

GOOD FRIDAY vs. BAD FRIDAY

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About six years ago, we were headed toward soccer practice when my six-year-old son Aaron begins "Why do they call it GOOD FRIDAY?" Before I even have a chance to think, his ten-year-old brother Andrew responds with a brief reply, "That is the day that Jesus died on the cross" he said. "But why do they call it Good Friday and not Bad Friday?" inquired Aaron with his usual curiosity. At this point I jumped in to encourage Aaron's line of thought. "That is a great question Aaron. I wish everyone asked those types of questions."

As a small child, my own Easter celebration memories mostly centered on anticipation of the arrival of the Easter Bunny delivering baskets of my favorite chewy candy, chocolate bunnies and hunting for eggs that our mom helped my sister and I color with our most creative designs. After we gorged ourselves with sweets and early morning fun, we would go to church where I remember another egg hunt and even more fun. As I got older, my holiday memories include the fancy clothes everyone wore. My sister would even wear hats and gloves, which was a novelty for a teenage girl. Jesus was definitely in my Easter experiences but I cannot honestly say that He was at the center of them. He seems to have had taken a backseat to all of the festivities and sweets according to the way I remember it. I meet a lot of people with similar memories and many children who are growing up that way today. My wife and I have four amazing children and we desire to reverse that in our house. We want them to grow up experiencing all of the fun of the holiday without misunderstanding the point of it all. After all, it is a holiday - better pronounced "holy-day".

As we rushed down the highway and through downtown to make it to Aaron's practice on time, I answered his questions with vigor in language a six year old can understand. I explained that we call it Good Friday instead of Bad Friday because it was good for us that he died on the cross so that we could be forgiven and be part of His family, receive His promises, so we could know Him now and even better when we are with Him in heaven. I said it is good because the Bible says that it is the only way that we could be with Jesus forever. Jesus knew this and so to die on the cross was His plan from the beginning because He loves us very much. We didn't get into the hard to understand and even more difficult to explain stuff. Why should we? Most adults don't even

really understand I told him. That is why we simply trust that Jesus knew what He was talking about and doing and we are told to live by faith, trusting in Him. Andrew chimed in about Easter being called Resurrection Day and how the story really is just beginning with these things. If Jesus wasn't alive, how could He hear our prayers? How could He be preparing a place in heaven for us? As the Bible makes it clear, if there is no resurrection, there is no Christianity. Or as a six year old says, "if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we couldn't be a Christian and were not going to heaven".

It is sometimes stimulating to discuss deep things with adults but I enjoy talking to children more. Aaron's understanding is surprisingly insightful. He seems to understand what is important, namely whatever Jesus has for me I want. And he isn't old enough to get distracted with superfluous religious knowledge that makes people want to argue. No wonder Jesus quoted the prophet saying, "out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants, you has perfected praise" and he encouraged us to have a child-like faith also.

I hope that each of us spend the time this weekend to appropriately reflect on, and celebrate, what Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday is all about.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.

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	Mid-Week Study: 7:00pm Thursday Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley 195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View