

The past two weeks, I've been very emotional; been all over the place. We had Labor Day, which was a great, fantastic experience for so many people. They got to see people they haven't seen in a long time. You got the beef burgers and coney's and they got chicken, and they got all kinds of slushies. Uptown, they got to play in the bouncy houses. They got to throw and dunk people in the water tank. It was great for everybody.

And then we had the other side, and we're losing people all week in different forms. Different reasons. It's very sad. It's very sad part of the week. And during part of that loss this week, I got angry. I got very angry, and I was angry because I was told to get over it. I was told it's a fact of life. Now, deal with it, You can't say, but people are saying that it's a part of life. It's a part of life

the kids have to be afraid to go to school? It's a part of life that kids have to deal with.

Wednesday has been in two lockdowns already. She's in kindergarten.

I couldn't imagine going through lockdowns at that age. Unfortunately, the kids don't know. Kids in the elementary school don't know that they're locked down. They see they get extra time to play. But the kids at the high school do know. They do know what's going on.

When I was in high school, my biggest threat was making football practice on time. That was my biggest concern, Was I going to get to practice? I didn't have to worry about where my food was going to come from, if I was gonna eat that. I didn't have to worry about if I was going to go to school and a kid would have a gun. I knew kids had guns at school. We go hunting afterwards but before practice. It was common back then.

Now it's a completely different world. These kids have to grow up in and it made me angry. How do we get to that point? How did we get to a point that it's okay for kids to walk through metal detectors every day? That it's okay For them to just accept one of their friends is going to die before they graduate in high school.

As parents. why are we supposed to accept that? As a community, why are we supposed to accept that the same person who said that, we just need to get over it that's a fact of life for these kids, also said that if you lose your kid, your kid gets killed in one of these shooting, it's okay because that gives you more time to spend with your niece and nephew. I love my niece, most of the time, but she is not Wednesday. They're two very completely different people. You can't substitute the loss of one for somebody else,

We're supposed to accept that, because that's what we are told. You're told that it's okay. And I don't accept it. I don't agree with it. I don't believe it and neither should anybody else? One of the things we've worked on this year, one of the things that I've worked on, I've tried to teach to you guys, is that there's different perspectives in all of the scripture lessons. (I really thought you were all going to fire me when I went after Noah.) But there are different perspectives to everything.

I remember as a kid being here for vacation Bible School. I had Ramona Gibbons as my teacher back then. And we talked about the Garden of Eden. And she told me that the Garden of Eden was about Good versus Evil. And it is. And a few years later, I was downstairs because Ramona's classroom was in the old back room, that's not there anymore. And we had the stairs that used to run up into the lounge. And I wasn't exactly paying attention to what was going on. And I was with Bryan Fatka. I remember this vividly. We are running down those stairs and

Ramona had class with a bunch of kids in that class. And she caught just cold caulked me around that corner of the door and she smacked me in the head. So you don't know if it was intentional or she was just accidental, but it happened. And she looks at me and she says Bryce Duling. I'm glad she didn't know my middle name. I probably would have gotten it right then, but she said Bryce Duling. God has bigger plans for you. Knock it off.

I thought about that. I thought about that a lot yesterday because God does have bigger plans for all of us. What we think we're doing at one point might not necessarily be what he has planned for us, but it's something that we need to find for ourselves. She always said that we need to reflect upon ourselves. You don't let people tell us what God wants us to do within ourselves. That made me think about today's scriptures. A very long time ago, the snake was a symbol of wisdom. It wasn't always the symbol of evil. Whatever you want to say, it was a symbol of wisdom. And when the serpent is talking to Eve, in today's scripture lesson, it's asking her questions like wisdom: Why do you think something, where do you think about it from? He never says anything about sinning. No more in that scripture lesson does the same thing about sinning. But what we hear is Eve's perspective of the world. She doesn't know what tree is. She doesn't know that's the tree of good and evil. Truth and also lies. She just knows that it's a treat. She knows that she's not supposed to eat from it. She knows that she's not supposed to touch it, and she knows that if she does, she'll die. But then she reflected on it.

She knows that God loves her, She knows that God loves her more than anything else. He created her literally. So if God loved her so much, why would he put something there for her to die? Do you believe Even though he asked her not to do something? That she wouldn't die from that because he was protecting her.

Kids do that all the time, right? They push you right up to the edge. You tell them not to do something and they're right there doing it. I know when I was a kid, I would constantly be told not to bother my sisters, and I still would. What is really going to happen? I wasn't gonna die from it, even though they tried a couple times. But we know that we're still protected by God in everything that we do. She knew that she was protected by God. So shouldn't she try it? She was taking advice from somebody. Somebody who told her not to do something, and she questioned it. And she ate the fruit. In doing that, she lost all of her innocents. She was no longer a child. She was an adult. Adam became an adult. They realized the difference between what God had been protecting them from. And he saw the other side and realized that it was a point of Now. Now they knew the difference between right and wrong.

Now, they knew. Well, God had meant something. It's so much easier for us to not know things. We're better off. Not knowing, For better off, not understanding because it's simpler. If somebody comes and tells us not to do something simply because they don't want us to, it's easier to not do it than it is to make those waves, to make those changes.

Kids today are not going to ever have the innocence that we had. They're never going to understand what occurred. If you see the sun, they're never going to understand that they can go from one side of town to the other by themselves, and not have to check in, not have to take a certain path that goes by our friend's house, so we can call our friends and say, hey, do you see Wednesday walking by right now. My mom and dad live literally a block from us and I won't let her walk that way unless I can see Kathy outside in her backyard, just in case I lose her because we can always lose Wednesday. I know Kathy and I'll call Mom and Dad and let them know that she's on her way so they can hide in the kitchen and act like they're not watching our

house. Not that they ever do that. But it's an innocence that she'll never fully understand because we have moved to a point in the world where we don't have that anymore. That made me very angry. Kids today have a right to not be scared all the time. They have a right to understand God is going to be there and care for them.

They don't always get to know that, but I hope that they do. I hope one day this all moves past it. That we all come together, and we stop fighting. I remember that God loves each and every one of us, no matter who we are or where we are in life's journey. So you can understand that, He gave his son so we wouldn't have to lose ours. Let us pray.