

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 26, 2015 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

TAKING A STAND Introduction

Ephesians 6:10-20, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Various

There are calls on every front today for Christians to “take a stand” and to “stand up” and be heard on a whole host of hot-button issues that are facing our world and our culture, issues that are threatening our country and our homes and institutions. And let's face it, many Christians are taking a stand today and letting their voices be heard on many of these issues that are facing our day.

CURRENT EVENT: Just this past weekend, thousands of Christians all over this country and across denominational lines (protestant, catholic, evangelical, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc.) stood arm in arm as they protested at Planned Parenthood facilities against abortion and abortion practices that have recently been revealed as the harvesting and selling of aborted fetal body organs and parts. Christians are taking a stand.

Let me ask you a question? Should Christians take a stand? And what should that look like, for Christians to take a stand? And when should we a stand... at what point do we enter the fight? And how should they take a stand... what should it look like for a Christian to take a stand? Are we sometimes doing more harm than good by our stand? These are other questions are very relevant and important questions for Christians, genuine believer, to ask these days? What is my responsibility.

QUOTES ON TAKING A STAND

Listen as the following quotes are read and respond to each. What is each saying about taking a stand whether from a secular or religious perspective?

Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself. ~ Robert Frost

You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life. ~ Winston Churchill

If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything. ~ Malcolm X

In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock. ~ Thomas Jefferson

I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving: To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it - but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor. ~ Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

There is only one secure foundation: a genuine, deep relationship with Jesus Christ, which will carry you through any and all turmoil. No matter what storms are raging all around, you'll stand firm if you stand on His love. ~ Charles Stanley

BIBLICAL QUOTES ON TAKING A STAND

The follow are two of our key texts for this study, “Taking a Stand,” and will serve as the foundational text for our study. Listen as these passage are read and respond to each. What is each saying about taking a stand from a Biblical perspective?

“¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.” –Ephesians 6:10-20

“⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” – 1 Corinthians 15:58

TAKING A STAND... GOING AGAINST THE FLOW

Some might define “taking a stand” as going against the flow. How easy is it to “go against the flow,” to “swim upstream,” to “fight against the current”? How easy is it? It’s not! As a matter of fact it is virtually impossible in our own strength and yet isn’t that exactly what God has often called believers to in His Word. Listen as the following Bible verse are read and ask yourself what exactly is being said:

- **John 17:15-19** _____
- **Romans 12:1-2** _____
- **2 Corinthians 10:2-3** _____
- **1 John 2:15-17** _____

Few pressures are most powerful than the pull of the worlds stream to fit in, to be accepted, to be one of the ground, to not stand out to much, to not be too different. From our earliest years we have wrestled with it. It is felt on the school campus just as in the office at work. If we shrug our

shoulders and think it will go away, it intensifies – dulling the edge of our commitment to Christ and pleading with us to lower our standards of spirituality, morality, and integrity.

This study offer straight talk from the Scriptures on how to handle this pressure to cave in and sit down rather than take a stand, but it does so from a Biblical and balanced perspective. As the pressure mounts for believers to take a stand on a whole host of issues threatening our day this study provides a needed answer guided by Biblical wisdom and balance, yet full of truth and something to stand on.

HOW TO TAKE A STAND?

As a basic introduction to the study one question seems to ring out in the minds of most believers, **"How should Christians stand up for their faith in such an anti-Christian world?"**

2 Things Christians Can Do to Stand Up for Christ: As Christians, the two things we can do to stand up for Christ are to live according to His Word and grow our own knowledge of Him.

1. **Let your light shine** - Christ said, **"Let your light shine before men..." (Matthew 5:16).** This means that we should live and act in a way that supports the gospel.
2. **Arm yourself with truth** - We should also arm ourselves with knowledge, both of the gospel and the truth of God's Word (Ephesians 6:10-17) and of the world around us. Paul calls us to stand firm in the "faith" in **1 Corinthians 16:13, "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong."** And Peter has these words for us in **1 Peter 3:15** says, **"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."**

**All we can do is live and teach as Christ would and let Him take care of the rest.*

3 Initial Problems with Taking a Stand:

1. **Critics of Christianity have become more vocal recently** - This is partly because there are many people who do not believe in God or understand the truth about Him at all. Yet the apparent increase of anti-Christians is also due to perception. As with many topics, those who truly despise Christianity are the loudest and most vocal of the non-believers. The vast majority of those who do not believe don't care enough to bother believers. The few angry, vocal, bitter unbelievers make enough noise to seem more numerous than they are. Paul warned us of this in **2 Timothy 3:12-14, "¹²In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned."** In other words "stand."__The typical insult from the non-religious crowd is to refer to believers as "ignorant," "stupid," "brainwashed," or to otherwise suggest that those who have faith are less intelligent than those who do not. When a Christian stands up intelligently for his faith, the terms change to "bigot," "extremist," or "zealot." When people who know that the believer is kind and loving hear this, the atheist starts to look like the fool that he or she is (Psalm 53:1). Most non-believers have no personal reason to see Christians negatively, but they sometimes hear so much from the loud anti-Christians that they just assume it is so. They need examples of Christ-like living to see the truth.

2. **Un-Christ-Like words and behavior of some Christians** - Of course, when someone claiming to be a Christian says or does something that is not Christ-like, the angry, loud crowd is there to identify him as a typical religious hypocrite. This is something we have been warned to expect. Paul warns us in Romans 1:28-30, ²⁸ *Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.* ²⁹ *They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents.”* And Jesus, Himself, warns us in Matthew 5:11, ¹¹ *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.”* The best thing to do is to cite a passage of the Bible that speaks against what the person did. And remind the atheists that just because a person says he is a Christian, and even if he thinks he is a Christian, that does not mean that he is. Matthew 7:16 & 20 tell us that true Christians will be known by their actions, not merely by their profession. And remind critics that absolutely no one lives without sinning at all (Romans 3:23).
3. **You can't force someone to believe something they don't want to believe** – In other words you are not going to win someone to Christ using a picket sign. It just doesn't happen that way. An important thing to remember is that no one, no matter how persuasive, can force anyone to believe anything he doesn't want to believe. No matter what the evidence, no matter what the argument, people will believe what they want to believe (Luke 12:54-56). Conviction is not a Christian's job. The Holy Spirit convicts people (John 14:16-17), and they choose whether or not to believe. What we can do is present ourselves in a way that is as Christ-like as possible. It is sad that there are many atheists who have read the entire Bible looking for ammunition against Christians, and that there are many Christians who have hardly read the Bible at all.

Something to Remember: It's hard for the angry crowd to accuse a Christian of being a hateful, cruel bigot when that person demonstrates a life of kindness, humility, and compassion. When a Christian can discuss, debate or debunk secular arguments accurately, the label of “ignorant” no longer fits. A Christian who has read the secular arguments and can politely expose their flaws helps to deflate the stereotypes advanced by atheists. Knowledge is the weapon, and it is invincible when we let Christ direct us in how to use it.

SOME SUMMARIZING THOUGHTS ON TAKING A STAND

This study is going to cover such topics as feeling opposed, being outnumbered, feeling tested and tried, and dealing with temptation. But throughout this study on taking a stand there are some grounding parameter to keep in mind.

3 Goals to Keep in Mind in Taking a Stand:

1. **In taking a stand always seek to be *balanced*...** avoiding fanaticism.
2. **In taking a stand always aim to be *positive*...** avoiding that which is needlessly negative.
3. **In taking a stand always be *victorious*...** avoiding defeat.

“Standing Alone When Outnumbered”
Romans 12:1-2, Deuteronomy 6:10-15

The Christian life is a unique and distinctive; it is totally unlike the life-style played out by the majority of people on this planet. As Christians, we have been compared to tiny islands of truth surrounded by an enormous sea of paganism. But still, we must live and operate in a world that is in conflict with spiritual values. God has chosen not to take us out of the world – but He does not want us to live as though we are of it.

“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.” –John 17:15-16

This creates a dilemma... and it is this very dilemma which this series of studies is designed to face.

I. INTRODUCTION TO “STANDING ALONE”

One of our greatest human fears is being ostracized... being cut off from other people because of being different. Being different just for the sake of being different is foolish, and this is not our concern here.

1. **Where are we going?** – In “Standing Alone” we will learn some biblical techniques on how to maintain a distinctive life-style when surrounded by non-Christians. Put another way, we want to learn how to counteract, on a serious level, conformity to the world system.
2. **What are our goals?** – There are three goals we want to keep in mind as we work through this study.

3 Goals to Keep in Mind in Standing Alone:

4. **That we seek to be *balanced*...** avoiding fanaticism.
5. **That we aim to be *positive*...** avoiding that which is needlessly negative.
6. **That we be *victorious*...** avoiding defeat.

II. ANALYSIS OF A BIBLICAL PASSAGE (Romans 12:1)

This is perhaps the most familiar verse in Paul’s Roman letter. When reading the text, six observations can be made.

6 Observations from Romans 12:1

1. **This truth is for the Christian –**
2. **There is an urgency in this message –**
3. **This urgency relates to a personal sacrifice –**
4. **The sacrifice touches two realms: (1) the inner person, (2) and the outer person –**
5. **The sacrifice is essentially spiritual –**
6. **The sacrifice leads to a practical and radical decision –**

Summary Thought: The seasoned apostle/writer saw that at life’s deepest level one was to present himself or herself sacrificially to God at all times. At work or at rest. In bed or on

the street. “Presenting” happens only when an attitude of sacrifice precedes it. This giving to God involves everything related to our senses, as well as our drives, interests, desires, and dreams. The very act of giving the sum total of all these things to God is to be viewed as our highest expression of worship; there is no higher.

III. REMINDER FROM EVERYDAY LIFE

None of us can do business in this world without rubbing shoulders with those driven by the world’s desires. The objectives of the world system can be summarized in four words... words representing challenges with which we must do battle daily.

4 Summary Words of the World’s Desires:

1. **Fortune** – The doctrine that success and prosperity give us our greatest happiness or security.
2. **Fame** – The search for popularity that supposedly leads to acceptance and elevation of worth.
3. **Power** – The exercise of influence and control over others, in order to feel important.
4. **Pleasure** – The pursuit of maximum enjoyment, satisfaction, comfort, and delight, ignoring all limits and restraints – godly or otherwise – to make ourselves feel good.

IV. COMMANDS FROM A BIBLICAL PASSAGE (Romans 12:2)

The meaning of two strong terms used by Paul must be grasped by those seeking to avoid being shaped by the world system.

2 Commands for Avoiding Being Shaped by the World System:

1. **“Do not be conformed”** – One who conforms assumes an outward expression that does not come from within. Conformity here has the idea of wearing a mask... masquerading. Let’s put it this way... when the outside of me does something that is not Christ-like, I am conforming.
2. **“But be transformed”** – The biblical term means an outward expression that comes from within. Perhaps the word we’re most acquainted with to describe biblical transformation is “metamorphosis.” Transformation occurs when we experience a striking alternation in both appearance and character. Think of it like this... when the real Christ, designed to express Himself through my life, comes through... transformation has taken place.

An Essential Word: Paul doesn’t leave us in the dark as to how we are to “be transformed.” Transformation accompanies the renewing of our minds. Here the key to our growth and development in Christ. We are to busy ourselves with the process that leads to complete mental renovation... the reworking of our inner thoughts. Our study – “Standing Alone” – is designed to help and stimulate that renewal process.

V. ILLUSTRATION FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT (Deuteronomy 6:10-15)

The context of this passage includes a leader and his people... Moses and those born in the wilderness (the children of those who had escaped the bondage of Egypt). This new generation was about to cross the Jordan River and enter the long-awaited Promised Land.

In speaking to them, Moses warned them of four potential disasters. Let's summarize his warnings this way.

4 Potential Disasters:

1. **Getting something for nothing breeds irresponsibility –**
2. **Irresponsibility creates an attitude of carelessness –**
3. **Carelessness leads to a loss of standards –**
4. **Loss of standards prompts insecurity -**

VI. APPLICATION FOR US TODAY

The world system is designed to entrench us in insecurity. As those of Moses' day needed a reminder... we today need one as well. If I am to renew my mind, then it must begin with four principle statements around which my life should be lived.

4 Principles Statements for Renewing My Mind for Standing Alone:

1. **"I am responsible"** – We take responsibility for both wrong-doing and right-doing.
2. **"I must not forget"** – We represent Jesus Christ, who brought us out of a life-style that we perverse and wicked. Remembering that which was behind, we keep looking ahead.
3. **"I am accountable to God"** – For none of us is the matter of taking God seriously an option... it is a realistic obligation.
4. **"I get my standards and security from God alone"** – Within us, the ability to stand alone grows out of our own security in our Lord God.

*"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed... STAND ALONE"
–Romans 12:2*