

Bad Ink: A Second Chance
Joe Stull - Mar 18, 2018

Series Big Idea: We've heard the stories of people who made a foolish decision to get a tattoo that later in life they regretted. And there are a few stories of folks who got a terrible tattoo because of a mistake made by a tattoo artist. That's what we call "bad ink." We all make wrong or foolish decisions. We put ourselves in a place where we are hurt or abused or allowed others to be hurt. We sin and face the consequences. We sabotaged a relationship. We wasted all our money because of an addiction. We played some role in what ended up in a divorce, abuse, bankruptcy, a broken dream, or the loss of a loved one. We didn't love someone the way we wish we had. And there is the regret and sorrow for the opportunities wasted, risks not taken, words and love never expressed, gifts not given and forgiveness withheld. It is easy to keep reliving the regret. But our God is a God of second chances. He can use the regret to remind us that the life we want to leave behind, through his unending grace, will lead us out of the bad ink. We are offered a perpetual second chance by a God of infinite grace.

Message Big Idea: We all have messed up and sometimes we mess up big time. And we live in the regret of what we did or didn't do. We don't have to forget our sin or the past, but God can use the regret to remind us of the depth of his unending grace. Our challenge is to trust in a God of second chances and unending grace. God's grace helps us use our past sin(s) to remind us of where we do not want to go, while keeping our focus on following Jesus forward.

Main Idea: God's unending grace will help us learn from our past failure in order to focus on following Jesus now.

Main Text: John 21:1-17 **Supporting texts:** Luke 22:54-62

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

Create 5-7 questions based on your message that life group or small group could use. It is best to write these after you have your message fairly complete. Avoid yes/no answers and seek real personal discussion and application of key points. After you write your question, imagine yourself asking that in a small group in your home. These questions are to challenge people to process beyond your message.

1. Is there a time or specific instance from your life that you regret the most? Do you feel you feel you are still holding on to the shame from this time? Why?
2. How do you think Peter felt after denying Jesus? How do you think Jesus felt?
3. Do you ever feel not good enough for God or experience shame from your past? If so, how do you deal with it?
4. Are there people/situations in your past you feel you can reconcile? If so, what can you do about it?
5. Are there people from your past that you need to forgive? If so, how can you go about it?

Issues, Questions, Program & Creative Ideas:

- Interview Troy Tompkins at offering time - Glen
- Pictures of bad ink - actual tattoo

Main Idea: Don't live looking backwards, but live in grace today.

Message:

Hi everyone! My name is Joe and I am one of the teaching pastors here at Pantano. As I was preparing for this message today, I got to thinking about how much culture has shifted and changed over time. It is just interesting to me, think for a moment what use to be popular that has gone down in popularity. Bell bottom jeans, AOL, 8tracks, video rental stores. (give time to respond to each question) Does anyone miss walking through a video store, wondering what movie you are going to watch?

But on the flip side of that, there are things that use to be taboo or unpopular that have become normal staples in society, and one of the most popular nowadays are tattoos. Tattoos used to be something that only sailors or criminals would get. But now, you have everyone from top-level executives to young creatives getting tattoos and it has become a normal thing. I even have tattoos. I have a couple of tattoos actually. I have a cross on my left arm that I got right as I was getting out of the Marine Corps and making that transition into ministry work. I also have one on my calf of the infantry unit I was in. And each of my tattoos has a specific meaning to me. I am sure there are even plenty of others here right now that have tattoos too.

But inevitably, some people, not all but some, make the decision to get tattoos that they later end up regretting. It's the risk you take when you get a permanent tattoo. Here are a couple examples, people get a tattoo of a girlfriend's name. Or they get a tattoo and it is misspelled. Or they let their friend or someone getting into tattooing for the first time gives them a tattoo and it ends up looking something like this I am pretty sure that is a self portrait of our worship leader Chris Hamlin.

And what ends up happening, is people make the choice to get a tattoo for whatever reason and then they end up regretting it. And every day they wake up and see these tattoos and they are constant reminders of the regret that they have.

And despite how you feel about tattoos, they are a really good illustration because tattoos are not that different from choices in our own lives. And just like a tattoo the choices we make in life, good or bad stick with us. And despite all the good things that

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may have happened in our lives it is those bad choices, those mistakes that end up sticking with us the longest.

And that is why today we are starting a two-week series called Bad Ink, talking about the choices we have made. Because for whatever reason, we have circumstances that happen in our lives, we make a decision to do something and then we end up regretting it. And sometimes these mistakes are small and we live with the regret for a while and then in time it passes and we move on. But for some of us, there are things in our past that no matter how far away from them we get, we can't seem to move past the regret. Here are some examples of things people regret.

- "Nose piercing are cool, until you get 160 million infections"
- "I wish I would have gone to college."
- "I wish I would have taken that job" or "I wish I would have left that job early"
- "I started drinking with I was 15. I wanna quit but I just can't."
- "I wish I would have never cheated on my spouse."
- "I regret having to give up my baby for adoption even though I know it was the right thing to do"

All of these that I just read, are real quote from people. It is not easy to hear these regrets and know that there are people on the other side of those statements that are hurting and broken. Maybe some of the regrets in your life you are thinking about right now are similar to the ones I just read or maybe not, but the truth is, is that we all have regrets. We all have things in our past that we are not proud of. And if we were to take a close look at those examples, you can see there are a couple different ways regret seems to manifest itself in our lives. There is the regret of things we have done. Like someone who has cheated on a spouse or has an addiction, you can't seem to get away from. Then there is the regret that we get from lost opportunities. Like not taking that job you could have or not tell someone that you love them.

And while regret is in some ways normal, what the evil one likes to do is take the regret, and the hurt, and the mistakes from that moment in our past and fills it with shame and then trap us in it. And instead of getting to move on and experience all that God has for us, we relive that regret over and over and over again. And every day when you get up and look in the mirror you don't see yourself or how God sees you, you just see that mistake, that thing you can't get away from. Just like that tattoo you regret, when you look down at it and you feel like there is nothing you can do, there no way to get rid of it. And you feel trapped.

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So what do we do? (pause) What do we do with the regrets and mistakes of our past?

Take your Bibles and turn with me to **John 21:15-17 (page 742)**

Today we are going to look at someone that had a huge regret. Someone that probably has the biggest regret in all of the New Testament, and that is Peter. And as you turn to John 21, I want to tell you a little about Peter and some of his background.

Now if you don't know a lot about Peter, he was a pretty interesting guy. Before Jesus comes around, Peter is a fisherman. And Peter was really a typical example of what a fisherman would be like during this time. He would have been a rough guy, probably a bit unkempt and for sure had a temper. And when Jesus called Peter to follow him, Peter has no real idea where his life is going to take him, but in time Peter a pretty amazing journey with Christ. He gets to see Jesus perform miracles and really is the first to say that Jesus was the Messiah.

But when we get to the night of Jesus' betrayal is when it gets really interesting. You see when Jesus is in the garden praying, Judas, who was one of Jesus' disciples comes and betrays Jesus and while Jesus is being arrested Peter takes out a sword and cuts off one of the high priest's servant's ear. And in that moment Peter is ready to fight for Jesus, but Jesus stops him because he knows that he has to fulfill what God has sent him to earth for.

And while Jesus is taken away and questioned, Peter and others gather around a fire and people begin to question him. People begin asking him if he is a follower or a disciple of Jesus. It happens once and Peter denies it, it happens again and Peter denies Jesus once more and then finally when pressed someone asked him again said they saw Peter in the garden with Jesus and for a third and final time Peter denies Jesus again. And as soon as he denies Jesus the third time a rooster crows. And suddenly, Peter realizes what he had done. Jesus had even warned Peter and told him that he would deny Jesus and Peter never thought it was possible. But there he was, standing around a fire as Jesus is being questioned, right before he is whipped and beaten and Peter simply says he does not know Jesus.

And as Peter denies Jesus for the third time, in Luke 22:61 it says that at that moment Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter. Imagine for a moment the regret and the shame that must have washed over Peter when he realized what he had done. Imagine how he must have felt every time he sat around a fire after that. Every time he looked

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into the flames he would just be reminded of how guilty he was. It probably became a reminder. Just like a bad tattoo that you can't erase. Just like some of us when we look in the mirror or on our drive home from work or laying in bed at night and all that captures our minds is the regret of what we could have done differently.

Peter, full of regret and shame, Peter runs off. But thank God the story doesn't end there.

Now when we pick up in John chapter 21, Peter knows that Jesus has risen from the dead but we still have not see them reconcile what happened before his death. So when we look in John 21, Peter and some of the disciples are out fishing. And I have to imagine that Peter is so full of regret that he is out on that boat and all he is thinking about is what he had done to Jesus. Probably thinking about the past and wishing he had done things differently. So they're out fishing all night, they haven't caught anything and then they see a man standing on the shore. They can't tell who it is but the man yells to them and tells them to throw their nets to the other side of the boat. And when they do, they catch a huge amount of fish. So many fish they can't even haul them into the boat. And suddenly when Peter realized that the man standing on the shore is Jesus, who was crucified and is now raised from the dead, he leaps from the boat and swims all the way to the shore.

Let's pick up the story in **John 21:15-17 (page 742)**

Three times Peter denied Jesus. Three times people asked him if he was a follower of Jesus and three times he lied and said he had nothing to do with him. And in, in John 21, sitting around a fire, just like the fire he sat around when he denied Christ, Jesus asked him "Do you love me?" not once, not twice, but three times, "Peter, do you love me?"

And I have to imagine that Peter is sitting in front of this fire with Jesus, the man he denied right before he was executed and then raised from the dead and Peter has to be full of tears. Choked up, full of shame and regret and Jesus asks him "Do you love me" and Peter says "Of course I love you" and Jesus tells him to "Feed my sheep"

You see Jesus is often compared to a shepherd. And what Jesus is saying to Peter right now is that if you love me, take care of my people, love my people. God is calling Peter back to him, Jesus is giving Peter a second chance. He didn't leave Peter in the shame and regret of his past but he sought Peter out and said if you love me then come back to me and love as I have loved.

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All of us have had an “I am Peter” moment, sitting around our own version of a fire and every time we look into it all I see and feel is the regret of the past. We can’t help but think about that one mistake we made, maybe we even avoid certain places and conversations because all those things do is take us back to that moment we can’t seem to get away from. And that is what the evil one wants, he wants us to live in the past. He wants us to relive our regrets over and over because when we do we get stuck in a place that paralyzes us with fear and we become full of shame and doubt. And then before you know it we spend too much time of the time in our lives looking backward.

There is a quote that I like that says “Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards. Regret is something to embrace and love. Use it to look back and learn. But don’t live looking backwards. Look forward in the direction God has for you.”

Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him and three times he replies yes, then once that is done Jesus doesn’t continue to push or ask him about things in the past, he looks to Peter’s future and says “Follow me” And the way that is translated is important because what Jesus is really saying is not just follow me here and now, he is saying “Keep following me. And in that moment, Peter know he has been fully forgive and fully restored. And sometimes that is the opposite of what we do, often time we can live in the past and beat ourselves up for the mistakes we have made but when we look at this example of Peter and Jesus, Jesus doesn’t shame Peter or calls him out specifically for what he has done, he simply gives Peter a chance, three times in fact, to say “I love you” and when that is done, they move on. That is grace. That is forgiveness.

Now we have to be clear, Jesus doesn’t necessarily remove the consequences of our regrets and mistakes. For example, if you committed a felony a long time ago, even though you are a different person now it can be hard to find a job or people may stereotype you because of your past mistakes. But what he does do, is he forgives and he restores us back to him.

And that is my very point today, **Don’t live looking backwards, but live in grace today.** Don’t spend time looking back at the mistakes you have made, dwelling on them, wishing you could have done things differently but start moving forward in God.

Now you may be asking what is my role in all of this? What do I do with a broke past full of regret?

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First, is that **we have to repent**. And what repent means that we turn away from the life that we use to live. I know that it is much easier said than done. Some of us have lived with addictions or the burden of our mistakes our whole lives. And if that is you, and you feel stuck then let someone know. Talk to someone, get help. That is why we have prayer partners here in the front at the end of every service because we want to be there for you and support you. There are people right here at Pantano that want to help move you forward in your relationship with God. And maybe for some of us we are afraid to even say our regret outloud and we have never, ever verbalized the regret that we have. Because we are afraid that if we verbalize it, that it will somehow become more real or that it will somehow have more power over us, but there is power in verbalizing it. I have even found in my experience that verbalizing it actually freeing. And the place to start, is to verbalize it to God, then when the time is right and with the right person if you must, verbalize it with someone you trust. There is power in asking for forgiveness out loud.

That leads me to the next step, which is, **repair what you can**. A lot of times the regrets of our past have to do with other people. And maybe it is not possible for you to repair a broken relationship from your past or fix the mistakes you made, but if you have the ability to do it, you should try. Jesus didn't let Peter live the rest of his life in the shame and mistakes of his past. He sought Peter out, forgave him and resorted that relationship.

Now you may be saying, Pastor Joe, I have done all of that. I don't live the way I use to and I have ask God to forgive me every day and I still feel shame. I still feel regret. And that is why this third thing is so important.

The third and final thing you need to do is **start living restored in God's grace**. Remember what we said earlier, the devil, the evil one, wants us to get stuck in our past where we feel like we are imprisoned. And what happens is that we get paralyzed by the past and we don't live looking forward we live looking back and what might have been. Don't live in the past but live today in God's grace. Trust what God's word says, he has forgiven you. Look at the examples of people in the Bible God uses, murders, thieves, fisherman, every day people that he uses for his glory.

And what will begin to happen when you live in God's grace, is those reminders of mistakes and the regrets of our past begin to change from reminders of our mistakes to reminders of God's grace. I suspect that just like a bad tattoo, after Peter denied Jesus, looking into a fire reminded him of the mistakes he made. But after that encounter with

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Jesus, it changed. What could be viewed as a symbol of failure and regret could now be viewed as a symbol of God's grace.

I know it can be hard, it is hard to look back on your life and the terrible things you have done loop in your mind over and over and you don't feel like God love you or forgives you. But you don't have to live in the regrets and mistakes of your past. God loves you and he knows you better than anyone. God's grace was bought at such a high price, his death on the cross paved the way for our forgiveness. Don't live in the regret of the past, but today, no matter what you have done know that you have a second chance in Christ and live in his grace.

Don't live looking backwards, but live in grace today.

SONG: Amazing Grace (My chains are gone)