



John on Jesus

Jesus Divides

Small Group Work Sheet

October 7, 2012

Part 1 - Ice Breaker

What is your favorite fall activity?

Part 2 - Sermon Review

1. How many months passed between the end of John 6 and the beginning of John 7?
2. What did the Feast of Booths (also called the Feast of Tabernacles) commemorate?
3. Why did his brothers know about Jesus and his miracles but still not believe in him? What does this teach us about faith?
4. Jesus followed the leadership of the Holy Spirit instead of the leadership of his family and friends. What does it look like to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our life today?
5. What was different about Jesus' style of teaching? What does it look like when someone preaches like Jesus? (see Acts 4:13 for a parallel example)
6. What does it mean to say Christianity can't be examined from the outside, it can only be experienced from the inside? (see John 7:17 and Hebrews 11:6) How does this help you understand why explaining your faith to someone who doesn't know Christ is so difficult?
7. The Feast of Booths featured a water pouring ceremony. What was the ceremony about? How does Jesus connect to what the ceremony remembered in the past and looked forward to in the future? (see Revelation 22:1 and 22:17 where Jesus repeats this invitation in the future)
8. Jesus divides. When Jesus is brought up in a conversation, he instantly divides the room. We shouldn't be afraid of this, we should expect it. It is only when we talk about Jesus that people will come to Jesus. With who is the Holy Spirit prompting you to bring Jesus into a conversation this week? Hold one another accountable for next week.

Part 3 - Digging Deeper - Excerpts from Ray Comfort's books on evangelism

Like A Mighty Tortoise

Over the years, I have asked churches, "How many of you can say before God that you have witnessed verbally to more than 12 people over the past 12 months? That is, at least every 30 days or so somebody who is sitting in the shadow of death has heard the Gospel of everlasting life from your lips?" I have found that only 8–12 percent will raise their hands. Where is the zeal? Jesus said, "But you shall receive *power* when the Holy Spirit comes on you; *and you shall be my witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, italics added). The Holy Spirit wasn't given without purpose in mind. He was given so that we might have power for the purpose of being witnesses of Christ. So many profess to possess the power, but where is the lifestyle that confirms what they profess to possess?

It would seem that the fear of battle has left many a soldier hiding in the barracks. They are afraid to let their light shine before men because they know that men hate the light. Yet, it is a natural principle that when light shines darkness flees. Darkness cannot overcome light. Try it. Switch on some darkness and see if the light leaves, then try it the other way around.

"Gross darkness" only covers this earth because the Church has not obeyed the admonition to "arise and shine." We often speak up when it comes to moral issues. We do scatter a little salt. But salt doesn't shine. Among other things, it merely preserves....

What Battle?

Some years ago a traditional church dropped "Onward Christian Soldiers" from their song index because it made reference to war. That's understandable for people who have never been born again. War is the last thing on their minds. They are "peacemakers" meeting in a building which they think is the "church." They are not born of the Spirit, so they live in a natural world. They are spiritually insensitive because they are spiritually dead. The world may think there is peace between man and God, but the Bible makes it clear that unregenerate man is an enemy of God in his mind through wicked works, that anyone who is a friend of the world is an enemy of God (see Colossians 1:21, Romans 5:10, Romans 8:7, James 4:4). Many within the Church have lost sight of this important truth, something evident by their passive lifestyle. We have become like the Dead Sea. It is dead because it has water flowing into it, but no outlet. The water has become so salty, a human being can't sink into it. Nothing lives in it, no one can penetrate it ... just like the contemporary Church. If the average church made as much noise *about* God on Monday, as it makes *to* God on Sunday, we would certainly see revival.

Useless though it seems, the Dead Sea contains very valuable minerals, which are waiting to be harvested. So does the modern Church. It is a field which is white unto harvest, both for souls and for laborers.

Perhaps much of the Church needs to consider dropping "Onward Christian Soldiers" and replacing it with something more appropriate:

Backward Christian soldiers, fleeing from the fight
With the Cross of Jesus nearly out of sight.
Christ our rightful master, stands against the foe
But forward into battle, we are loathe to go.
Like a mighty tortoise moves the Church of God
Brothers we are treading where we've always trod.
We are much divided, many bodies we
Having many doctrines, not much charity.
Crowns and thorns may perish, kingdoms rise and wane,
But the Church of Jesus hidden does remain.
Gates of Hell should never 'gainst the Church prevail
We have Christ's own promise, but think that it will fail.

Sit here then ye people, join our useless throng
Blend with ours your voices in a feeble song.
Blessings, ease and comfort, ask from Christ the King
With our modern thinking, we don't do a thing.
(Anonymous)

Are we hot for God? Can we say that we have witnessed to more than 12 people in the last 12 months? Do we have the testimony “to live means opportunities for Christ?” Is there a zeal to witness burning in our bones? It doesn't matter how much we pray, tithe, fellowship ... Jesus said to “Go.” Obedience is better than sacrifice. Sure, those things are basics of the Christian faith, but if we are not sharing that faith we are not fulfilling our commission. We are like survivors of the Titanic singing songs as we polish brass in the lifeboat, when there is room for many who are drowning around us. There is nothing wrong with polishing brass ... *but not while people are drowning around us.* We are *commissioned* soldiers. True Christianity is not a pleasure-cruiser on its way to Heaven, but a battleship stationed at the very gates of Hell!

“I'm doing fine. I don't need God.”

Many people feel this way because of the modern gospel message. It says that Jesus will help their marriage, remove their drug problem, fill the emptiness in their heart, give them peace and joy, etc. In doing so, it restricts the gospel's field of influence. If the message of the cross is for people who have bad marriages, are lonely, and have problems, then those who are happy won't see their need for the Savior.

In truth, the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ is for people with bad marriages and people with good marriages. It is for the happy and the sad. It is for people with problems and those without problems. It is for those who are miserable in their sins, as well as those who are enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. Those who think they are doing fine need to be confronted with a holy Law that they have violated a multitude of times. Then they will see themselves through the eyes of the Judge of the Universe and will flee to the Savior.¹

As I began to look at church growth records from around the country, I found to my horror that 80 to 90 percent of those making a decision for Christ were falling away from the faith. That is, modern evangelism was creating 80 to 90 of what we commonly call backsliders for every hundred decisions for Christ.

For example, in 1991, a major U.S. denomination was able to obtain 294,000 decisions for Christ. Unfortunately, they could find only 14,000 in fellowship, which means they couldn't account for 280,000 of their decisions—and this is a normal, modern evangelical result.

The tragedy of modern evangelism is that, around the turn of the twentieth century, the church forsook the Law in its capacity to convert the soul and drive sinners to Christ. Modern evangelism therefore had to find another reason for sinners to respond to the gospel, and the reason it chose was the issue of “life enhancement.” The gospel degenerated into “Jesus Christ will give you peace, joy, love, fulfillment, and lasting happiness.” Something like this is usually said, “You will never find true happiness until you come to the Lord. You have a ‘God-shaped vacuum’ in your heart that only He can fill. God will heal your marriage and take away that addiction problem. He'll get you out of financial difficulty and be your best friend.” The following anecdote will illustrate the unscriptural nature of this very popular teaching.

Two men are seated on a plane. The first is given a parachute and told to put it on, as it would improve his flight. He's a little skeptical at first, since he can't see how wearing a parachute on a plane could possibly improve his flight. He decides to experiment and see if the claims are true. As he puts it on, he notices the weight of it upon his shoulders and he finds he has difficulty in sitting upright. However, he consoles himself with the fact he was told that the parachute would improve his flight. So he decides to give it a little time.

¹ Comfort, R. (1999). *How to win souls & influence people*. Orlando, FL: Bridge-Logos Publishers.

As he waits he notices that some of the other passengers are laughing at him for wearing a parachute on a plane. He begins to feel somewhat humiliated. As they continue to point and laugh at him, he can stand it no longer. He slinks in his seat, unstraps the parachute, and throws it to the floor. Disillusionment and bitterness fill his heart, because as far as he was concerned he was told an outright lie.

The second man is given a parachute, *but listen to what he is told*. He's told to put it on because at any moment he'll be jumping 25,000 feet out of the plane. He gratefully puts the parachute on. He doesn't notice the weight of it upon his shoulders, nor that he can't sit upright. His mind is consumed with the thought of what would happen to him if he jumped without the parachute.

Let's now analyze the motive and the result of each passenger's experience. The first man's motive for putting the parachute on was solely to improve his flight. The result of his experience was that he was humiliated by the passengers, disillusioned, and somewhat embittered against those who gave him the parachute. As far as he's concerned, it will be a long time before anyone gets one of those things on his back again.

The second man put the parachute on solely to escape the jump to come. And because of his knowledge of what would happen to him if he jumped without it, he has a deep-rooted joy and peace in his heart knowing that he's saved from sure death. This knowledge gives him the ability to withstand the mockery of the other passengers. His attitude toward those who gave him the parachute is one of heartfelt gratitude.

Now listen to what the modern gospel says: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. He'll give you love, joy, peace, fulfillment, and lasting happiness." In other words, Jesus will improve your flight. The sinner responds, and in an experimental fashion puts on the Savior to see if the claims are true.

And what does he get? The promised temptation, tribulation, and persecution—the other "passengers" mock him. So what does he do? He takes off the Lord Jesus Christ; he's offended for the Word's sake; he's disillusioned and somewhat embittered...and quite rightly so. He was promised peace, joy, love, and fulfillment, and all he got were trials and humiliation. His bitterness is directed at those who gave him the so-called "good news." His latter end becomes worse than the first, and he's another inoculated and bitter "backslider."

Instead of preaching that Jesus improves the flight, we should be warning sinners that they have to jump out of the plane—that it's appointed for man to die once and then face judgment (Hebrews 9:27). When a sinner understands the horrific consequences of breaking the Law of God, he will flee to the Savior, solely to escape the wrath that is to come. If we are true and faithful witnesses, that's what we'll be preaching—that there is wrath to come—that God "commands all men every where to repent: *because* he has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:30, 31).

The issue isn't one of life enhancement, but one of righteousness. It doesn't matter how happy a sinner is, or how much he is enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season; without the righteousness of Christ, he will perish on the day of wrath. Proverbs 11:4 says, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivers from death."

Peace and joy are legitimate *fruits* of salvation, but it's not legitimate to use these fruits as a drawing card *for* salvation. If we continue to do so, the sinner will respond with an impure motive, lacking repentance.

Can you remember why the *second* passenger had joy and peace in his heart? It was because he knew that the parachute was going to save him from sure death. In the same way, as believers we have "joy and peace in believing" (Romans 15:13) because we know that the righteousness of Christ is going to deliver us from the wrath to come.

With that thought in mind, let's take a close look at an incident aboard the plane.

We have a brand-new flight attendant. It's her first day. She's carrying a tray of boiling hot coffee. She wants to leave an impression on the passengers, and she certainly does! As she's walking down the aisle, she trips over someone's foot and slops the hot coffee all over the lap of our second passenger.

What's his reaction as that boiling liquid hits his tender flesh? Does he say, "Man, that hurt!"? Yes, he does. But then does he rip the parachute from his shoulders, throw it to the floor, and say, "The stupid parachute!"? No; why

should he? He didn't put the parachute on for a better flight. He put it on to save him from the jump to come. If anything, the hot coffee incident causes him to cling tighter to the parachute and even look forward to the jump.

If we have put on the Lord Jesus Christ for the right motive—to flee from the wrath to come—then when tribulation strikes, when the flight gets bumpy, we won't get angry at God, and we won't lose our joy and peace. Why should we? We didn't come to Christ for a better lifestyle, but to flee from the wrath to come. If anything, tribulation drives the true believer *closer* to the Savior. Sadly, we have multitudes of professing Christians who lose their joy and peace when the flight gets bumpy. Why? They are the product of a man-centered gospel. They came lacking repentance, without which they cannot be saved.²

² Cameron, K., & Comfort, R. (2004). *The school of biblical evangelism: 101 lessons: How to share your faith simply, effectively, biblically—the way Jesus did*. Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos Publishers.