

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor David Bennett
November 3rd 2013

“What Would Billy Graham Say to Tiger Woods”

Good morning Fil-Am, it is so good to see so many of you here this morning, like we have said many times in the past, that every Sunday here feels like a family reunion.

We are on our second sermon in the series what would Billy Graham say so with that said let get into the message this morning.

I want to take you back to February 19th 2010 to a very memorable press conference. It was with Eldrick Tont Woods, better known as “Tiger Woods”, who had his most difficult, most anticipated, and most memorable press conference to date. There were no questions allowed... Tiger simply entered the room, read a prepared statement, hugged his mother and some friends, and then left. Thirteen and a half minutes total.

You may have remembered that it was on a Friday morning during the Vancouver Olympics. During the broadcast of the Olympics, they cut away to air the press conference. You could tell just by watching that it was a very difficult statement for Tiger Woods to read. Because it was during that press conference that Tiger first admitted to the world that he had cheated on his wife, and that he would be taking some time off from golf to focus on his family.

There had been lots of speculation and accusations ever since the previous Thanksgiving when Tiger crashed his car while leaving his driveway late one night. There are still unanswered questions surrounding that event. The fact that his wife Elin smashed in the back window of the car led people to wonder if she was trying to save Tiger or attack him. And over the next couple of months, the headlines

linked Tiger to as many as a dozen mistresses. The National Enquirer has since reported 120 affairs. But then, that's the Enquirer.

Well, since that press conference, Tiger's marriage has dissolved. In August, Elin filed for divorce. Plus, they share custody of their kids. So Tiger has really lost his family. Plus,

Tiger also lost several of his sponsors who wanted nothing to do with the scandal. And to top it all off, his golf game has suffered. He came back to playing golf competitively, but went through 2010 and 2011 without a single tournament victory.

Here is a list of the times he was PGA Player of the year...

2000	2001	2002	2003
2005	2006	2007	2009

Here is a list of his PGA Wins form 2000...

2000 (9)	2001 (5)	2002 (5)	2003 (5)
2004 (1)	2005 (6)	2006 (8)	2007 (7)
2008 (4)	2009 (6)	2010 (0)	2011 (0)

Tiger's world basically came down around him. Maybe you've never experienced that yourself. Or maybe you have. Maybe you know what it's like to have your dreams destroyed and your world shattered.

If so, then this message is really for you this morning. We are going to try to answer the question, "What Would Billy Graham Say to Tiger Woods, or say to you this morning?"

And in the process, I think we'll discover some things He would say to you and to me when we find our worlds shattered, too.

Look over and tell you neighbor to pay attention.

So let's get going. The first thing I think Billy Graham would say to Tiger Woods in the midst of the fallout, it is also the same thing Pastor Rolly touched on with Charice last week and that is....

1. That Jesus you.

Billy Graham would remind Tiger that regardless of what Tiger had done or the current state of his life, that Jesus still loves him.

During those three years of Jesus' public ministry while Jesus walked among us, He encountered a lot of people who had done some pretty shameful things. And the natural reaction for most people encountering sinners would be to...

- ✓ Shun them,
- ✓ Avoid them,
- ✓ Distance yourself from them.

But not Jesus, he did not cast blame; He offered love. While never condoning sin, He always expressed love to...

- ✓ The down and out...
- ✓ The marginalized...
- ✓ The people who needed a good dose of compassion.

And it didn't matter what they had done; Jesus still loved them and expressed that love to them.

So before dealing with any issues, I think Billy Graham would first of all assure Tiger Woods that Jesus loves Him. And I think that's the same thing He would tell **YOU**, regardless of what you've done or how unworthy you might feel, and you need to understand that Jesus still loves you.

Jesus loves you. However, while I think that might be the first thing Billy Graham would say, I don't think it's the last thing. The second thing Billy Graham would say would be...

2. **There are consequences for your choices.**

Billy Graham would remind him that Jesus would say, “Tiger, I love you, but you’ve made some bad choices. And now you’re experiencing the consequences of those choices.

- ✓ You’ve been humiliated,
- ✓ you’ve become the target of gossip,
- ✓ You’ve lost your family...
- ✓ Your wife and
- ✓ Your kids...
- ✓ You’ve humiliated them...
- ✓ You’ve lost your sponsorships,

It has cost you millions of dollars, you haven’t been able to bounce back on the golf course... these are all consequences for your choices.” That echoes what Paul wrote to the Galatians...

Galatians 6:7 (NIV)

A man reaps what he sows.

In Tiger’s case, the biggest consequence has been the breakup of his marriage. And you can certainly understand why Elin chose to leave him, as the list of his affairs was played out on the air daily. Adultery is devastating to a relationship, and many relationship and marriages don’t survive.

For Tiger Woods some of the consequences were in the form of monetary settlements as reported an approximately \$100 million settlement during the divorce proceedings and paying about \$750 million in alimony over the next several years.

Some reports indicate that the amounts may be even higher. That’s pretty substantial, even for someone who has accumulated as much wealth as Tiger has.

Of course, money's not going to solve everything. Tiger hurt a lot of people and disillusioned a lot of fans and lost a lot of respect and trust. In his press conference, he said...

“I have a lot to atone for.” Tiger Woods

Many couples cannot survive this type testing. I will say I have nothing but respect for couples who choose to address their problems head on, work through them as painful as they can be, and are able to salvage their relationship or marriage.

That can be a very difficult and long process, and the easy thing to do would be to call it quits. So for those who choose to work at it and seek counseling and are eventually able to reconcile and even rebuild trust... nothing but respect.

That is why we here at Fil-Am are so involved in Boundaries for Marriage classes to try and equip the couples with the tools needed to build strong & healthy marriages as well as how to Fight fair.

Because regardless how strong your relationship or marriage is you will be tested! The question is not if it will happen, but rather when!

That begin said, I can understand why Elin would have opted to divorce Tiger. That's a consequence Tiger has faced. He's reaping what he's sown.

Many people will try and rationalize or even justify their sinful behavior by saying I'm only hurting myself, and by doing so somehow, that makes it okay. “As long as you're not hurting anyone else.”

But the truth is, even our secret sins have a way of affecting others. And eventually, even those secret sins will become known. As Jesus warned us in Luke 12:22

Luke 12:2 (NASB)

“But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.”

We need to remember that everything we do or fail to do will be brought to light, nothing is hidden for God either good or bad.

The next point Billy Graham would say is that...

3. That Jesus is in the forgiveness business.

You can hear him say, “Yes, Tiger, you’ve messed up. You’ve messed up big time. And you’re going to face the consequences, but those consequences do not have to be final. They do not have to be eternal.”

You need to remember that Jesus is...

- ✓ Ready
- ✓ Willing
- ✓ Able to forgive you!

Some people find it difficult to believe that Jesus will really forgive people, regardless of what they have done.

Well, if there were one person in the Bible that would have felt that way, it would have been Paul.

In **IMPACT** Class we discovered that Paul wrote one third of the New Testament, and the man responsible more than anyone else for spreading Christianity beyond the Jewish community.

This same Paul had a life as a Christ-hater before he became a Christ-follower. In fact, his goal had been to completely eradicate Christianity and the newly forming Church. So he persecuted Christians and even watched on as some of them were killed. The most notable example of this is when Stephen was stoned to death in Acts 7, which you can read for yourself. But at that time, the Bible tells us that Paul, who was then

known as Saul, was looking on and giving his approval as Stephen was dying.

Yet this same persecutor of the Church went on to become one of its greatest proponents. He came to understand who Jesus is and just how great His love and forgiveness is. This is what Paul wrote to his apprentice, Timothy...

1 Timothy 1:15 (NLT)

This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them all.

Do you wonder if maybe Tiger feels that way right now?

Have you ever hit rock bottom, and not sure what to do anymore?

You know you have done some bad things and hurt people so severely that your not worthy of forgiveness?

You know it might be easy to look at what Tiger has done and where he’s at in life and laugh at him. “How the mighty have fallen.” We like the drama of it—the scandal of it—and so we make him the butt of our jokes.

But Jesus never jokes about sin; He forgives it. There’s no question that Tiger has done some bad things. So have you and I. So let’s not put on our Holy Cloths and pass judgment on him too quickly.

There are people who have done worse things, too. But Jesus offers forgiveness to everyone who will receive it.

Listen, compared to the incredible purity, integrity, perfection, and holiness of God, we all fall short. It doesn’t matter how good you are or how bad you are, none of us measure up to God’s perfect standard. The difference between the best of us and the worst of us is only matters of degrees. We are all sinners in need of God’s forgiveness.

How about you? Do you get caught in the trap of thinking you're "good enough" and don't need to be forgiven? Or maybe you find yourself at the other end of the spectrum thinking that Jesus could never forgive you for what you've done. Either way, I'm here to tell you that it includes all of us.

Jesus came to forgive every one of us. Despite anything you've done, God loves you and offers you His forgiveness.

The next thing Billy Graham would tell Tiger Woods is...

4. You must change your behavior.

Remember the passage in John chapter eight where a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery was brought before Jesus by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law as a way to trap Jesus. This is what Pastor Rolly keyed in on last week in his Sermon. We won't go over the whole thing again but just imagine yourself being caught in the very act and then paraded through the streets to the very feet of Jesus?

How do you think this woman would have felt? I imagine she was frightened. I imagine she was also incredibly embarrassed and ashamed. I'm sure she never expected her private affair to be made so public. But there she was, dirty laundry being aired.

Those of you who know this story already know what Jesus did next. Jesus just squatted down and started drawing in the dirt. At one point, He stood up and told the crowd that whoever was completely without sin could throw the first stone. Then He stooped down to write on the ground again.

And once they were all gone, what did Jesus do? He stood up, looked at the woman, and asked...

John 8:10-11 (NIV)

“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

That’s what I think Jesus would say to Tiger Woods and to you here today. _____ fill in your name, you have messed up. “Yes, you messed up. You messed up big time. And there are going to be consequences.

In fact, right now everyone knows what you’ve done and you’ve got to live with it just like that woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. But Tiger, I’m in the forgiveness business. I’m not going to condemn you.

No matter what you’ve done, no matter how badly you’ve messed up, He can and will forgive you.

He’s not giving you a free license to do whatever you want and He’ll always forgive you. He’s saying, “I’ll forgive you, but you’ve got to change your ways.” That’s the condition.

In other words, you’ve got to repent. And do you know what the word repent means? Here’s a dictionary definition...

Repent: to feel regret about a sin or past actions and change your ways or habits Encarta® World English Dictionary © 1999 Microsoft Corporation

It’s not just to feel bad; it’s to feel so bad that you change your ways. In fact, the Greek word used in the New Testament that we translate as “repent” literally means to change your mind. It’s not about feeling bad; **it’s about change.**

We just talked about how Paul described himself as the worst of sinners. Well, this very same Paul who experienced the forgiveness of God gives us this advice...

Acts 3:19 (NLT)

Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.

Next Billy Graham would say that Jesus would more than likely advise Tiger Woods and you that....

5. I can help you overcome your sinful impulses.

Okay, here's what Tiger needs to hear and what you and I need to hear when it comes to our struggle with temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

You know the secret to overcoming sinful impulses? It's responding as soon as you start to feel the tinge of temptation by removing yourself from the situation.

In **IMPACT** class we went over Genesis quite a while ago, and studied the life of Joseph found in Genesis 39:6-12.

⁶ So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, ⁷ and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

⁸ But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. ⁹ No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

¹⁰ *And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.*

¹¹ *One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. ¹² She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.*

Saints, sometimes all you can do is **run**....

When God shows you the way out, take it. Don't hang around any longer than you have to.

In Tiger's case, delete the phone numbers and email addresses, block them on Facebook, never meet with them alone... don't play with fire.

When you are tempted, don't say I can handle it, don't see how close you can get without getting burned. Get out of there. Eliminate the opportunity.

For me it is kind of like when you first start to get that feeling that you are starting to come down with a cold, you get your first sniffle, what do you do?

I will tell what we do in the Bennett household, as soon as we start to feel that sickness coming on, we will go home and Shirley will make what she calls sick soup, (Chicken Noodle or rice soup) we will get all wrapped up in nice warm sweat pants and take a large amount of vitamin C, Day-Quill, Nyquil, anything we can and get about 10-12 hours of sleep and then the next day we are not only fully rested but feeling 100%.

You know another secret to overcoming sinful impulses? Change your focus to something better. Fill your thoughts with good things. Take a look at these verses...

Philippians 4:8 (NLT)

Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

Psalm 119:11 (NLT)

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)

Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Read the Bible, pray, change your focus away from the object of temptation to something more positive and beneficial. As you do, you'll find that Jesus will help you overcome those sinful impulses.

Finally the last thing I think Billy Graham would say to Tiger Woods, or any of us in the same type situation is to remind us that Jesus said...

7. I can make you a brand new person.

So you don't like yourself and the things you've done?
Don't worry about it Jesus can make you brand new.

Look in the Bible at how the Apostle Paul explained this in the New Testament book of 2 Corinthians... read it with me...

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

...Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

When God transforms your life, you're a new person! He doesn't just do a little housecleaning here or there...

- ✓ He transforms you so that at a heart level...
- ✓ At a soul level...
- ✓ You're a brand new person.

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.

That process of transformation begins the day that you welcome Jesus into your life. And it continues throughout your life.

Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit—we often call Him the third Person of the Trinity—to work in your life, changing you and transforming you into the person He intends for you to be.

Philippians 1:6 (NLT)

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

Can I pray for you? Let bow our heads together. In fact, let me guide you in a prayer. I'll pray out loud; you can pray silently. You can pray something like this...

Jesus, thank you for loving me no matter what. Thank you that I can always turn to you and depend on you, despite what's happening in my life... even despite that times I mess up and cause my own problems. Thank you, too, that you offer me forgiveness. No matter what I've done, your forgiveness is real.

I know that I may still have to face the consequences for choices I have made, but I know that I can be right with you. And that means everything to me.

For the ways that I have sinned... how I've hurt others and hurt you... I ask for your forgiveness and for your help in changing my behavior. When I try to do the right thing on my own, I so often discover that I just can't do it. So help me to change. Do your work in my life. I give you permission to change me from the inside out, from this moment on. So help me God... Amen