

AS IS

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You know how you see those cars for sale on the side of the road? How many of you have ever bought a car from the side of the road?

I grew up in Sedro Woolley, home of Vern Sims Ford Ranch. In the corner of "the Ranch" was the "Bargain Corral". It was part of our regular route and each pass I would take a long look. 16 years old, in search of my first car, clueless. Only needed three features: affordable, affordable and affordable. This is 1989 full of stylish cars like the AMC Pacer, Chevette, Datsun B210. All cars that make you so proud to show up at high school!

I would stop, look at a car, and read the sticker ... "AS-IS". Look at another one, "AS-IS"! "AS-IS"! "AS-IS"! They all said "AS-IS"! Might as well say, "guaranteed to let you down", "I promise to frustrate you - leave you stranded. It's not a matter of if, but when." I just wanted a car that doesn't have any problems.

I ended up buying my first car from a private party, somehow I felt better getting one that didn't have that label. But I can tell you from experience, when you're looking for a cheap used car, the only difference between one with an AS-IS sticker and one without... one of them isn't lying.

Here's the thing.... Humans only come one way... "AS-IS"

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. - *Romans 3:23-24 NIV*

The only difference between someone who has "AS-IS" tattooed on their forehead and someone who doesn't ... one of them isn't lying.

But Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin ... - *Galatians 3:22a NIV*

We all fall short. There might be a flaw here, a streak of deception, a cruel tongue, a passive spirit, or an out-of-control temper. Nobody's going to have it tattooed on their forehead; but don't be shocked when you're let down, frustrated and she blows a gasket! The friend that won't let us down, is just always out of our reach. The perfect spouse eludes us. If we could just find the boss that always recognizes our work.

We even expect our kids, not to act like their kids. I think we can all agree that "their" kids are definitely AS-IS.... Understand, I'm not saying your kids, I'm saying their kids.

But we don't use the term AS-IS. Do you know what we say? It means the same... not *Normal*. My kids are normal, but their kids, not so normal. My hang-ups, normal; their hang-ups, not so normal. My hypocrisy, normal; their hypocrisy, kind of offensive. The truth is we are all AS-IS, none of us are normal.

Certainly the Godly men and women of the Bible were normal, it's the Holy Bible. Not so much ... look at the first two kids:

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. - Genesis 4:8 NIV

How bout Noah, the one righteous man. You know the one part of that they don't teach in Sunday school. It's after the flood, where Noah gets drunk and passes out in his tent naked. And his two sons have to protect his dignity ...

But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. - Genesis 9:23a NIV

Their marriages were in shambles, there was incest, adultery, murder. And these are the hero's, the examples. But, you know why they're in there? ... *Because* they're AS-IS. God uses them in spite of it. A lot of the stories are about them trying to cover it up, sometimes literally.... with fig leaves. We too want to cover up our AS-ISness, we don't want people to know where we fall short. One mark of maturity is recognizing everybody comes AS-IS.

We all stumble in many ways ... - James 3:2a NIV

We might have habits we can't control, past deeds we can't undo, flaws we can't correct.



Ever run into a porcupine? If you have, you'd remember... it's an encounter you don't forget. Porcupines have 30,000 quills. They're needle sharp with overlapping barbs on each quill. It takes almost no effort to lodge them into your flesh and once they're in, they don't come out easily. I've actually helped my vet pull quills out of a dog's nose, it's not a pleasant experience.... for me or the dog!



I think the dog got every quill that porcupine had. I'm pretty sure that porcupine walked away naked.

If a porcupine is just out doing little porcupine things, eating tree bark, reading it's little porcupine newspaper, it's quills lay down. But when it senses danger those quills stand straight up.

A dog doesn't have to attack or even touch the porcupine just getting too close, whether out of curiosity or ignorance is enough to get those quills to stand up.

The other day, I pulled to the side of the road by the entrance to the fairgrounds; because, my wife was bringing me a pass. But this attendant yelled at me not to park there. So, I rolled down my window to explain to him that I *wasn't* parking. That was gas on the fire! All of a sudden he's yelling and swearing at me. Thankfully, I didn't scream back (like I wanted), but as I pulled out and drove away I was shaking with adrenaline.



Just like porcupines, when we feel threatened our quills stand up. Our quills have names like: rejection, condemnation, resentment, arrogance, selfishness, envy and criticism. If we're not careful, we can burn through marriages, friendships, jobs, and relationships with our children. When I think I'm "normal" and everyone else is AS IS, I'm only deceiving me.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. - 1 John 1:8 NIV



I like to think of myself as the poor dog surrounded by porcupines. That's part of the deception. You're not the dog, you're the porcupine. I'm somebody's porcupine, you're somebody's porcupine - we are all somebody's porcupine.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." There are no dogs, we're all porcupines!

And this brings up what I call the porcupine's dilemma. How do ya' get close without getting hurt? We know it's possible, because there are little baby porcupines. We all have quills, we're all AS-IS, none of us are normal, BUT we're drawn into relationship with one another. John Ortberg writes ...

The yearning to attach and connect, to love and be loved, is the fiercest longing of the soul. Our need for community with people and the God who made us is to the human spirit what food and air and water are to the human body. That need will not go away even in the face of all the weirdness. - John Ortberg, *"Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them"*

Why do we expect people to be perfect anyway? There is a reason, it's actually wired into us. We would never expect to find a cheap, used car on the side of the road that didn't have problems. Yet when it comes to relationships, we've been *wired* to seek the perfect normal, the not AS-IS.

Why? When I said "none of us are normal", that's not entirely true. There was One. The only One. The Perfect Normal. We've been wired to seek fulfillment through the only perfect one. He's the only person to ever walk this earth and not be "pokey". And, that's the example we are to follow.

Accept one another, then, **just as Christ** accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. - Romans 15:7 NIV

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, **just as in Christ** God forgave you. - Ephesians 4:32 NIV

And walk in the way of love, **just as Christ** loved us and gave himself up for us - Ephesians 5:2a NIV

Our greatest resource for learning to accept and forgive others, is to fully embrace that God, through Jesus has accepted and forgiven me. "AS-IS" becomes a badge of honor for the believer, it means, "broken but forgiven", "broken but accepted", "broken but loved."

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. - Romans 5:6-8 NIV

It's only when we can see ourselves as a precious AS-IS porcupine that we can begin to accept others in this same way. And that's the solution to the porcupine's dilemma: how to get close without getting hurt.

Why *do* your quills go up when you've been insulted? And why do they go down when someone pays you a compliment? Why is that? Because we base a lot of our self-worth on what other people think of us. We get mad when our self-worth is threatened. And we are happy when our self-worth is stroked. But that's not how God intends it. He wants my worth based on Him and Him alone. All of it.

When my worth is based on what others think, it's only a matter of time before I'll feel threatened, my quills will go up and they'll get a nose full. But, to the degree that my worth is based in Jesus it's "unthreatenable".

If I have fully embraced how Christ has accepted me, my self-worth is based in the fact that God loves me, I'm AS-IS and he still loves me, It's the most amazing thing, and I want to get this image in your head, God loves to hug porcupines. And that's the message of the gospel.

So the next time I encounter an angry parking lot attendant or I'm completely ignored by a rude store clerk. If my self-worth is based in Christ, rather than being threatened, I'm freed to think, they're having a really bad day, maybe something tragic has just happened, or maybe they're just a horrible human being and isn't that sad and maybe God's set, this up so I can make a difference; because, if I can show kindness in that moment, they might just look at me and see Jesus.

And if we do this on a regular basis, we might learn to like hugging porcupines.