

8-5-18

## **A,B,C and 1,2,3**

Look at the title of Today's sermon: A,B,C and 1,2,3. Now, be honest, who thought of Michael Jackson and the Jackson 5? As soon as I decided on the title, I thought maybe I should change it because that was the first thing that came to my mind, and I just started singing it...

A,B,C, It's easy as... 1,2,3... Or simple as Do-Re-Mi

A,B,C, 1,2,3, baby you and me.

You remember!! Now sing it with me...

A,B,C, It's easy as... 1,2,3... Or simple as Do-Re-Mi

A,B,C, 1,2,3, baby you and me.

But I decided that I would keep that title, it was okay if we started singing with Michael Jackson because if that helps us remember the A,B,C and 1,2,3 that help us to share in God's kingdom, share in the life given to us by the blood of Christ, who am I to argue? If we remember the A,B,C and 1,2,3, we will always know that Jesus is life - we will know that Jesus has always got our back. It's as if Jesus himself is saying: "You and me baby, you and me."

Now I would be willing to bet the Jacksons were not thinking about getting the love of our Lord and hanging on to that love when they sang that song, but the words really are true to that idea!

Let's start with our A,B,C's...

- A. A is to Admit to God that you are a sinner and Accept Jesus into your heart
  - a. When we admit to God that we are sinners, and we are all sinners - it's in the book of Romans (3:23): "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." So we admit we are sinners and part of that "admitting" process is to repent, to turn away from our sins. It's not enough to simply say, "Yup, I'm a sinner. I know that God would not necessarily approve." That's just not enough because there's nothing there that says, "and I don't want to do that stuff any more", nothing that says, "I'm really going to try NOT to do that stuff anymore." If

we sin and go “oops” and keep doing the same thing over again, what’s the point? That’s why repentance - turning away from the sinful behavior - being sorry for what you have done and willing to change your ways, is part of admitting you are a sinner. So, we admit we are sinners, we admit this to God and he accepts our honesty and our willingness, and our efforts to turn away from sin, to change our ways... Good! That’s really good!

- b. But “A” is not done yet. The next step in the “A” of the A,B,C’s is to Accept Jesus into our hearts. Until we do that, we merely give lip service to the “I’m going to try not to sin anymore” that we are so anxious for God to believe. Without Jesus, we can’t do it. We simply don’t have the strength to ward off the temptations placed before us. We need Jesus in us, and we can have that. John 14:23 tells us ... *If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.* You see, by admitting we are sinners and truly repenting, by changing our ways, we are keeping the Word and God loves us for that. Because of our repentance, God the Father and Son will make their home in us. With the Lord in us, we can keep His word by turning from sin, we will have the power because we have been told that we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength. (Philippians 4:13) By accepting Jesus, truly accepting, we have the strength to ward off temptation.

So that’s A. Admit you’re a sinner and accept Jesus into your heart...

B. B is to Believe that Jesus is God’s son and to Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins

- a. To truly be redeemed by the love of our Lord, to claim Him as our heavenly father, we must believe that God’s son was born here on earth of an earthly, human, mother. We must truly believe that Jesus is the son of God. This is affirmed many times in the bible Galatians (4:4) *But when the right time came, God sent his Son [into the world]. A woman gave birth to him, and he came under the control of God’s Law.* Again in Romans 8: (3-4a) *What the law could not do since it was limited by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours under sin’s domain, and as a sin*

*offering*... Throughout Paul's letters, throughout the gospels we are assured that God did send His son. And we need to believe that.

- b. The other part of the B in A, B, C, is to believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. Again, we turn to scripture and we find in Paul's letters to the Romans: *While we were sinners, Christ died for us.* We can read that, we can say that, and we can tell people we believe that... but we have to really truly trust that as truth - believe that Jesus, God's son, suffered and died on the cross as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. You all know the affirmation of this. We read it in the book of John, and most of us know this verse by heart. If you do know it, say it with me, John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* I don't know what else I can say about this. If you are struggling with believing, I wish I could wave a magic wand or twitch my nose like Tabitha from the show "Bewitched", but I can't do that. I can't give you the power to believe, you have to take the power given you from "A", from admitting you are a sinner and accepting Jesus into your heart - take the power of Jesus in you to believe, to have faith that God loved us SO much that he gave his only Son, He sacrificed his only Son, to die for each one of us. Jesus took our sin to the cross. You need to believe that. Believe that through his death, Jesus will make you clean on the inside. If you believe this, then you are what they call "in Christ" and 2nd Corinthians tells us: *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.* God gave his son, Jesus as the gift to the world, a gift to you, that you may receive salvation, that you could become "new".

- C. C is to Confess your sins and Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior
- a. Part of confessing is to admit, like in the "A" of our A,B,C's. We have to own up to our mistakes, take responsibility and reveal to God that we know we have sinned. We know we make mistakes, we mess up, we make poor choices, we behave in ways that are NOT in his image... When we confess this to God, we are, in essence, agreeing with God - we are admitting that we are wrong and He is right - we agree that His way is the right way - His path is the path we should

be taking. When we confess our sins, God will - in His remarkable faithfulness to us, His children - God will forgive us of those sins. 1 John 1:9, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

- b. When we learn our A,B,C's, when we Admit we are sinners, Accept Jesus into our hearts, truly Believe that Jesus is God's son and that he died on the cross for us, Confess our sins - take responsibility - repent in apology because of all God has done for us, what we are actually doing is confessing our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. And when we do that, our eternity with God is sealed. As we read in Romans: *If you will confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (10:9)*

That's our A,B C's: Admit and Accept, Believe, and Confess. A,B,C - that's how we become part of God's kingdom.

So, once we get there, how do we stay? That's the 1,2,3 part of today's message - not as complicated as the A,B,C's, we'll get through 1.2,3 a little quicker.

First, we pray.

There are several reasons to pray: We pray to ask for guidance when we feel lost and alone; we pray to ask for His saving grace when we have yielded to temptation; we pray that we live following His will and not our own; we pray so that we can accomplish God's work in the World; and we pray because prayer is a weapon of spiritual warfare. But perhaps the most important reason to pray is because prayer helps to build our relationship with Jesus.

And that relationship is immensely important because Christianity is a relationship. Christianity isn't a thing like a city or government agency or community with rules; Christianity isn't about rules, Christianity is our relationship with God and with our savior Jesus Christ. And we build that relationship through prayer. Prayer is a gift, and I believe the main reason for that gift is that we learn to receive, experience, and return His love in a genuine relationship. Prayer is the one place that God can really get at us - not what we would think. We think that prayer is

the place for us to get at Him, but it is where God can get at us and speak to us and minister to us. That's number 1. Pray.

Second, we read His Word, we read the Bible.

We read the bible to learn about God and to answer questions we have about God. We read the bible for many reasons...

Reading the Bible teaches us to imitate God, and we need to know how to do this... In Philippians 2 (3-8) we read: *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interest of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus*

In First John (2:6) *The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*

And in Ephesians (4:32) *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

Reading the Bible gives us courage

Joshua 1: 8-9 *Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it... Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go"*

And Finally, Reading the Bible allows us to be certain of what God said. The Bible is our final authority.

In the book of John (17:17) we read: *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*

And number 3? Number 3 is that we practice all we have learned in our A,B,C's and numbers 1 and 2, and we live in His image. When we look in the mirror, we want to see what God sees. We want to be the image of the kindness, the grace, the love of our God. The God who gave us His most prized possession - His son who walked this earth showing us the power and the love of God our Father; His son who sacrificed his own life, taking with him the burden of our

sins; His son who lived and died to be the savior we so desperately need so that we might know our Father God. We want to live in the image of that God - the one who gave all that - as best as humanly possible and by the power of Christ within us, we need to live in His image to keep the love of God ever present in our lives.

So, remember your A,B, C's:

- Admit you are a sinner and Accept Jesus in your heart
- Believe that Jesus is God's son and that he died on the cross for us
- Confess your sins and confess your faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior

And your 1,2,3's

- Pray
- Read the Bible
- Live in His image

Learn the A,B,C and the 1,2,3. Allow God to guide you, to mold you, to help you to live in His image. Do those things and you will never, ever be alone. Not in the joys you find in life, and not in the depths of sorrow or confusion. Jesus is with you. He's got your back... Let the Jackson Five remind us of that, as if Jesus is singing: "A,B,C; 1,2,3 baby you and me"  
AMEN.