

The Walking Dead

Justin Morton

Something To Think About

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Other Books by Justin:

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The Walking Dead
Week 1: Spiritual Zombies
Ephesians 2:1-3

INTRODUCTION:

We all have favorite television shows, right? Those shows we like to watch no matter how many times we have seen them in the past.

QUESTION: Someone tell me what your favorite show on television is right now?

How many of you are familiar with the name Rick Grimes? What about Carl Grimes? Okay how about Lori Grimes? What show has these people as it's main characters? The answer is The Walking Dead. This is one of the most popular shows on television right now. They have even created a spin off called Fear the Walking Dead.

Why is this show so popular right now? ZOMBIES. Our current culture loves zombies. They believe zombies to be very cool, although they might think otherwise if they ever came face to face with a real zombie.

QUESTION: What is a zombie? A zombie is a person who moves very slowly and is not aware of what is happening, especially because of being tired. Perhaps some of you are zombies right now. However, a zombie can also be defined as a dead person who is able to move.

ILLUSTRATION: I have a friend who at one time worked in a funeral home because he was planning on being a mortician. One night while working late on a body that had just arrived, he turned to grab one of his instruments when the dead body lying before him took a big gasp of air. He ran out of that room as fast as he could get out. He thought the dead person was alive. He would find out the next day that the body was in fact dead. What happened was some air had gotten trapped in the bodies lungs and wasn't released before the person passed away.

Perhaps as cool as it would have been today, for my friend to say that he encountered a zombie, the fact is he did not.

However, what if I told you that most of us encounter zombies in our lives more than we probably realize, although much to your disappointment, not in a physical sense.

Spiritual Zombie? (v. 1)

We don't encounter physical zombies, but spiritual zombies. What is a spiritual zombie you ask? If a zombie is a dead person who is able to move, then a spiritual zombie is a spiritually dead person who is able to walk.

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins."

- Ephesians 2:1

Paul, in writing to the Christians in Ephesus, told them that at one time they were dead in their trespasses and sins. These Christians were at one time spiritual zombies; they may have been alive physically, but they were dead in their sins.

QUESTION: What's the big deal about being dead in our sins?

Being dead in one's sins is a big deal. Listen to what the prophet Isaiah said about our sins:

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."

- Isaiah 59:1-2

Our sins and iniquities cause a separation between God and us. Spiritual zombies are people who are separated from God because they are dead in their trespasses and sins. They may be alive physically, but they are dead spiritually.

Identifying Spiritual Zombies (vs. 2-3)

The group of Christians Paul was writing to in Ephesus was once dead in their sins. They were once spiritual zombies before they came to know Christ. Notice Paul gives a few reasons for them being a spiritual zombie.

1. ***They walk after the ways of the world (v.2).*** The reason spiritual zombies are hard to identify is because they look and act like most everyone else around them. They surround us; we go to school with them, play on teams with them and perhaps we even go to church with them. They live and act normal to us because they live according to the ways of the world. They are participating in all the same things the world around them participates in; things that are not godly. Paul told the church at Rome to not be like the world around them.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

- Romans 12:2

2. ***They live under the influence of the Evil One (v. 2).*** Not only do the people walk according to the ways of the world, but Satan also influences them. Who is your biggest influence? What does that person's influence cause you to do? Now just imagine if Satan influenced you? What would his influence cause you to do? Those living under the influence of Satan are blinded so that not only are they unable to see the light of the gospel, but they disregard the will of God.

“In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

- 2 Corinthians 4:4

3. ***They indulge in the desires of the flesh and mind (v. 3).*** Spiritual zombies don't control or try to fight against the fleshly desires they have. Instead they give in to those desires and look to fulfill them. It's all about what they want. This is something John warns about.

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

- I John 2:15-17

The Spiritual Zombie Apocalypse (v. 3)

After informing these Christians that they too were once spiritual zombies, Paul tells them what they deserved.

“Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

- Ephesians 2:3

Notice Paul said they were children of wrath like the rest of mankind. This wrath is the wrath of God, which all spiritually dead people await. God is holy and all rebellion against Him deserves His wrath. Thus, for all the spiritual zombies in the world around us, disaster is coming.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”

- Romans 1:18

QUESTION: What will the wrath of God look like in the life of a spiritual zombie?

“For the wages of sin is death...

- *Romans 6:23*

The risk for spiritual zombies is too great. If a person lives and dies in sin, he will ultimately be separated from God eternally, because the wages of sin is death.

CONCLUSION:

There are zombies among us, only they do not come in the form of physical zombies, they come in the form of spiritual zombies. They may look and act like most other people, but they are spiritually dead on the inside. Unless something changes in their lives, they are heading down a path of disaster.

The risk for spiritual zombies is too great. We must do what we can now, to help them so that they are able to survive what is coming to them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think there are so many spiritual zombies among us today?
2. What would you do if you ever came face to face with a real zombie? Why?
Are you guilty of treating spiritual zombies in this same way?
3. What can we do to help the spiritual zombies around us?

The Walking Dead
Week 2: Dead or Alive? Am I A Spiritual Zombie
Ephesians 2:3

INTRODUCTION:

What would you do if you encountered a physical zombie? Although, we might talk a big game as to what we might do, I think most of us, if we are honest with ourselves, would run as if there was no tomorrow. We would run as fast and as far as we could and never look back. Why? Zombies are scary.

I doubt we will ever encounter a physical zombie, but spiritual zombies are all around us. No matter where we go or what we do; we encounter zombies every day of our lives. These spiritual zombies are people who walk around dead in their sins. They have no relationship with God and if things do not change in their lives, they will physically die and be a spiritual zombie forevermore.

One of the great challenges we face is identifying these spiritual zombies. This is difficult to do because spiritual zombies look and act like most everyone around us. We go to school with them, participate in activities with them, and even sit in Church pews and youth group activities with them. We often fail to see the many spiritual zombies around us.

The sad reality of this is sometimes these spiritual zombies come in the form of those closest to us. Even more difficult is sometimes we are the spiritual zombies around others and we don't even realize it. Paul told the Christians in Ephesus that they were once spiritual zombies. Is it possible some of us tonight are the very walking dead we long to bring into a relationship with Jesus?

As we continue this series on the walking dead, let's ask ourselves a personal question, "Am I a spiritual zombie? Am I spiritually dead or alive?"

To help us answer this question we need to consider that there are at least four different groups of people who are walking around when it comes to being spiritually dead or alive.

People Who Are Spiritually Alive

We all know people who come alive when it comes to certain things in their lives that are important to them. Maybe it's a certain hobby, event, person, sport or even a job. It's the one thing that gets someone super excited to the point they can't help but talk about it or participate in the activity. What about spiritually though? Do you know many people who are what we might call "spiritually alive?"

QUESTION: What makes a person spiritually alive?

People who are spiritually alive are the same people who are deeply in love with God. These are the people who take the Greatest Commandment to heart.

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" **37** And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **38** This is the great and first commandment."

- Matthew 22:36-38

QUESTION: What would this kind of love look like in our everyday lives?

This kind of love propels us to love God with everything we have to offer. It means when someone closely exams our lives they easily see we are willing to choose God over everything else we might have available to us. People who are spiritually alive understand their relationship to God is what truly matters in this life.

QUESTION: When you think about people who lived this way, who comes to your mind?

I think about a lot of the individuals who are listed in the great Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11). Based on the choices they were willing to make, I'd say they were very much spiritually alive.

QUESTION: When someone closely exams your life, what do they conclude about you spiritually? Would they be able to come to the conclusion on their own that you are spiritually alive?

If someone could not conclude you were spiritually alive after examining your life, then you probably fall into one of the next few groups that involve those who are spiritually dead.

People Who Are Unaware They Are Spiritually Dead

Just as you have people who are spiritually alive, you have those people who are spiritually dead. Think about all the people you come in contact with in a given day. Perhaps some are Christians, and some are not.

QUESTION: How many of you have friends who you know are not Christians? Do you think there might be some of them who are unaware they are spiritual zombies?

There may be several reasons they're not Christians, but perhaps one of the reasons is because they have never been taught the truth of the Gospel message. For whatever reason, they do not know they are what we would call a spiritual zombie.

In my time as a youth minister, I have come in contact with many kids from various backgrounds and walks of life that were spiritually dead but had no idea. In a lot of those cases, the reason they didn't know they were the walking dead was because they came from families who had no religious background.

When Peter was preaching on the Day of Pentecost, He was preaching to a group of people of whom some were responsible for the death of Jesus. Listen to what Peter said to those people when he had the opportunity to speak to them.

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. **37** Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

- Acts 2:36-37

These people were unaware of their spiritual condition. They had murdered the Messiah. Once they learned they were spiritual zombies, they asked what they should do.

QUESTION: How can someone learn what he or she must do to be right with God, if they never knew they were not right with God in the first place?

A person cannot change or fix a problem they are unaware of. Let's do our part to teach spiritual zombies they are walking dead and help to change their eternity.

People Who Know They Are Spiritually Dead BUT Do Nothing

This group is made up of people who, even though they know they are spiritual zombies, they choose to do nothing about their spiritual condition.

QUESTION: Have you ever been guilty of knowing you should do something, but you chose not to do it anyway? What? Why did you make that choice? Perhaps you made that choice because it was all about you and what you wanted.

Every day we come in contact with people who know they are spiritually dead. They know they are not living the kind of life God would have them to live and yet, they chose to do nothing about it.

And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” **40** And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

- Acts 2:38-40

The people on the Day of Pentecost asked Peter and the apostles what they needed to do to be saved. Peter proceeded to tell them exactly what they needed to do. Notice how they responded:

“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. **42** And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

- Acts 2:41-42

What if after those people were told what they needed to do, they responded by saying, “Nah, I’m not going to do that.” We would think either they are crazy or they just don’t care about eternity, right?

There are people even in our midst, who know they are spiritually dead, but chose to do nothing about it. What a catastrophic mindset for one to have.

People Who KNOW They Are Spiritually Dead BUT PRETEND They’re Not

This last group to me is the most perplexing group of all. This group is made up of spiritual zombies who know they are dead, but pretend like everything is okay. Most even go out of their way to try to hide their spiritual condition, thinking no one will find out who they really are.

QUESTION: How do spiritually dead people try to hide their spiritual condition?

To help cover up their spiritual condition they attempt to do many good works. Remember what Jesus said to the religious leaders in His day about such actions?

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. **26** You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. **27** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. **28** So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

- Matthew 23:25-28

Another means of their cover up comes in the form of comparison. Such individuals might look at others around them and think that they are not as bad, so they must be doing okay spiritually.

QUESTION: Why are we sometimes guilty of making such spiritual comparisons?

Jesus spoke about the need to avoid making spiritual comparisons when He told the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11** The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **12** I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’

- Luke 18:10-12

The Pharisee was guilty of trying to justify his spiritual condition based on what he knew about the tax collectors life. He thought as long as he wasn't as “bad” as the tax collector and other such people, he must be doing okay spiritually. What a wrong attitude for one to have.

Pretending we are spiritually alive may fool others, but it will never fool God. He knows exactly who we are even when others may not.

“And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

C

- Hebrews 4:13

CONCLUSION:

The question is not are we surround by spiritual zombies because we are every day. The real question is, “Are we a spiritual zombie? Are we spiritually dead or alive?” This is a question only God and us knows the real answer to.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- A. Why do so many Christians struggle with pretending they are spiritually alive when they are in fact spiritually dead?
- B. What can we do to guard against being spiritually dead but pretending we are spiritually alive?
- C. What would you say to other spiritually dead teens that either don't care or who are trying to play pretend?

The Walking Dead
Week 3: From Death to Life
Ephesians 2:4-5

INTRODUCTION:

It's that time of year where zombies are everywhere around us. From various television shows and movies, to pictures posted on social media from Halloween parties, it's the time of year when the dead look to be alive. Friends, Halloween is upon us.

For me, one of the interesting things about this time of year is all the stories you see on television and read on the internet about people who were thought to be physically dead, but then appeared to be very much alive. I have recently read about everything from a grandmother waking up in her open coffin and going in the kitchen to fix her something to eat, to another woman who woke up at her own funeral and literally scared herself to death by means of a heart attack.

While some of these stories are truly fascinating and even quite hard to explain, most of us still believe that once a person is pronounced dead, there is nothing that can be done to bring that person back to life. We just grieve over the loss and move forward with our lives.

However, what if I told you it is possible for the dead to be brought back to life? No, this doesn't happen in a physical sense, it only happens in a spiritual sense which is why this is so important. Just as a living being can be spiritually dead, they can be made spiritually alive again as well. As long as the spiritually dead person has air to breath, they have the opportunity to be brought from death to life.

In our past lessons in this series we have talked about how there are spiritual zombies all around us; people who may look alive and well on the outside, but whose heart is far removed from God. And the sad reality of this is that sometimes these spiritually dead people come in the form of those closest to us, perhaps even in our very own lives.

As we bring this series of lessons to a close, I want you to notice what Paul told the Christians in Ephesus about those who were spiritually dead.

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

- Ephesians 2:1-3

Did you catch what Paul said about those who are dead in their trespasses and sins? He said they were by nature children of wrath or deserving of wrath (NIV Translation). But what wrath? Deserving of whose wrath? The walking dead deserve the wrath of God.

“For the wages of sin is death...”

- Romans 6:23

Due to our own sinfulness and rebellion towards God, you and I deserve death. Not a physical death, but a spiritual death.

QUESTION: What is a spiritual death? A spiritual death is being separated from God. Even though we were created to be with God, what we deserve for our sinful behavior is to be separated from God for all of eternity. Let that sink in for just a moment.

If this were how it all ended, we would be a people with no hope. Those who are walking through this life as spiritual zombies would have no hope of ever being made spiritually alive. They would live the remainder of this life as a spiritually zombie and would enter an eternity in hell prepared especially for those who are spiritually dead, forever being separated from God.

However, God doesn't want that. He desires all men to be saved (**2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:3-4**). This is why what Paul told the Ephesian Christians next is so important.

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

- **Ephesians 2:4-5**

GOD'S MERCY

The first two words Paul spoke after telling them what they deserved are words of hope. God doesn't want us to go through life as spiritual zombies. He desires for us to be spiritually alive with Him. Thus, He showers us with His mercy.

QUESTION: What is mercy? Mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve.

QUESTION: Have you ever had your parents grant you mercy?

I experienced my parent's mercy on numerous occasions while growing up, but one time in particular involved me wrecking my parent's car. It wasn't the wreck that warranted the wrath of my parents, it was the cause of my wreck. The reason I had my wreck was because I was trying to hurry home in order to make my curfew. I was about 20 minutes away from my house and had only ten minutes to get home. Being the smart young man I was, I figured I just needed to drive twice as fast as I normally would and everything would be fine. Oh, did I learn a valuable lesson. My parents were very merciful toward me. They did not give me what I definitely deserved.

We understand mercy from the parent/child relationship because we have all probably experienced that mercy more times than we can count, but it's really no different with God. Spiritual zombies deserve to be punished just as I deserved to be punished for wrecking my parent's car. BUT GOD is merciful and doesn't give us what we deserve.

QUESTION: Why is God so merciful towards spiritual zombies?

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

- **Ephesians 2:4-5**

GOD’S LOVE

God is merciful toward spiritual zombies because of His great love. Even though we do not deserve His love, God cannot help Himself. He loves us because He is love (**I John 4:7-8**) and that love compels Him to extend mercy toward even the worst of spiritual zombies. This is the same reason our parents extend mercy to us. It has nothing to do with us deserving their mercy. Our parent’s mercy toward us has everything to do with their unconditional love for us.

QUESTION: Has anyone ever expressed his or her great love for you? How did they express their love?

We all understand love is best seen and understood through demonstration and action. Thus, God didn’t just say, “I love you.” God demonstrated His love for spiritual zombies by the giving of His dear son on the cross of Calvary.

“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

- **Romans 5:8**

Friends, that is true love. God offers us something we do not deserve because He loves us and His love has been proven through the sacrifice He made on our behalf. This has nothing to do with who we are and everything to do with who He is. God’s love for us is so unconditional He extends mercy toward us even when we are undeserving of such mercy.

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

- **Ephesians 2:4-5**

A NEW LIFE

Since God loves us and is willing to bestow His rich mercy on us and offer us something we do not deserve, we have hope. God is offering all the spiritual zombies in the world, including us, a chance to survive the spiritual zombie apocalypse. He has given us the means to be brought from death to life. He is offering us a new life that can only be found in Christ Jesus.

God wants all the walking dead in the world to escape spiritual death. The only way for this to happen is for those who are outside Christ to be united together with Him. How does this happen?

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

- Romans 6:4-5

When we make the decision to obey the Lord and be united with Him through baptism, we are brought from death to life just as Christ Jesus was raised from the dead. We not only have freedom from getting what we deserve, but we have the opportunity to have God forgive our sins and remember them no more (**Psa. 103:8-13; Heb. 8:12**). And the best part about what God is offering spiritual zombies is that it's totally FREE. What a gift to be received!

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- Romans 6:23

CONCLUSION:

God can take dead things and bring those dead things back to life; this includes the lives of spiritual zombies. So what are you waiting for? The walking dead may be exciting to watch on television, but when it comes to real life there is nothing exciting and fun about the spiritually walking dead. For

the end result of the walking dead is eternal separation from the only true source of life, God Almighty!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does God's mercy towards the walking dead say about God?
2. Why do people resist taking hold of the mercy and new life God offers? What can we do to help with this?
3. What's the one thing you will take away from this series on "The Walking Dead?" How will you implement that takeaway into your life?