

If you've ever disappointed someone, you know that it can be a difficult feeling to endure. Parents sometimes disappoint children, and children sometimes disappoint parents. Friends often disappoint one another, as do coworkers and neighbors not to mention siblings. And of course, spouses often do the same, spouses who have declared their everlasting love, but who quickly find out just how difficult marriage can be. And when we disappoint someone, we often experience any one (or more than one) of several emotions - sadness, anger at ourselves, worry, pain, and even frustration. That last one is a tricky one, because it usually comes from a place of not knowing - not knowing exactly what we did wrong, or how we could have handled things differently. And sometimes, when we've hurt someone and want to make sure we don't do it again, we resort to a kind of command . . . . .

Just tell me what you want me to do!

It's as if things have gotten too complicated, too confusing, and we just want things to be a lot simpler, a lot clearer. And if the person we have hurt would just tell us how to act, tell us what to do or not to do, well, that would make things a whole lot better, would make our relationship a much smoother ride.

I believe a black and white world is just easier to live in. Many of us go to work and want to know exactly what we need to do that day, not be given some nebulous project that is due three months down the road. Many of us want our teachers to spell out for us exactly what the upcoming test will look like, rather than remain in the dark. And what we're usually hoping for is an objective type of test - true/false, multiple choice, and the like - one with "right" answers and "wrong" answers. And kids like to know exactly what kinds of behaviors will get them in trouble with their parents, so that they can do their very best to avoid them.

And with God . . . . .? Do we want the exact same thing?

It's easier to see God as the one who simply makes the rules, right? Our faith tells us what to do or not do, what to believe or not believe, what behaviors will get us "in trouble" with God, and which ones will "earn" us God's praise. Most of us don't want to have to struggle to figure things out, we don't want to be constantly wondering whether we are on the right path or not. We want two columns, and want to make sure we have way more boxes checked in the good one than in the not-so-good one. In other words . . . . .

God - just tell me what you want me to do!

Oh - if it were that easy. Now, in one sense, we have that very "information". We received it from our ancestors in faith long ago, the Jewish people who received God's revelation and who ensured that it would be preserved and passed down to future generations. And Jesus didn't negate those things, he didn't abolish the Mosaic Law that had shaped the behaviors and practices of the Chosen People for centuries.

He fulfilled it. In other words, he took those sacred teachings and (for lack of a better way of description) "added" to them what was "missing" - took those teachings and brought a fullness to them that seemingly hadn't been there before. And the thing he seems to have brought is on full display in the beautiful words we just heard from the Gospel of Matthew, what we call the Beatitudes.

And when we read those profound words, when we take them to heart, it seems clear that it's not enough to just want God to "tell us what to do or not to do". What is far more important, far more central to authentic faithfulness, is wanting God to do something altogether different. God, ... just tell me WHO you want me to BE!

And the Beatitudes help show us that very thing, they help show us that being "blessed" is more than just modifying a few behaviors. It's a whole way of thinking. A whole way of seeing. A whole set of God-centered

attitudes. A whole way of BEING. You see, God didn't die just so that we could know a few new "rules" to live by. Rather, he died to make US new creatures, new people, he died to save us and re-create us as a people infused with his grace, infused with his Spirit, so that we could infuse the world with the same.

Yes, we absolutely still need to know right from wrong, that goes without saying. We still need some guardrails by which to live, guardrails that keep us from driving off the road. But faith is so much more than that. And the incredible thing is that once we start seeing as God sees, once we start allowing God to transform us into the beautiful people he created us to be and died for us to be - all those other things will take care of themselves, all those "rules" will become second nature to us, because they will line up perfectly with the person each of us is. Imagine that.

And that's not easy, for it requires a kind of openness, a kind of humility, a kind of willingness to not always have everything spelled out for us, not have everything black and white and crystal clear. I guess you could say that it takes trust, the kind of trust that moves us to give God "permission" to make of us what he wants, gives him the okay to change us in whatever way he sees fit. And you know what? That could never make us a disappointment in God's eyes. I guess we really are blessed.