

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, May 3, 2017 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

Be these. 
Matthew 5:13-16

“Impacting the Lives of Those Outside the Faith”

Matthew 5:13-16, 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12, 1 Corinthians 5:9-11, Colossians 4:5-6

“For Christians to influence the world with the truth of God's Word requires the recovery of the great Reformation doctrine of vocation. Christians are called to God's service not only in church professions but also in every secular calling. The task of restoring truth to the culture depends largely on our laypeople. To bring back truth, on a practical level, the church must encourage Christians to be not merely consumers of culture but makers of culture. The church needs to cultivate Christian artists, musicians, novelists, filmmakers, journalists, attorneys, teachers, scientists, business executives, and the like, teaching its laypeople the sense in which every secular vocation—including, above all, the callings of husband, wife, and parent—is a sphere of Christian ministry, a way of serving God and neighbor that is grounded in God's truth. Christian laypeople must be encouraged to be leaders in their fields, rather than eager-to-please followers, working from the assumptions of their biblical worldview, not the vapid clichés of pop culture.”
—J. Gresham Machen (Conservative Theologian, and New Testament Scholar, Prebysterian Minister, and Seminary Profession at Princeton Theological and Westminster Seminary)

1. *What does Machen mean by “recovery of the great reformation of the doctrine of vocation” and how might this impact our world if it happened?*
2. *What is Machen suggesting when we says “Christians must be not merely consumers of culture but makers of culture”? How may Christians “make” culture... what is he saying?*
3. *Machen gives a long list of vocations and even relations in the quote, why would he included these and what might he be suggesting to us in the way of impacting our world.*
4. *What is he saying concerning the church and Christians with the phrase “eager-to-please followers.”*
5. *He makes a comparison between “biblical worldview” and “clichés of pop culture,” what is he talking about and how does it relate to the church and Christians today? What is he suggesting with this contrast concerning impacting our world?*

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ¹⁴ “You are the light of

the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

–Matthew 5:13-16

What is the Christian’s responsibility toward non-Christians? Are the saved to conduct their affairs as if unbelievers didn’t exist? Or are they to treat outsiders as though they had some kind of contagious plague and thus are in need of being kept at a safe distance? Should Christians try to avoid offending non-Christians by adopting their lifestyle? How should believers behave toward unbelievers? What does God’s Word say about this?

In this study, we are going to probe a bit deeper into trying to answers to these questions. As we do, let’s bear in mind certain categories of outsiders who usually cross our paths. What do we mean by “outsiders?”

Generally: Outsiders = Those outside the faith

For the purposes of this study we are not using the term in a derogatory way at all, but rather as a simply reference to those who are not of the faith. Generally we are referring to “outsiders” as those who are outside the faith, the lost, the irreligious, those who don’t know Jesus Christ in a personal way.

Specifically: Outsiders = Those within our sphere of experience who are outside the faith

These may include those such as immediate family members, relatives, neighbors, work associates, fellow classmates, friends, and even casual acquaintances. How do we really make a difference and impact these lives in such a way that they are drawn to Christ? The answers we discover in Scripture will affect not only our lives but theirs as well.

I. A NECESSARY WARNING AND CHALLENGE TO ALL CHRISTIANS

All of us who are Christians are engaged in an intense conflict – the war of extremes. This war is waged on a variety of fronts. Let’s briefly look at four of them.

- 1. Wars of Extreme** – We are talking here about how we often gravitate toward “extremes” on our lives that may actually affect our ability to impact our world and produce an unwanted “turn off” to our faith.

Four Specific Wars of Extreme We Need to Be Aware Of:

- (1) The war between faithful evangelism and personal edification** – The first occurs between faithful evangelism and personal edification. Either we are zealous for the lost and inclined toward evangelism, almost to the exclusion of personal discipleship and development through Bible study and prayer, or we are so committed to our spiritual growth and a life of devotion that we show little or no concern for those who are without Christ... not that we don’t care about lost, but our lives consist of our concern for our own growth and spiritual advancement rather than the lost. And we often, given our giftedness and personal proclivities tend to gravitate toward one or the other.

Something to think about: **What is the danger when we go to the extreme of zealous evangelistic endeavor to the exclusion of personal growth and discipleship?** 1. We may beat people over the head with their need to be saved, without offering them any real help for how to live saved. 2. We may produce spiritually immature Christians who have embraced Christianity with a “shallow/easy believeism” (no depth) 3. We may lose them out the back door quicker than we are bringing them in the front. **What is the danger when we go to the extreme of personal growth and development to the exclusion of evangelistic pursuits?** 1. We may give people who have never truly been saved a false sense of security but giving them spiritual disciplines and religious practice but no true relationship with Christ. 2. We may find it produces a lack of compassion for the lost and there by a huge omission of the Biblical mandate of the great commission on all believers.

- (2) **The war between enthusiastic faith and healthy trust in God** – A second battle of extremes occurs between enthusiastic faith and a healthy trust in God. On the one hand, we can act with such self-confidence and determination that we run ahead of God and His help and make a mess of things. On the other hand, we can be so afraid of taking a risk and stepping out on faith that we excuse ourselves from really seeing God do things and as a result we become dull and visionless.

Something to think about: Have you ever heard the phrase “Put feet to our faith!”? What does this quote mean? How does this quote relate to the war of extremes between “enthusiastic faith” and “healthy trust” in God?

- (3) **The war between vertical and the horizontal** – Another conflict arises between the vertical and the horizontal. The vertical side of the life of a Christian has to do with our “vertical” relationship between us and God, which of course is highly important. The horizontal side of the life of a Christian has to do with our “horizontal” relationships that we have in this life, which are also of utmost importance. Both are important and both are highlighted and emphasized in Scripture, but an over emphasis on one may deeply affect the other. Some may prefer to call this the “spiritual” and the “practical.” Our relationship with God and our spiritual life must translate over into our practical life or daily practice of our horizontal life (the life we live on the horizontal plain). An over and unhealthy emphasize on the horizontal may find us neglecting God direction and intervention in our daily lives and relationships, and an over emphasis on our vertical life may find us un-relatable, disconnected, and irrelevant on the more human side of life.

As an example we may have pastors and ministers who neglect the care of their own family because they are so attentive to the care they give to the church, to Biblical study, to their pious and spiritual activities to be a good minister. This has been referred to as spending too much time in our “ivory tower” so that we lose our ability to relate to those outside that tower. There is sometimes a war of extremes between the vertical and the horizontal.

Something to think about: *Have you ever heard the phrase “He (or she) is so heavenly minded, that they are no earthly good!”? What does this quote mean? How does this quote relate to the war of extremes between the vertical and the horizontal?*

- (4) **The war between maintaining relationships with Christians and maintaining relationships with non-Christians** – A fourth fight between extremes occurs as the result of our need to maintain relationships with both Christians and non-Christians. We can become so exclusive and inbred with our spiritual family that our whole world revolved around other Christians. This leads to becoming spiritually fat Christians whose faith is only about themselves and them being fed. It also leads, more importantly, to our losing touch with lost and the impact we ought to be having on a lost world. Or we can slip into the other extreme, where we choose to avoid contact so thoroughly with fellow Christians and Biblical teaching that we end up constantly trying to be accepted, seen as one of the crowd.

Something to think about: *How does Paul’s admonishment to Christians in 2 Corinthians 6:14, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers...” relate to this?*

2. Warnings and Challenges Concerning these Extremes:

- (1) **A Caution... Guard against extremes!** – Each of these extremes is a distortion of God’s desire for us and plan. God want us to be more solidly grounded in our Christian lives. So, what’s the caution? Guard against extremes! But beware! Satan will try to break down your defenses against extremism because he is the expert of the unbalanced and confused life. He was satisfied to be the highest-ranking angelic servant of God. He wanted to rule as God (Isaiah 14:12-14). Then, when the Lord judged him for his sin, he became the most corrupt and devious rebel in God’s entire kingdom. Such a sinful extremist will do all he can to get and keep us off balance. So watch out for him and his tricks.
- (2) **Some Clarification... We can only be salt and light to a dying world when we involve ourselves in it without becoming like it (the world)!** – In John 17, Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father and asked Him to keep His children from extremism – specifically, from the extremes of 1) losing touch with unbeliever because of Christian exclusivism and 2) becoming so worldly that no noticeable Christian distinctive exist. Listen carefully to Jesus’ words in John 17:15-18,

“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”(Jn. 17:15-18)

The Lord does not save us so that He can remove us from the world. Rather, He rescues us from the path of destruction, then calls us to present the only path to life to those traveling who are still going the wrong way. Jesus prayed for our insulation

from Satan, not our isolation from the world. We can only be salt and light (contagious) to a dying world when we involved ourselves in it without becoming like it.

- (3) **A Challenge...** *We need to quit expecting non-Christians to behave as Christians should and stop excusing Christians for behaving as non-Christians usually do!* – In 1 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul applied the essence of Christ’s prayer to a situation that had arisen in the Corinthian church. The Corinthian believers had gone to an extreme. They had become so worldly that they condoned and incestuous relationship in their midst – one that would have shocked even the non-Christian world (1 Cor. 5:1). Paul strongly rebuked these believers for not disciplining a Christian who had become sexually intimate with his father’s wife (1 Cor. 5:1-5). Then he backed up his rebuke with these words of clarification in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11,

“I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.” (1 Cor. 5:9-11)

2 Challenges Expressed: The challenge is clear here...

- 1) **Remain distinctive yet attractive** – First, Christians need to remain distinctive in and attractive to the world without living like the world.
 - 2) **Be tough on our own yet easy on those not our own** – Second, Christians need to be tough on their own and, in comparison, easy on non-Christians.
- *We need to quite expecting non-Christians to behave as Christians should and stop excusing Christians for behaving as non-Christians do.*

II. SOME BALANCED COUNSEL FROM EARLY CHRISTIANS

Paul, Silas, and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1) provide the counsel all Christians should heed for behaving properly toward the unsaved. Their instruction in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 is basically twofold:

2 Fold Instruction from Paul and His Associates:

1. **When it comes to fellow Christians (vv.9-10)** – Their first piece of counsel is basic yet foundational to the unity of the church and its witness to a watching world. It’s pretty simple, really! What is it? That Christians love one another. Look at what these verses say,

“Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.” (1 Thess. 4:9-10)

4 Things about Their Love:

- (1) **Practice of Love** – The Thessalonians Christians not only knew that they were supposed to love fellow believers, but they made their knowledge come alive in their relationship with other Christians. They were not simply hearers of the truth but were doers as well.
- (2) **Growth of Love** – And yet, Paul and his associates (Silas and Timothy) exhorted them to excel more and more at loving others. The Thessalonians were called to do that which was best for fellow believer to the highest degree attainable.
- (3) **Example of Love** – Their love was to be modeled after the sacrificial love of Christ manifested toward them when He willingly died on the cross on man’s behalf (see Jn. 3:15, Jn. 13:1, Jn. 15:13, Rom. 5:6-8).
- (4) **Result of Love** – When Christians display this kind of love toward one another, it attracts the attention of the unsaved.
 - Why? _____

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- When non-Christians (the unsaved, the lost) are confronted with unconditional love... a love that accepts others regardless of who they are or what they have done rather than for what they have to offer or what they can achieve – they see something that they want.
 - That desire generally opens a natural door for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with that person.
 - The Lord was well aware that the exercise of genuine Christian love among His people would have this effect That’s why He instructed His disciples with these words in **John 13:34-35**, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have love you... By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

2. **When it comes to Non-Christians (vv.11-12)** – A more direct way in which we may behave properly toward unbelievers is laid before us in these verses from 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. Basically, what is set forth is lifestyle evangelism. Let’s consider the three key elements listed that comprise this witnessing method as well as its usual result.

“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.” (1 Thess. 4:11-12)

4 Key Elements of Lifestyle Evangelism and It’s Result:

- (1) **Lead a quiet life** – There is good reason to believe that many in the Thessalonians church had gone overboard on prophecy – specifically, the imminent return of Jesus Christ. Remember... balance, balance, balance! Some among them had quit their jobs and begun spending their time in idle conversations and speculations about this supernatural event and the rest of the city... more particularly the lost were tired of hearing it and wanted nothing to do with it. So Paul exhorted them to stop spending an inordinate amount of time living in tomorrow and to start living with a calm, responsible eye on today. Have you ever heard of “Quiet Evangelism”? What do you

think it is? I have known believers who lived life so well that other took note and began to want to be just like them and sought out what made them the way they were... they actually came to Christ this way.

- (2) **Attend to your own business** – The idea in this command is one of personal diligence – working steadily and faithfully with consistency at one’s own assignment in life (Jn. 21:20-22). The Thessalonians were not to be busybodies, obnoxious, or wearisome about their Christian beliefs. They were to do their sharing in an ongoing maintenance and development of Thessalonica by attending to their own work. You know in a church there is often such this networking of gossip and talebearing, of nitpicking and tearing things apart and down that the world looks on in disgust and wants not part of it. We need to stay out of the business of having an opinion on such trivial matters and be content to just be all that we can be for Christ... to build up rather than tear down.
- (3) **Work with your hands** – The Thessalonian Christians were to earn their own way in the community. They were not to freeload off of one another or non-Christians. Apparently, some of these early believers thought that there was nothing wrong with leading a lazy life and reaping the benefits of other people’s hard work. So, in another letter to them, Paul had to reiterate this exhortation to work in much stronger terms (2 Thess. 3:10-15). Few things damage the effective spreading of the gospel more than a Christian who does a job poorly or hardly at all. We who are Christians need to work hard at what our had finds to do and with all of our might to God’s glory. As we do, respect for our labor will eventually create ample opportunity for us to share our faith.
- (4) **This lifestyle will win you the right to be heard and make you less dependent on others** – Of course, there are exception to this general consequence, but the main point it this... *“A loving, responsible lifestyle of a believer will not only benefit other Christians and yourself, but it will also bring to the watching eye of the lost a magnetic view of the life that could be theirs through Jesus Christ”* A contagious Christian faith!

III. SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE REGARDING NON-CHRISTIANS

Keeping in mind the wise counsel we have just considered, let’s turn our attention to one more Biblical text and draw our final piece of advice from it. The passage is Colossian 4:5-6 and it says, *“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation (speech) be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”* The instruction presented here regarding Christians’ behavior before non-Christians is clear. Let’s personalize it for your benefit and mine.

3 Practical Reminders for Behaving Toward Outsiders : (Colossians 4:5-6)

1. **Non –Christians are watching and wondering, so conduct yourselves with wisdom** – Don’t let your actions contradict your witness. Be an example of what you believe even before you share it verbally.
2. **Non-Christians are listening and learning, so speak your words with grace** – No rebukes, put-downs, insults or suggestions of superiority are needed or wanted when you convey your faith to unbelievers. Let your speech (conversation) be bathed in God’s

supernatural grace. When it is, forgiveness and unconditional love, not condemnation and haughty pride, will be its hallmarks.

- 3. Non-Christians are individuals and important, so respond to them with dignity and sensitivity** – Every Christian has a different background. Hence, each has varying expectations, abilities, needs, and struggles. The same is true of every non-Christian. As servants of the One who gave His life for every human being, we need to treat each person as a distinct individual who is greatly loved by God, because they are.