

Adult Sunday School Class: Taking Sides
Class 1- Summary Notes
Sunday February 20th 2022

Objective: The objective of this class is to introduce the course and lay out ground rules for discussion. We will discuss how we establish a worldview and how we use the Gospel as the foundation and lens through which we establish our world view.

Introduction

1. What are some topics that you never bring up in Church?
2. Why do we avoid these topics?
3. How many of us would say that you think you have a pretty well formed opinion about some, many, all of these issues?
4. What would you say is the most influential source, for you, in forming your opinion on these issues? (TV, Social Media, Newspapers, Scripture.)

“What we’re seeing is massive discipleship failure caused by massive catechesis failure,” James Ernest, the vice president and editor in chief at Eerdmans, a publisher of religious books, told me. Ernest was one of several figures I spoke with who pointed to catechism, the process of instructing and informing people through teaching, as the source of the problem. “The evangelical Church in the U.S. over the last five decades has failed to form its adherents into disciples. So there is a great hollowness. All that was needed to cause the implosion that we have seen was a sufficiently provocative stimulus. And that stimulus came.”

“Culture catechizes,” Alan Jacobs, a distinguished professor of humanities in the honors program at Baylor University, told me. Culture teaches us what matters and what views we should take about what matters. Our current political culture, Jacobs argued, has multiple technologies and platforms for catechizing—television, radio, Facebook, Twitter, and podcasts among them. People who want to be connected to their political tribe—the people they think are like them, the people they think are on their side—subject themselves to its catechesis all day long, every single day, hour after hour after hour.

On the flip side, many churches aren’t interested in catechesis at all. They focus instead on entertainment, because entertainment is what keeps people in their seats and coins in the offering plate. But as Jacobs points out, even those pastors who really are committed to catechesis get to spend, on average, less than an hour a week teaching their people. Sermons are short. Only some churchgoers attend adult-education classes, and even fewer attend Bible study and small groups. Cable news, however, is always on. “So if people are getting one kind of catechesis for half an hour per week,” Jacobs asked, “and another for dozens of hours per week, which one do you think will win out?”

Peter Wehner in “The Evangelical Church is Breaking Apart.” The Atlantic October 24th 2021.

5. Purpose of the class.

- a. We will examine a number of issues; including, race and racism, CRT, human sexuality, patriotism/nationalism, sanctity of life, etc.
- b. The reason for teaching this class is because I became convicted that we all were receiving plenty of teaching on these topics from many different sources and the Church cannot remain silent. You cannot be an effective disciple of Jesus Christ without knowing how to apply the teaching of the Bible to the issues of our time.
- c. My Goal in this class is simple; that by the end of this class we will the ability evaluate the issues of our day according to the teaching of Scripture.
- d. This class is not my soap box. If you walk away in 6 weeks and all you can say is, "Pastor, says this or that about..." than I will consider that a failure. You should walk away with greater confidence in the teaching of God's Word and your ability to apply it.

6. Guidelines for Class

7. Should Christians get involved in politics and cultural debates?
8. Is there a right/wrong way for us to get involved?
9. What makes a political position a "Christian" position?
10. Is it enough to simply speak out for positions which are in line with biblical principles or does it matter how we do this?
 - a. We must listen to each other.
 - b. **James 1:19** ^gKnow this, my beloved brothers: let every person ^hbe quick to hear, ⁱslow to speak, ^jslow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore ^kput away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with ^lmeekness the implanted word, ^mwhich is able to save your souls.
 - c. Notice that James gives us three pieces of instruction, but only expands on one; anger.
 - d. Can someone tell me a story, a time in your life where you learned the lesson of this verse?
 - i. Illustration of discussing abortion with my grandfather.
 - e. I could have been quick to speak, or worse quick to anger. And I could have justified it by saying that I was just speaking the truth, but if I had I would have missed hearing about his pain. Now I don't think he was right, and I think his views were formed more from his own experiences than passages of Scripture.
 - f. So for this class, we will dive deep into Scripture, but we will also treat one another with love and respect, even if we disagree.

Discussion

11. Read Colossians 3.12-17

- a. ^dPut on then, as ^eGod's chosen ones, holy and beloved, ^fcompassionate hearts, ^gkindness, ^hhumility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ ^hbearing with one another and, ⁱif

one has a complaint against another, ^gforgiving each other; ^gas the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on ⁱlove, which ^kbinds everything together in ^lperfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let ^mthe peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called ⁿin one body. And ^obe thankful. ¹⁶ Let ^pthe word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, ^qsinging psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, ^rwith thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And ^swhatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, ^tgiving thanks to God the Father through him.

- b. Let's identify the verbs
 - i. Put on...compassionate heart, kindness, humility, meekness, patience
 1. Our human sinfulness says...Not compassion but division / Not kindness but suspicion. Not humility but self-righteousness / Not meekness but demand your rights / Not patience but impatience
 - ii. Bearing with one another...
 1. Our human sinfulness says... Don't give the time of day to someone who thinks differently than you.
 - iii. Forgiving each other...
 1. Our human sinfulness says...Dig up the past.
 - iv. Put on love...
 1. Our human sinfulness says...Put on hatred –identify your enemies
 - v. Let the peace of Christ rule...
 1. Our human sinfulness says...Be afraid and be angry
 - vi. Teaching, admonishing, singing...
 1. Our human sinfulness says... Don't seek to teach just to win.
 - vii. Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus...
 1. Our human sinfulness says...Do what is right in your own eyes
 - c. These are the behaviors that are contrary to God's Word which we must avoid, in this course and elsewhere.
 - d. What does it mean to let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly?
12. Is the Gospel relevant to every issue that we might discuss?
- a. "An authentic grasp of the gospel of Christ will bring increasing transformation and wholeness across all the dimensions of life that were marred by the fall. By removing the primary cause of all of our alienations – our separation from God – it also treats the alienations that flow from it. The gospel addresses our greatest need and brings change and transformation to every area of life." –Timothy Keller in *Shaped by the Gospel*. pp.66-67
 - b. The Gospel will address every aspect of our lives, not just what happens on Sunday morning.
13. It is essential that we always look for the unique gospel approach and not simply fall into "either/or" thinking.

- a. “The Christian story provides us with such a set of lenses, not something for us to look at, but for us to look through.” – Leslie Newbigin “The Gospel in a Pluralist Society p.38
14. We can learn from Jesus’ example of how to deal with controversial topics.
15. Matthew 19.3-9 “And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, ⁵“Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” ⁴ He answered, ^t“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, ^u“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and ^vthe two shall become one flesh”? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. ^wWhat therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” ⁷ They said to him, ^x“Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” ⁸ He said to them, “Because of your ^yhardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ ^zAnd I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”¹
- a. Jesus was being bated into a debate of his time and expected to take an either/or response. Two perspectives were presented and Jesus was challenged to pick one. (Can a man divorce his wife for “any reason” or only for “unfaithfulness?”)
 - b. Does this happen to us as well? Are we often bated into either/or debates?
 - c. In many debates we are presented with two perspectives and pressured to select one.
 - d. Eisegesis; is when we start with a view and try to find scriptures to support it- anyone can do this.
 - e. Exegesis is when we start with God’s Word and from that form a perspective.
 - f. We must struggle to avoid eisegesis and (like Jesus) allow our views to be formed by scripture.

Application

16. We need to be able to address issues of our day from the teaching of Scripture. We must do so by seeking God’s truth first and changing our views when Scripture dictates it. We must avoid the tendency to simply use the Bible as a source for “proof texts” to support our own previous formed opinions and views.
17. We must conduct ourselves with mercy and compassion toward one another as we discuss these issues.

Resources

James 1.19-21 / Colossians 3.12-17 / Matthew 19.3-9

Keller, Timothy. “Shaped by the Gospel”

Wehner, Peter. “The Evangelical Church is Breaking Apart” The Atlantic, October 24th 2021