

If you have a relationship with a 2 month old child, you have to understand certain things about that relationship. Some examples:

- You have to understand that the two-month old will be no help whatsoever with finding the remote control or with raking the leaves.
  - You have to understand that the two-month old will not respect the fact that the Vikings play Monday night at 7:30. Indeed, it is precisely at that time the two-month will expect feeding, changing, and cuddling.
  - You have to understand that the two-month old will give you a reminder that life is precious.
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If you have a relationship with a mother who is over the age of 70, you have to understand certain things about that relationship. Some examples:

- You have to understand that no matter how old you have become, she is still your mother, and has the right to ask you if you have made your bed or washed the dishes. She also retains the right to tousle your hair.
  - You have to understand that, if you are a daughter, you have in some ways become your mother. If you are a son and are married, you have to understand that at least in some ways you have married someone with your mom's characteristics. Live with it. This is the truth.
  - You have to understand that your mother loved you so much that she did all sorts of things for you... All sorts of things! We are talking about things you could not pay any one else to do. She did those things for you out of love. Live with it. This is the truth.
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We spend all sorts of time in relationships. Some of these relationships we understand clearly. Others we are totally mystified by. How is your relationship with God? Clearly understood or mystifying?

Martin Luther wrestled with his relationship with God. It began for Luther as a mystifying relationship. He wanted to love God, so he did all he could to bring himself close to God. But he found that his works could not get him close to God. He came to a point where he would wonder if he hated God.

Luther had clear pictures of an angry God. He did penance upon penance to alleviate God's anger. He fasted, went on pilgrimages, laid in cold floors. He even

inflicted wounds upon his own body – self inflicted cuts – as a sign of his sorrow for his failings.

Such was Luther's early relationship with God. But all that changed when he realized that in his relationship with God he was like a two-month old, who needed God to draw near to him.

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Out of Luther's struggle came a reforming of the Church and its teachings, which still bears fruit today. This morning, we are going to look at the "four alones" of Martin Luther, and their keys.. These became the clear understanding of his relationship with God. They can speak to us today as well.

- *The first alone: Scripture Alone.*
- *The first key: Accept the Scripture's Authority.*

How many of you have heard these four phrases:

- "Everybody's doing it." Authority of Culture
- "We have always done it this way." Authority of Tradition
- "I have always thought..." Authority of Reason
- "I feel like it." Authority of Emotions

Those four are for many people the great authorities in this life.

Martin Luther directed us to a fifth authority: Scripture. And he gave us a key to this authority: Accept it.

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I look back at those other authorities in life and I am so embarrassed by how I have followed them and made huge mistakes in my life.

- The things I have done simply following the crowd!
- The actions I have continued to do simply out of habit, even when the habit becomes an unnecessary habit
- The paths I have taken because I always thought it was the right path.
- The life choices I have made simply because it felt good at the time.

Martin Luther went down that road as well. Then God showed him the truth that in his relationship with God it was Scripture Alone.

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- *The second alone: Faith Alone.*
- *The second key: Accept the Person the Scriptures Reveal.*

When you picture Jesus, who do you picture? That is the question for us when we consider faith alone. Faith in --- whom?

When I was a teenager two musicals came out at the same time picturing Jesus in our modern culture. One play was “Jesus Christ – Superstar.” The Jesus in that play was tormented and uncertain.

The other play was “Godspell.” The Jesus in that play was whimsical and flighty.

Then there was the Jesus which Pastor Owen Gassadalen put before us on a weekly basis. Every Sunday Pastor Owen would have Scripture read, and he would do his best to open that Scripture and show us Jesus.

When on May 5, 1968, I was confirmed, it was the Jesus revealed in the Scriptures in whom I placed faith for the first time as an adult.

If you have not placed faith in the Jesus of the Bible lately, then let me lead us in a quick prayer. ***Lord Jesus, there are so many versions of you out there in the world. I am tired of the superstars and the whimsical versions of you. I need you in my life. So, as you are proclaimed in the Bible, I pray today. Lead me this week. Amen.***

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- *The third alone: Grace Alone.*
- *The third key: Accept the Definition that Grace is Love Stoopng.*

To stoop means you have to come down to someone else’s level. When I first began to play trumpet Mr. Tentis, one of the finest trumpet players in SE MN, would

regularly stoop to my level and play “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” in a duet that made me sound good.

When I think of how many times Mr. Tentis played that children’s song with various aspiring flutists and trombonists and everything elseists! That man could stoop for the sake of others!

When is the last time you stooped for another? I don’t mean just offered your seat or held a door. I mean really, truly, painfully stooped for the sake of another? God does it daily for you and me. Grace is God stooping for you and me.

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If you want to come home, you can come home. That is grace stooping to our level. It does not matter how many windows you have broken, how many lies you have told, or how low you have stooped. If you call on the name of Jesus and want come home, you can come home today.

A pastor once said: “To be God means always to stoop lower by far than any man could stoop, and to bear what never a human heart would dream of bearing.”

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- *The fourth alone: Christ Alone.*
- *The fourth key: Accept that Jesus died on the Cross and Rose from the Tomb – and no one else did.*

Let me tell you a story.<sup>i</sup> In an Arab land was a king whose land was suffering from a terrible drought. The wells were drying up. The King had a sign placed by all of the wells which read: “You shall not waste water.”

Time went on and so did the drought. It got so bad that only a few wells – they were the King’s wells – still had water. The King shared his water as he could. But because some of his subjects were greedy he had a sign placed by the wells which read: “Those who steal water shall die.”

Time went on and so did the drought. One night two people were caught stealing water from a well. They were wrapped in gunny sacks and carried before the King.

The King said: “My law is, ‘Those who steal water shall die.’ Let us see the two who shall die for stealing water from others.”

The bag was opened, and before the King was his Daughter and his Son. The King sat in stunned and unbearable silence. His children begged for their lives. They said: “We were so thirsty! We only took a little.”

The King finally said: “You shall die. I am a King of principle, and I must obey the law I made. You shall die.”

His children were taken out to die. But then the King arose from his throne, took off his robe and crown, and stepped down to where his children waited to die. The King quietly said: “I will die for them.”

His guards said: “Majesty! No! You cannot do that!”

But the King, looking at his Daughter and his Son, said: “Yes, I can. I love my children. I will fulfill my law by dying for them. Children, live well!” And the King went to die for those he loved.

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What type of relationship do you have with God?

- One of love.
- One of a King who stoops.
- One who does it all alone – because you and I cannot.
- One who calls you to live well this day.

Have a Blessed Reformation Sunday!

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<sup>i</sup> Edward Marquardt, “Sermons from Seattle” In the Sermon Romans: The Penalty Is Too Great.