

### How often do you text and drive?

So... what a great pessimistic question to start us off right? I gotta be honest... i do this way more often than I should. I tell myself that I only do it when there are no other cars around, but the truth is, it's more often than that.

[texting and driving] Here's why I bring this up... I know that texting and driving is REALLY BAD. I know that the research that has been done over the last few years is staggering. TV shows, movies have all pointed us to this. Research has even be thrown all over the internet stating that texting and driving is way worse than drinking and driving! We even have specific signs in school zones saying that even talking on your phone is illegal. Some cities and states have even made hands free devices the only legal way to use your phone in the car. I know this. I BELIEVE that these statistics are true and accurate. But do I really....

Now obviously in this example, there's a HUGE disconnect between our belief and our behavior. I would say we all BELIEVE that we BELIEVE texting and driving is bad, but the fact that we text and drive suggests we really BELIEVE texting and driving is bad or dangerous for EVERYONE ELSE. But I am such an amazing driver that I can do it and not hurt anyone. right?

That's definitely embarrassing for us to admit. And I'm a bit embarrassed to say that I struggle with this. It's uncomfortable to admit that while in our brain we would affirm that this thing is TRUE, our actions don't always line up. That's not fun for us to say out loud, because we all want to believe that we are a people formed and shaped by our beliefs, But what happens instead is that we promote fake beliefs to make ourselves feel better. Instead of our actions being products of our belief that texting and driving is dangerous, we promote the false belief that "I can because I'm that good." of course, if someone was following behind us, they may put to question that assumption about our driving skills.

We would all agree that our beliefs should shape and reinforce our behavior, and in some instances that is the case for sure. But what happens 100% of the time is our behavior reveals what we truly believe. And this is GOOD NEWS. Our behaviors can in fact act as a window into our inner self and reveal to us what we truly believe.

this becomes particularly important for those of us in THIS room. Church for many of us is a group of people that have a certain set of beliefs? In fact, to become a Christian, many have boiled it down to accepting, believing and confessing a certain set of believes. And while believing certain truths is important: Jesus is God, Jesus died for you, etc. ...while what we believe matters, I would suggest that if those beliefs do not inform and shape the way we behave, then they are pointless. That's a pretty bold statement Sprang, where did you come up with that? Thanks, i'm glad you asked. Jesus has an encounter with someone that asks a very similar question and Jesus' answer was just as much concerned with behavior as it was with beliefs. In fact, he tells a story.

A story that we know as "The Good Samaritan." This is a story that has broken out of just the church conversation and become a phrase that is used in our culture as well. This a great reason why we've been doing this series...We hear the word Samaritan and we think that's a good person ....but that's not who the Samaritans were in the days of Jesus' listeners... I we were first centruy Palestinians we would have a very different reaction to the word Samaritan. A story about a Good Samaritan wouldn't make us happy, it'd make us angry. so if Jesus were telling us this story today...

Imagine with me, [dinner gathering] that you've gathered at a friend's house to hear this new teacher and a seminary professor, Dr. Jon O'Malley has stood up and asked, "How does one receive eternal life?"

Jesus responds with a question, "What does the bible say?"

"Love God with your entire being, your entire heart, your whole soul and every ounce of strength, and with all your mind.... Second, you must love your neighbor as much as you love yourself."

The teacher claps his hands in pleasure and says with clear sincerity, "Well said. Do that and you'll live."

But Dr. O'Malley has one more question, "And who counts as my neighbor?"

This time, Jesus will answer, but with a story....

*The Good Muslim by Matt Mikalatos (Available in [The First Time We Saw Him](#))*

Now, if you're feeling a bit uncomfortable, a bit uneasy, if there's a tension in your heart and stomach, then you are exactly where Jesus wants you to be. That's why he used a Muslim. To shock us into seeing what's really at stake...

At this point, I'm sure many have some questions: "So pastor, are you saying that all Muslims are 'good'?" "Are you saying that Muslims are in?" "Are you saying that all roads lead to heaven?"

But this story was not a response to, "Who is going to heaven?" This is a response to "how do I receive eternal life?" The point of the story isn't to tell us who's in and who's out. The point of the story is to show us that we can be pastors and teachers, and seminary students, we can have all the right answers, and the better arguments. we can win every debate with every person that wants to argue all the details of religion and faith, and at the end of the day we can miss the life that Jesus offers. We can have all the right beliefs and yet if they are not forming and shaping our behavior then we are missing it.

So what do we need to get this life? We need.... enemies.

See, the Muslim is not the hero of the story in the literary sense. The trucker is the protagonist. He's the guy we want to see come out alright. And the Muslim is an ally. In narrative terms, the "ally" is the person who helps the protagonist attain their goal. He comes alongside the trucker to ensure that he continues to live. Seems to me, what Jesus is advocating is that the people that we are most different from, the people we despise and hate the most, they are the ones that hold the key to unlocking this eternal life in us. That more than anything else in our life, more than anyone else in our life, our greatest enemies are our greatest allies.

but I have my family, and my church, and my cgroup, and my accountability group, and my cell group, my bible study, my LTG, my men's group women's group, Recovery group, AA group, NA, SA. yes and those are all great things to help us work out what we believe and learn how to love. But where the rubber meets the road, what really puts it to the test, where we really get to see how our beliefs are shaping our behavior. how do we treat our enemies.

Because Jesus says in another conversation, "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing

more than others? Do not even pagans do that?” (Matthew 5:46-47) In our context today, what I hear Jesus saying. If you only love those that love you, then what good is it. Even ISIS does that. Phew. You think I want to say that? I don’t want to say that. I feel the same thing that you feel. But I can’t sugar coat the words of Jesus. We can’t just wear our beliefs as a badge of honor. He’s calling us to a life where what we believe shapes and molds our behavior, and if we believe that what Jesus says is true and don’t live it out, we are in danger of missing it altogether. We said it over and over in our Summer Love series... **Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. (1 John 4:20)**

There’s the tension. There’s that uncomfortable feeling in the pit of your stomach. That’s exactly where Jesus wants us to be. He wants us to live there. We see the tension and the conflict as bad things but God sees them as good. He calls us to live in that tension, embrace it, because the struggle strengthens us. Like a butterfly that must get the strength to fly from the struggle of breaking out of the cocoon, so we get the strength to live from the struggle of loving those that hate us.

These words of Jesus reveal to us how we are guilty at times of saying “I believe you Jesus”, but.... our behavior doesn’t line up. Jesus uses the image of our enemy coming to our rescue so that we can see our enemies as a resource of love. they keep requiring more and more, and they build up a love endurance in us that loving those that love us never will.

So how can we be reminded of this? What’s an image that will help make this real for us. This isn’t just about the conflict with militant Muslims and ISIS, but they are a very real tangible evil our culture is aware of. Considering how we love ISIS can help hammer this point home. **[ISIS flag]** This is the flag of ISIS. For them it says “there is no God but allah. allah. prophet. muhammad,” but when we see this flag, the emotion and the feeling that it evokes is anger and hate. There’s a church that saw this as an opportunity to show their community not to hate. They took the ISIS flag and placed the words of Jesus on it, **[LOVE flag]** so that whenever they see the ISIS flag, they will be reminded to love.

This same idea is nothing new to the Christian faith. We have been co-opting images and seasons and stories for the message of God’s love and forgiveness for ages. We see this type of image every time we gather here, we see it on tatoos and pop singers necklaces. It’s the cross. It’s not a pretty image. While it may be shiny and gold, what it represented was a weapon of the enemy. The Romans used it to kill those that we threaten the empire. But then one day, a man named Jesus was captured beaten and killed. He took a weapon that was meant to be about hate and power, and turned it into a reminder of God’s love and grace for ALL.

So today we are going to respond to this message by taking communion....

**For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! – Romans 5:10**

**[Communion Slide]** When we were God’s enemies, he loved us so much that he gave his life to show it.