

SYATP "Engage"

I'd like you to take a second and think about the things and people who engage you? (pause). For some of you its TV, your show comes on, the show you have been waiting for all week. It's finally time, it's finally here and you get like sucked into a different world for the next 30 or 60 minutes. Maybe it's a certain video game, you get playing it and everything else sorts of fades into the background, maybe even disappears all together? Why? You are totally engaged in what's happening. Others of us maybe we're engaged in an activity, a sport, a competition. It engages us in what's going on. Maybe even others of us are engaged by a person, some of you guys. A certain girl walks in, you know that one in class that you're like "awwwwwwe" or you're watching something and the supermodel comes on. You are like totally there, in that space and time. Same thing with you girls, the guy walks in and all you are thinking about and talking about is him. It's like the smell of AXE has desensitized your brain to anything else. Or you go see the action movie, not because you're totally into action but because the hero is pretty cute.

There are a lot of different things trying to grab our attention. There are people, entertainment, activities, and really a whole slew of things that are attempting to engage us. What do all those things have in common; they are all trying to get something from us. They're trying to get our *time*, our *energy*, our *money*, our *attention*. But what if there were something out there, attempting to engage us but wasn't in it to get something? Think about it, if you have ever seen a healthy marriage, one of the reasons it's healthy is because the two people are engaged with each other for the purpose of giving rather than getting. Receiving is always a benefit of giving, never the purpose. Even Christmas, think about it. Do you think that if we as humans didn't have Christ, we didn't have a reason for Christmas that we would still figure out ways of getting stuff? Sure we would, but would we figure out a reason to give stuff, that questions is more doubtful?

Tonight we're going to be talking about the God who wants to engage us in order to give. One thing we miss many times is that all those things that are trying to engage us, those things and people are attempting to take our time, our money, energy, our attention. What they really want is us, they figure that if they can take our time, then we'll invest so much time that it'll become our god. They figure if that they can take our money, we'll spend so much that it will become our god. They figure if they can steal our attention away from the God that deserves it the most, then they'll gain us. But what about God, what about Christ. He gives; he wants our attention so He can give us more. He wants our money, not only because it's His already, but because he wants to meet more of our needs. He wants our time, so that he can give us the most effective time with it. He wants our heart so that you can be changed, and enjoy all that you were created for. That's really the challenge for tonight, the question if you will. What's engaging you? Why do we use so much of what we have, (time, energy, money, attention) engaging in things that take from us instead of engaging the one who gives?

In the Old Testament there was this king named Josiah. Josiah was a king in the nation of Judah; in fact he was one of the better kings. There are a few things you should know about what's going on during this time. For one, the country of Judah was a product of a split. I'm not sure if you remember or not, but a few weeks ago when we were talking about communicating conflict and we mentioned a king by the name of Rehoboam. The people come to him with gentleness and respect. They ask him...

"Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you." (1 Kings 12:4)

He says give me three days and I'll think about it, during those three days he ask some who were close to him what they thought. The wise men who had worked for his father reply with the right will and the right words. They respond by valuing the people over their own desires. They tell him...

"If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants." (1 Kings 12:7)

He also asks some of the guys who grew up with him, probably not the best guys to ask about the situation. Their response is full of empty words and a will that values their own desire for power and authority over their concern for the people. They tell him...

Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter'—tell them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.' "

(1 Kings 12:10-11)

As we said it didn't go well; the people are put to work and as soon as the king sends his first taskmaster out, the people stone and kill him and the king runs for his life. That wasn't the only result though; the people of the region of Israel make a decision that day.

^{1Ki 12:16} When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king:

"What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, O Israel!

Look after your own house, O David!" So the Israelites went home.

^{1Ki 12:17} But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them.

The kingdom of Israel split that day, into two countries, Israel and Judah. Splits are never good and the people of both countries go through a dark time where God rarely speaks to them. Most of us are of the opinion that either God speaks all the time and we never listen or God never speaks. For these people, they were used to hearing God and then for them to make decisions that lead them to a place where they no longer hear from God. Was a big deal, it was a painful and dark situation. These people had lived as God's chosen people, He was their strength, and He was their life. And then to make decisions that walk away from their strength and life left them with none, nothing greater to live for than themselves. It was a tough time.

We jump down a few chapters in 1 Kings and we see that this kid by the name of Josiah is king. When I say kid, I mean kid, he was eight years old. Now I don't know how many eight year olds you know, but most eight year olds don't have a lot of fear. They don't know what to be afraid of. Sometimes this can be a little crazy but other times, it works out great. Kids are much more trusting than adults. That's one of the reasons Jesus mentioned that in order to enter the kingdom of heaven we need to have faith like a child (Mt. 18:4).

We know from 2 Kings 22, that Josiah was eight and that he followed the Lord. This wasn't a relationship with God where he just went to Sunday school and did his church stuff. His relationship with God was real, it was beyond that. Look at what the scripture says concerning Josiah,

^{2Ki 22:2} *He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.*

This kid was a die hard; despite the darkness around him he recognized that God was worth following. Even though the whole country is engaged in darkness, engaged in things that are taking their attention, money, energy, and time, Josiah chooses to be engaged with a giving God. He has his servants rebuilding this place to worship, called the temple. In the Old Testament the temple is where God dwelled. Today, because of what Jesus has done, the Holy Spirit dwells in the people who give their lives to Him. As his servants are rebuilding the place, one of the priest comes across a book of the law, what he pretty much found was the first five books of the OT; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Here we are a good chunk of people who live in this country are following their own way, *they are engaging things that take from them*. They haven't really heard from God in years because of the choices they make, and they are just being taken advantage of by the world around them. *Josiah on the other hand is engaging God, he's doing what is right in God's eyes and God "gives", God gives Josiah His Word.*

Do you realize that God's given all of us this word, the bible is alive and it's provides the greatest opportunity for us to engage with God and receive his gifts. When Josiah hears the word of God, when he hears God's voice he does something with it.

^{2Ki 22:11} When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. ^{2Ki 22:12} He gave these orders ... ^{2Ki 22:13} "Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD'S anger that burns against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us." (The prophetess says, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, ...I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. ^{2Ki 22:17} Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.' ^{2Ki 22:18} Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: ^{2Ki 22:19} Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD.

Josiah engages God, receives God's gift, and then responds to it. He's concerned, he's upset, because he see's those around him engaging with all sorts of things, and *these things have not only stolen their time, energy, effort, and money, but they've robbed the people of engaging with their creator. These things have become their idols.* Josiah tears his robes and he ask, what are we supposed to do with all this, but God doesn't answer his question. Instead God responds to Him, concerning His personal relationship with God. It is as if God says, stop for a minute thinking about your environment, and stop thinking about what everyone else is doing. I, the God who gives, am pleased with you. I have seen what you've done, I've seen your response, I've seen your heart and I'm pleased.

What are you engaging with, the God who gives or the gods who take away? The theme of SYATP this year is engage. Josiah engaged with God. Verse 13a says, ""Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found". You have the ability and privilege this week to engage God for yourself, your friends, family, and the school concerning all that is written in the scripture. Will you be like Josiah, engaging a God who gives? Or will you engage the idols that take and take, never giving anything that last?

Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. What types of things engage you, be specific. (There will be some overlap in each of these categories)
 - Money, Time, Attention, Energy
2. Why do you think we spend so little of what we have engaging a giver and so much engaging with takers? (I don't think we realize)
3. Understand that Josiah's response flowed out of his relationship with God, what types of responses flow out your relationships with those you are engaged with (both takers and the giver)
4. In your life are you more the type of person who takes or gives, how do you know?
5. Please keep in mind that if we give with the wrong motives we are really takers, because we are giving with the purpose of receiving. How do you know whether or not you've fallen into this trap? An example of this is Acts 5:1-11.