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ARTICLES

A Mini Chocolate Chip or Giant Chocolate Bar?

By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

Around our house you will likely find a variety of chocolate (and it's not all mine). Elyssa usually has a bag or two of the mini-chocolate chips, which she likes to bake with occasionally or to use in her ice cream. You will also find regular-sized chocolate chips in the cupboard. I like to throw some of these into my salted peanuts as a nice snack. You'll also find a chocolate bar (or five) in our fridge quite often for Steph and Ian. Then, we always have a good supply of chocolate ice cream for everybody, though Zack always goes for vanilla (we still love him). There's usually some chocolate syrup in the fridge as well.



But it's only around Christmas time when you'll find the large 2 pound blocks of dark chocolate. These babies are hard to find sometimes, so Stephanie does

occasionally store them in our freezer. These are the good stuff, and they get used to make my favorite, peanut butter balls.

Can you tell my family likes chocolate?

On April 25 my sermon challenged us to be chocolate chips in the cookie dough. (Unfortunately, the live stream and the recording didn't work.) The point was that we are not like the sugar or the salt or the flour that simply dissolves into the cookie dough. We are to be chocolate chips. We are to be in the cookie, but we are distinct from the cookie. Jesus prayed just that for his disciples...

“15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” (John 17:15-18 NIV2011)

I also shared that there are two ingredients in chocolate. There's actually a couple more, but for the sake of simplicity, we'll simply talk about cocoa and sugar. The cocoa represented truth and sugar represented grace.

I'd like to add another layer to this

metaphor... It's become too easy to be content with being a mini chocolate chip. I believe God wants us to be a lot more like a giant chocolate bar. We are to be full of grace and truth as Jesus was (John 1:17). We will never have too much grace and we will never have too much truth. The whole point of following Jesus is to become more and more truth-filled and grace-filled. We cannot settle with being mini-chocolate chips! **We need to add more ingredients.**

Let's consider each of these ingredients.

Sugar/Grace.

There are two major ways in which we gain more grace in our lives. The first is to read scripture. To let it speak into our hearts. To convict us of sin. To point out where we fall short. To show us the love of Jesus Christ as he forgave us on the cross. If you want to be more grace-filled, you must let God's word penetrate your heart, convict you of sin, and ultimately bring forgiveness and grace into your life through Jesus.

The second way we can gain grace is by better understanding those around us. It's very easy to be frustrated and angry with family members. We tend to let down our guard, vent our frustrations with life, and spew our anger all over them, largely

because they're safe. However, if we understand what their day has been like, we tend to be much more gracious. It's also easy to get frustrated with strangers. We too quickly call others idiots, narrow-minded, naïve, morally depraved, and much worse.

When it comes to political tensions, much of the conflict is simply over not understanding one another. Instead of listening and trying to understand, we want to win the debate. We want them to see how we are right. **The first practical step you can take today is to ask more questions.** How are you? What happened today for you? How's your family?

The second ingredient in our giant chocolate bar is...

Cocoa/Truth. It's been encouraging to see many of you back on Sunday mornings, eager to meet together, to worship, and to hear God's word.

Certainly, gathering for church on Sunday morning is a great way to gain more truth. It's like a cup of cocoa once a week.

That's just not enough to be filled up with truth when you're in a world that feeds you lies at every turn. You watch materialistic shows on the TV for hours. You read lie after lie on Facebook and Instagram. You'll hear that conspiracy from your neighbor along with some good rumors

that might be true. One sermon once a week is simply not enough truth to combat all the lies.

So, the most valuable practical step you can take today to become more truth-filled (and grace-filled) is to study your Bible. Open the app, dust off the real book, and start reading. If you're more relational, then call a friend and do it together. If you just can't handle reading, let the Bible app read it for you. If you really want more biblical teaching, open up RightNow Media, type a topic in the search bar, select one of the video options, and start watching.

Today I just want to urge you to not be content with being a mini chocolate chip, or even a good sized candy bar. Our world needs far more giant chocolate bars than ever before. So gather the ingredients and make a giant chocolate bar out of your life.

Speaking Truth in Love

By Pastor Doug Shotsky

Ephesians 4:14-19 - 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. **15** Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the

head, that is, Christ. **16** From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. **18** They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. **19** Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

There's no doubt that it's perfect timing that God has led Pastor Kevin to preach a sermon on Living in Babylon, and to lead a study on a similar topic on Sunday nights with the book *We Will Not be Silenced*. Certainly we are still afforded many freedoms in our country that those living in Babylon were not, but we are seeing a secular culture that is being more and more antagonistic towards biblical truth.

It's tough to know when to stand up for truth, what to say when we do stand up, and how to say what we say. As the scripture above mentions, "speaking the truth in love", so many of us struggle to know how to do this. We must speak the truth. We must do it in love. But, even

when we do so we must also recognize that God's truth often isn't received well, and in fact will be considered offensive. Certainly we're not out to be antagonistic or offensive, but I'm learning that God's word is offensive to those who choose to reject it.

I want to share something about my recent experience at the local school board meeting that was a little mind-boggling to me. The board was allowing the public to speak on the subject of allowing transgender students to use the bathroom of the gender they identify as, not their biological sex. As I spoke I mentioned that I believe God created individuals male and female and that it is He who determines our gender, not us.

The response to me simply stating this, was that I was "weaponizing the bible", am "homophobic", and was "spewing hatred". Unbelievable! It was interesting to me how hateful the response comments were that were calling me hateful. I'm not surprised by this, and I don't take it personally, and I am challenged more and more to pray for and love those who are in opposition to God's Word. The scriptures we read above mention the hardness of people's hearts that leads them to being given over to sensuality and impurity, so I pray that God will open their eyes to the deception they are living in and consider the eternal

consequences of rejecting God through their behavior.

Please join me in praying that we will remain strong in the face of opposition, that God will help us to love those opposed to us, and that God will reveal the truth to those who are deceived.

God's Purpose and Plan

By Jessa Ter Beest

“What is God’s plan for my life?” It’s a question every Christian asks at least once in their life, and most likely a lot more than that. It’s difficult to know exactly what God wants us to do in the big stuff - what should I do after high school? What career should I get? Who should I marry? Where should I live? Those are tough questions!

Last weekend at the middle school retreat we talked about God’s plan for our lives - but what middle schooler knows that?! Most adults are still questioning it! So instead of focusing on God’s plan, let’s focus on His purpose.

These might seem like the same thing, but really what comes out of scripture is that God’s purpose for us is simple - to love Him and to share His love by loving others. So no matter what the “plan” may be, or if we feel like we’ve messed up His plan, we can still know

what our daily purpose is.

So how are you living out your purpose? Are you growing with God? Are you sharing your love and faith with others? The kids in our church are such an inspiration for that. I encourage you to tell them stories about what God is doing in your life and ask them how they’ve seen Him working too!

Bible Class Memory Work Challenge

By Adrea Daane

We want to congratulate the following Bible Class participants for completing their year-long memory work challenges this year!

1st Grade:

Brielle Kok

2nd Grade:

Camden Rens

Everett Mueller

Porter Daane

Trase Mulder

3rd Grade:

Brinley Bruins

Jenica De Jager

Jenna Bresser

Madelynn Daane

4th Grade:

Blake Bruins
Brady Buwalda
Klay Vande Zande
Laney Arndt
Rhett Derksen
River Block
Victoria Shotsky

6th Grade:

Ella Lemmenes
William Shotsky

7th/8th Grade:

Eden Schultz
Grant Braskamp
Leah Buwalda
Sawyer Bruins
Winton Glewen

Hello Spring

By the Library Committee

The past week has been a roller coaster with the strange weather. Not unlike our lives have been over the last year. Yet, through it all, no matter what happens, good or bad, we need not fear because we know God is always in control.

Many of the books in our library go along with that same theme. No matter if it's fiction or non-fiction, teenage reading, adult or children's books, they're all entertaining. It's wonderful to see each

week how much our library is being used by both adults and children.

Even if you're not used to the library before or are a slow reader, you don't have to worry because there's never a charge for an overdue book. All we ask is that you do return them.

Soon the new books will be arriving and that's always exciting. Happy reading!

MESSAGES

A big thank you to Brian Tenpas, Mark Zeatlow, Milan Ter Beest, Larry & Gloria Mulder for a work project. A donation was given to the youth group.

-Joyce Van Buren

Women's Ministry-

Many thanks for your donation of 347 pounds of food. Your efforts on our behalf truly benefit those in our community who are struggling. We appreciate you!

-Waupun Area Food Pantry

EVENTS



Monday,
May 17 at
7pm
ARC
sanctuary



Registration
is OPEN!

NEWS

Births

4/20/21 - Landon EJ, son of Jared &
Ashley Stelsel