

(from *Dynamic Preaching*, XXIII:2, 57) An elderly woman walked up to a little old man rocking in a chair on his porch. Weathered and feeble, he had the most content smile. "I couldn't help noticing how happy you looked," she said. "What's your secret?" "Well, he said, "my philosophy is, if it feels good, do it! I smoke three packs of cigarettes a day," he gestured with a wrinkled yellow hand, "and I drink a case of whiskey a week, eat fatty foods, and never exercise." "That's amazing!" said the woman. "So ... how old are you?" Came back the raspy voice: "Twenty-six."

My goodness! The man's been living 26 years with the common assumption --- "If it feels good, you should do it." He's still grinning ... which means after 26 years, he still hasn't discovered that his assumption is common ... but it's false.

In today's Gospel Jesus concludes two chapters of sound advice about human living. His teaching method is fascinating. He very often begins by stating a false assumption almost everyone makes ... about real life things like sexuality, marriage, getting even, evaluating others, and what to do with your anger. He states the false assumption, and then replaces it with a true statement.

False assumption: Closure for hurts inflicted on you comes only when the other person suffers appropriately. The truth: Closure for hurts inflicted ... comes when you forgive.

False assumption: sexual impulses are to be honored and indulged, as long as you're not hurting anyone directly. The truth: inner harmony and communal trust flourish when people keep their promises, refuse to rile themselves up with forbidden fruit, or have too big a contrast between who they are outside and who they are inside.

False assumption: Money and clothes and treasures are a big big deal. The truth: money, clothes and earthly treasures are very small potatoes. Focus on them too much, and you'll never have time or attention for what's really important in life.

Is your life built on any false assumptions?

The answer is almost certainly ... **yes**. We live in a fallen world, our spiritual instincts are dulled by what our church calls original sin, and as a culture we're not famous for being great reflectors. Fortunately, we have a truth speaker, sent by God. Someone with uncanny, profound, shocking clairvoyance and insight.

We'd be nuts not to go to the scriptures and hear what he says, hang on his words! Build your life, your personality, your character on false assumptions, and you end up a flimsy shack built on sand that can't stand up to life's storms. Build your life on his words and you'll be on rock.

Jesus, sometimes your words seem naïve, counter-intuitive, nonsensical, even idiotic. But that doesn't make them not true. Help us take your words into our hearts and souls, bind them on our wrists, and hang like pendants in front of our foreheads.