

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 16, 2015 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

TAKING A STAND

God Help! I'm Outnumbered! – Part 2

*Ephesians 6:10-20, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Romans 12:1-2,
Genesis 6:5-14, 1 Samuel 17:1ff, 1 Kings 18-19*

Too many Christians have a commitment of convenience. They'll stay faithful as long as it's safe and doesn't involve risk, rejection, or criticism. Instead of standing alone in the face of challenge or temptation, they check to see which way their friends are going.

– Dr. Charles Stanley

“To conform to a sick society is to become sick.

— Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

JUST FOR REVIEW

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. There are some goal that we must keep in mind as believers when we talk about taking a stand and begin to put the discipline into practice, lest we lower and reduce ourselves into nothing more than narrow-minded, judgmental, and unloving dogmatists, legalists, and religionist seeking simply to impose our will on others... and this is not a way to win others to a God who loves them and died for them. With this in mind, here are our three key launching goals to keep in minds as we proceed throughout our study, “Taking a Stand.”

3 Goals to Keep in Mind in Taking a Stand:

1. That we seek to *be balanced*... avoiding fanaticism.
2. That we aim to be *positive*... avoiding that which is needlessly negative.
3. That we be *victorious*... avoiding defeat.

Again, for review, for the purposes of our study we defined “taking a stand” as “going against the flow.”

Definition: “Taking a stand is going against the flow”

What happens when we go against the flow?

3 Things Going Against the Flow Potentially Does:

1. **It upsets the current** – By this we mean that the current doesn’t like it, and the world doesn’t like it when we go against its natural flow either. It is much easier to go with the flow, to coast along with everyone else and conform. The world is extremely upset when, out of God’s great love for us, He calls us to a higher standard or one that contradicts what the world does.
2. **It creates hazards** – When an obstacle interrupts the current and flow of a river, it creates rough and choppy water... sometimes rapids and whitewater that can be extremely dangerous. Sometime the hazards created by an obstacle interrupting the current or flow can actually be something that those following the current can get caught up on and cause drowning. Going against the flow creates hazards for both those going with the flow and those going against it. This means that when Christians go against the natural flow of the world’s ways and way of thinking it can sometime cause a violent reaction. It may cause ridicule, rejection, persecution... sometimes severe persecution, and maybe even martyrdom.
3. **It provides growth** – Swimming upstream, against the flow is actually a great strength training exercise. It builds muscle tone, and strength and stamina (i.e. the wave pool). In the same way for a believer, going against the flow can actually create a great opportunity for spiritual growth and the building of one’s faith. Certainly, going against the flow would entail really knowing what you believe and why you believe it, studying deeply in God’s Word and establishing your convictions firmly on His Word.

Think about this... how easy is it really 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. Let’s go back to some passage of Scripture that we examined last time and listen again as each is read. Once again, ask yourself what exactly is being said in each passage:

- **Matthew 10:34-39 (purple)** _____

“³⁴ Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; ³⁶ and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ ³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” –Matthew 10:34-39 (NKJV)

- **John 15:18-19 (black)** _____

“¹⁸ If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” – John 15:18-19 (NKJV)

- **John 17:15-19 (black)**

“¹⁵ I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.” –John 17:15-19 (NKJV)

- **Philippians 2:14-16 (gold)**

“¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” – Philippians 2:14-16 (NKJV)

- **2 Timothy 3:12-15 (blue)**

“¹² Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³ But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” – 2 Timothy 3:12-15 (NKJV)

The vast indication of Scripture is that as believers and Christ followers we will be often find ourselves outnumbered and at odds with the world and the world system. Our Christian worldview certainly runs contrary to the world’s perspective and as such “taking a stand” for what we believe in even within our own selves will put us as odds and in conflict with the vast majority of those around us. How do we stand alone when outnumbered? How do we take a stand even within ourselves when we are outnumbered, outmanned and facing the strong current of the day.

I. TAKING A STAND: A COMMAND FROM SCRIPTURE (Ephesians 6:10-20, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Romans 12:1-2)

There are various passage of Scripture that called believers, Christians, to take a stand and to stand. The following are our key texts for this study, and serve as the foundational text for believers. These passages certainly give us a couple of reasons why it is so important that Christians take a stand.

2 Scriptural Reasons Christians Should Take a Stand:

- 1. We must take a stand for preservation and growth of our faith (1 Corinthians 15:58)** – In order that we not be moved, that our relationship with the Lord might not fall into laxness and compromise. Paul writes in *1 Corinthians 15:58*, “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.”

2. **We must take a stand against the attacks and schemes of the enemy (Ephesians 6:10-20)** – The enemy of God and God’s children, will attacked and seek to take down every one who is God’s. In order for us to be all that God has called us to be and to do we must take our stand against the devil and His schemes. This passage not only calls the believer to take a stand against the enemy, but also reminds us who the enemy really is and isn’t, and how we may stand successfully. Only with the “full” armor of God. Again the Apostle Paul writes in *Ephesians 6:10-20*, 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.”*

Again, these key texts provide us with an important perspective on why it is so important that Christians take a stand. But Scripture, doesn’t just give us the “why?” of taking a stand. It also provides on various fronts the basics of “how?” Perhaps some of the Apostle Paul’s most familiar and oft quoted words come from his letter to the Romans in *Romans 12:1-2*, ¹ *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* ² *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

Paul makes six important observations in those verses that we need to understand..

6 Observations from Romans 12:1-2

1. **This truth is for the Christian** – Verse 1 says, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren...”* Paul is addressing the “brethren” or Christians, believers. Romans 12:1-2 is a word for you, Christian.
2. **There is an urgency in this message** – Paul uses the word *“beseech”* in verse 1, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren...”* There is a sense of urgency and force being communicated with use of this word. Literally the Greek word translated as “beseech” means “to call alongside to help” Paul is saying, “I need you to do this!” “This is a

must for you as a believer!” And as Dr. John MacArthur says, “Paul’s counsel to believers here carries with it the full weight of his apostleship.”

3. **This urgency relates to a personal sacrifice** – Verse 1 says, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice...”* He is urging us toward personal surrender not to our will and desires, but to God’s. The idea here is living in surrender to our Lord, daily!
4. **The sacrifice touches two realms: (1) the inner person, (2) and the outer person** – Paul tells us that we are to present ourselves (our bodies) as living sacrifices and he describes this as inwardly “holy and acceptable to God” and outwardly our “reasonable service.” Verse 1 says, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”* In other words, in light of all the spiritual riches believers enjoy solely as the fruit of God’s mercies, it logically follows that we owe God our highest form of service. Inward change, outward results!
5. **The sacrifice is essentially relational** – These verses, Romans 12:1-2, speak directly to the sort of relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ. Given what God done for us through His Son, Jesus Christ, we owe Him our lives, our very all. Hence we are to live in relationship to Him in surrender of our will to His. This about this... *Why is our presenting our bodies as living sacrifices to God a “reasonable service” we can do?* Isn’t because of what He was willing to do for us, in order that we might be brought back into “right” relationship with Him... at great cost to Him.
6. **The sacrifice leads to a practical and radical decision** – That is the very practical and radical decision to not conform to the world which clearly outnumbers us, but to allow God to transform us in to something and someone “radically” different from the world. Here is how Paul says it in verse 2, *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* There are two very strong terms used by Paul in that verse that we must grasp if we ever hope to be able to avoid being shaped by the world... going with the world’s flow and current... and being able to “stand” as a believer in this world.

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. **NOTE: Remember that earlier in Paul’s letter to the Romans, he told us that rather than being conformed to the world we are to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (see Romans 8:28-29)*
- (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. **NOTE: When we conform to the image of Jesus Christ and begin to reflect Him, rather than conforming to the world, that in itself is a radical transformation and is life changing.*

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's the key to our growth and development in Christ. We are too busy ourselves with the process that leads to complete mental renovation... the reworking of our inner thoughts. Our study – "Taking a Stand" – is designed to help and stimulate that renewal process.

II. TAKING A STAND: LEARNING FROM THOSE WHO STOOD ALONE THOUGH OUTNUMBERED (Genesis 6:5-14; 1 Samuel 17:1ff; 1 Kings 18-19)

There are many example of those who were called to take a stand against all odds, even when outnumbered... sometimes greatly outnumbered. The amazing stories of Moses and the oppressed Children of Israel standing against Pharaoh and the powerful masses of Egypt, or Joseph outnumbered by his own brothers and later against all odds rising to become a single voice savior of his own people, or prophet of old like Isaiah or Jeremiah who stood as a single voice of God against God's own people who would not listen, or Daniel taking a stand even if it meant a lion's den, or the reluctant prophet Jonah who took a stand against the entire city of Ninevah, outnumbered by the masses and brought revival to that wicked city. These are some great and inspiring testimonies to what God can do when we are willing to take a stand even when outnumbered by people and odds. There are three others whose particular story inspires us to stand though out numbered.

3 Important Old Testament Figures Who Stood When Outnumbered:

1. **Noah (Genesis 6:5-14)** – God called Noah to take an unusual stand against a world gone crazy.

3 Character Qualities that Made Noah the Kind of Man Who Could Stand When Outnumbered: Genesis 6:9 says, *"⁹This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God."* The order here in describing Noah is one of increasing spiritual quality before God and is what made him one that could stand and not be swept away with the flow of his day.

- (1) **Noah was a just man** – "Just" here means to live by God righteous standards. Noah didn't just preach it. He lived it. He didn't just know it. He exhibited it in his life by practicing it. We too, who call ourselves Christians, must allow that profession to pass from simply words on a page into how we life. It is hard to take a stand if it is not backed up by our life and the way we live.
- (2) **Noah was perfect in his generation** – "Perfect" sets him apart by a comparison with those of his day. His life was lived in contrast to those around him and set him apart. In other words, Noah was different as we are called to be different, to stand out, shine like stars in a crooked and depraved generation. Remember Paul's words in Philippians 2:15 that as believers we are to *"¹⁵...become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."*
- (3) **Noah walked with God** – That he "walked with God" puts him in a relational class with Enoch, and speaks to Noah intimate and personal relationship with God that was an ongoing, growing, and maturing relationship. Noah's ability to stand against an entire generation of wickedness is rooted in His relationship with the one

that he was standing with... God. Taking a stand for us must be rooted in our relationship as well. You won't stand, when outnumbered, if the One you are standing for and with means nothing to you. The more you know Him in relationship the easier your stand will be no matter the odds.

2. **David (1 Samuel 17:1ff)** – God called David to take a stand against a sizable foe and his forces, though he was greatly overmatched. David's story of facing a sizable foe is one that encourages us with some important factors for our own stand taking in our day.

5 Important Factors for Taking Stand in the Face of A Sizable Foe:

- (1) **Externals don't matter (1 Samuel 17:38-40)** – 1 Samuel 17:38-40 tells us, ³⁸ *So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. ³⁹ David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them." So David took them off.⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine.* Neither size, age, nor weaponry mattered for David. And although his sizable foe, Goliath, had all of that it proved no benefit for him. When taking a stand it is better not to depend on the fleshly externals that you think are yours... they usually aren't and usually they just cause our dependence on those things rather than the true source of victory and courage. You may be outmatched, outsized and outnumbered. David was, yet he didn't depend on the externals... swords, spears, shields, or armor. As David approached Goliath these were his word, ⁴⁵ *... "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin..."* In other words, "No externals Goliath!"
- (2) **Internal do [matter] (1 Samuel 17:45-46)** – David had a internal relationship with God, the God of Israel. Remember with Noah we said Noah's ability to stand against an entire generation of wickedness is rooted in His relationship with the one that he was standing with... God. Same was true with David as seen throughout this story. David had a relational dependence on God who had delivered him from a lion and a bear and he was sure would deliver him from Goliath and the outnumbering foe in the Philistines. So David's words to his sizable opponent in 1 Samuel 17:45-46 were these, ⁴⁵ *Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand..."* In other word, "Goliath, you may be depending on the external weapons to save you, but I am totally dependent upon my God who is bigger than you, and I can stand against you because He is on my side." The same is true for you and I. We must depend on our who we know, not what we know. We must depend on the one that we have an internal and personal intimate relationship with. He is bigger than any sizable foe that may outnumber or outman us.
- (3) **Humility helps (1 Samuel 17:28-39)** – David was just David. He couldn't be his older brothers. He couldn't be Saul. He was just a young boy, a shepherd, the baby of the family, and he couldn't be who he wasn't. And all indications are that David

wasn't trying too. An interesting part of this story is Saul's attempt to make David like him and clothe David in his armor. But David couldn't and didn't want to be anyone but who God had made him to be as indicted by verses 38-39 *“³⁸ So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. ³⁹ David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, “I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them.” So David took them off.”* It's as if David shook off the temptation to be who he wasn't and humbly approached his foe with notion by a sling and a few smooth stone because that is who he is. And his statement indicated that if he defeated his foe it would not be him by the God he served doing so, and I am reminded of Peter's word in **1 Peter 5:5**, *“God resists the proud, but give grace to the humble.”*

- (4) **Faith sustains (1 Samuel 17:45-47)** – I love the faith statement of David in **1 Samuel 17:45-47**, as he takes his stand, though outmanned and outsized by his foe, *“⁴⁵ Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷ Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands.”* David was sustained as he took his stand by his faith in his God's ability to deliver him.
- (5) **Battle is His (1 Samuel 17:47)** – *“⁴⁷ Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands.”* I believe that this may be one of the most important truths for us to remember as believers, Christians, in taking a stand. If the stand we are taking is our own, it will fail, it probably need too, and why take it. On the other hand as believers we must remember *“the battle is the Lord's.”* It's His stand we are taking. We are simply His mouth piece and instrument, just as David was. The stands we take must be the Lord's not our own axe to grind.

3. **Elijah (1 Kings 18-19)** – God called Elijah to take a stand against false religion and religious extremism that was leading people astray and away from God. He was greatly outnumbered by both the evil regime of King Ahab and his powerful wife Jezebel, and by all the false prophet of Baal. Hundreds opposed him as he took his stand and in 1 Kings 18, in a mighty display of God's power come down on Mt. Carmel and defeats and destroy the prophet of Baal. Elijah stand as a hero at taking a stand when outnumbered and coming out on top, but taking a stand can carry some risks and hazards for us as well. A series of events tracked Elijah's life, including a famine that he himself had prophesied, and a confrontation on Mt. Carmel where he defied 450 prophets of Baal. After seeking out a solitary retreat next to a juniper tree, his reward was a threat on his life – issued by Jezebel. His words were like Moses' in **verse 4**, *“While he (Elijah) himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, Lord,’ he*

said. *'Take my life...'* What happened? When he should have been celebrating a great victory something happened to Elijah.

3 Cautions From the Life of Elijah After Taking a Stand When Outnumbered:

- (1) **Taking a stand when outnumbered can leave us physically drained (1 Kings 19:1-3)** Verses 1-3 of 1 Kings 19, following Elijah's victorious stand we read these words, *"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." ³ And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there."* Elijah was left physically exhausted and filled with fear. In fear for his life, Elijah had just run approximately 30 miles. Not only was he weary from running, but also from relating to the cultic prophets on Carmel. He had missed sleep and meals... he was worn out. And the same caution should be heeded for Christians, we need to take care of ourselves physically... get rest, eat properly, exercise because being a Christian who stand can be exhausting. Notice that in Elijah's exhaustion God didn't rebuke Elijah. Instead, God fed His servant and allowed him to sleep (vv.5-8). The food which the heavenly men delivered to him was so adequate that it kept his strength sustained for 40 days, until he reached Mt. Horeb. Not only was he well fed and well rested, but God also supplied him with a friend – Elisha (vv.19-21).
- (2) **Taking a stand when outnumbered can leave us feeling emotionally used up (v.10)** Elijah suffered from a martyr's complex in a sense... he started to feel sorry for himself. Emotionally used up he began to feel taken advantage of and underappreciated. It happens! Note his words in verse 10, *"... I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left and now they are trying to kill me too."* He felt all alone, like there was no one else by him. Not so. God soon reminded him of that, saying that he was joined by 7,000 others in Israel who had refused to bow to Baal.
- (3) **Taking a stand when outnumbered can leave us spiritually sapped** – I think this is clearly seen in verse 3 that we read a moment ago. Elijah's fear was an indication that his eyes were not on God, but on the enemy. Jezebel was anxious to take his life, and it seemed all were against him – Jezebel, the world, even God.

III. 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.