. Fake is never God's _____.
3. Fake will be _____.
4. Fake leads to _____.
5. Real faith requires _____ to _____.

No App For That

Life Group Lesson - Week of March 19

None of us wants fake, and yet we choose between real and fake all the time, often without even thinking. From the sweeteners we put in our coffee to the “who” we put in our relationships, we live in a world where appetites dictate choices. And while all appetites are not bad, our choices do have a ripple effect. When it comes to areas like our faith and close relationships, will we choose real or imitation?

En route to the Promised Land, Israel had many choices to make in the wilderness. As the trek got tough would they be grateful for freedom or would they long to go back to Egypt? Would they trust God’s way or rebel? Would they be holy (set apart) or would they blend in with the surrounding cultures of enemy nations? God’s way is often hard, but it is never fake. As we will see, choosing authenticity is costly but will far outweigh the price we would pay for disobedience in the future.

Read Numbers 25:1-9

In Numbers 22-24, Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, heard about Israel’s defeat over the Amorites. So Balak sent officials to hire a diviner, Balaam, to curse Israel while they were camped on the plains of Moab. Although God did not want Balaam to go along with Balak’s scheme, the Lord eventually allowed Balaam to travel some 400 miles from his home in northwest Mesopotamia to meet with the Moabite king.

Balaam was not permitted to curse the Israelites—God didn’t allow it (Numbers 22:7-12). However, Balaam did later influence the Moabites (namely, the women) to trick the men of Israel into having sex with them so that they would worship their gods. If Israel could not be cursed, at least Moab could bring down Israel through their sexual appetites (Numbers 31:15). God’s anger raged against His people until Phinehas, grandson of Aaron, put an end to the plague that killed 24,000 Israelites.

1. We cringe at this story but must remember sin is ugly (see the blood-stained cross of Christ). These thrill-seeking men disregarded God’s guidelines for marriage and indulged in blatant sexual sin. Sooner or later, all unrepentant sin will be judged. How does Phinehas’ respond to their rebellion?

Read Psalm 139:19-24. How does Phinehas’ response mirror this passage?

Whether it’s saving up for dessert (or not having any at all) or saving yourself for marriage, it’s hard to delay gratification. We want *what we want*—quick and now. Perhaps we give in to fake relationships because we grow impatient, or perhaps because we don’t feel like we are good enough and deep down want to be someone

else. We don’t see the person (and purpose) God has for us. Often our desires to be someone else, or be with someone else, lead us down a path of fake. Continuing to live a fake life leads not only to deep regrets, but eventually to death.

2. Fake is often instant and satisfying. Think of a time you yielded to something convenient and seemingly innocent at first, but in time, it proved to be a dangerous trap. What did you learn from that experience?

It is in day-to-day struggles that our faith is tested and strengthened. As we spend time in God’s Word and prayer, the Lord will teach us how to be wise. Read **James 2:2-8**. How do faith and endurance equip us for real living?

One area we often try fake in order to speed things up is with our finances. Proverbs 13:11 says, “Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows over time.

3. In the space below name some practical things that have helped you avoid instant, fake schemes. In what ways are you developing authentic financial disciplines for life’s long haul?

Sexual intimacy is another area we often try to speed up only to regret later. Paul says, “Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18). An innocent compliment can lead to an invitation to attend lunch with a co-worker. Several lunches can turn into an emotional attachment that can lead to a full-blown affair. An affair can blow up a marriage and cause financial calamity with two households to support. Is it not true that we pay a far greater price in the long run if we are disobedient rather than obedient to God’s will?

4. Think about it. Our culture celebrates all sorts of sexual sin. Why is “sexual immorality a sin against your own body” as stated in 1 Corinthians 6:18?

Think about what makes sexual immorality fake. Outline why sexual immorality leads to idolatry and death, as we see in today’s scripture.

Our Plain Truth states: “When we choose fake we get death instead of life.” Real faith requires real obedience to Christ. We will pay a price for obedience as we choose to delay gratification. Doing the right thing requires sacrifice. But we will pay a far greater price in the long run if we are disobedient to Christ. The Lord wants us to follow in His footsteps, not keep pace with this world. Walking a real walk with Christ (who is never fake!) is hard, but more than worth it in the end.

Read Numbers 25:10-18

The spiritual hero in our story is Phinehas. Verse 11 says God “stopped destroying all of Israel” because of Phinehas—his courage to stand against sin saved the entire nation from