

Break Free...

*A Thought for the Week From Patrick Kemper at
No Strongholds Ministries*

Week #1

Put 'Em in a Shopping Cart

Matthew 25:31-33 (TLB)

³¹ *"But when I, the Messiah, shall come in my glory, and all the angels with me, then I shall sit upon my throne of glory.*

³² *And all the nations shall be gathered before me. And I will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,*

³³ *and place the sheep at my right hand, and the goats at my left.*

I sat and listened to Dr. Ed Callahan preach a difficult sermon yesterday – a sermon which made it clear that, while there is only one right answer (when it comes to spending eternity with God), there are two choices.

In an effort to add a little levity to an intimidating, in-your-face kind of message, he included some video clips from a TV show which is, apparently, very popular in the UK. The show is entitled, "101 ways to leave a game show."

The idea behind the game is this: provide the correct answer to a given question or find yourself violently ejected from the scene by one of 101 brutally concocted methods which elicit hysterics and screams rivaling those produced by the best of amusement park rides. Sounds like good family time, eh?

The second of two videos showed two women, each sitting in separate shopping carts. They were pointed down a very sharp decline, high above a pool of water (I'm guessing somewhere around 100 feet in the air). Both women were wearing protective gear, their arms crossed over their respective chests in despair. Their eyes were closed, anticipating their fate. Both searched desperately, pleading, for something to comfort the terror that was awaiting them.

One of the women was completely losing it.

She was begging and pleading as though her very life hung in the balance. As her answer was revealed as incorrect by the host, she responded with verbal dread I have never heard from a human being... ever.

Amid the laughter of the crowd in which I sat, I listened to screams of desperation as her cart was cut loose and she plummeted down the ramp. She immediately found herself

in a free fall to the water below. I was slightly embarrassed, wondering if I was the only person in the auditorium who was crying.

I saw something different than the rest who sat in the crowd, enjoying the show. From the very beginning, the way these two people were sitting in vulnerable, helpless positions, I felt like I was looking at judgment day.

These two people had given their answers and the moment of truth was at hand. There was no possible lobbying, no further opportunities to make different choices. In five seconds there would be consequences – that’s just how it was.

Much like the deafening silence that can occur in the eye of a violent storm, these two women sat, waiting to discover who would soon be sent hurtling away with no further recourse.

I wiped away the tears, trying to convince myself I was overreacting; I was being stupid. Then God sent an additional thought to my heart that caught me off guard. It sent the tears flowing once again.

Application

I can be a judgmental person.

I can be quick to respond with aggression when meeting opposition. All at once, I was seeing faces of other people (with whom I had disagreements in the past) sitting in those carts, helplessly waiting to find out if *they* had made the right choice. I found myself feeling responsible for them being there because, instead of being more concerned about where they would spend eternity, I was more interested in being right and winning the dispute.

If there was anything redeemable in this situation, somehow, there was still an authentic peace in my soul. I may need some work in the selflessness and pride departments, but I didn’t have slightest doubt as to whether or not I had made the right choice regarding eternity. For this I am very grateful.

As a result of watching this woman scream and plummet over the edge into the abyss, I have begun a new practice. When faced with people that do not agree with me (who may even be aggressive towards me), I first try to place them in that cart, facing a ramp into the abyss. Then, as I picture them, freaking out like the lady does in the video (you *have* to see this clip - use the URL provided at the end of this session!), I ask myself which is more important... the issue at hand, or responding in a way to get them out of that cart before it drops and all that remains is their screams in the darkness?

We are supposed to be light in a dying world. When it’s all said and done, when God the Father says time is up, when our final answer is whatever we have already chosen... ... People are all that really matters.

So the next time you find yourself in conflict with another person, no matter what the situation, try putting ‘em in a shopping cart and then asking yourself how your response might change the much bigger outcome for them.

Below is the link to the video if you would like to see it. Type the whole thing into your web browser just as it appears. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJAuPx9ulZA>)

Homework for the Week...

1.) Did you watch the video clip? How did it affect you? Was it anything like my experience? What is your reaction to people who oppose you or your opinions? Can you put 'em in a shopping cart? When you do, does it cause you to have a change of heart? Where do you have the most difficulty; where would you say you most often need to practice putting people in carts for you to feel differently about them? Write down the names of those with whom you have the most trouble interacting. Be specific. Imagine each one of them in a cart and decide how you will go about finding a way to help them get out of the cart. Who can you contact to help you? Write down what methods you will use to begin accomplishing this.

2.) Mid-week check. List the opportunities you have had and how you responded (this is your obedience indicator). If you are still posting a doughnut, more than likely you weren't all that truthful when you asked God for chances to respond and improve. Check your heart; be authentic. Ask God to show you the way through what is blocking you from submitting in obedience.

3.) How are you doing compared to the way you started the week? If you still need improvement, refuse to move on to the next session. Stay here, submit, and choose to be obedient no matter what it takes. Explain how you have improved, or make a commitment to continue working. When you are operating in obedience in this area of your life... turn the page and move to the next session.
