

SHARING CHRIST IN AN UNHOLY WORLD

Introduction: How can we live holy lives while living in an unholy world?

"Keep yourself from being polluted by the world". James 1:27

"Come out from them and be ye separate." 2 Cor. 6:17

I. Does God want us to withdraw from contact with the world of non-Christians?

A. Christ is our example:

1) He was set apart from sinners, but

2) He was in such contact with sinners for their salvation, that the Pharisees questioned Christ's lack of separation and his character

"Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus answered, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:30-32

B. New Testament writers assumed we would live in the midst of an unholy world

"I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning people of this world.... in that case you would have to leave this world." 1 Corinthians 5:9-10

"Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."

1 Peter 2:12

"Do everything without complaining or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe, as you hold out the word of life."

(This verse is talking about real superstars for God.)

Phil. 2:14-16a

C. Jesus said we are to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-14).

Salt

1) Has preserving power

2) Antiseptic

3) Agent to prevent decay

Light

1) John 1:7-9: we are to be witnesses to the light, Jesus Christ

2) Light helps people see the truth

4) Creates thirst

* Salt is no good if contaminated * Light is no good if hidden

D. Summary: John 17:15.

No, we aren't to remove ourselves from the world (i.e. contact with the world), but we must separate ourselves from the world and not conform to the world's standards (Romans 12:2), or agree with the world's philosophies (Colossians 2:4, 8).

"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.

May they be brought to complete unity **to let the world know** that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17:15, 23

II. Does that mean that we go around denouncing others' sin?

A. No, our holy life will be sufficient rebuke. (I.e. working at the foundry)

B. Our interest in others is not their conduct, but their need of Christ.

Do we want unbelievers to just change their behavior and act like believers or do we want them to come to faith in Christ?

Illustration: Evangelist Henry Trumbull was seated next to a man who was drinking heavily on a train. Each time he opened his bottle, he asked Trumbull if he wanted a drink. He graciously said, "No thanks" each time. Eventually, the man said to him, "I suppose you think I am a pretty rough fellow." Mr. Trumbull graciously replied, "I think you're a very generous-hearted fellow." That response opened an opportunity for him to share Christ with the man.

C. We want to live in such a way that we have opportunities to share about Christ.

III. So How Can We Live Holy Lives in a Perverse Culture?

A. Identify yourselves openly with Christ.

How do you think that will help you live a pure life?

(Tell the story of the guy in the marines who let his platoon know he was a Christian in boot camp)

B. The Bible is our best defense against the world's pollution. Psalm 119:9,11

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee."

C. There may be situations where it is necessary to leave a corrupt environment

because it becomes intolerable.

- 1) Lot and Sodom, Genesis 19
- 2) Roommate having premarital sex

- D. Your relationships with others will either influence you positively or negatively.
- 1) There may be associations you need to cut off if they are pulling you into sin.

Your primary reason for relationships (helping them be drawn closer to Christ) is being hampered by your poor testimony and your moral character is being compromised.

- 2) Are your friendships helping you grow stronger in your faith or causing you to compromise? (This includes dating relationships).

- E. BUT we must be more than on the defense. We must be concerned not only with remaining pure, but also with the eternal destiny of those who would pollute us.

Why did God leave us on earth? To share the gospel and help others follow

Christ.

(To make more and better disciples)

We need to be on the offensive.

I want to suggest to you that when we forget this mission, when we lose this focus, it seems like the Christian life stops making sense. We may begin to ask:

- Does it really matter if I don't pray?
- Does it really matter if I don't read my Bible?
- Does it really matter if I don't go to church?
- Does it really matter if I don't live a life of faith?

Many Christians would say, "Life seem to be going fine without practicing these things. It's not like I am doing all kinds of bad stuff."

Some of you here today may think just like that.

But take that same person and engage them in trying to win their unsaved friends to Christ and what happens?

They quickly realize how much they need God and how powerless they really are.

-Prayer becomes vital

-God's Word is the only truth that transforms

-Being with other Christians who understand you and encourage you is not

optional.

-Living a holy life becomes indispensable because if you don't you won't have an influence on your unsaved friends.

IV. That is why it is so crucial to develop godly habits, so you can make a difference in your world without it corrupting you.

A. Godly Habits to help you live a holy life

1) Accountability: giving someone else permission to ask you the hard questions about your heart.

"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. "

(2 Tim. 2:22)

2) Prayer: praying daily that God would help you remain holy

3) Memorize Scripture: Jesus modeled this for us in the wilderness temptation (Psalm 119:11)

4) Guard what you put into your mind.

B. How to Develop Godly Habits

1) Habits are developed and reinforced by frequent repetition.

Negative: The more we sin, the more we are inclined to sin.

Positive: The more we say no to sin, the more we are inclined to say no to sin

2) To develop new habits, never let an exception occur. (That is just reinforcing the old.)

3) Diligence in all areas is required to ensure success in one area.

4) Don't be discouraged by failure. Prov. 24:16

IV. APPLICATION

1) Do you have relationships that are pulling you down? What do you need to do about them?

2) What spiritual disciplines do you need to commit to, to help you live a holy life?

3) If you have no relationships with unsaved people, I challenge you to develop meaningful relationships with unbelievers, so that you can share Christ with them by living a holy life and pointing them to Jesus.

Hand out the "Friendship Challenge"

Questions for small groups

1. Are most of your friends Christians, non-Christians, or a good balance of both?
2. Would you say you influence your friends more or they influence you more? Why?
3. Have you ever shared Christ with your friends? What did you do? What happened?
4. Do you practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer, reading God's Word, fellowship with other believers, and living a holy life? Why?

How has that impacted your ability to witness to your friends?

5. Share who you are praying for (and inviting to the Murder Mystery) on your "Friendship Challenge".