



RAY EDWARDS

LIVE WITH JOY. LEAD WITH PASSION. PROSPER WITH PURPOSE.

Are You Waving “Stupid” Flags? Episode #195

Sean: Welcome, this is the Ray Edwards Show and I’m Sean Edwards and today we’re going to talk about some stupid flags.

Ray: That’s right. Some people should just have a flag that says stupid! And some people do, here’s your sign. Maybe you... what?

Sean: Then, how to change your life overnight no matter what.

Ray: Small promises.

Sean: Then we’ll talk about the best camera money can buy.

Ray: And how you can get it.

Sean: All that and more, coming up.

Spiritual Foundations

Ray: Let’s start with the small stuff, how to change your night overnight no matter what. The simple but powerful truth here is this, you don’t change from the outside inward it’s the other way around. You might say okay that doesn’t sound like a big deal, but it’s a huge deal because almost everybody tries to do it the wrong way. They focus on what they eat or don’t eat, if they’re trying to get healthy. They focus on what they drive or where, if they want to be successful. They focus on what kind of house they live in, if they want to have a good family life. They do all these external things to try and fix internal problems.

That’s the totally wrong approach and Christians are even worse. It’s interesting in the world of churchianity, what we do is tell people that salvation is the free gift of grace. You can’t do anything to earn it, it’s just a gift that you accept so there’s nothing you can do to make yourself righteous and holy. Then, once we get them to sign the membership card we let them in on the secret. You have to straighten out your life, because you can’t come to church if you’re going to be like that. That’s wrong that’s not how it works.

Does that mean that if I’m a Christian then I have to be a spiritual person and if I’m not I’m going to get kicked out? No, it doesn’t mean that. But what happens is it like exercise? Do I work at the gym and work myself up into holiness? How does it happen if I become a believer, do I change? How do I change?

Romans, written by the Apostle Paul who is writing to his flock says, don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. You will notice, Sean, the correct NKJ translation of this passage, because I found an example of exactly what we were not

discussing last time we did a podcast together, in that the other translations got it wrong, because other translations weaken this statement and it actually says, according to the best scholarship that I can uncover is, you're renewing your mind so you can prove the will of God.

What in the world does that mean? Firstly there's this concept that we are supposed to prove what the will of God is, which opens the door to all kinds of craziness. Like, we're supposed to be doing the miracles of the New Testament today. But we're not going to get into that today that's just one of the doors that it opens. The other door that it opens is, is that we know what the will of God is. That the will of God is always perfect and if it's always perfect then what about all the bad stuff that happens? There are all kinds of doors that open up when you start unpacking this thing.

What I want to focus on is the transformation that allows us to open all those doors and step through them, is a renewing of your mind not of your spirit, your intellectual thinking brain. Some Christians would have you believe, and they believe themselves, that once you get saved, working out your salvation means you have to get your behavior straightened out. They have to stop smoking, stop drinking, stop having bad thoughts and if they don't the implication is they'll lose their salvation. If you follow that line of thinking it has to be that way, but that's not the way Paul says it works. He goes on to describe what it looks like to be transformed in this same passage.

Read Romans chapter 12 and you'll see how he unfolds it and gives all these behaviors that he says show up when you're being transformed. He doesn't say do these behaviors in order that you can be transformed. He says when you are transformed you will begin behaving more and more like this. He also says elsewhere, don't be anxious for anything. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with Thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God and the piece of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

There's that brain thing again...

Sean: Brain thing.

Ray: Even Christians are supposed to think.

Sean: That's crazy.

Ray: It's revolutionary, but it's true.

Sean: Because most people don't want to think they just want to be spirit led.

Ray: Right. Being spirit led is good, but we're told in this passage we need to use our minds to prove the will of God. That would include proving that we're being spirit led and not just being led around by our emotions or our hormones. Well, I feel like God's telling me I should get this boat so I could use it to minister the gospel to my friends.

Sean: I feel like God's telling me I shouldn't get a job, that He'll just bring the money to me. I actually have a story of that happening and it worked out really well, so God does say that, I'm not going against that.

Ray: But you need to have a way of verifying that you're actually hearing what God is saying.

Sean: Right.

Ray: And that involves your brain. Thinking. Okay, so that implies that I am doing something, I'm renewing my mind. How am I doing that? The simple answer is, through the word of God. There are two major takeaways I want you to have from this segment... the word of God is both Jesus. He is the logos, the word... in the beginning was the word and the word was God and the word was with God and the word became made flesh and that's the Apostle John writing about Jesus being the word. The word is also his written word.

So, when you feel that God is telling you to do something, how do you test it and prove the will of God? You see if it's aligned with the word, with the written word, with the word of Christ as witnessed inside of you and, because we're all part of a larger body of Christ on the earth, you check in with some mature grounded trustworthy believers, who can help you verify whether you're hearing from God or not.

As far as the transformation process itself, here's a set of instructions. This is practical advice and not some airy-fairy mystical thing you can't figure out what it means. Paul says, finally brethren whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and anything praise-worthy, meditate on these things. The things which you learned with your brain and received and heard and saw in me. These do and the God of peace will be with you.

It's a process as the saying goes, I'm going to take it back, bring it back into the kingdom. Progress not perfection. You're already perfected in the heavenly realms. You're progressing in your transformation in this realm and it's not something you work yourself up to it's something that works its way out of you and that should give you a lot of stress relief.

Tip of the Week

Ray: What day is the tip of the week?

Sean: Monday?

Ray: Or is it the tipping point where we...

Sean: Is it hump day?

Ray: Hey what day is it? I'm a talking camel now.

Sean: I've been wondering dad, what is the best camera that money can buy?

Ray: I've researched this extensively as you know. I've looked at many cameras and have had many discussions about the exciting prospects of buying expensive photographic equipment. Your mother especially hearing those discussions.

Sean: I'm sure.

Ray: She loves thinking about that. Here's the problem as photographers, even if we're just hobbyist photographers, you if you're like me you want to take more and better pictures

and you are convinced the answer is the latest, greatest camera gear. In other words, you have gas. Explain that.

Sean: Gear acquisition syndrome.

Ray: This is something I first heard about in a realm that you're familiar with, which is the...

Sean: The guitar and musician world which is, you always have to buy new pedals, new amps, new guitars; you can never be satisfied.

Ray: Yeah, gear acquisition syndrome (gas). So that's what you have in this photographic world. So you have gas but you have no pictures. You're not taking pictures you're just thinking about taking pictures and you're actually thinking about buying stuff to take pictures with. You don't need a new camera.

I know you're shocked, Sean, to hear me say this.

Sean: I am.

Ray: You need to understand it's not about the camera it's about the eye.

Sean: Hopefully you have more than one.

Ray: Even if you only have one, and one of the world's greatest photographers Tray Radcliffe, only has one functioning eye.

Sean: I did not know that.

Ray: So anyway, the best camera money can buy is the one you already have. It's the one you have with you all the time so you're always ready to take a picture, it's your iPhone. If you don't believe me I would point you to the links in the show notes, to some of the best photographers online and these guys that I'm about to share their sites with you are iPhone photographers.

AustinMann.com – the pictures on his site are all taken with an iPhone. He does some post processing, but not much and he doesn't do any post processing in Photoshop he does it with apps on his iPhone.

Sean: Wow.

Ray: Dan Reuben is another one. You can find his work on Instagram. I will post a link to the top 10 iPhone photographers and you will be amazed at their work. My point is this, if you simply think of your iPhone as a tool to make art, instead of always focusing on, well I can't really take any good pictures until I get the Sony A7R+ and five lenses and \$10k worth of gear. Your iPhone can produce work that will rival the work of someone who has a \$10k DSLR system of your dreams.

It is for this reason I'm issuing a 30-day challenge for those of you who are into photography and like me you've been talking about taking more photographs, better photographs but you have to get this new camera gear. I want to challenge you not to buy any new camera gear, but for the next 30 days take a post one picture every day with your phone. I'll put them on my Instagram account. I think this is the right way to do

this, I haven't really thought this part of it through yet, which is awesome and very unlike me to just make things up on the spot, but let's do it. Let's share our art. I'll link to yours and you link to mine and let's see how we do just taking pictures with our iPhones.

I think we're going to come up with some fantastic photography and we're all going to learn something in the process, and that is, it's not about the gear it's about the artist.

Feature Presentation

Sean: I've been wondering another question dad.

Ray: Really, have you?

Sean: Yeah. I've been wondering how to know if I'm waving any stupid flags and if I am, how do I stop?

Ray: Have you been wondering that, because that's what I wrote as the title to this segment?

Sean: Oh it is? Wow, isn't that serendipitous?

Ray: That's amazing, some kind of prophetic gift you have there. Word for word even, it's like you were reading my mail.

Sean: I was reading something.

Ray: Yeah. Here's where this comes from. One day I was in the alligator patch... the point is this, there are two experiences that prompted this for me, one was a few weeks ago and the other was very recently.

1. The first was in an airport.

I was on a flight that was delayed and we had to get off the plane and get on a different plane and I listened to all the people complaining about having to change planes. We all knew what the problem was, and it was explained to us like this. The captain came over the intercom and said we aren't going to take off because we discovered some unexplained metal shavings inside the casing of the aircraft so we're going to change airplanes.

People were complaining, moaning and groaning, and saying some of the most angry things. So I'm thinking, okay let me get this straight, you're upset because you weren't allowed to ride in an airplane that has metal shavings in its engine. Here's a flag for you to wave saying, I'm stupid. That is a stupid thing to get upset about. This is where this came from, because it's like you're waving a stupid flag for everybody to see.

2. The second situation that came up and made me think about this is when I was in a surgical waiting room at a hospital.

A member of our family was having a procedure done and I was waiting. It wasn't a big deal, nothing to worry about just a regular procedural test and I listened to many people in the surgical waiting room complain and one lady in particular was calling everyone she knew apparently, one after another on her phone and it sounded something like this.

Yes, I don't know. They said it was going to be an hour or less and it's been an hour and a half. I don't understand what the problem is, why can't they move along? Don't they understand people have a schedule, people have a life? It was supposed to be an hour or less and it's been an hour and a half already.

She was loud and people all over the waiting room, which was pretty large and had about 40-50 people in it, were looking at her with their eyebrows raised. As I was talking with one of the nurses later I said now, what did that lady want to happen? I'm thinking if I'm getting the procedure done I want you to take your time, I don't want you to say doc, I don't care what's going on but I have an appointment so you have to be done in an hour, so whatever the state is when an hour is up sew me up and I'm out of here. Got to keep on schedule.

Again, waving a stupid sign.

Sean: Or do you want the doc to do that to you? Like if you're in the room, hey we have another appointment we're supposed to get to. I know we're only halfway through your procedure so we're just going to be done.

Ray: I'm just going to staple it off. You don't need it anyway you got extras.

Sean: You're good.

Ray: This has really had me thinking that some people are constantly throwing a stupid flag, signaling the rest of us that they are stupid! Let me be clearer. They're operating in a stupid way. They're in a stupid state and it's often not just annoying it's harmful. Even if you're a believer and you follow the scripture, Ephesians 4:29 says, don't let any corrupting talk come out of your mouth, but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear.

Most people will tell you that this is about cursing and saying swear words, but it's not it's not talking about that at all. It's saying, don't say things that are corrupting and he goes on to explain that if it's not building people up, if it doesn't fit the occasion, if it's not giving grace to the people who hear it then don't say it. Another way to put it would be, if you don't have something good to say then it's better for you to remain silent.

This whole thing got me thinking about, am I ever waving a stupid flag? And I realized, yep.

Sean: Yep.

Ray: Here's your sign. So I began thinking through this for my own benefit and I'm just going to share it and maybe it's just me, maybe it's not you, maybe you're just listening to me do self-therapy on the podcast right now and you're like well Ray, you seriously have a problem but it's good you worked it out. Or maybe someone you know has this problem and maybe they could work on it.

So, I believe that you can figure out if you're waving stupid flags and I'll tell you this, they cost you money, relationships and opportunities you'll never know about. So the idea is to figure out, am I waving stupid flags? How can I stop if I am indeed doing that? There are three different ways that I'm focusing on for today.

1. Does what I'm saying or doing possibly sound like a complaint?

I want you to hear me. Complaining, rarely if ever does anyone any good. You might say, but if I get poor customer service I should complain so they'll fix the problem. Let me ask you, if you're on the other end of that equation and a customer calls and complains and is using strong language and saying mean things to you, does that make you want to help them more or does it make you want to help them less?

Which approach do you think is more useful to you if you're the one who's thinking about complaining? Complaining actually, is I believe, an incompetent request. You don't know how to say it well or say it nicely or you didn't take the time or you're not willing to invest the effort in thinking about, how do I communicate this in a way that's not offensive or judgment or confrontational, but in a way that would help this person want to help me. How do I make a request? If, in fact, you are a complainer listen, complaining is stupid, making a request is smart.

2. Ask yourself, does what I'm saying or doing come at a cost to someone else?

This is a big stupid flag. If you're saying something that costs someone else like, if you're gossiping and you say I don't tell gossip, everything I say about other people is true, that's still gossiping. If you make jokes at the expense of other people you need to understand that your words and actions are as painful or as deadly as a fist or a knife. We have all heard the expression, sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me. Bologna! Everyone listening to this can think of a time when someone said something to you, and you've probably had a specific time come to mind that hurt you deeply. In fact, so much so that you probably still feel some of that right now.

Words hurt, and it doesn't have to be words, it could be as simple as somebody mocking the way you walk. They don't have to say anything. Or the even more subtle and more insidious and I think more shameful way of doing this, is doing it with a smile on your face and saying I was only joking, come on.

The book of Proverbs says if you're taking that approach and your humor or jokes are coming at someone else's expense then you are like a madman who throws fire brands, arrows and death. Proverbs says, like a madman who throws fire brands, arrows and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, I'm only joking. Proverbs 26:18-19.

3. Ask yourself, does what I'm saying possibly display my ignorance?

In other words, and this can be difficult because we often don't know what we don't know. This is one that I have been guilty of recently. The way I'm working through this myself is to ask myself more and more often, how do I know what I'm about to say is true? I've discovered that many things that often in the past I would have said instantly, if I remember to take a pause before speaking and think about what I'm about to say and ask if it's true and how do I know it's true. Often the answer is, I have no idea if this is true or not, I just heard this somewhere. Maybe on the Rush Limbaugh show or wherever.

Again, I was in an airport and this is where I hear many of these things happening, because I have time to reflect of the nature of humanity while I'm in airports. There were two young ladies 18-19 years old, who were well dressed and seemingly well off in life.

One of them was passionately holding forth the importance of the Bill of Rights. I thought it was awesome that they were talking about government, the Bill of Rights, freedom in our nation and she says no I'm telling you it's true, because it's in the Bible. For those of you who don't know, the Bill of Rights is not in the Bible. It's not even in the Concordance or Appendix. Stupid flag.

This is the one that's a little more difficult to get a handle on, because we don't know what we don't know. What I have found increasingly that I'm able to do is realize when I'm about to say something of which I have no objective information that led me to that conclusion.

The next level of this for me has been, there are certain things that I know and I think I know how I know, but if it is a subject that is controversial or might hurt someone else's feelings, before I give my opinion, even when I think it's informed I take a step back and double check my research which means often in conversations I just don't say things I used to say, quite readily. I just feel like why would I do that? I don't really know if it's true. It's important enough that it could hurt this person really bad if I say what I was going to say and even though I think I know it's true I haven't really looked into it in a year, two or even five. This is an opinion I formed when I was a much different person at a much different time in my life, so I probably should do some research on this.

So, especially if you're about to express a hated opinion or an opinion about something that is very controversial or emotional or highly debated such as... abortion, gay marriage, pick the thing that makes you upset and that you have strong feelings about. Check your premises. Ask yourself, how do I know this is true? Then, even if you're convinced it's true, harken back to our stupid flag at the beginning of this discussion when I quoted Ephesians. So if you're at Thanksgiving dinner and someone brings up a heated subject and you know you're right, you may be, but is it fitting for the occasion that you say what you're about to say? Does it impart grace to the people who are hearing you speak? If not, I believe it's better to keep your stupid flag in your pocket and remain silent.

Now, I have a 30-day challenge.

Sean: You're really into these challenges.

Ray: I am. I probably should limit myself to two at a time. So 30 days of no stupid flags.

Sean: Wait, can we combine this with the previous one with us taking pictures?

Ray: Don't take stupid pictures.

Sean: Maybe take pictures of us avoiding a stupid flag.

Ray: If you can figure out how to do that, yes. You'll get extra points. So 30 days of no stupid flags. Just work through the three questions about how to know if you're about to throw off a stupid flag and stop yourself. If you accidentally wave the stupid flag then you have to start over. How do we keep track of this? Well, I have a tool. Get yourself a rubber band and put it on your left wrist, keep it there until you mess up and wave a stupid flag and then take it off your left wrist, put it on your right wrist and go back to your calendar or journal and write, day zero, starting over.

Sean: I thought you were going to snap it and pop yourself thing.

Ray: You could do that too.

Sean: What I did in a situation like this in college was, I got a travel size Sharpie and kept it on my keychain. Every time I did something stupid or trying to break a habit I would put a dash mark on my hand and people would ask, what's that about? I'd say well, that's every time I did blank.

Ray: Oh my. If you're really gutsy you can do that. That'll keep you in line. After the second or third mark you'll be like, I am not doing that again. So that's the 30-day challenge. Now, if you go 30 days without waving a stupid flag I think your life will change. For sure, one thing you want to do once you get through the 30 days is don't keep going. After that just go back to waving the stupid flags all you want. If you kept going then your life would get better and better.

Sean: People would like you.

Ray: You'd have more opportunities come your way.

Sean: People would want to hear what you have to say and what you think.

Ray: You'd have more influence and impact in the world.

Sean: People would want to be around you.

Ray: So why would you want to keep doing that? I don't think it's something anybody is really into.

Sean: All right, you can find the show notes for this episode, including a transcription by going to RayEdwards.com/195.

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Ray: Thinking back to the whole transformation piece about how we don't work our way into transformation we just let the spirit of grace transform us from the inside out, just remember we don't change so that God will bless us, we are changed because He already has.

Until the next time, I pray may God continue to bless you and do more for you than you can ask or possibly imagine.

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