

What does God think about
illegal downloading?

*How my affection for Rick Steves, Zagat and the
Oscars contributed to my compromise*

By Anthony Ceder



The Oscars

I'm writing this just before the 2013 Academy Awards. I love this time of year. I called my friend who is an actor in Los Angeles this week and asked him, "what movie will win best picture and who will win best actor and best actress?" He said, "I've got Daniel Day Lewis as best actor, Jennifer Lawrence as best actress and Argo for best picture. Wouldn't be surprised if Hugh Jackman snags best actor though, it could be a year of surprises!"

I also emailed one of my favorite seminary professors who teaches in the film and communications department at Pepperdine University and asked him his predictions. His name is Craig Detweiler and his reply was:

"This was a very good year for movies with many excellent contenders.
If you want inspiration, see Les Miserables.
If you want admiration, see Lincoln.
If you want a good date movie, see Silver Linings Playbook.
If you want visual splendor, see Life of Pi.
If you want a nail biting entertainment, see Argo.
If you want experimental and original, see Beasts of the Southern Wild.
If you want to think about something important, see Zero Dark Thirty.
If you want violence, see Django Unchained.
If you want a moral quandary, see Amour."

I love movies but not just any movie will do. If I'm going to sit down and watch something for two to three hours, I want it to be worth my time and money. With two small children living in my house I don't have enough time these days to watch a bad movie. I love my life but with a three-year-old and one-year-old calling me "dada" I simply don't have tons of spare time. One of my all-time favorite life experiences was attending the Sundance Film Festival with my wife in 2006. Craig Detweiler spent a week helping me and my classmates understand film and how to extract truth from them in constructive ways. He taught us to mine for the grace and truth being promoted in a film that actually has something to say. He taught me to appreciate even dark films so long as they were communicating something true and powerful about real life. The experience was life changing and deepened my appreciation for films and filmmakers. Little did he know he was creating a monster within me. Ever since the Sundance Film Festival of 2006, I obsess over seeing the best movies of the year. I absolutely love it when the Academy releases the best picture nominees. Usually I don't see many movies until their list comes out. Part of the reason why I love the release of the nominees is because of who is a part of the Academy. Just in case you didn't know, the Academy is made up of directors, actors, producers, writers and all sorts of professionals in the movie industry divided into 15 categories. Currently, Harrison Ford, Colin Firth, Jake Gyllenhaal, James McAvoy, Christopher Waltz, Julianne Moore and Laura Linney are some of the actors and actresses that represent the Academy. They are the ones who nominate their peers for best actor and actress each year. Today the Academy now includes more than 6,000 artists and professionals. No matter what branch of the Academy you are in, you

are allowed to nominate the films for best picture. In other words, credible people in the movie industry are selecting the best picture nominees and because of this I feel I simply *must* see what they are calling the *best*. I mean, come on, Harrison Ford gets a vote! That means Indiana Jones/Han Solo is one of the guys telling me what I should watch. How can I not take his word for it?



Rick Steves' Travel Guides

I also love Rick Steves' travel guides. Sometimes I think I should quit my job and try to work for him. I simply love him and feel like I am indebted to him. If you have never been to Europe and ever plan to go I highly recommend you choosing his books as your guide, regardless

of where you are headed. The first place I ever went in Europe was Paris. It's a wonderful city, full of romance, charm, delicious food, epic museums and iconic monuments such as the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de Triomphe. It's truly one of the most amazing cities in the world but I really did not enjoy my stay there. Why? I'm convinced it's because I didn't have my Rick Steves' guidebook. I didn't really know where to eat. I didn't know what I was looking at when I visited the Louvre museum where the Mona Lisa is. I didn't know which sites were worth my time. I didn't know anything except what my less than stellar guidebooks told me. I will not name which guide books I found to be worthless but let's just say I had a few and none of them compare to the ones Rick Steves creates.

The second city I visited was Venice, Italy. My Venetian experience was totally different than my Parisian experience. Someone had given me a Rick Steves' guide to Italy before my trip and having this in my hand opened up all the hidden gems of one of Italy's great cities. Having

Rick Steves' Italy guidebook in my hand made me feel like I wasn't a tourist (except for the fact that I obviously was one with my guidebook ever in hand!). The guidebook showed me where the locals ate and helped me avoid tourist traps. It helped me understand the meanings and significance of the paintings I was looking at and it kept me from getting lost or feeling like a stranger in a foreign land. I love Rick Steves' guidebooks because they help me feel like I'm a local when I'm in Europe even though I stick out like a sore thumb. I have sampled his Germany, England, and Italy guidebooks while traveling in those countries and they have never let me down. Some days I wonder how much more I would've loved Paris if only I had had Rick Steves to guide me through it! Essentially, Rick Steves makes me feel like I have insider information on the best things to experience in Europe.



Zagat Rated Restaurants

I also love Zagat. I feel like a delicious meal experience is one of the greatest experiences life has to offer. I simply love food but not just any kind. I love savory, delicious, and superb food. I love to travel and if a Zagat rated food guide exists in the city I'm going to I will almost always order a Zagat book before embarking on my journey. I love Zagat for the same reason I love Rick Steves' guidebooks and the Academy Awards. I simply love to know what is best. I don't like to watch movies that aren't the best. I don't like to pay for food that isn't the best either. I simply love to sit with my wife or a group of friends and enjoy a meal. Just to be clear, I'm not saying I like to go to five-star meals everywhere I go. In fact my favorite section of each Zagat book is the ranking of the best "cheap eats" in each city. I love finding a great burger, sandwich or slice of pizza. It doesn't have to be expensive, I prefer it not be. However, it does have to be good for me to be satisfied with my experience.

What's the point? Why do we need to talk about illegal downloads?

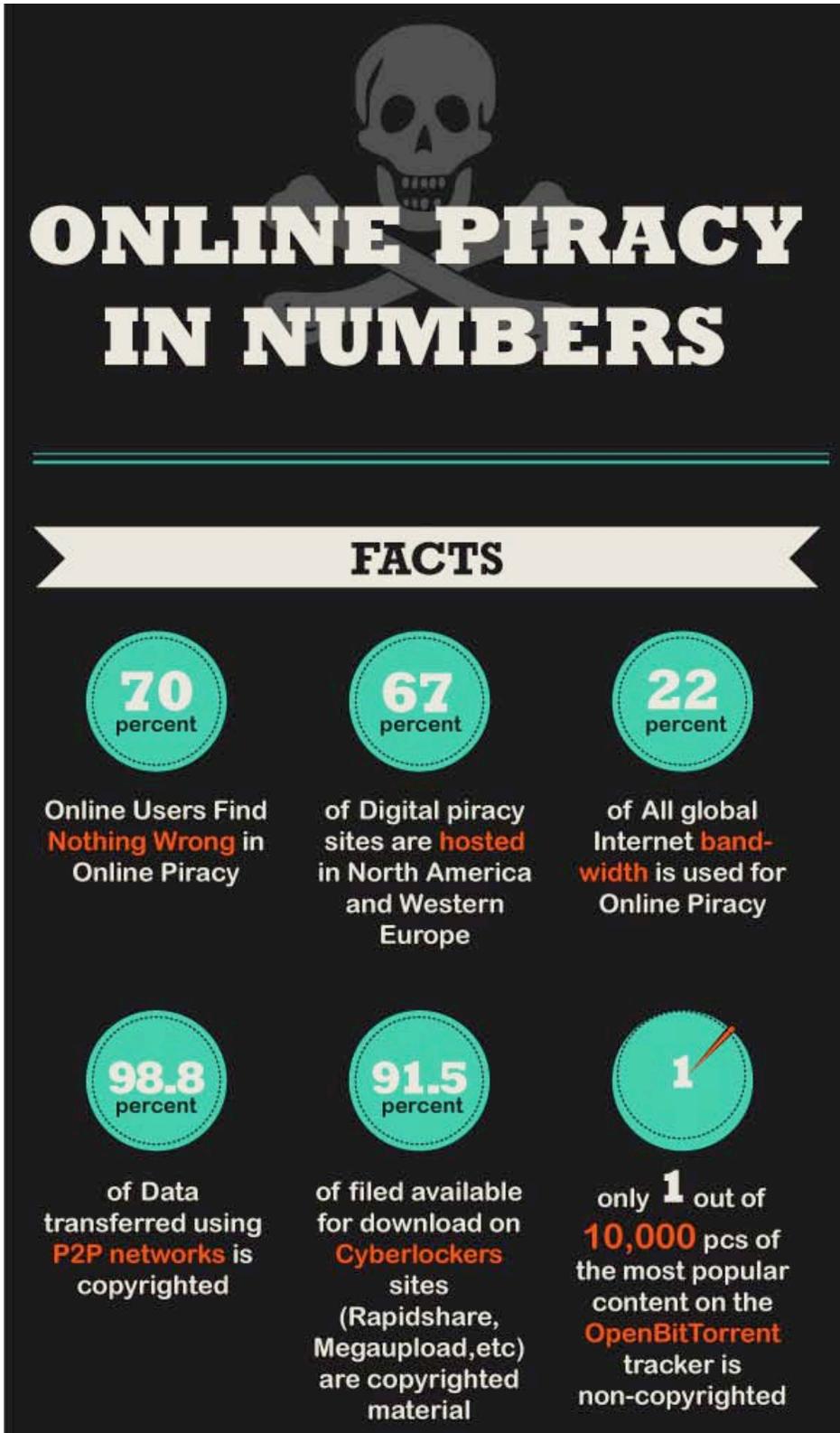
As much as I love good food, good travel experiences, and a good movie, there is nothing I want to love in this world so much as I love Jesus. I have never experienced anything in this world that compares to knowing him. I agree with the apostle Paul when he says in Philippians 3, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things." I'd like to think I would never intentionally do anything to grieve him but I know sometimes I do. Two weeks ago a friend helped me see that my illegal downloading of all the movies nominated for best picture at this years Academy Awards ceremony was something I needed to examine myself in. He pointed out that I am supposed to be leading the students that I pastor into a lifestyle that is pleasing to God and questioned whether I was setting a good example by the way I was rationalizing doing something I knew in my heart was likely not pleasing to the Jesus that I love and live for. His words stung but I'm thankful that he loved me enough to call my behavior into question.

As I mentioned earlier I have two small children and therefore I lead a busy lifestyle. I'm a youth pastor and have a family and therefore like most people who have jobs and families I have very little free time. When my wife and I have time for a date she rarely wants to spend it in a quiet movie theater but naturally prefers to spend time talking to me over dinner instead. So when this years list of Academy Award nominated films was released I realized I had a problem. I had not seen a single one of the films. My first response was to head to Blockbuster to see if any of them had been released for rent. Only one was released for rental so we watched "Beasts of the Southern Wild." The rest of the nine films were still in theaters and with the Awards show coming up I was in a hurry to see as many of the films as I could before February 24th, the night of the Oscars. I did some research on how to download movies still in theaters. Without

considering whether or not my actions were legal I immediately gave it a try on my Macintosh. I couldn't believe how easy it was and quickly downloaded all nine movies I hadn't seen! When I excitedly told my wife what I had done she wasn't as thrilled as I was. She kind of frowned at me and said, "isn't that illegal?"

To that point I hadn't really thought about the legality of my actions. Looking back I realize that I had already deceived myself into thinking that my actions weren't *technically* illegal. I had heard somewhere that as long as you don't sell or mass produce or make financial profit off things you download that it isn't technically illegal to download music, movies or other types of media off the web. I relayed my sentiment to my wife and she wasn't convinced. I was so excited to watch *Argo* that night that I made this deal with her. "Jennifer, I understand you don't feel great about this. What if when these movies come out for rent I go to Blockbuster and rent them all even though we will have seen them. With our schedule we won't get to the theater to see any of these films so really all we are doing is watching them early. The only money they will make on us is through Blockbuster so what if I just pledge to rent these films when they come out for rent? Would you watch them with me if I plan and pledge to rent them later?" She still felt uneasy about it but my persuasion won out and we watched the film.

What are the facts about illegal internet downloads?



PIRACY BY REGION

146

million

visits

day

=

100,000+

visits

minute

=

53

billion

visits

minute

\$ 12.5

billion

in economic losses each year due to Piracy in the music industry

71,060

jobs

lost in the United States every year due to Online Piracy

\$ 2.7

billion

in workers' earnings are lost each year due to Online Piracy

42

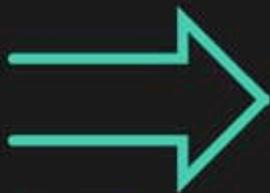
percent

of Softwares running in World are illegally downloaded

\$ 59

billion

of Softwares were illegally downloaded in 2010



More than **75%** of computers have at least **1** downloaded illegal application



An average iPod contains pirated music of **\$800**

95

percent

of music downloaded online is illegal

2/3

of Torrents available online are illegal

MOST PIRATED ITEMS ON WEB



Pornography
35.8%



Movies
35.2%



TV Shows
14.5%



PC /Console Games
6.7 %



Software
6.7 %



Music
2.9 %



E-Book
0.2 %

More statistical data:

- From 2004 to 2009, 30 billion songs were downloaded illegally.
- Movie piracy costs US film studios \$25 billion annually.
- Over 70% of Americans feel that sharing movie and music files with family members is okay.
- Over 50% of Americans feel that sharing movie and music files with friends is okay.
- Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on anti-piracy campaigns annually.
- 70% of 18-29 year-olds have downloaded illegal content.
- Democrats and Independents are significantly more likely to download media illegally.
- Universities spend millions of dollars to combat piracy annually.

Youth Statistics

- One in five 11 year-olds have been found to be illegally downloading music from the internet, according to a study for Childnet International.
- Kids also did not know that their parents could face legal action if the household account is identified as being used for unlicensed file-sharing.
- The study of 1,000 11-16 year olds, found that most children, 73%, are introduced to illegal file-sharing websites by their friends.
- More than half (53%) of 11-16 year olds now access the internet unsupervised from their bedrooms, or while out an about on smartphones.
- Professor Tanya Byron, child psychologist and author of 2008's Safer Children in a Digital World said: *"The majority of parents will confidently tell their children that it is wrong to steal or shoplift in the real world, but it's vital that they also help kids understand what is and isn't acceptable behaviour online, and why it's just as harmful."*

Why don't kids think it's wrong to break this law?

- "Actors and musicians make plenty of money, they don't need mine."
- "I can't discern if I like a band until I sample the music."
- "Everyone does it."
- "No one ever gets caught."
- "It's against the law? Really? I didn't know it was illegal?"
- Parenting blogger Janis Curry from ReallyKidFriendly.com said: *"Our generation walked to the local record shop and bought singles and LPs - although some people may have sneaked out with a record under their shirt, most people expected to pay for music. The best we can do as parents is to help our kids understand that what they're doing is an online version of shoplifting, and hope that their morals prevail... That, and give them a monthly allowance for buying music online through TuneChecker.com."*

Is there any upside to file sharing?

1. Some say that profits are higher than ever

Even though the record companies are still complaining about the supposedly disastrous effects of music file sharing, the Warner music group confirmed back in 2005 that profits for the three months prior to December 31 increased to \$69 million, from \$36 million for the same period the previous year. Profits continue to rise, and are believed to be due to the sale of high-margin digital tracks from music download sites like Rhapsody and Napster, coupled with a dramatic reduction in distribution costs.

2. File sharers took band to number 1

The British band 'Arctic Monkeys' debut album sold a staggering 360,000 copies in its first week of release. This amazing success has been attributed to the music file sharing community, spreading free CDs handed out at early gigs in 2004 on the P2P networks. The band were reportedly amazed when crowds started to sing back the words as they performed at larger gigs, and highlights the role that viral Internet marketing and loyal fans played in promoting the band. This supports the popular theory that the Internet is changing the way that bands break into the mainstream and market themselves, putting them in a very strong position, and setting an exciting precedent for the future.

3. File sharing is now legal in Canada

Using P2P networks to download copyrighted music is legal in Canada. Instead, the Copyright Board of Canada have imposed a tax on recording media such as audio tapes, recordable CDs, and MP3 players which goes into a fund to compensate musicians and songwriters for any revenue lost due to copying.

Judge von Finckenstein is quoted as saying "I cannot see a real difference between a library that places a photocopy machine in a room full of copyrighted material and a computer user that places a personal copy of a song on a shared directory linked to a Peer-to-Peer (file sharing) service." Uploading remains illegal in the U.S. however but this could become a model for countries looking for a balance between protecting artists' copyright, and giving consumers more liberal access to copyrighted material.

4. File sharing is now legal in France

France has determined that the sharing of copyrighted files on the Internet qualifies as "private copying", and is legal for personal and non-commercial use.

5. "Piracy has no negative effect on legitimate music sales"

This was the conclusion of a study conducted by two university researchers, Felix Oberholzer-Gee of Harvard Business School, and Koleman Strumpf of the University of North Carolina. The researchers found that the most heavily downloaded tracks 'showed no measurable drop in sales' and that music file sharing actually increases CD sales for popular albums that sell more than 600,000 copies. They found, after tracking sales of 680 albums over 17 weeks, that "for every 150 downloads of a song from those albums, sales increase by a copy". This is in direct conflict with the music industry's allegation that Internet file sharing is having a detrimental effect on sales.

What kind of trouble can our kids get themselves or us in to if they keep downloading illegal things off the internet?

Illegal music downloading can carry penalties that far outweigh the value of the goods. Depending on the jurisdiction and the circumstances of the case, a person may be incarcerated. She may also experience heavy financial obligations in the form of fines and civil damages. Many higher learning facilities have developed policies for dealing with students who are convicted of illegal music downloading.

It is important for people to realize that illegal music downloading is not only wrong but is also a criminal offense in some jurisdictions. This means that if a person is found guilty in those places, the offense can be listed on her criminal record. In some cases, this offense may even be a felony. As a result, it is possible that the criminal record that stems from these activities may affect a person's life in various ways for a long time.

There are several ways that illegal music downloading can result in a heavy financial burden. To begin with, conviction may be accompanied by fines that are far greater than the purchase price of the music that is acquired. The guilty party may also face civil lawsuits.

In the United States, for example, the Copyright Office says, "Anyone found to have infringed a copyrighted work may be liable for statutory damages up to \$30,000 US Dollars (USD) for each work infringed and, if willful infringement is proven by the copyright owner, that amount may be increased up to \$150,000 USD for each work infringed." In the case of illegal music downloading, a work will generally refer to a single song. As many people who download music are likely to get more than a single song, it is easy to see how the damages can become very expensive. In addition to that, the guilty party may also be held responsible for the attorney's fees of the parties whose music was illegally downloaded.

Some people are subject to consequences besides those that are financial. In some jurisdictions, such as the United Kingdom, illegal music downloading can lead to incarceration. Sentences vary, but there is often the potential to be ordered to serve several years.

Furthermore, many students risk jeopardizing their educational careers and therefore may also be jeopardizing their futures. Some educational facilities have developed policies for dealing with students who are convicted of illegal downloading. These policies, like the laws in various jurisdictions, may vary. In some cases, the students may be warned for a rather mild first offense. If caught a second time, they may be put out of school.

What does God think of illegally downloading things of the internet?

The point of me writing this isn't to shame you or to make you feel guilty about every little sin in your life. I feared even writing this because I feared sounding like a legalistic Christian. To put this in the words of Jesus I'm not trying to strain out a gnat. He once said to the Pharisees and teachers of the law, "You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:24). Essentially he was saying, "you guys are good at mining for less significant sins when there are much bigger ones to worry about." Some you may be saying to yourself right now, "Anthony, relax. Aren't you straining out a gnat right now? Don't we as Christians or as parents have bigger things to worry about than the downloading of things off the internet?"

The answer is yes and no. Yes, there are bigger camels to worry about. Most likely all of us have bigger sins to worry about than the illegal downloading of things off the internet and so do our kids. However, I think it's at least possible that this particular sin could possibly turn in to a camel if we aren't careful. Let me explain.



Self-deception is very dangerous. The rationalization of one sin often leads to another. In my

opinion, one of the most dangerous things that happened in my heart with my illegal downloading is that I rationalized something that deep in my heart I knew was probably wrong and that experience can turn a gnat into a camel rather quickly. I rationalized something I suspected deep down was wrong. My wife tried to warn me but I realize now that I suppressed her voice through my rationalization.

When I started doing research about the legal nature of what I had done, the website I used to download the movies stated that nothing on their site was illegal. It even stated that I should contact them if I ever found any content on their site to be illegal. I wanted to believe it was true but deep in my heart I knew it wasn't.

It turns out they were telling the truth. Nothing on their site was *technically* illegal but that's because in simple terms their website contained very little. Essentially they can get away with saying they have nothing illegal on their site because all that is on their site are links to places where illegally downloaded movies are stored. So technically the site tells the truth. It contains no actual movie files therefore it contains nothing illegal. What it does contain are links to where illegally downloaded files are actually stored. That means if you click a link on a movie file on their site it takes you to an illegal download. That's an oversimplified way of explaining something technical.

The truth is that in America, anything with a copyright, is illegal to download on the internet. Period. Music, movies, or anything else with a copyright. Therefore I don't think God wants me or any of us to illegally download things off the internet. That's my conviction. However, to be honest, the purpose of my writing is not to talk much about the legality of illegal downloads. I don't really feel led to express my sentiments regarding the ethics of everything that takes place through the internet. I'm not smart

enough or technologically savvy enough to even understand it all. What this issue exposed in me is my vulnerability regarding self-deception and instead I aim to focus on that.

Student Self-deception

I'm a youth pastor in Houston, Texas and have been for the past ten years. I hear rationalizations in my students all the time regarding things they are doing that they should not be doing. Here are some examples of the self-deception I have witnessed in students over the years:

- “I do a lot for my school. I represented our team last night in a game that required a lot of practice. I haven't had time to study because I've been helping out my school all week through sports so I think I'll cheat. I have no real choice.”
- “I'm a male. Everyone says my sex drive is powerful. Surely I can't be expected to never look at pornography. A little bit will help me not look at it a lot. It's not possible to not look at it at all so moderation is reasonable so here I go...”
- “I work hard at work. I don't get paid enough so I should be able to eat the food here for free. Even though my manager said I get 50% off my food when I'm working I think I should eat free so I think I will.”
- “Everyone drinks. It's part of high school. Surely God wouldn't expect me to miss out on this experience.”
- “Everyone has sex in high school. I can't be expected to be old school about this.”
- “It's just marijuana. It's natural. It's even legal in Colorado and Washington. God made it. Why shouldn't we smoke it?”

- “Why shouldn’t I leave this girl out of our group? She’s been mean to me before and has her own group of friends. If we invite her she will alter our dynamic and make things awkward.”

These aren’t necessarily things kids will admit or say out loud. They are thoughts that they confess to me usually after a bout of self-deception has left them feeling convicted, caught, or burdened by their actions.

Adult Self-deception

Truth be told we all know this isn’t just an adolescence issue. I spend a fair amount of time with adults too and here is how I discern this issue playing out in the mind of adults:

- “I know this technically isn’t a business expense but I work hard for the company and they don’t pay me enough so this one is on the company.”
- “My wife isn’t meeting my sexual needs so I have no choice but to find satisfaction somehow.”
- “The government taxation is criminal, they don’t need to know about this money.”

You actually went there...

I’m not sure what you’re thinking right now. I suspect that at least some of you reading this may be offended at something I’ve said so far or you may feel like I’m being really rigid and stiff. You may even be trying to justify one of things I mentioned above and feel like I’m being petty. I get it. I really don’t enjoy making people feel guilty. The point of me writing this particular piece isn’t to point out your sin but rather to confess mine and warn you of deceiving yourself and talking yourself into things being righteous

when they clearly are not. Self-deception is dangerous and who knows where it could lead.

I feel compassion and grace for Lance Armstrong, Joe Paterno and Manti Teo. I don't enjoy watching people suffer and their reputations go up in flames even if their behavior has been unacceptable. I only mention their names because I wonder how self-deceived they were when they were in the midst of their dishonest behavior? I wonder if Joe Paterno actually convinced himself he was doing the right thing in not exposing a sexual predator to the proper authorities? I wonder if Lance Armstrong actually believed that it was the right thing to do to sue people for telling what he knew deep down was the truth? I wonder if Manti Teo believed it was the right thing to do to lie about the hoax even after it was revealed to him? I wonder if self-deception played a significant role in their moral failures?

The bad news

First the bad news. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" Wow. Just in case those words didn't frighten you let me state them another way. Your heart is very sick and so is mine. Your heart and mine are more deceitful than anything else, or "above all things." What that means is that we can't always trust the voice in our head. We can't always rely on our reason, rationale and inner compass. We certainly can't always "follow our heart" as our culture often encourages us to. This scripture makes it clear that our hearts are potentially far too dishonest to totally trust.

Not only are our hearts sick but we also have a very dishonest enemy and we would be wise to realize that he is real and that his hot breath can be persuasive and

destructive. Jesus called Satan a “liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44) and 1 Peter 5:8 says that the “devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.” The first humans that lived on the earth fell prey to one of his twisted deceptions and he’s been on the move ever since. In my opinion, Satan merely taught Adam and Eve how to talk themselves in to something they wanted but knew was wrong. They wanted to eat the fruit. He put a spin on why they had a right to eat it even though God forbid them to. Then their own minds started rationalizing what Satan was suggesting.

Satan tempted Adam & Eve and he will tempt us too...to be self-deceived. He will teach us how to rationalize our behavior. He will teach us a way of talking ourselves in to justifying actions that we know God would be grieved by. He will teach us how to suppress the gentle stirrings of the Holy Spirit to reach for something that we know deep down we shouldn’t. We must be aware of our capacity to be self-deceived.

Perhaps the scariest case of self-deception in the Bible is the story of Sampson. Sampson had it all. He was tall, dark and handsome. He was physically stronger than all other people and if he had lived today he would probably be the best football player in the history of the NFL. However, Sampson had a problem. He never let God have control of his sexual appetite. He perpetually disobeyed God’s desire regarding his sexual purity and it ended up costing him everything, even his very life. At the end of his narrative in the Bible he finally reveals to his mistress Delilah the secret behind his strength and she betrayed him and cut off his hair which meant that the strength God gave him was gone. One of the scariest verses in the Bible to me is Judges 16:20, “He awoke from his sleep and thought, ‘I’ll go out as before and shake myself free. But he did not know that the Lord had left him.” He had no idea that God’s anointing was gone. He was so self-

deceived that he thought “no matter what I do, God is with me.” He feared no consequence and even when his self-deception dug his own grave, he had no idea that God had left him. Self-deception is a scary reality and we must not fall prey to the deceptive powers that lie within our own hearts.

The Good News

In a word, the best news in the history of the world is...Jesus. How dark would this world be without that name? His best friend while he walked the earth was a man named John and here is how he described him: “In him there was nothing dark. Not one thing,” (1 John 1:5). Think about that. Not only was he not capable of self-deception, John says there was not one ounce of darkness in him. Not one single ounce of darkness existed in him. I have not met another human I would describe that way.

If ever there was a time for Jesus to be self-deceived it surely would've been while he was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane just before his cruel execution. With blood running down his face like sweat because of the pressure he was feeling, his dialogue with God the father was surely intense. We don't know for sure what he was praying but we can only surmise it was an intense conversation between father and son. It would've been so easy to rationalize staying around on earth a bit longer. It would've been so easy to ask for a less cruel and humiliating form of death. It would've been so easy to justify his feelings and allow his mind to go down a train of thought that would've led him

away from his mission. It would've been so easy to talk himself in to how much good he could do if he were allowed to stay a bit longer. But praise be to Jesus that he did no such thing.

Instead he did what we should do when tempted and he exposed his thoughts bare before God and waited for his clear answer. I personally think Jesus was a bit frightened in that moment but instead of allowing his mind to justify possible outcomes that he could choose, he simply called upon his father in heaven and waited. He asked three times if there were any ways around what he was about to suffer but instead of allowing deceit to fill his heart he simply lifted his prayers to God the father and waited for a response to obey. No self-deception took root in Jesus because his mind and heart were set on doing one thing, pleasing the father.

Just a few hours before this prayer time Jesus claimed that he was truth (John 14:6). He didn't claim to be *a* truth but *the* truth. He literally claimed to be the anti-thesis of deceit. He said, "I am the truth," literally claiming to define the word. In Revelation when we are told of his second coming we discover that he comes on a horse with the name "faithful and true," (Revelation 19:11).

The bad news is that your heart is sick and that you have an enemy that wants to deceive you and teach you how to deceive yourself.

The best news in the history of the world is that God sent Jesus to die for our sick heart condition. The one who is faithful and true, defines the word truth and has never had a single ounce of darkness enter his being, came for your sick heart. And he died a cruel death to save you from being punished for all of its

sickness. And his body was resurrected to new life so that you too can experience resurrection.

Conclusion

I love the Oscars, Zagat rated food and traveling with Rick Steves. I won't stop loving those things until Jesus returns I suppose. Last Sunday I watched the Oscar's without having seen many of the movies nominated and it was okay by me because I love Jesus deeply and I want no part of being self-deceived. I know my heart is vulnerable and I know I am capable of dark things but I'm so thankful that isn't the case with Jesus.

I really don't like pointing out other people's sin because I feel I have enough to worry about. People smarter than me know more about what exactly is legal and illegal to do through the internet. My intent in writing this was not to make you feel guilty about things you choose to download on the internet but to lovingly warn you against self-deception and to excitedly remind you or inform you of how much Jesus did for you through his death and resurrection.

Application for Parents

If you are a parent, you may be wondering, "what am I supposed to do in light of the fact that my child is likely downloading illegal things off the internet?" Here's some suggestions I have:

1) Be careful about straining for gnats

Nothing seems to frustrate kids more than parents majoring on minors and harping on them for every little thing. My encouragement to parents is stay focused on the larger issues of the heart and be careful not to frustrate your kids.

2) Live for The Truth

One of the best things a parent can ever do is live for the one who calls himself The Truth. It is my view that kids don't need better morals, they need someone to look up to. I don't want my son and daughter to tell the truth in order to be good kids, I want them to tell the truth because Jesus Christ is *The Truth*. I want their hearts to burn to be like Jesus and therefore be people of *The Truth*. Do your kids know the driving motivation behind your parenting is for them to know *The Truth*? If they see that lived out in your own life, it will be a clarifying and powerful witness to them and by God's grace perhaps they will set their face towards living for *The Truth* as you have.

3) Remember that transparency and humility go a long way with kids

There will be times that you as the parent fall short. There may even be times where you have been self-deceived about something. You have the power as a parent to demonstrate to your children what to do with self-deception when you discern it in your own heart. Most parents I talk to are afraid to really let their kids discover their weaknesses. I'm not advocating sharing your deepest darkest sins on a daily basis, I am suggesting that it's a powerful thing for a child to witness humility in their parents. The goal of parenting is to present a child to the ultimate

hero, Jesus. The goal isn't to be the hero. My dad was great about humbly admitting his faults to me and apologized to me often for parenting blunders. I was raised by a humble man that didn't try and disguise his flaws. Instead he confessed some of his sin to me and taught me the good news of God's grace in Jesus through the way he always leaned on the blood of Jesus to cover over his mistakes. I learned from watching him, how to humbly walk with God and depend on God's grace. I learned what to do with my self-deception largely from watching how my dad dealt with his own.

4) Teach your kids the value of community

Your kids must be encouraged to confess their sin to their peers and mentors. If Lance Armstrong, Joe Paterno and Manti Teo were in the habit of exposing their thoughts to a supportive, Christ-centered, encouraging circle of people, I wonder if the outcomes of their lives would be different? I strongly believe that if they had subjected their thoughts and motives bare before others and humbly listened for wisdom they would not have dug themselves in so deep of pits. If I had just exposed my movie downloading idea to a few more people that love me and love The Truth I don't think I would have done it. This episode has reminded me of my desperate need to walk in the light of Christ among people that know and trust him.

Self-deception is dangerous. It's far from being a gnat. It can grow into a camel sized issue rather quickly. May we all, for the glory of Jesus, have nothing to do with trusting our own hearts but seek to follow The Truth in community!