



# abclinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on June 28-29, 2008

## Part Three of a Three Part Sermon Series

### "Inside Out"

## this week's coreverse

*"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.*

*The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call" ...Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. Acts 2.38,39,41 NIV*

## usingabclinks

### Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days, you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage from scripture. Other days, you'll be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying and answering questions.

### Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions acts as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members for more information on ABC Small Groups or go to [adabible.org](http://adabible.org)>ministries>small groups.

See [adabible.org](http://adabible.org) for **abclinks** archives.



Dancing, playing cards, movies, tobacco, tattoos, long hair, swimming on Sunday, mowing the lawn on Sunday, playing sports on Sunday, beer, rock music. What do all these things have in common? They were banned substances and activities in my upbringing. "Christians don't do these things" was the phrase I heard from a variety of sources. Christians should not only avoid these things but I was told they should be people who attend church each week (sometimes 2-3 times), have Christian haircuts, dress appropriately and occasionally hand out a "gospel tract" to a waitress or someone on the street. I know now that the people who said this had their reasons and they most likely had a much bigger picture of Christianity. But as a young man trying to find my way, that's what my immature ears heard about what it meant to be a Christian.

As I began to grow in my understanding of God, I came to realize that my Christian faith was based on an "outside-in" approach. Meaning my focus was on the exterior well before I tended to the interior. Outside-in religion cares more about what other people think than what God thinks. This is dangerous because it leaves its followers with a checklist to use to determine a person's righteousness or unrighteousness.

Jesus had strong words for people who focused on the outside to the neglect of the inside. That was His biggest criticism with the religious leaders of the day. He called them "white washed tombs" inferring that their spirituality was like dead bones but above the ground they were clean and neat. Another image Jesus used was a cup washed clean on the outside but filthy on the inside. Jesus' strongest words were to those who based their righteousness on that which was measured from the outside.

My quest these days is to approach God from a relationship perspective rather than a religion. Honestly, my checklist religion loves to raise its ugly head. But this summer, I've set on a quest to grow stronger in my understanding of what it means to truly relate with God. In a small group that my wife and I attend, our assignment is to read and journal through the book of Psalms. So, I put my own twist on this assignment. I read with a highlighter in my hand, marking every phrase that is relational in nature toward God. David was known as a man after God's own heart. His songs or psalms are beautiful reflections of his relationship with God. This has been a wonderful exercise to help me approach God from the inside-out.

Our teaching this week compares two groups of people who pursued religion differently. One group, the Israelites, clamored for a new, more external god when their leader, Moses, went up Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments from God. The other group, the first Christians, found the power, freedom and growth from the God with the Holy Spirit. The difference between the two is amazing.



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# daily readings



## dayone

Read Exodus 32.1-29

The nation of Israel's history of following God could be described as inconsistent at best. Even with God's presence and direction for them they tended to turn toward other things when life got tough.

As you read this story of the Israelites in the wilderness, look for how their relationship with God moves from being inside-out, to outside-in.

What caused the change?

## daytwo

Read Acts 2.1- 41

Inside-out living comes through the power of the God who lives within His followers. It's the power of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit arrived after Jesus ascended into heaven, He empowered God's people to do and say extraordinary things.

As you read the story, put yourself in the sandals of the characters. Watch how they respond to God's Spirit.

Compare and contrast these believers to the Israelites in Exodus 32.

## daythree

Read Acts 2.42-47

After the Holy Spirit's amazing arrival and Peter's bold speech, this growing group of new believers established a DNA or thumbprint for inside-out Christian living. The Holy Spirit who took residency in these people, gave them strength and courage to love and grow together.

Examine their thumbprint. What were their distinguishing marks?



# small group discussion



## leanin

What religious tradition frustrated you growing up? Where did the tradition come from? Why didn't it lead to God?

## lookdown

Have someone retell the story of the Israelites at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Tell it from the perspective of Moses. How was their approach to God outside-in?

Have someone tell the story of the first Christians in Acts 2. Compare and contrast them to the Israelites. How were they inside-out?

## lookout

Discuss how people in our world today approach God or religion from an outward perspective. Give examples.

## lookin

What tendencies do you have in drifting toward an outward focused approach to God? Where do you think that comes from?

How does the power of the Holy Spirit bridge the gap between an outward focused religion and an inward focused heart toward God? What's your role in bridging the gap?