



Being Conformed Into The Image of Jesus: Being IN the World...But Not OF It!

By Danny Ovalle
July 5, 2009

As we conclude our mini-series on Creative Cultural and Civic Involvement, let's take one last look at what God is doing among us as He is helping us to grow in our understanding of and walking in the truth that like our Master, we are in this world, but not of it.

Like Jesus, who was sent from the Father to go from perfect and glorious heaven...to a fallen, sin-sick world of lost and rebellious sinners like you & me...
...so too, we who are in Christ, are sent to those in our world, to tell them by word and deed of God our Maker, and God our Savior...lest they face God the Judge!
He is a REAL Savior, for REAL sinners (like us)...lest they face REAL judgment!

A question began to float around in my recently as I considered our last 3 weeks on this topic of being involved and engaged in our culture around us. Both Mike and Dave served us well in getting us to think more Biblically about this. Thanks men.

I suspect for years, many of us have heard the scripture, many times over, that we Christians are to come out of the world and be ye separate! We are not to touch the "unclean" thing. We are to be different from those in the world who haven't been born-again, and much of that being different includes being separate from those who are not Christians, lest you be tainted by "their sin". And now, for the past several weeks we have been saying that the Bible teaches us to do just the opposite and actually get involved with and engage the culture and intersect with those around us who are not Christian...and are very unclean!

You may say, I am confused, Pastor Danny. Should I be separate or should I be involved with non-Christians?

I answer a simple: YES!

My question to you this morning, as we consider being in the world and not of it, is this:

Has God called us to be separate from the world or involved and engaged in it?

The answer is a simple and resounding... YES!

Jesus said:

(And I am no longer in the world, but they are **in** the world -john 17.11)

(I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not **of** the world, just as I am not of the world. John 17.14)

Put another way: God has predestined us to be conformed into the image of Jesus, who was VERY in the world...and VERY not of it! Separate AND Involved!



We can catch a glimpse of this kind of confusion of being separate from those IN the world on the one hand...and associating with those in the world on the other - as we look at the Corinthian church.

Let's look at 1 Cor 5 in some detail to glean what God is doing among them:
These Christians didn't have it all together, spiritually speaking, did they?

God, through Paul, is bringing a series of responses to the problems and situations facing this flock in Corinth....pagan, very pagan Corinth.

There are responses to reports and responses to specific questions the Corinthians had.
Chapter 5 is one of the responses by the Apostle Paul to a report he received about the subject of sexual immorality and confusion about associating with non-Christians.

The Problem: 1-2

The Solution: 3-5

The Reason for This Solution: 6-8

The Clarification of Associating with Non-Christians: 9-13

Since they are being conformed into the same image as Jesus, they are being instructed in 2 things

1. on being separate in many ways from those in the world.

(Hebrews 4:15 ESV) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

2 Corinthians 6:16-18 ESV (16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

2. on being involved in many ways with those in this world

Matthew 9:9-12 ESV As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. (10) And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. (11) And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (12) But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

Luke 19:1-5 ESV He entered Jericho and was passing through. (2) And there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. (3) And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. (4) So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. (5) And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."

We all need to grow in both of these ways.



SEPARATE

Some of us need this holy word from God. Repent.

INVOLVED

Some of us need this encouragement to associate with “worldly” people.

Some helpful words from Mark Driscoll:

The people have been marketed, they have been pitched, they have been sold, they have had their felt needs assuaged. What they haven't had is anyone get up and open the Bible, tell them who God is, what he has done and call them to repentance in a very clear, forthright way that respects their intelligence.

What does that look like in concrete terms on the ground? That means that Christians need to be loving their neighbors as Jesus did, you know whether it's like Jesus with the woman at the well who was a social outcast and very sinful; there is a deep love for that person and a willingness to sit down and dialogue with them, not just preach at them... or whether it's a man like Zaccheus; it's actually having meals with such people and entering into a relationship with them so that the gospel can be explained and demonstrated and defended. I think the hard thing is that most people are for evangelism, but it is time-consuming. It does take energy and some people are very difficult and their understanding grows slowly and it's a commitment to walking with people in relationship, in community, in conversation, practicing hospitality, loving your neighbor...and I think we see that in the incarnation of Jesus, that God himself would spend time with some of the people that he spent time with, and people like me who he's still willing to spend time with is remarkable.

So your preaching, your Word-based ministry, it's not one thing over here and then you also have this outreach program over there, but your outreach is a ministry of the Word to your neighborhood. We call it "air war" and "ground war." The preaching of Scripture is air war. It deals with multitudes and wide audiences, but then our people really do the ground war. They love their neighbor, they share the gospel with their friends, they open their home to family, friends, and coworkers...they're really doing the work of the ground war, and generally speaking, that's where most evangelism happens - on the ground war. The air war can help articulate the gospel, but then people are going to have questions, misunderstandings, misapplications, and somebody who loves God is going to need to help walk with them through those particulars.

A lot of us grew up in churches, Mark, where we were told, "You are a member of this church now, which means that you have to find your gift-teach such and such a grade in Sunday school, be a greeter, show up for various church events... are you going to join the clean-up ministry or the



tract ministry..."-and you end up spending all of your time in church-related activities so that you couldn't actually spend time out in the world in your secular calling, investing in relationships with friends. You kind of scurry out there to make a buck, then scurry back into the church to be with your people. Do you think that that is a fundamental flaw in the way a lot of traditional churches approach the outside world? Look at the way they look at their programming. Sometimes a church only considers formal ministry in the church, as opposed to informal ministry in their home. So, you know, we like to tell our people that informal ministry counts. If you're having your lost neighbors over for dinner to love them, that counts. And so, I think it's an understanding that church is not just a thing that people come to; it's also living the lifestyle created by the gospel, knowing that wherever we're at we're witnesses, we are missionaries, we do bring the gospel with us, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are given opportunities. We should not overlook those in the name of formalized ministry but to see those informal opportunities as God's providential hand giving us wonderful opportunities out in the marketplace... We don't have any evangelism training, we don't have an evangelism department, we don't have altar calls, we don't do any advertising, we don't do any marketing.

Over the next 3 months, we have several opportunities to collectively be in our world, and not of it

Joni Eareckson Tada 7.12

Game Night 7.17

Beach Day 7.25

Baptism / Pool Party 8.15

Block Party 9.26

Great opportunities to be involved with others as light and salt in the stream of life!
Amen!