

INTRODUCTION

In this series I'm comparing the lifestyle and lyrics of the Beatles with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I started this series two weeks ago, and after the first message I had a few people tell me, "Oh, I'm so glad you didn't throw the Beatles under the bus." Let me say up front that I love the Beatles' music. I believe God created music. He owns it all. Some people have put bad lyrics to God's music, but music itself is part of God's creation. I love praise and worship music most, but I appreciate all kinds of music.

On January 1, 1962 the Beatles auditioned for a recording contract with Decca Records, the largest record company in England. They had an hour-long audition in which they sang fifteen songs. The company said, "Don't call us, we'll call you." A few months later their manager, Brian Epstein received this letter from a Decca Record Executive: "Not to mince words, Mr. Epstein, but we don't like your boys' sound. Groups are out; four-piece groups with guitars particularly are finished...The Beatles have no future in show business."

That ranks right up there with other bad predictions like Y2K and Hillary can't lose. The Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan show on February 9, 1964. That night 73 million Americans tuned in which was the largest television audience in history at that time. Ed Sullivan said, "Ladies and gentlemen, the Beatles!" The girls started screaming and the Beatles started singing, "Close your Eyes and I'll kiss you; tomorrow I'll miss you." Their second song was, "There were bells on a hill but I never heard them ringing. No I never heard them at all 'til there was you." (From the Music Man). Then they sang, "She Loves You Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, She loves you yeah, yeah, yeah. With a love like that, you know you should be glad." Their last song was, "Oh yeah, I tell you something; I think you'll understand; When I say that something; I wanna' hold you hand." And Beatlemania was born.

One of their most popular number one hits was "Yesterday." It was the first Beatle song recorded by just one singer, Paul. He played a guitar and was backed up by a string quartet. Yesterday has the distinction of being the most "covered" song in history. It has been recorded over 2,500 times from artists from Ray Charles to Elvis to Daffy Duck.

There is an interesting story behind the song. Here's how Paul and John remember it.

Paul McCartney: "I composed the entire melody in a dream one night. It flowed so easily I was afraid I had unconsciously plagiarized someone's song. For about a month I went round to people in the music business and asked them whether they had ever heard it before. Eventually it became like handing something in to the police. I thought if no one claimed it after a few weeks then I could have it. It took me a little while to allow myself to claim it, but then like a prospector I finally staked my claim, stuck a little sign on it and said, 'Okay, it's mine!' It had no words, so I used to call it 'scrambled eggs.'"

That's a true story, although it seems a little bizarre. Paul had the tune many months before he added the lyrics. So to maintain the tune they would sing: "Scrambled eggs; Oh, my darling,

how I love your legs; But not as much as I love scrambled eggs; Oh, let's all have some scrambled eggs."

Later John Lennon reminisced: "Scrambled eggs became a running joke between the band for months and months before it was finally recorded in June (1965). Every time we got together for a recording session, this would come up. We almost had it finished when we made up our minds that only a one word title would suit, and believe me, we couldn't find the right one. Then one morning, Paul woke up, and the song and the title were both there. Completed! I know it sounds like a fairy tale, but it's the plain truth. I was sorry, in a way, because we had enjoyed so many laughs about it."

It's the ultimate break-up ballad of a lover looking back to how he lost someone he loved, and now he was longing for yesterday.

Obviously Paul believed in Yesterday. He claimed that he wasn't half the man he used to be. Yesterday all his troubles seemed so far away, and now it looks as if they're here to stay. Do you believe in Yesterday? Of course, we all believe there was a yesterday – that was Saturday. But do you believe that your yesterdays are better than your tomorrows? That's a sad outlook on life. And the Bible teaches just the opposite viewpoint.

There was another Paul who wrote something about yesterday. He wasn't Paul McCartney; he was the Apostle Paul. He was a prisoner in Rome when he wrote Philippians. He didn't know if he would get out alive. It would have been natural for him to believe his best days were in his past, but he kept looking forward believing the best was yet to come. He wrote: "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14 CSB)

Let's compare the lyrics of Yesterday with the truth found in the Bible. I can actually give you the message in one statement. So here's the sermon in a sentence: Don't let yesterday mess up today because that will ruin tomorrow. I want to make three quick applications about yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

1. LEARN FROM YOUR PAST, BUT DON'T LIVE IN THE PAST.

The Beatles Paul sang, "I'm not half the man I used to be. There's a shadow hanging over me." The prisoner Paul wrote that he was forgetting the past in order to move forward. That's great advice. Many people spend much of their time looking back and longing for the "good old days." Those good old days weren't as good as we often remember.

As far back at the Old Testament, people were longing for the good old days. I want to show you a verse in Ecclesiastes. If you are reading through the Bible with me, we are studying Ecclesiastes. It's important that you recognize that Solomon wrote much of these passages when he was old and bitter, when his many wives had turned his heart away from God. Some of the advice he gives is NOT good. Much of Ecclesiastes looks at life "under the sun." That is,

from a human perspective instead of God's perspective. So you have to read Ecclesiastes carefully and sort out the bad advice with the good. But there is some good advice found in Ecclesiastes 7:10. "Don't say, 'Why were the former days better than these?' since it is not wise of you to ask this." (Ecclesiastes 7:10 CSB)

The Bible scholar Warren Wiersbe comments on this verse with these words: "Do not say, 'Why were the former days better than these?' You do not move ahead by constantly looking in a rear view mirror. The past is a rudder to guide you, not an anchor to drag you. We must learn from the past but not live in the past."

When you drive you have a tiny rearview mirror and you have a huge windshield. Which one are you spending most of your time looking into? Living life looking in the rearview mirror can be dangerous. There is a true story about a fairly young high school science teacher who tried to be cool enough to be friends with some of the high school guys. They seemed to really like him. One day he was driving down the street and he saw several of these high school guys standing on the sidewalk. As he drove past the group he lowered his passenger side window and tried to say something cool. He said, "Hey dudes, see you in class tomorrow!" He was so interested in wanting to know their reaction that he kept staring in his rearview mirror—until he plowed right into the back of a car in front that had stopped at a traffic light.

So don't live your life looking in the rearview mirror! Yesterday's a great place to visit, but a terrible place to live.

2. WORRYING ABOUT TOMORROW STEALS THE JOY FROM TODAY.

A couple of months ago, I stood again with some travelers at one of my favorite places on earth. We gathered in the very spot where Jesus delivered His Sermon on the Mount. It's a peaceful setting overlooking the fresh water lake we call the Sea of Galilee. Every year at this spot, I share with the group the words that Jesus spoke about not worrying.

Jesus said, "Don't worry. Consider the birds of the air." And as I pause, we always hear the happy chirps of dozens of birds that are always there. Jesus said, "They don't worry about what they will eat—for our father feeds them. And you are worth more than the birds." And then He said, "Consider the flowers of the field, they don't work or worry but God clothes them in colors more brilliant than Solomon's finest robes." And I point to the brilliant colors of the yellow mustard plants and other wildflowers.

Then Jesus said in Matthew 6:34, "Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." There are two days you should never worry about—yesterday and tomorrow. You can't go back and change yesterday, and you can't live in tomorrow. You only have today. I once read a great quote from that popular philosopher named Anonymous: The Past is HISTORY; the future is MYSTERY; Today is a GIFT; That's why it's called the PRESENT.

When someone asks us how old we are, we usually answer with years, unless you're a female and you say, "None of your business!" But the Bible teaches that each day is so precious that God tells us to number our days. Psalm 90:12 NIV says, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Factoring in leap years, today is day #23, 844 of my life. And instead of believing in yesterday I'm saying, "This is the day the Lord has made and I will rejoice and be glad in it!"

3. WITH JESUS YOU CAN ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD WITH HOPE!

Paul said he was pressing forward for the goal of the prize of the high calling of God. For many people the future is a scary thing. They don't know what's going to happen to them while they are alive and they don't really know what's going to happen to them after they die. But for those who know Jesus Christ, we can face the future without fear. Instead we can have HOPE, and remember my acrostic for HOPE is Having Only Positive Expectations.

Jesus had something profound to say about not living in yesterday. He said, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62 CSB)

A good farmer knows that when he is plowing he picks a tree or fence post in the distance and keeps his eye on that goal. If he ever looks behind to see if the furrow is straight, suddenly the plow will veer to the side and he won't have a straight furrow. That is a powerful parable in one verse. Jesus said that if we are going to be effective in His Kingdom, we've got to forget the past, live in today, and keep pressing forward in hope. Put your eyes on the prize; that's a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

If you just look at your anatomy, you will realize that God designed you to be moving forward. Just look in the mirror. What side of our heads did he put our eyeballs on? He put them in front because He wants us to look forward.

Which direction do our ears face? Forward because God wants us to be listening to the promises of the future and not listen to the back talk of those behind us.

Which ways do our arms reach? They aren't facing awkwardly backward, because God wants us to keep reaching forward. Now you might not have looked at your feet in a mirror for a while, but which way are your feet facing? Right. Because God wants to be walking forward toward His promises.

The Beatles Paul sang, "Oh, I believe in yesterday." But the Bible Paul teaches us to live for today and to move forward toward the promises of God for our future. He has promised that I will have a purposeful life everyday and when I die I will live with Him eternally in heaven.

CONCLUSION

So, will we see the Beatles in Heaven? Only God knows. Two of the Beatles have died, George and John. Paul and Ringo are still alive. Although all four of them were baptized into the

church as babies, none of them grew up practicing the Christian life. Don't ever assume just because you were baptized or christened as a baby that you are a Christian. The Christian life is knowing Jesus.

The biggest religious controversy from the Beatles surrounded a statement John made. On March 4, 1966, John was giving an interview to a friend when he was asked about Christianity. He said: "Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. We're more popular than Jesus now; I don't know which will go first, rock 'n roll or Christianity. Jesus was all right but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It's them twisting it that ruins it for me."

Those remarks didn't cause a stir in England, but they created a firestorm of protests in the U.S. Radio stations were banning the Beatles songs and many stations and churches in the South were hosting Beatle Burning parties where records and magazines were burned.

You may be familiar with John's claim about being more popular than Jesus, but hardly anyone knows about John's apology when the Beatles arrived in the U.S. in the summer of 1966 for their third and final tour. At a press conference in Chicago on August 4, 1966 John said: "I'm not anti-God, anti-Christ or anti-religion, I was not knocking it. I was not saying we're better or greater, or comparing us with Jesus Christ as a person or God. I said the Beatles are having more influence on kids and things than anything else, including Jesus. I said it in that way, which was the wrong way. I never meant it to be a lousy anti-religious thing. I've tried to tell you what I did do, but if you want me to apologize, if that will make you happy, then—OK, I'm sorry."

Even after the apology there were protestors at every concert. In Memphis someone tossed a cherry bomb toward the stage during the show. All the opposition and protests they faced were factors in the Beatles deciding never to tour again. After their final concert that year in San Francisco, the Beatles became a studio-only band.

Later after the Beatles broke up, John and Yoko moved to New York City where they lived in an exclusive apartment building, called the Dakota, facing Central Park. John had some interesting religious ideas before he was shot in 1980.

A respected British music journalist, Steve Turner, wrote a book entitled *The Gospel According to the Beatles*. I didn't even know the book existed when I announced I was going to preach on the same subject. Lanny Bridges had a copy of the book and loaned it to me, and I've read through it a couple of times. The author interviewed every one of the Beatles—and he and other people close to John report that he had a private fascination about Jesus and the Bible.

Turner wrote: There was a period in his life when John deeply wanted to know who Jesus was. In an effort to escape the chaos of public life, Lennon would often retreat to television and became a regular viewer of the era's most influential evangelists including Billy Graham, Oral Roberts and even Pat Robertson.

At a chapel service at Oral Roberts University, Oral Roberts read part of a handwritten note he received from John Lennon late in 1972. Included in the envelope was a £10 note for a donation. Part of the letter said: "The point is this; I want happiness. I don't want to keep on with drugs. Explain to me what Christianity can do for me. Is it phony? Can He love me? I want out of hell."

Oral Roberts wrote him back sending one of his books and saying that Jesus had said, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He wrote John several times but never heard back from him.

In 1977 John was moved to tears after watching the NBC presentation of the movie Jesus of Nazareth. He told friends he had become a born-again Christian. A week after seeing the movie he and Yoko and son Sean attended Easter services at a church in New York City.

For a short period of time, he seemed to be committed to growing in his faith. He even wrote a song called "Amen" which was the Lord's Prayer put to music. But Yoko had only one thing to say about his conversion. Yoko said, "Oh no!" to John's born-again experience. She was into witchcraft and the occult and was not pleased with his new zeal for Jesus. She took him to Japan. While there, they visited with some Christian missionaries to talk about Biblical beliefs. Over time, with Yoko's insistence, John walked away from his short-lived born-again experience.

But at least he was exposed to the truth about Jesus. Who knows, maybe on that night in 1980 when he was shot four times in the back he didn't die immediately. Maybe he had time to reflect on the truth about Jesus before he died. Only God knows.

You can summarize the Beatles music with one word: Love. One of their most popular songs claimed, "All you need is Love." They repeat the word love forty-two times in that song. Is that right? Is love all you need? Love is wonderful, and the Bible even says "God is love." But it doesn't say "Love is God."

But I think love isn't the only thing you need. I think the bottom line truth is ALL YOU NEED IS JESUS. The French philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."

OUTLINE

1. LEARN FROM YOUR PAST, BUT DON'T LIVE IN THE PAST.

"Don't say, 'Why were the former days better than these?' since it is not wise of you to ask this." *Ecclesiastes 7:10 CSB*

2. WORRYING ABOUT TOMORROW STEALS THE JOY FROM TODAY.

"Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." *Matthew 6:34 CSB*

3. WITH JESUS YOU CAN ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD WITH HOPE!

"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." *Luke 9:62 CSB*

— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations and/or use material that is not under copyright. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material stimulate your own Spirit-driven preparation—*it is never intended as a substitute for your own study of Scripture.*

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, it is good scholarship (not to mention the right thing to do) to cite the source. If you are teaching, you may simply preface your remarks by saying something like: **“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”** This simple citation also applies to any work you may publish, too, as I routinely publish my material in books that are protected by copyright.

This careful effort on your part may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you. I trust you will find that additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners.

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas*
