"Brands" and "badges" want to shape our lifestyle, influence our decisions, and create expectations. Groceries are loaded up with badges that appear to indicate purity and health but are in fact usually advertising schemes. Here are 3 badges that mean nothing!

 • "all-natural" affixed to products whose ingredients include high fructose corn syrup, cellulose (which is made from non-toxic wood pulp or cotton), sodium injections, and natural fruit flavors (which are chemical creations NOT made from the fruit their flavor imitates).

 • "hormone free" on poultry even though the FDA has banned hormones in poultry for decades

 • "free range" has no definition. It literally means the animal in question has had outdoor exposure not that it has been happily running in fields till butchered!

Brands want to help us define our life-style. Apple wants us to believe they care more about our experience than their profits (which include $152 billion in cash assets) and a simple Google search will yield 23.4 million hits on Rolex watch knock-offs!

LifeGroup

Resource Guide

 for the week of 4 May: brands, badges, & the costly grace that ruins us

The truth is that we frequently take pride and find security in our badges and brands. Paul recognizes this when he addresses the Jews who take pride in their "brand" (we are Jews- God's chosen people) and their "badge" (circumcision). Faith, life, and relationships are not measured or secured by external branding and badges. Our lives are measured by a heart whose brand and badge is the ruinous love of God, through Jesus Christ , who died on the cross for us.

Enjoy your LifeGroup! Mark

 This week’s Bible reading:

*Romans 2.1-29: … 28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.*

*“Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession...Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”*

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

 Getting to know one another better...

Do you have a favorite brand you like or an "enemy" brand you always avoid? If, "yes", why do you like/hate that brand?

Read Romans 2.1-29 (yes, the whole chapter!)

 Reflecting on Romans 2.1—29

 cheap grace

What is the spiritual danger Paul warns us of when we judge others?

Do you think Paul considers everyone to be a hypocrite because we judge others? Why or why not?

What "pushes your buttons" to judge other people?

Who, in your life, do you judge in a way that is displeasing to God? Why?

Paul warns the Roman Jews to not find security in their "brand" (we are Jews) or in their "badge" (we are circumcised). Why?

Summarize what you think this chapter teaches about God's judgment?

What do you learn about the character of God from this chapter?

 Reflecting together on Romans 2.1-29

How do we reconcile the judgment Paul describes in Chapter 2 with the promise of salvation by grace he describes throughout Romans?

Read Romans 2.24. Why does Paul write this? Do you think the Church is behaving and expressing its faith in manner that is causing our culture to be hostile to God? Why or why not?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: “Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace. Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjacks’ wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices. Grace is represented as the Church’s inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits. Grace without price; grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing… In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin.”

Cheap grace arises when Christians put their hope/security in their brand (The Church) and in their badge (the Cross). What are the dangers of "cheap grace” for us personally and for our community?

What is "costly grace"? What does it look like?

How can our LifeGroup celebrate "costly grace"?

 My prayer requests (think of what you want to share in advance)

 Praying for my group...

 Highlighting...

**Planting a seed now…**

Later next month we will begin recruiting our summer team for Children’s Ministries. Will you consider serving? Rather than say, “No!” … Pray! Why?

* Because the children need your “touch”. Studies show us that if children receive 7 or more significant “touches” from adults in their congregation they are far more likely to have a relationship with Jesus and His people that extends beyond the years they live at home.
* Because our current CM team needs a summer break so they can return in the fall refreshed and ready!
* Because you will grow in Christ as you serve!

 Upcoming...

Third Sunday- May 18 @ 6:30-8pm: a time of prayer in the Worship Center.

Partial Family Sunday- May 11 for Mother’s Day, the children will join us in worship b.

Xtreme Faith- May 18: one week later than usual because of Mother’s Day.

Family Sunday- May 25: A time when the children join us in church for the morning.

Office Closed- May 26 in observance of Memorial Day.

Living Your Strengths- May 31 @ 9am-12noon in Children’s Center

Summer Youth and Children’s Camps- learn more at [www.faithsandiego.org/camps](http://www.faithsandiego.org/camps). There is a 50% scholarship for everyone for our overnight camps!