

Today's Message: "Skeletons in God's Closet"

*"God seems to want the closet door open. He doesn't accept our comfortable religion; he keeps sending prophets to churn things up. Jesus doesn't skirt the tough issues; he confronts us with them head-on. We don't need an access code or crowbar to pry the closet door open; God himself keeps flinging it wide open and inviting us to look inside...as much as we may keep trying to swing it back shut. We want the door shut...but God doesn't. Not only is He big enough to handle our questions, he wants us to bring them. God opens the door and invites us to take a peek." – Joshua Ryan Butler, *The Skeletons in God's Closet**

⁷"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8, ESV)

Does God punish people?

¹But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ²and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." ⁵When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. ⁶The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. ⁷After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." ⁹But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things. (Acts 5:1-11, ESV)

Part 1

Pastor Kent Chevalier

January 23 & 24, 2016

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¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth... ¹⁹ Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. ²⁰ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. (Revelation 3:15-16, 19-20, NIV)

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5, NIV)

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Small Group or Personal Reflection Questions:

1. Do you believe that God punishes people? Why?
2. What are some of the toughest passages for you to reconcile punishment and God's goodness?
3. What are some ways that you have interpreted the Bible according to your experiences or opinion?
4. How do you reconcile God's goodness, mercy and discipline with these passages (Genesis 6:1-8; Genesis 19; 2 Samuel 11 & 12; Acts 9:1-9)?

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