

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 2, 2015 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

TAKING A STAND

God Help! I'm Outnumbered!

Ephesians 6:10-20, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Romans 12:1-2, Deuteronomy 6:10-15

“Radical obedience to Christ is not easy... It's not comfort, not health, not wealth, and not prosperity in this world. Radical obedience to Christ risks losing all these things. But in the end, such risk finds its reward in Christ. And he is more than enough for us.”

–David Platt, “Radical”

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

TAKING A STAND... GOING AGAINST THE FLOW

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.

In the space below list what you would consider some of the “hot button” issues facing our day:

ex. -immigration _____

1. Go back over that list and place a [✓] in front the issues that you think Christians should take a stand on.
2. Now place a “1” beside the issues that you feel are “very important” for Christians to take a stand on, a “2” beside the issues that you feel are “somewhat important” for Christians to take a stand on, and a “3” beside the issues that you feel are “not important” for Christians to take a stand on at all.

1 = very important
2 = somewhat important
3 = not important

3. Place a wavy line ~~~~~ through the items that you fell Christians would be going against the flow if they take a stand on that item.
4. Now circle ○ the items that you feel Christians have lost ground on by not taking a stand. Explain... why? How?
5. Now apply the 3 things above (What Going Against the Flow Possible Does) to the issues.

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 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. REMINDERS ON TAKING A STAND

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 our study, “Taking a Stand” 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. We briefly looked at these as we closed out our introduction to our study last time, but just for review let’s look at them again. Remember that these are our bed-rock statements for our study.

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.

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. **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 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 – “Taking a Stand” – 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** – Let me ask you, is our brand of Christianity, too easy? How? Why? Do we take “being a Christian” in our country for granted? Explain. What effect does this have on us? And what do you think “irresponsibility” means in the context of our discussion? Are we as Christians “irresponsible” with our faith in some ways?

2. **Irresponsibility creates an attitude of carelessness** – What do you think results in we are too casual and irresponsible with our faith? Are we careless with our faith? Have Christians in America been “careless” with Biblical truth, and standards that are clearly laid out in Scripture? Explain. Examples.
3. **Carelessness leads to a loss of standards** – Have we seen a loss of standards in the church and by American “Christians? Given our discussion, why might that be the case?
4. **Loss of standards prompts insecurity** – Has all of this made us more insecure as Christians in this county? Why or why not? Explain.

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... TAKING A STAND”
–Romans 12:2*