

Bilingual Believers

Fluency in the language of the kingdom and culture

Introduction

- Self-isolation isn't just a pandemic problem, it's also a problem for the Lord's people who insulate themselves from a world who needs them so desperately. It's easy to pull away from the world, huddle up within the church, and never go out.
- After Jesus' death, the disciples hid in a house out of fear of the Jews. But when he returned, he sent them out of the house into the uncertain and hostile world (John 20:19-20).
- Today's culture is increasingly antagonistic towards the faith. The LGBTQ community, "cancel culture," those who believe in a woman's right to choose with regard to abortion, the makeup of the home, and the permissive views of divorce, all stand opposed to Christ's and his apostle's teachings.
- What are we to do? We need to become "Bilingual Believers" who are fluent in both the language of the kingdom and culture. Let's spend a few minutes examining the "ABC (and D)'s" of our relationship to the culture in which we live.

Alien Association

- Too religious and too worldly (Matt. 5-7; 19:9-12; John 5:18; Matt. 9:11).
 - As we follow Jesus, we model our lives after his. But spend a little time thinking about the way he related to society, and it's easy to see that he was viewed as "too religious" by some and "too worldly" by others. The radical teachings from the Sermon on the Mount and the shocking position on divorce (to name a few), left people shocked at his extreme religious beliefs. But the religious leaders didn't see him as anything more than a Sabbath-breaker or someone who ate with sinners. We should expect the same misunderstandings when we teach today!
- Fluent in both languages (John 15:19; 1 Cor. 9:19-23).
 - We're in this world, but not of it. The world will hate us, but our approach should always be tailored to the situation. Like Paul, we understand our audience, and "become" who they need us to be, all while maintaining our faithful convictions.

Baggage Bearers

- How much is too much? (Acts 10; Matt. 19:21-22; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).
 - We could all hope to find Cornelius's in the world — as close to godliness as possible — but that's unlikely. Everyone has baggage, just like we did when we came to the Lord. And some baggage is heavier than others. Some sins have wrapped up a person so tightly that repentance is going to take a great deal of effort. Like the rich man who couldn't sell all his possessions, some will be unwilling to let it go. But change is possible! And Paul's words to the Corinthians prove that out, with their former lives of unrighteousness, sexual immorality, and idolatry, all left behind.
- Don't stop at their sin (John 4:16-19; Acts 17:22-23).

- It's tempting to try and address the "elephant in the room" of someone's baggage. But Jesus didn't stop at the Samaritan woman's adultery. And Paul didn't stop at the Athenians idolatry. Sin isn't the world's biggest issue, it's their lack of understanding about God! Without the Lord's direction and correction, it's not surprising the world is so entangled in their sin.

Concerned Conversations

- Care enough to persuade (Jonah 4:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:11).
 - Our love for people drives us out to speak. In maybe the best "what not to do" example, Jonah preached a powerful 8-word sermon, converting 120,000 people, yet he didn't do it out of love for them. When we understand God's judgment — the terror of the Lord — we persuade people to leave their lives of sin. Will you care enough to speak?
- Your approach matters (1 Peter 3:15-16; Col. 4:6).
 - Standing on the street corner and shouting that people are going to hell may not be the most effective evangelism strategy. Peter urges us to have gentleness, respect, and a good conscience when we speak to people. Paul tells us to season our words with grace, thoughtfully approaching people in the most effective way.

Deity Declaration

- Proclaim God's excellence (1 Peter 2:9-10).
 - The job of teaching the lost seems like an uphill battle, and it is. But we're not trying to win an argument or prove people wrong, our main objective is to proclaim God's excellence. We share our faith, conversion, and how God showed us mercy. It's a much more simple task when you think about it that way.
- Your obligation to all people (Rom. 1:14-17).
 - We're not all naturally skilled at teaching. For some it comes naturally, but for others it's a skill that's constantly under development. Whether it comes easy for you or not, it's our obligation to people to share our faith with them. Don't be ashamed of the gospel, and don't hide your light under a basket.

Conclusion

- Despite the increasing pressure from our culture, our faith needs to travel the distance from our heart to our mouth. We're aliens in this world, carrying the messy baggage of those around us, concerned for people's wellbeing out of love, always declaring the Lord's greatness to those we meet.
- It's a delicate balance to maintain purity within the church and also allow God to take care of everyone else (1 Cor. 5:9-13).
- Let's be careful not to isolate ourselves from the world so much that we lose our effectiveness in our evangelism.