

At The Movies Msg 5 – Toy Story 4
How To Grow Up Spiritually?
Sermon preached by Dr. Rick Mandl
Eagle Rock Baptist Church
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(OPEN w/ Toy Story 4 TRAILER)

Welcome to Eagle Rock Baptist Church, it's great to have you with us as we continue our series At the Movies.

Today we're looking at the new animated film

Toy Story 4 (Poster on Screen)

It's hard to believe but the original film in this series was released 24 years ago – **in 1995**.

To give you a little history on the film . . .

Toy Story was Pixar's first feature-length film and it was also the **first computer-animated film** in history.

The movie, which depicts the life of a young boy's set of toys, was so successful, it has since spawned several sequels, the most recent of which we're looking at today.

24 years ago was a long time.

Some of you here today weren't even born 24 years ago.

If you were, I wonder how much you remember about what was going on then.

24 years ago . . . in 1995 a company named

Amazon sold its first book

In 1995 another new company operating under the name **Auction-Web** began selling things online from San Jose.

Two years later in 1997, it changed its name from **Auction Web** to

Ebay

If you wanted to buy or sell on Ebay or Amazon, you'd need a computer.

The good news is in 1995 you could buy

Apple Macintosh Computer

With 8 mb of RAM and a 350 mb hard drive for \$2,099

If you weren't into computing, but were more a fan of fine-dining, you would have been interested in a new product that also hit the market in **1995**.

Originally marketed under the name George Foreman's. . . .

Lean Mean Grilling Machine

The **George Foreman Grill** made its debut and since that time has sold more than 100 million **1995** is also marked by many as the beginning of **our obsession with Reality TV** as more than 150 million people around the world tuned in to watch

the trial of the century and the jury deliver its final verdict in the O.J. trial.

A lot of things have changed in 24 years

Even in the toy story series

There have been changes.

Early on in Toy Story 4, it becomes clear that

Bonnie, the adorable preschooler

who inherited all of Andy's toys in *Toy Story 3*, doesn't have much use for Woody anymore.

When Andy was around, Woody was Andy's favorite. . .

The chosen one who got to go on trips to Pizza Planet and develop the closest bond with the boy of the house.

But at Bonnie's place, things are different.

When Bonnie wants to play, she often leaves Woody behind on the floor of her closet.

She even takes Woody's sheriff badge and **pins it on Jessie** instead.

All of this because Bonnie is growing up

Which begs the question

But what about you and me?

Have you changed in 24 years?

In many ways you're **probably not the same person** you were 24 years ago – and in most cases - that's a good thing.

But what about you spiritually?

What about your faith?

What about your relationship with God?

Are you the same, better, worse than you were 24 years ago?

How about 10 years, or 5 years, or even last year?

Are you growing or are you at a standstill?

Today, I want to help you assess where you are in your spiritual life and then give you some commitments (that for some of you may just be some needed reminders) to help you grow in your spiritual life.

Because, at the end of the summer, **I want don't want you to look back and be disappointed or frustrated that you're the same person that you are today.**

And I know that's what God wants for all of us here today.

God wants you to grow.

Grab your notes and let's look at our first verse:

“Then we will no longer be immature like children . . . Instead. . . growing in every way more and more like Christ.” Ephesians 4:14-15

Circle the word growing.

God's desire for you and me is that we would “GROW”

Growing in every way to be more and more like Jesus.

If you've been around here for any length of time, you know that's our vision as a church

“More people More Like Jesus”

The longer we walk with Jesus, the more we should grow to be like Him.

But HOW?

How Do I Grow Up Spiritually?

I Become A Follower Of Jesus

This makes sense if you think about it logically.

This is the starting point.

In order to grow physically, **you first need to be born.**

It's a natural progression!

In the same way – you can't **grow up spiritually** – until you have **been born again spiritually.**

Until you have found new life in Jesus by asking him to be your Lord and Savior!

In John 3 – a man named Nicodemus, approached Jesus and asked him about eternal life.

And Jesus responded – ***“Unless you are born again – you can't get into heaven.”***

Nicodemus said – ***“What do you mean? I can't go back into my mother's womb and be reborn!”***

But Jesus was saying – **to get to heaven – you have to be reborn spiritually.**

A spiritual birth.

So – I want you to take a moment to think about this question.

Have you been reborn spiritually?

Have you had a spiritual rebirth?

Have you asked Jesus to be your Savior?

To come into your life and forgive you of your sins?

And did it change your life!

Are you a NEW person?

Right after Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be reborn – He told Nicodemus exactly how to do it.

How to become a follower of Jesus and get right with God.

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

So – have you been reborn spiritually?

Have you prayed – talked to God and said. ***“God – I believe you love me so much that you sent Jesus to die on the cross for my sins.”***

I believe that.

Come into my life.

Save me.

So that I don't perish but have eternal life.

If you're not sure right now where you stand with God.

If you don't know if you've been reborn spiritually.

If you aren't sure that you are a follower of Jesus and that if you were to die that you would spend all of eternity with God in heaven.

Then I want to invite you to take care of this right now.

Because any talk about spiritual maturity and growth can't happen until you've been reborn spiritually.

There's a simple prayer written on your notes, and on the screen

Let's all bow our heads...

Prayer of Salvation

"Oh God, I am a sinner. I'm sorry for my sin. I'm willing to turn from my sin. I receive Christ as Savior. I confess Him as Lord. From this moment on, I want to follow Him in the fellowship of His church. In Christ's name, Amen."

If you prayed that prayer – or you've prayed it in the past but haven't let us know . . .

We encourage you to let us know.

Connection Card - - - WHY?

Let us know so that we can pray for you . . .

Let us know so we can send you some material to help you on your journey.

I've put together a book called . . .

What's Next?

And basically it answers the question, "Now that I'm a Christian, what comes next? What do I need to do to grow?"

Check that box on your card and we'll send it to you free as our gift.

So, this is the first step to growing up spiritually.

Becoming a follower of Jesus.

And that leads directly to our 2nd step to growing up spiritually.

I Go Public With My Faith Through Baptism

The first step of spiritual growth is becoming a follower of Jesus.

It's an inward decision.

It's **between you and God.**

That's what saves you.

But **that internal belief flows out in an external, public commitment** in the way you live your life and in who leads your life.

As a Christian - I'm no longer a follower of ME.

I'm a follower of Jesus.

God has a plan for my life – so I'm going to trust Him.

And **this commitment to follow Jesus is something you do publicly.**

You **don't keep it hidden to yourself.**

And **that's the step of baptism.**

You know – a lot of years ago I asked Judy to marry me.

And those who knew us, were surprised to learn that she said YES!!!

What if – after she said "yes" – I said ***"Honey, I'm committed to you. So let's get married but, here's the deal, no ring or anything. Let's just keep this between you and me. Let's keep this a secret. Let's not tell anybody about it."***

What kind of commitment would that be?

She'd be right to say, ***"Why would you want to do that! Are you ashamed of me? You won't tell anybody about me? If you won't tell anybody about me then you aren't really committed to me. You better put a ring on it!"***

You see - **a private commitment is no commitment at all.**

You've got to make it public.

So – when I proposed to Judy – we made it public.

I gave her a ring to show that we were engaged.

We told our family and friends.

And then **one day I stood up one day in public, right here and I said, "I do!" in front of a bunch of people.**

And now I wear this ring everywhere I go.

It shows everyone that I'm committed.

I'm proud of her, and I love her till death do us part.

What is the wedding ring of the Christian life?

It's BAPTISM.

Baptism is you saying, *"I want the world to know...I'm committed to Christ."*

Understand - **getting baptized doesn't make you a believer.**

It shows that you already are a believer.

It's like a wedding ring.

This ring doesn't make me married.

It just shows that I am already married.

And the Bible says that getting baptized is the **FIRST step of obedience** and growth that we take after saying yes to Jesus.

In Acts we find this story in which Philip, who was one of Jesus disciples was involved in a conversation with someone who didn't know anything about Jesus.

It says that . . .

"Philip told him the Good News about Jesus. As they rode along, they came to some water, and [he] said, 'Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptized?' He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him." Acts 8:35-38

That's a great question – Why can't I be baptized? Why can't you be baptized?

What's stopping you?

We try to make it as easy as possible for you to take this step.

We do baptisms regularly here at the church

And then **once a year, we do a beach baptism**

And if you're not sure what that's about, I want to show you.

BEACH BAPTISM (Video 2:17)

Our next Beach Baptism is Sunday September 15th, but if you want to take this step here at ERBC, you don't have to wait till September – just let us know using that. . .

Connection Card

So – become a follower of Jesus and then take the step of baptism.

Here's the next step to growing up spiritually...

I Develop A Daily Devotional Habit

Spiritual maturity starts with **Bible study and prayer** – a daily time set aside for God.

You can't become a mature Christian unless you live out the principles and practices from the Bible.

That's why we study the Bible every Sunday and **every Life Group** is based on a Bible study book and every week there's Scripture to memorize.

There's a correlation between your time in God's word and your spiritual maturity.

Let me ask you some Pop Quiz questions:

- Where's your Bible?
- Do you have a plan for regular Bible study?
- When was the last time you worked that plan?
- What did God say to you during that time?

A worn bible leads to a well-lived life.

This past week I went out with our Love Share ministry, to visit some of our shut-ins

One of those I visited was. . . (add image for Sunday)

Richard Morgan

PHOTO OF RICHARD MORGAN

I was also able to wish him a "Happy Birthday" because this month Richard celebrated his 101st Birthday.

He shared with me some photos from the party his family and friends had thrown for him.

One of the things I noticed during that visit was Richard's Bible, which by this point in his life is pretty much falling apart.

I reminded him of that old truth that, **“A Bible that is falling apart is often owned by someone whose life is not.”**

Our **MEMORY VERSE** for this week comes from Psalm 119 . . .

“Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:105

When you fail to study the bible . . . it **STUNTS** your spiritual growth and you begin to fall into disobedience.

You don't let the Bible guide you.

It's dangerous to live apart from God's word.

You'll experience unnecessary heartache, failure, pain and regret from disobedience to God's word.

Here's why - because the **Bible is the primary way God speaks to you.**

But you also take time to pray - because **prayer is the primary way you speak to God.**

“Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7

It's through prayer that God's peace that passes all human understanding enters our life - as we share with God what's on our heart and listen to his guidance.

Prayer and Bible study go together and should be an important part of every day.

And one place where prayer and Bible study go together are in our **Life Groups.**

If for some reason you haven't been part of one of our Life Groups you're missing out.

You are missing out on meeting a lot of great people.

But most importantly **you are missing an important way to grow up spiritually.**

Here's the 4th Spiritual Growth accelerator.

I Give Generously

Something we like to say around here is that you're never more like God than when you're giving or when you're serving.

We try to provide regular opportunities to serve. . .

- Street Kitchen
- Trader Joe's Food Distribution
- Serving with our children/youth
- Worship ministry

This weekend

SERVANT EVANGELISM

When it comes to generosity, serving is important, but so also is giving.

And very often people try to trade one for the other.

“God, I'll give you my time, but my money is mine!”

Let me begin this point with this truth.

There is a direct connection between spiritual maturity and generosity.

Between growth and giving.

The Psalmist describes it this way...

“But the godly are generous givers.” Psalm 37:21

It's true.

I've **never met a mature Christian** who wasn't mature in their giving.

I've **never met a growing Christian** who wasn't growing in their generosity.

Stinginess and **spiritual growth** don't go together...they're the opposite.

If you don't honor God with your finances – if you don't return to God from what He's blessed you with – **it's a sign that there's something not right in your heart.**

You're **most likely going to be stagnant spiritually.**

People have a lot of reasons for not giving financially toward God's work.

Very often those can be summed up under the broad heading that **they trust more in money than you do in God.**

What I mean is they don't trust that if are generous and tithe – that God will take care of them.

But see - when you're generous – it frees up your heart.

You're honoring God and it opens up your life to growth and blessing and happiness.

God loves generosity.

So – let me ask you – **What does your giving say about your spiritual maturity?**

What does your generosity say about how much you've grown up spiritually?

In the NT – Jesus makes this point about giving...

“(Jesus) *“You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.”* Matthew

23:23

Notice - Jesus says – **“*Don't neglect the more important things.*”**

According to Jesus - money is NOT the most important thing in the world.

It's not the most important thing to God.

It's an elementary thing.

Something that should be easy.

But here's what Jesus means – if God can't trust you with something as basic as money – how can he trust you with the more important things?

If he can't trust you with monetary blessings – how can he trust you with spiritual blessings?

If he can't trust you with money – how can He trust you with spiritual growth?

You see the connection there.

Some of you are stuck spiritually.

And you don't know why.

You go to church.

You've been in a Life Group.

You're checking all the boxes.

Or almost all the boxes.

But maybe this area of immaturity is holding you back.

Before you get to the more important things – you need to honor God here first.

GENEROSITY is foundational to your spiritual growth...to your happiness and to your life having maximum impact for God.

Now – for some of you this is new.

And if it is – your first step today might be telling God – **“*Okay God - I'm going to start by bringing back something to you.*”**

***Today, I'm going to give something for the 1st time.*”**

Your first step is just to give something today!

Use your envelope and make an initial gift today.

Maybe it will break down some walls in your life.

But **maybe you already give** - but you **only give something every once in a while.**

You give sometimes – but you haven't really been consistent.

Your next step might be to **move from sporadically to consistently.**

One way to do that, not the only way, but maybe the easiest way is to Automate your giving.

This way you don't leave it to chance.

You set it up in advance, so that every time I'm paid.

Every time some money comes into my hand, before anything else, my first gift is toward God.

Giving generously accelerates your spiritual growth.

Because it makes you more like God.

God is generous.

Remember - God GAVE His only Son Jesus so that we could have eternal life.

And when we're generous – we become more like God and grow in our faith.

Now – the next way to grow up spiritually – **this is one you can't do on your own.**

It takes a church family...

I Fully Engage With My Church

This is what you're doing right now!

Weekend Worship.

Having a weekly time of worship is a key link to all the other ways to grow we've discussed.

Think about it.

When you come here on the weekend, we study the Bible and pray; you see others from your Life Group; you're able to give.

A lot of the ways to grow, come together when we come together to worship on the weekend!

Here's how the book of Acts in the NT describes the early church...

“All the believers devoted themselves to

***the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer."* Acts 2:42**

All of these are part of what happens here on the weekend.

But a lot of people miss out on God's power at the weekend services, because they have the wrong view of what this is all about.

Let me explain.

From your history books do you remember the Italian physicist and Astronomer

Galileo?

In Galileo's day, a lot of people thought the world revolved around them.

Galileo rightly corrected them and said...no, no, no - the world revolves the Sun.

The two views were the . . .

Geocentric vs Heliocentric

This HELIOCENTRIC view, first proposed by Copernicus, and then proven by Galileo, wasn't popular in his day.

In fact Galileo was

Arrested and put on trial

For his view

But his view has withstood the test of time

And **today we talk about our SOLAR system not the EARTH system.**

Today, when it comes to worship in our weekend services, maybe what we need is a Galilean revolution.

Because many people throughout our country come to the Weekend Services and **they think the service should revolve around them.**

It's about what they get from worship.

It's about what they get from the message.

It's all about them.

But the truth is – worship is not meant to revolve around us.

Our worship and our lives are meant revolve around God.

With Him as the center.

God is at the center of our Weekend Services.

Its about what God wants and what he has for us.

We **come expecting not to 'get something from the church'** but to give something back to God.

To put God at the center of our lives.

See the difference?

It's about our hearts.

When we come with the wrong motive – we come asking **"What Can I Get from God?"**.

But like the mis-directed people from Galileo's day, we are wrong.

Worship doesn't revolve around us – it revolves around God.

So we come to worship asking: **What Can I GIVE to God in Worship?**

That's your **it's really not about songs we sing or if the message on a specific weekend isn't relevant to your life.**

Because you didn't come to get – you came to GIVE.

To give your attention to God.

To give your praise to God.

To give your offering to God.

To give yourself to God.

And when you come with the desire to 'give' to God you ALWAYS walk away full. Let's pray together. . . .