

Playground
No Littering
October 18, 2015

PRELUDE – Only Grace

Songs – Rejoice

Beautiful Things

Prayer – Nathan

Video Announcements - Rick

Band – “So Unsexy”

Offering

INTRO

So unsexy, so unloved, so boring, so ignorant.

All these little rejections how they add up quickly

One sideways look and I feel so ungood

I'm 13 again am I 13 for good?

This song so clearly illustrates our second rule in our playground series...No Littering. The principle that the junk going on inside of us has an impact on our relational playground and how we experience life.

REVIEW

We'll come back to this rule in just a moment. Well...

Good morning all. I'm Shannon Horn, one of the associate pastors here at NHCC and as Rick said, we are in week two of our Playground series. Simple rules for getting along with others.

When we were kids, I'm certain most of us enjoyed playing on the playground but we also knew there were rules on the playground right? Rules that were designed to help us and others enjoy the playground.

Well The Bible is full of wisdom on how to get along with others. And so we are using the analogy of a playground and the rules that govern them to help us take a look at some of the rules and guidelines that can benefit us in the playground of our adult relationships.

Last week, Rick shared with us the first and foundation rule: Adult Supervision Required.

The key take away being that the relationship

we experience with God directs and influences how we relate to others. If we are experiencing forgiveness, grace, love and our identity in our relationship with God then we are more apt to experience healthier relationships with others. If we are experiencing God's love and grace, we are more gracious and loving with others. If we are experiencing his forgiveness we are more apt to be forgiving with others.

How we relate to God is foundational to how we relate to others. Rick had some great wisdom on how we can truly experience a relationship with God not just here (head) but here (heart). If you were not here or if you are still trying to grasp that concept, I want to strongly encourage you to go to the media section of our website or to our app and

watch, listen or read last week's message.

It's truly foundational for the rest of the series.

See if we aren't getting our identity, love, grace, truth, mercy, forgiveness, etc. from a relationship with God then we will seek to get it from our circumstances and others. We will seek to make others, our successes, our jobs idols asking them to do the job that only God can do...to fill us and make us feel whole.

Which brings us to today's rule. No Littering.

All of us are broken in some way. All of us have weaknesses, wounds and waste which litter up our relationships.

But far too often we are obsessed over what

others are doing, or not doing, or have done or have not done.

Matthew 7:3-5 describes our condition well:

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” (Matthew 7:3-5 NIV)

When it comes to dealing with our brokenness, our baggage, our junk, our litter so to speak, we often struggle to see clearly the plank in our eye. We can so easily see the litter that others are bringing to the

playground but our own insecurities, pride and denial create blind spots about our own junk.

Last week Rick was talking about when God gave him a vision for the NHCC staff culture and how they were to deal with relationships. This happened around year four and as I was listening to him speak last week, I was reminded that that vision was coming to be just about the time I left my career to come to work for NHCC.

I had been working in higher ed, specifically as a Residence Hall Director for several years and I loved it but through a series of providential events, I found myself coming on to the staff at NHCC as the Director of Administration. I find it humorous that this

vision would come right at the time I was coming on staff as I considered myself to be pretty darn good at relationships. I was and still am a highly relational person. But as I would soon find out after coming on to the staff, I wasn't quite as good as I thought because I was failing to obey Rule #2-No Littering.

At the time I came on to the staff at NHCC, I was going through a time of heightened insecurity. It had been less than a year since we had left our home in Springfield. Springfield was like heaven on earth in my mind. It's where I found my place. It's where I met and married my husband. It's where my friends were. It's where our families gathered together. It's where my son was born. It's

where I felt like I mattered. It's where I felt I belonged.

In May of 98, we left Springfield to come to Kansas City for Price's job and within the month we started attending NHCC. And as I mentioned through a series of providential events I came to work at NHCC but I was totally unaware of how the litter that was lurking in my heart was trashing my relational playground. My insecurities were at an all-time high. I was insecure in my marriage calling my Price 5-7 times a day at work, just to check in and tell him I loved him and wanting him to tell me the same. I found myself growing increasingly jealous of his female co-workers. I struggled with feeling insecure at work because I didn't feel spiritual enough and felt like I just didn't belong.

Which one of these doesn't belong I often wondered and of course the answer was always me. I worked in unhealthy ways as a way to stuff my I figured if I worked harder, longer hours and went above and beyond I'd feel better and less insecure, I may not be spiritual enough like everyone else but I could work hard. I struggled with my role as mom, feeling like a failure because I didn't stay home and it seemed like that's what all the good Christian women were doing.

Point is...I was a mess and I was making a mess of my relational world by ignoring the litter in my life. In a series of events, it became clear I really needed to talk with someone and Kitti was willing to mentor me. She started by addressing the fact that I wasn't doing so hot at Rule #1 either...Adult

Supervision Required. You see...I understood that Jesus died for my sins but I wasn't grasping the whole relationship with him and I most certainly was not seeking my identity in him.

She challenged me to do many of the things Rick mentioned last week... Bible reading, journaling, worship, silence, time in prayer but with the focus on connecting with God not just trying to make up for my bad behavior and checking things off my "good Christian" checklist.

So as we got those foundational practices in place, Kitti walked me through a book called Changes that Heal by Henry Cloud. The book is one of the best out there for dealing with your litter.

As we embarked on this mentoring journey, I learned three key truths.

- 1) You are the constant in all your relationships. If your relational playground is a mess, you should take a good long look in the mirror and seek to understand your role in it.

This was a tough pill to swallow. See I had had a lot of yucky stuff happen to me in my life and I wanted to blame it, blame them. I wanted to be the victim. And though it was true that I had a lot of pain in my life from the choices of others, I had to learn that my ability to deal or my refusal to deal was perpetuating chaos in my life and in my relational world. I was refusing to

acknowledge the litter because I wanted to blame ALL of it on someone else. I wanted to address the ways they needed to change which brought me to the second truth I learned.

2) You can't fix anyone else. You CAN deal with yourself and your responses to the world around you and the litter within you.

I've heard it more times than I care to count (and now I say the same thing because I know it's true)...I can't fix them. You are coming to deal with *your* litter. I can help you address yours but the focus has to be on you and your healing and that healing cannot be based on what someone else does or does not do. You can only control you and work

with God to heal you. Eyes on your plank. Let's start there. And I've learned again and again and again that...

3) Addressing the litter in your life, takes three things. God's truth, God's grace and time.

This was the third thing I learned. That getting rid of the litter in my life would require me to acknowledge the truth, receive grace and to repeat that process over and over and over again.

These three truths were difficult to grasp and honestly still are and again it all goes back to that foundational principle from last week. When I'm not engaged in my relationship with God, I struggle with dealing with my own

litter. When things with God are out of whack I tend to have one of two responses to my own junk.

My first response is, I want to ignore it and avoid the truth of it. I stick my head in the sand, I look the other way, I blame someone else for pigging up our relationship. I can't take in God's truth and see my part in it all. I ignore the litter and therefore I can't receive God's grace because I see no need for it.

When I'm in this place, I tend to overinflate my virtue. I tend to see myself as the martyr. I think it's all up to me. I'm doing my best and everyone else needs to step up their game. I can't imagine anything I'm doing is causing litter on the relational playground.

The other response that often comes out when I'm not connected with God, is the obsession over my failings. In this scenario, I'm painfully aware of my litter but I'm obsessed with it. I'm stuck in the middle of the mess feeling like an utter failure. I sabotage my relationships, pushing people away. Again I'm not hearing truth because I can't see a way out. I'm not experiencing grace because I don't feel I deserve it.

Neither of these scenarios are going to bring health to my relationships because in both scenarios I make it all about me. Either I'm one up and better than you or I'm one down and not worthy of your time.

But if I can push past this, if I can go back to that foundational truth and find time with the

Lord, find my identity in Him, experience his truth and grace, I can begin to get healing.

So assuming I want to do that. Assuming I want to pursue the Lord and deal with my own litter. Assuming I know I am the constant in my relationships and that I can only deal with my own junk not obsess over making others deal with theirs. Assuming I'm prepared to receive God's truth, His grace and the time it takes to work through my litter. What kinds of litter are we talking about? What kinds of things might need to be addressed?

Well as I thought about the litter in my life. The places the Lord has had to deal with me. I came up with three levels of litter.

The first is the equivalent of papers, wrappers, etc. Not a tremendous nuisance at first but left unchecked it can make a huge mess in your relational playground. Like this

(playground covered in trash)

This first level is weaknesses. We are all wired a specific way. Introvert/Extrovert. A variety of personality types: At NHCC we use the DISC Personality Profile a lot

(DISC image)

which includes 4 main types of personalities the D “Let’s Do it My Way” personalities, the I “Life of the Party” personalities; the S “Steady and Supportive” personalities and the C “Cautious and Compliant” personalities.

We have different gifts and skills. We are all wired a certain way and left to our own, it gets really easy to begin to think the way you see the world is the only way to see the world.

This was a huge issue in our marriage when Price and I first started out together. We had amazing marriage counseling. We learned so much but the one thing neither of us remember learning...was that by personality and preference we were polar opposites and how to address that. Truly in our case opposites attracted...exact opposites.

I'm a pretty high extrovert and he is a pretty high introvert. I'm an ESFP on the Myers Brigg test and he is the exact opposite the

INTJ type. I'm an "I" Life of the Party type and he's a "C" Cautious and compliant type.

I had no clue what being an introvert meant and what he needed to recharge. I didn't even ask. I was far too busy filling our calendars with social engagements and fun, fun, fun. Our approaches to our calendar looked a lot like this cartoon.

(How Intros and Extros view a night in)

I could not comprehend why he would want to stay home and why he would need to have downtime. That's what sleeping was for. You can be alone then I thought. Also because I didn't understand this it introduced some doubt in to my mind. While he would be

reading or trying to recharge, I'd be hovering around him.

What are you doing? Pay attention to me pay attention to me. And because he seemed to want time alone I thought he just wanted time away from me. I had no idea he needed to recharge his brain, refill his soul. And because I wasn't seeking my identity in Jesus, I would get all frustrated by this and of course, I certainly tormented him with statements like why don't you love me, what have I done wrong, etc.

This continued with our approach to our household and family. By personality I lean to relationships and by personality he leans to task. He would come home and be frustrated because the house was a mess. He couldn't

understand why that didn't bother anyone else (i.e., me).

I would get frustrated with him because I've read all those sappy poems. There will be time to clean the dishes and the house when our kids are gone. And we could get more polarized. He would get more and more frustrated because he'd come home from work, cook, and clean, do house stuff and I'd be frustrated because I'm trying to spend time with others-our kids, our neighbors, on the phone with our friends and family. I thought...what does it matter, that stuff can wait...people are more important. We can always clean this weekend or next weekend or next month or when the kids leave for college or before they come home with the grandkids.

And sadly it wasn't just with Price that my weaknesses were coming out. As an "I" and extrovert, I can relate to this:

(anything you think you don't say)

Yes...I have a terrible tendency to blurt out stuff, interrupt people, talk over them, get distracted by shiny things☺ oh squirrel.

It never dawned on me that perhaps those were weaknesses that might be affecting my relational playground. That perhaps I might need to at least be aware of it and not just write it off as well that's just the way God made me and you can love me or leave me.

So often when it comes to the way we are wired, our personalities, preferences and gifts, I think we have a tendency to see our way as the “normal” way and the “right” way to see and interact with the world and to make the world a better place. We miss that our strengths can also be our weaknesses that can litter up the relationships.

I’m often reminded of this verse in Romans 12:3 (NIV):

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

Paul goes on to talk about how the body has many parts each with its unique job. And the

truth is each of us are uniquely wired with personality and gifts. We bring something to the table but it can get really easy to see our way as the right way. To see our way of relating or working or whatever as the best way. When the truth is, we all have strengths we bring to the table and we all have weaknesses. None of us get to claim our personality or gifts are the one true personality or gift.

If we want our relational playground to be healthy and litter free we need to stop and consider how our weaknesses might be impacting others.

My relational playground is better and cleaner and healthier when I remember that “it’s not all about me” and my preferences.

So how do you deal with this litter?

If you aren't aware of your personality and preferences, take a test. There are many on-line assessments that are free. The DISC we use a lot around NHCC. I'll post some options on our FB wall this week but you can also just search Myers Briggs; DISC; etc on line

Once you know, seek to understand how you are wired and the good, bad and ugly of that personality type. Rick has done a variety of series over the years addressing the DISC personalities and that would help you to be more aware of the tendencies you might have. I'm hoping to post the info from a series he did a while ago called Maximizing Your

Personality later this week on our FB page and website.

Again “I”s are never going to be “C”s and vice versa, but somewhere between my way is right and your way is wrong is we both bring value to the table. Understand how you and those around you are wired and be aware of your weaknesses and how they impact your relationships and you will help decrease your litter in your relationships.

The second level of litter is equivalent to sticky gum or candy. People don't see it coming, until they step on it and it makes a huge mess.

The second level is wounds. We all have them...those places in us that are painful

when bumped. Maybe it's our physical appearance, our academic or athletic ability, a dream that never happened, etc.

At dinner the other night, I was talking with my kids about this topic and my daughter mentioned seeing a video called "To This Day" that made a huge impact on her. She said it really stuck with her so I checked it out on YouTube. The video is a poetry performance piece that runs about 7 minutes but for the sake of time, I want to show you just one minute excerpt from it but excuse the abruptness of the ending because of the way the video is done it's hard to fade out and catch what the poet is saying but I think you'll get the gist.

Let's watch.

VIDEO “To This Day” (1 minute excerpt ends suddenly with amazing.)

Despite a loving husband and raising two wonderful kids, she still struggles with the pain of her past. And friends I don't think I've ever met a person that didn't have some wound. Something that when it gets bumped or attention gets drawn to it, it affects them.

The truth is during that time when I first came to NHCC, I was obsessed with my wounds. I struggled with the voices and pain of my past. I couldn't see myself as beautiful or loved. I believed that people only tolerated me to get me to do stuff for them.

I still remember a situation where we were doing a staff exercise and as part of the exercise I got way out of whack because one of my old wounds was hit and I littered the whole staff with my pain.

See I often felt as a kid and was often told by my peers, that I was annoying and too much. They made it clear at social occasions that I was a “pity invite” so needless to say, I have a wound that is very sensitive to feeling like people just “put up with me”. They don’t really want me around. They are rolling their eyes on the inside when I’m around and sighing relief when I’m gone

At this staff exercise, something was said that hit that wound. Somebody stepped on that spot and suddenly it got really sticky really

quick. I immediately shut down. Let me tell you nothing is more fun than being around me when I'm in that much pain. I give everyone the silent treatment for fear that if I open my mouth I might spew venom on everyone. The wound was littering up all my relationships with my fellow staffers and it almost got wicked ugly but thankfully my good friend stopped me and challenged me to take a look at what was really going on. Would spewing venom on others really help?

No it would not. That wound needed to be dealt with. I needed to address it. I needed to deal with my litter and failure to do so was going to make my relational playground a big hot mess.

And I've learned that when my response to someone or something comes with great intensity there is a pretty good chance it's because they or the situation is hitting on an old wound that once again needs to be dealt with. Just last week I had a situation with one of my kids where I was feeling a tremendous amount of emotion that didn't seem to match the situation so I needed to look at what old wound was getting hit on and address it.

So how do you deal with this litter?

Well just like your weaknesses, step one is to become aware of them. You might already know some of them. If not, it might be worth taking some time to ask the question, what am I most sensitive about? When do I feel the most insecure or inadequate?

Then bring that to God for healing.

You might consider reading a book like Changes that Heal or Healing for Damaged Emotions. By the way, Changes that Heal is available in a video teaching format on our Right Now Media. Right Now is a Netflix style service that offers training, classes and Bible studies. You can get a subscription by visiting our app.

Finally you might need to get some coaching on this either from a mentor or a counselor. Personally I have used both. Some of my wounds were addressed with the help of a mentor but some of them were like a cancer that were pervasive through most of my life and relationships and for those I needed a specialist, a licensed counselor who could

invest dedicated time to helping me address those issues.

The truth is we will always carry our wounds with us but they don't have to hold us hostage. We can experience freedom from them and as we address them we will experience better relationships.

The final level of litter is equivalent to biohazards, sharp needles, etc. They can be dangerous and toxic to the playground and to our relationships.

The third level is waste, specifically sin and unhealthy relating patterns. We all have sin in our lives. Scripture is clear ALL have fallen short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

We are all sinners. We all have a sin nature. We all have some kind of waste that we struggle with that affects our relationships...gossip, lying, cheating, lust, envy, pride, addictions, and the list goes on.

And our tendency when we sin is to hide. To cover it up. We don't want our spouse to know what we are looking at on the internet. We don't want our boss to know what we are doing with our time. We don't want our friends to know that we are self medicating. Perhaps we don't want our spouse to know we are stuffing our emotions. We feel sad and out of control and so we turn to twinkies

and candy bars. I mean if said spouse knew that they might call us on it when we complain about how “fat” we are. If said spouse knew we were medicating with food, said spouse might push back and so we’ll just hide that wrapper. After all, it’s just a tiny sin and it’s not really affecting anyone any way right? Except it might affect them because I’m tired and crabby and I feel terrible about myself and it makes me feel out of control and unlovable. But really my sin just affects me right?

Wrong...your sin always has an effect on the other people in your life. The people you are in relationship with are affected when you don’t address your sin. Because if nothing else, when we sin we tend to hide our sin, we go further in to the darkness, pulling further

and further away from God and other people. Remember the garden? Adam and Eve sin...they go against God and what do they immediately do? Go cover up. They hide their sin. They pull away. Make no mistake friends, when we let sin go unchecked in our lives, it will make a mess on our relational playground eventually.

In addition to our sin, we also have unhealthy relating patterns that we fall in to. Playing the victim, playing the martyr, passive aggressive remarks, why can't you read my mind?

And when we play these games on the relational playground, no one wins. We end up more frustrated, more self justified, more discouraged and more upset.

For the first 15 years or so, Price and I had played a lot of games. We were especially good at the martyr game where we liked to see who had it worse. We would regale one another with all the poor pitiful me statements...well I work and I clean and I blah blah blah...well I work and I pay the bills and I handle the daycare...blah blah blah.

I especially loved to play the game, if you can't read my mind I'm certainly not going to tell you. I'm pretty sure I tormented Price with this game for the first 15 years of our marriage and probably sometimes still do. He would say something. It would hit an old wound and I would retreat...hearing what he was not saying. I would make assumptions he was saying I was a bad wife, a terrible mother, an ugly human being and I would

build a wall give him the silent treatment. And trust me...when I shut up...something is definitely wrong...remember that earlier cartoon? Anyway, he'd ask what was wrong and I'd just look at it him as if to say well if you don't know I'm certainly not going to tell you. If you loved me you'd know exactly what you did.

Trust me friends...these unhealthy relating patterns, these "games", they are like toxic waste on the playground of your relationships. You have got to deal with them.

So how do we address the waste?

Similarly. First you have to acknowledge that you are sinning. You have to call your sin sin. You have to acknowledge that you are

playing games and have an unhealthy relating pattern or patterns. You have to admit that there is waste there.

And then as you admit it, again you go to God and ask him to help root it out of you. You ask for forgiveness. You ask God to help you, to make you aware of your sin temptations, to make you aware of when you are tempted to play games with others.

You might need to get help as you did for your wounds seeking out books to help, mentors to guide or counselors to challenge and direct.

So there you have it.

Considering you are the one constant in all your relationships and you can't fix others,

you can address your litter instead of ignoring it by spending time dealing with your weaknesses, wounds and waste.

And as you do that...don't become obsessed with your litter. Don't let it overwhelm you.

Take courage from these verses found in Romans 7:21-25

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 7:21-25 (NIV)

See Paul was aware of the litter inside him. The junk and where does he place his hope? In Jesus who will set us free.

Friends, Jesus is inviting us to deal with the litter in our lives. He wants us to bring all of it. Our weaknesses, wounds and waste. He wants to not ignore it or bury it or obsess over it but rather take it to him.

And as we do, He will bring the truth to bear and His grace will follow and we will repeat that again and again.

So this morning I want to invite you to join in me in a practice session of dealing with our

litter. You should have received a piece of paper on your way in and if not, share with someone around you or grab a piece when the music starts.

In just a few moments, the band is going to begin playing and during that time, I want to invite you to:

Acknowledge the weaknesses, wounds, and waste in your life. Psalm 139: 23-24 we read:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting
life. Psalm 139:23-24*

Take some time this morning to allow God to search you and point out the litter in your life he wants you to address. Remember we all have a plank in our eyes, let's take some time to address them, to see them and to seek God to help us with them.

Then Confess...which just means to agree with God that it's litter and it's not good for you or the relationships around you and then

Repent...which means to turn away. Ask God to help you turn away from the litter, to let it go. Ask him to clean your heart and give you a right spirit.

As a practical way of doing that I'm going to ask the band to play and while they do, take some time with God and then if you want,

write the litter you are sensing you need to get rid of, write it on that paper and come throw it out as a symbol of choosing to allow Jesus to help you to clean out the litter in your heart. He is our defender, he is our savior, he came that we might be set free from this junk. Let's do some cleaning today friends.

Let me pray with you

Song – “Only Grace”

Response

Final words...

And may we live in that sweet spot. That place where we know we are far worse than we can imagine because of the litter in our

lives but we are loved far more than we can imagine. When we fall again, and we will, we have to repeat this process day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment being reminded that because of Jesus' death on the cross, there's only grace and we can get back up again.

May the truth and grace of our Lord Jesus be in your hearts and minds this week.

Thanks for being here. And we'll look forward to seeing you next week for rule #3...

Closing comments:

Mavericks - guys grab info from Ladell at the table.

Go Royals?