

OpenTheo

Toward a Radically Christian Counter - Culture (Part 2)



Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture - Steve Gregg

In this series on creating a radically Christian counter-culture, Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of living a holy and distinctive life that exemplifies the teachings of Jesus. He argues that this involves following God's laws and rejecting the moral standards of the surrounding culture, while also striving for unity and consensus within the Christian community. By living in this way, Christians can provide a consistent witness to the world and inspire others to follow the path of discipleship. Ultimately, this requires a deep commitment to radical conversion, evangelism, and discipleship, in which the body of Christ becomes a cohesive and powerful force for good in the world.

Transcript

Well, we embarked shortly ago on a series that is only new, just begun, and that is called Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture. And as I said in the previous lecture, the church is supposed to be an alternative society in the world with its own distinctive culture. And by culture, we're talking about values, rituals, practices, manner of life, what some people call ethos.

Basically, a culture is civilization. Every society that is civilized has a culture, or even societies that we wouldn't call civilized, they have a culture too. But culture is the secondary environment that's artificial, put on the natural environment we're around.

Our natural environment has to do with the weather and the climate and the soil and things like that. We have a certain natural environment that determines things about how we survive and so forth. Then there's a secondary environment that our culture is.

It's something that's cultivated. That's why it has the same root as culture. In fact, the word culture only came to mean what we mean by it in recent, in the past century or so, I think.

If you go back a few centuries, the word culture in the English language only spoke about cultivating plants. We retain that in the word agriculture or horticulture. Culture means something that's cultivated, something that's been manipulated and cared for in order to become something that nature itself does not produce.

When God said that he had cultivated Israel as his vineyard, it was because he wanted grapes. When he actually came at vintage to get the grapes, he said he didn't find grapes such as he wanted. He found, as it were, wild grapes.

Now this is a parable, of course. The grapes, the fruit he's looking for, as he said in Isaiah 5, 7, is righteousness and justice. Now, righteousness and justice are values and patterns of life that he was looking for in Israel.

He gave them his laws so that if they would obey them, they would live differently than everyone else around them. Their culture would be holy as opposed to the pagan cultures around them. And he had cultivated them the way he described it.

He says he had this hill. He plowed it. He planted good seed in it.

He watered it. He built a protective hedge around it and so forth. He did all the things that a man might do to his property to cultivate good fruit.

And what God's complaining about is, I did all the cultivation, but what I got wasn't good fruit. It was like wild grapes. What are wild grapes? What nature would produce if it's uncultivated, which are inferior, of course, grapes.

Culture, the way we use it in modern times, speaks of the manner of life of a society that is the result of being cultivated by the group effort. The philosophers, the musicians, the entertainers, the educators, the politicians, all together, all their activities flow together to create sort of a society of a certain sort, which is different than maybe some other society somewhere else that has different thinkers and different values and things like that. Now, what I'm saying all along here is that what the early church did was form its own culture.

Why? It was a city on a hill, Jesus said. It was a society unto itself. It was a kingdom under another king, one Jesus.

And their culture, the early church's culture, was cultivated by obedience to Jesus Christ. And they looked very different than the culture around them. They were a radical counterculture because the rest of the culture was not informed by obedience to Jesus Christ, but by something else.

What else? Well, it's not in your notes, but Peter might answer that question for us. In 1 Peter 1, verse 13 and following says, Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and rest your hope fully on the grace that is to be brought to you at the hour of your death. Be obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance.

But as he who has called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Now, if Christians are children of obedience, they're obedient children, and we're not fashioning

our society according to lust as we did in the days of our ignorance, Peter says. Peter says, when you were ignorant of the things of God, you had nothing else to govern you except your desires.

You just did what you thought best, what you desired most. That's what your lusts are, your desires, your passions. You shaped your life according to your preferences and desires.

But that's not true. Don't do that anymore. But as he who has called you is holy, that call to holiness is to inform your behavior now.

So be holy in all your conduct. If Christians are holy in all their conduct, then collectively their conduct will create a holy cultural expression in the Christian community. Now, this is a lot easier for Christians to have a radically Christian counterculture when they do things like the monks did and go off into some monasteries and when they live separate and they have, you know, they all rise at the same time in the morning and they go to their prayers and they work their gardens and they go to their vespers and so forth.

And, you know, everyone in the community is conforming to a way of life that nobody outside the walls of that monastery is doing. That's a counterculture. It might not be radically Christian.

It might be radically separated and religious, but that's not the same thing as radically Christian. But it's a counterculture. Much easier to keep the counterculture when you're off away from the regular dominant culture and you're not having to confront it and have it confront you.

Much easier for you to live a holy life when all the people around you are living a holy life and you don't have people at work and school and places like that telling you you're not because you're following Jesus Christ, but you're around people who are all following Jesus Christ. So much easier. But that's not the world we live in.

Jesus didn't call his Christians a way to live in a cloister. Now, sometimes there have been there has been some profit in Christians gathering into, you know, communes and things like that for various ministry purposes or whatever. Certainly the Amish are an example of people who've separated themselves off into a different geographical enclosure so that they can maintain their countercultural ways different from the dominant culture.

And I wouldn't wish to criticize them because they have maintained their culture very effectively, but they haven't impacted the outside culture at all. They haven't even tried. It's not even their goal.

It's not their interest to make the other people, the whole state of Pennsylvania, you know, drive carriages. That's not what they I mean, they want to keep to themselves, be

left alone and be able to do things the way their ancestors have always done. And that's that's a subculture.

I've mentioned also there's like the Chinese, many of the Chinese people in Los Angeles, they live in Chinatown. They like the Chinese culture. They speak the Chinese language.

Their architecture is Chinese, their food is Chinese, their marketplace is China-like. They've brought much of China over with them and they're allowed to do that. That's OK.

That's that America is a free country. If people want to live with a Chinese culture, they can do that. They go off in an enclave somewhere where everybody's doing that, like the Amish do with their culture.

And there are groups like that. And Christians have done that before. Christians have started Christian communes and things like that.

Some of these can have positive effects. But the point is that the Christian subculture is different in that we are not, at least we're not supposed to be, just saying to the world, just leave us alone and let us be who we are, OK? Now, we do want to be able to be who we are, but the world can't stop us from that. We can follow Jesus.

They might kill us. They might put us in jail. They might hate us.

They might mock us. They might marginalize us. They can't stop us from being Christian.

But we can. We can stop ourselves from being Christian because we're intimidated, because it's easier for us to go with the flow of the dominant culture than to resist it. It's easier to float downstream than to swim upstream.

If a fish is floating downstream, it's dead. If it's alive, it can swim upstream. And if we are a living Christian community, we should be able to resist the tide, at least in our own conduct among ourselves.

We should have a different cultural expression than the rest of the world that isn't following Jesus. But that doesn't mean we have to go off somewhere and be alone among ourselves. We should be able to do that in the midst of the world.

You know, when God brought Israel into Canaan, he said, don't let any of those Canaanites live. You're going to kill them all, man, women, children, every last one, because if you let them live, you'll be corrupted by them. God did not want Israel mingled among the Canaanites because they couldn't handle it.

He knew they'd be corrupted. But that was before Jesus came. In the Old Testament, it was understood if someone who's righteous comes into contact with someone who's unrighteous, probably that righteous person would be corrupted.

It was that concept was symbolically ritualized in the laws of cleanness and uncleanness among the Jews. In fact, somebody came to, I think it was Zechariah, the prophet, or it might be Haggai, I think it's Haggai, and said, no, I think it's Zechariah, regardless. Someone came to one of the prophets and said, if a priest carries holy meat someplace and comes into contact with something unclean, will the meat become unclean? And the answer is yes.

And then the question was, well, what if, will it not be possible for the contact to cause the unclean thing to become clean by contact? And the answer is no, it can't happen. That is to say, let's say I'm, under the law of Moses, I'm a leper. Therefore, I'm unclean.

Now, if I touch you, you become unclean, even though you weren't before. Just contact with the unclean makes you unclean. It never would be the case that if you touch me, I become clean.

Not under the law. There was no power in the Jewish religion or in any religion to allow sinful, corrupt people to be in contact with righteous people, and the righteous people remain untainted. But then Jesus came and brought something different.

Jesus touched a leper. Jesus didn't become unclean. The leper became clean.

A woman with an issue of blood, under the law, anyone who touches her becomes unclean. She's unclean. She touched Jesus.

He didn't become unclean. She became cleansed. Jesus brought a different dynamic than was available under the law.

Namely, he brought the spirit of God. He brought the kingdom of God. He brought the grace of God.

These are phenomena that were not part of the old covenant system. And along with it, the ability for Christians to be in touch with non-Christians. And instead of the Christians being defiled, the non-Christians can be converted.

God never expected Israel to convert Canaanites. Just kill them. They'll convert you if they live.

But to the Christians, Jesus said, go out and make disciples of all the nations. Who, the pagans out there? We're supposed to go out among the pagans? That's right. Go out there and make disciples out of them.

Win them. Teach them to observe everything I've commanded. In other words, Jesus, I should say, under the old covenant, there was no spiritual dynamic in the old covenant that would protect a godly Jew from defilement by contact with a Canaanite.

So God said, don't have any contact with them. Go over here. God cloistered the whole

nation in one country and didn't want any of the pagan influences in it.

It's like an Amish community or like a monastery with walls around it to keep people from being defiled. But Jesus didn't do that. Jesus told the disciples, you go out into the nations and you infect them with good.

You infect them with me, with my spirit, with my grace, with my kingdom. You spread my kingdom. Now, therefore, I don't believe that it's the Christian ideal for us to go off into cloisters or separated communities for special purposes.

Maybe that's helpful. Missionaries going on the field to have their missionary compound where the missionaries live. For the most part, that might be that might be fine.

I mean, it's for the time being. The idea, though, is that Christians should be out among the world, but the Christians retain their distinctiveness without being defiled. We are spiritually separated.

We're not geographically separated. You know, it says of Jesus in the book of Hebrews that he was holy, harmless and separate from sinners. Have you ever thought about that? In what way was Jesus separate from sinners? He was eating with them.

He was walking with them. He let them touch him. You know, in fact, everybody's a sinner.

Jesus didn't go off and live in a cave like some Hindu guru who's trying to keep from being defiled. He was out among the people. He was with the sinners.

He was criticized. He was with the sinners so much criticized by the religious people. In what sense was he separate from sinners? Well, it wasn't geographical.

He was spiritually of another order of a different species than them. He was spiritually in another world, but physically in their world to bring them into his world. Now, for the Christians have a radically Christian counter culture, doesn't require that you go off into a monastery or, you know, an Amish community or something.

What it means is that every time someone meets a Christian, they're meeting somebody who's part of the kingdom of God, part of part of the body of Christ, part of the community of Christians, and they should begin to see something consistent. Every time I run into a Christian, it's like they're different than the rest of us in these ways that seem really good. You know, I mean, they're not different for us because they dress funny or because they are prudish or whatever.

They're different because they're good. Because they say they're doing that because they're following Jesus. But, you know, they every time I meet a Christian, they're not, they're not hostile, nasty and, you know, you know, indulging in humor at somebody

else's expense or, you know, making lewd comments about the women in the office or, you know, they're different kind of people.

Now, not that they're holier than thou kind of people. Here's the thing. The thing that makes a person radically Christian is not that you are more moral than other people.

The Mormon is not radically Christian, but he may be more moral than other people. Even the Muslim might be more moral than other people. Any religious person or even a good atheist could be more moral than most people.

Being more moral is not what makes you radically Christian. Of course, if you are a Christian, you will be moral. But in that respect, you'll be a lot like other moral people.

What's radically Christian is grace, is that you are a gracious person. That you see many times when people want to have Christians be radically Christian, put them under new rules. Let's make all these rules so that we'll live more more holy lives than everyone else.

And so legalism is the result. And every time there's been a holiness movement I'm aware of in the church, it simply boils down to legalism. We don't wear jewelry in this church.

Our women don't wear pants. Our women don't wear their hair down in public. They don't wear makeup.

And, you know, we don't wear, you know, it's what we don't do. It's what makes us holy. No, that's legalism.

What makes you holy is if you're radically gracious and loving like Jesus. Jesus said, that's how all men will know you're my disciples, if you love one another. And of course, if you're a follower of Jesus, you're not gonna be doing immoral things because that's against what Jesus said to do.

But so much of what Jesus said to do would be the same morals as Moses said, or Confucius said, or the Buddha said. I mean, many religions have very similar morals to what Jesus taught. What makes Jesus distinctive is not the morals he taught, although in some cases his morals were distinct from, you know, Moses or something.

But on balance, the big difference between Jesus and Moses or any other religious system was not that Jesus had people living more moral lives than others, but that he had them living more loving lives than others and more gracious lives. You see, it says in John chapter one, that the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. That's what the difference is between religion and Jesus.

All religion is law. That's what religion is. It's laws.

And if you want that reference, verse 17, John one 17, for the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. What's distinctly Christian, what's radically Christian is grace and truth. Everything else is law.

And when Christians try to be holy by imposing law, instead of through grace and truth, they may get people to behave well, but they're not really any more radically Christian than any other religious group that behave well. I'm not trying to diminish the value of moral purity. It is absolutely essential.

Moral purity is absolutely a requirement in the Christian life, but Christians are not the only people. They're not the only religion that has moral purity as a goal. In fact, even though Christians believe in moral purity, they don't always live more morally pure than other religious people or non-religious people.

What makes people truly Christ-like is having grace and truth dominate their life and their society, their culture as a society, a Christian community. When people encounter a Christian in the office or at school or on the street or in the bank or in the marketplace, when they encounter a Christian, they should be impacted by, that's a really gracious person. I don't know if they have that word in their vocabulary, but if they knew the word, that's what they call it.

There's grace there. This person is good, pure, kind, and just really has a gracious spirit, not a critical spirit, not a judgmental spirit, not a legalistic spirit. I think most non-Christians, when they think of Christians, whether this is fair or not, they usually think of Christians as very critical, judgmental, legalistic people.

That's probably either because they've met a lot of Christians like that or the Christians have been depicted that way in movies and media and so forth. Whatever the reason is, let's face it, there are Christians like that. If they are, they're more likely to get in the headlines than others because they make Christianity look bad.

The media is always happy to make Christianity look bad. If there's Christians out there carrying plaques that say God hates fags, well, then they're going to get on the front page news. They might get a special segment on CNN.

But, you know, Mother Teresa and her type, if Christians aren't doing those kind of things, mostly they'll be ignored. Mother Teresa is an exception. The media couldn't ignore her.

She became famous. But there's lots of other Christians who are like her, but no one knows they're there unless they meet them. And when people meet Christians, there should be a consistency.

Every time I meet one of those Christians, there's something very humble and gracious and kind and loving about those people. Instead, there's something very critical and

something very judgmental and very withdrawn about those people. So when we talk about radically Christian counterculture, we're not trying to think of how many rules we can make to reel in the loose morality in the church.

There is, unfortunately, loose morality in the church. It's one of the symptoms of our problem as a church of not following Jesus. It's one of the symptoms of having a watered down gospel that draws in people who have not bothered to get converted before coming to Christ.

I mean, they don't come to Christ getting converted. They come instead of getting converted to the church. And so we've got problems with morality in the church in this country.

But the problem is not remedied by making more laws about it, making more rules, becoming more legalistic. It comes by getting people to really have Jesus as their Lord and have his spirit as their life. You know, the spirit of God, the spirit of Christ looks and tastes and smells like Jesus.

I think people need to smell Jesus on the clothes of Christians whenever they walk by, so to speak, because the spirit of Christ is so saturating us, so filling us, so much the whole life of our community and of us as individuals. That isn't what most people find at this point. And that's what we need to need to aim at now.

Not tonight. Not tonight's notes. I'd like to start with a proposition breaking into separate pieces and talk about them separately.

In order for the church today to become a radically Christian counterculture, as it was in the early church, certain conditions that existed in the early church must again be in place. A radically Christian counterculture grows out of certain conditions that existed in the early church and don't exist anymore among us. They need to exist or else we're not going to have that.

We can't just go into the pulpit and start preaching rules and regulations for the church to be more like Jesus. You've got to have certain things that were present from Pentecost on in the early church that don't seem to be present in the American church, at least not so universally as we should hope. There may be exceptions to this general statement, but I think the general statement is fairly recognizably true.

Now for such a counterculture to emerge, there needs to be, one, a consensus of a radically Christian alternative society. Two, which requires the existence of a radically Christian community. Three, which requires radical Christians.

Four, who must have been radically converted. Five, through radical evangelism. Six, followed up by radical discipleship.

Seven, which occurs in a self-disciplining community. Now, that last number, seven, is the only one that doesn't say anything about radical. I didn't want to be artificial and stick the word radical in there unnecessarily.

The self-discipline community simply means this, that just like every society has its standards, which when they are violated, they do need to be enforced. So does the church. And this may sound like legalism, but this is not legalism I'm talking about.

When we talk about church discipline, we're simply saying that those who have a credible testimony of wanting to follow Jesus Christ belong in the church. Those who don't have a credible testimony of wanting to follow Jesus Christ don't. And when somebody lives in sin and the church seeks to bring them to repentance and they will not repent, they do not have a credible testimony of wanting to follow Jesus Christ.

You see, Christians do sin. Every Christian sins, I'm sorry to say. Hopefully we don't sin as often as other people do, and hopefully we don't sin as often as we used to.

In other words, we should be getting better. We should be growing in holiness and obedience to Christ. But every Christian is flawed.

But if you're a real Christian, if you have a credible testimony that you want to be a follower of Christ, you're not happy that you sinned. You don't want to sin. If you sin, you've sinned because you're weak or foolish or careless, but you don't really want that.

You want to live a life where you don't want to sin. You don't want to live a life where you don't want to sin. You don't want to live a life where you don't want to sin.

You don't want to live a life where you don't want to sin. You don't want to live a life where you don't want to sin. You don't want to live a life where you don't want to sin.

You don't want to live a life where you don't want to sin. Because a true Christian's heart is toward God, they won't be sorry when they've sinned. They won't want to do that.

When you're dealing with someone who says they're a Christian, and yet they're living in sin, and you confront them and they say, I don't care. What are you going to do about it? You know? Well, they don't appear to be Christian. In which case, Jesus said, let that person be to you like a heathen or a tax collector.

In Matthew 18, 17, he said that. So, that's what I mean by self-discipline and community. One thing we don't have, and we will never have a radically Christian counterculture visible until we do have, we don't have a church that disciplines its members in a godly manner.

Some churches kick people out. They might call that church discipline, but in many cases, it's not done in a godly manner or even for biblical reasons. More often than not,

when a person's kicked out of a modern church, it's because the pastor got tired of, you know, them disagreeing with him too much.

You know, they disagreed with the pastor too much, so they finally crowded him out of the church. I've heard all kinds of stories of people being thrown out of churches, and when they tell their story, that can't be the real reason. Certainly, that can't be the real reason.

What church would be so crazy as to kick people out for that? I look into it, and it turns out that is the reason. Churches kick people out because they just don't like them, in many cases. That's not church discipline.

That's usually some kind of a leadership group or a leadership individual trying to maintain dictatorial control, and there's someone there who's just not towing the line. Godly church discipline is when you love the members enough that when you see they're sinning, you assume the best about them. I'll bet they don't want to sin.

I'll bet they're Christians. I'll bet they want to follow Jesus. We'll go and talk to them about it.

We'll go and let them know this is sin. Certainly, they'll want to repent, but if they don't, you think, oh wow, I wonder why they didn't repent. They must not.

I must not have been convinced. I'll bring two more people to help convince them. It's not you're condemning.

You're assuming these people don't want to sin. If they're saying they're Christians, if you're a Christian, you don't want to sin, right? So, but when they demonstrate at every level that they don't want to repent, they say, oh, okay, well, they're not a Christian. That explains it.

They shouldn't be here in the church because the church is a community of Christians. It's the body of Christ. It's the community of Christ.

Now, you see, if we don't practice that kind of discipline, then we're going to have what we have today. The early church didn't have this. They didn't tolerate it, at least not when the apostles arrived.

Corinth tolerated it until Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, and they threw the guy out then. The guy was living with his father's wife, and the church was kind of just letting it happen. And Paul said, you don't do that.

You deliver that man over to Satan. You kick that guy out. He doesn't belong there.

A little leaven leavens a whole lot. Get him out of there because he wouldn't repent. Likewise, you know, Ananias and Sapphira, what did they do? It was their big crime.

Well, they lied to the Holy Spirit. That sounds pretty bad, but what did it boil down to? They just lied about the amount of money they sold their property for. Well, they were given a chance to repent, and they didn't repent.

God disciplined them. The church didn't have to kick them out except to take them out and dig the hole to put their bodies in. But the thing is, the early church had standards.

You had to be a follower of Christ to be in. And if you gave evidence that you weren't interested in following Christ, you were graciously told to go somewhere else because we are a fellowship of people who want to follow Christ. Until the church defines itself that way, we're not going to ever have a visible radically Christian counterculture because the church today in America sees itself as the big umbrella.

The big umbrella. Anyone who's got slightly religious sentiments is free to come and be part of our church. Now, of course, we don't.

If we're evangelicals, we don't mistake them for Christians until they come forward at an altar call. But they're still welcome to be part of the church until until then, especially in our big secret sensitive churches. We've got we've got churches that are full of people who probably have never even been told or don't understand what it means to be a follower of Christ.

And so they haven't become that. All they know is they they go to church because there's some nice people there. And there's in the past was mighty good at giving an inspirational message.

And and the music's pretty good. And so the church becomes the big umbrella for anyone who's who's who wants to be there in the early church. It wasn't that way.

You had to be a person who has repented of your sins, confess Christ as your Lord, been baptized, and you come under the you know, the communal standards of the body of Christ. And if a person lived in immorality, they were confronted. If they didn't repent, ultimately they were asked to leave.

We don't do that. And because we don't, we've got churches are full of people who are living in immorality. So when when non Christians meet these Christians at work or wherever they meet them, they don't see something different than the world.

They say, oh, this person, he's inviting me to his church. He says the music's good, but I haven't always lived with his girlfriend. You know, he's he goes out and gets drunk every weekend or whatever.

I mean, this guy, the church isn't disciplining its members. And so people who aren't even saved are regarded to be part of it. How can the church have a testimony for being countercultural? If it's including everyone who doesn't even agree with the terms of the

gospel.

You see, the church has to be a self disciplining community or else it will it will never be a light on a hill. It'll never it'll be salt that's lost its favor and cannot be salt to the world anymore. So that's why that last number seven is on there.

It has to be this this discipling of the individuals takes place in a self disciplining community. That's where everyone in the community agrees. Jesus is Lord and we're all serious about that.

And if somebody lives a life that is flagrantly in violation of Christ's standards, well, then we will lovingly ask them to repent. And if they are truly Christians, they will and all will be well. Jesus said, if you confront your brother, if he repents, you've won your brother.

That's good. End of story. No problem.

Problem solved. But if they don't repent, you give them another chance. Another.

But after after a few, Paul said, a divisive person after two or three admissions reject, you know, you give them a couple chances to get it right. But if they won't, then you say, you know what? I don't have any evidence that you want to be living a holy life. I don't see any evidence that you really put Jesus as your as your Lord in your life.

It sounds to me like, you know, Jesus disapproves that you're just coming, you know, is that even saying I'm going to do what I want, take me to heaven anyway when I die. But he's not going to do that. She said, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Those who do the will of my father in heaven. And so. The church has to hold the standard of its own community, just like a family should now, we don't unfortunately don't have that families don't do that anymore.

Once again, if people are alienated from their parents, it's usually because the kids are either rebellious and just left their parents or else the dad's got a short fuse and he's throwing him out in a temper tantrum or something like that. But in good families that are not dysfunctional, the father maintains certain standards in his home. And the children, if they don't want it when they grow up, if they don't live by those terms, they go somewhere else.

They're not allowed to live contrary to their dad's standards under his roof. And he's responsible to see that they don't, because what he allows under his roof, he's authorizing. He is sponsoring.

He is underwriting. He is responsible for. And so also the church, it's a family.

We look out for each other. If someone starts training, we should go and help them come

back. But if they don't want to come back, we don't let them stay in.

They might. You know, it's like occasionally you hear about a husband who's given up all of his responsibility as a husband. He doesn't support the family.

He doesn't raise the kids. He doesn't do anything that husband's supposed to do, but he still lives at home and considers himself the head of the house. Well, he's kind of reneged on everything.

He's not a husband, but in name only. But he's still there. Well, there's people like that in the church.

There's people who are not Christians, but in name only, but they're still there. In this case, they shouldn't still be there, because as long as they're there, people will look at the church and they'll see they'll get mixed messages. What is the church about anyway? I don't know.

Some of these Christians, some of them are saying they were supposed to live a holy life. Other people, they just go out and get drunk and party all the time. There's no message.

There's no united message. And therefore, the early church understood that they had to discipline those who were not following Christ. It's a foreign concept to us today.

I don't know if the lady's here tonight. I don't think so. But if so, that's fine.

I received a phone call on the air from, I think it was someone in Las Vegas. I'm not mistaken. Recently, you might have heard the show.

She had heard me say something earlier to an earlier caller who had said something about a homosexual guy who's leading worship or someone who seemed homosexual to her. And so she left the church. I said, well, if he's practicing homosexual, he shouldn't be in the church.

But if he's not repentant, well, a few days later, this lady called me. I think she's from this area. And she said, I don't understand this matter of you're saying that fornicators shouldn't be in the church.

But see, as we talked, it became clear. She thought the church is just kind of the big umbrella where we hope a lot of non-Christians come in so that they might eventually someday possibly get saved. In the meantime, they're part of the Christian community, but they're not Christian.

They're in the church, but they're not really in the body of Christ. It's a really strange situation. She seemed to accept when I explained to her that the church is not an evangelistic meeting.

It's the fellowship of the saints. The evangelism takes place outside the church. At least it did in biblical times.

You go out where the non-Christians are, you get them saved. Then they come in the church because that church is where Christians are being edified and having communion with other Christians. It's not supposed to be a mixed multitude.

But when it is, when the church allows itself to be a mixed multitude, it totally destroys its testimony to the world because the world can't see what the distinctives are of being a Christian when they look at the body of Christ because they can't tell who's in and who's out. They all look like they're under the roof. They're all under an umbrella.

And there is no united testimony for Christ. And this is why the church needs to practice as the Bible commands church discipline. You say, where does it command it? If you're not familiar, Jesus was the first to command it.

Matthew 18 verses 15 through 17. I've already alluded to this. Matthew 18, 15 through 17.

Also, Paul, I've alluded to 1 Corinthians 5. We talked about the man who's living with his father's wife. There are other places. Romans 16, 17, I believe.

Titus 2 or 3. I think it's Titus 3, 10. There are a variety of places. Jesus criticized one of the churches in Revelation chapter 2, verse 20, because they allowed Jezebel to be there as they were supposed to kick her out.

Removing people from the church who are clearly not Christian is the church's responsibility. Until that happens, we will not see a visible, radically Christian alternative. There might be, in fact, true Christians who are living in an alternative way, but they won't have a collective witness at all.

It's not enough for the world to see one Christian in their lifetime who looks like Christ, and the others don't. The testament of the world is not that of an individual Christian, but of the body of Christ. Every time people meet someone who is identified as a Christian, they should see someone who looks like, acts like, smells like Jesus, because they're supposed to see Jesus.

I think I mentioned before, it always frustrated me whenever I was witnessing some people, and they always bring up all these Christians they knew who cheated and lied and were no good. And I always had to say, and you have to hold your nose and vote sometimes for certain people, I had to almost hold my nose and say, don't look at the Christians, look at Jesus. Anyone ever heard that line? Don't look at the Christians.

Why? Because they're such a bad example. Don't try to decide what Christianity is about by looking at Christians. Look at Jesus.

Well, sometimes that's all you can say. But what a horrible thing to have to say that. Why can't we say, look at the Christians and there you'll see Jesus.

Where are they supposed to look at Jesus, if not in us? And yet this is what it comes down to. The church has held so low a standard that it allows all kinds of people who don't even care about being like Jesus to be part of it. And yet they're called Christians, or at least they're looked like to the world.

They look like churchgoers, they're church people. And it just totally destroys the testimony. It's only at times like that we have to say, don't look at those Christians.

Please don't look at the Christians. Please ignore all the Christians you've ever met. Just look at, just read the Gospel of John.

Just look at the Gospel of Matthew. Just read about Jesus because he's the only thing that's safe to look at because everything else is an abomination. Shouldn't be so.

In the early church, if someone would say, what's Jesus like? You say, look at those people over there. That's the church. They're like Jesus.

They love each other. The ones who have extra money, they're selling what they have and they're giving it to the poor. None of them lack anything.

They won't allow anyone in their community to lack anything. If someone lacks it, they give it to them. You know, they live loving lives, committed to Christ and to each other.

It's a different kind of people. It's a different kind of society. It's a counterculture.

And until we can do that, the testimony that Jesus intended for the church will be neutralized. When Jesus said to his disciples, collectively, you are a city on the hills. You are the light of the world.

A city on a hill cannot be hid. He meant that collectively, the society of Christians, the city, the community of Christ, not all sitting in one place on one hill, that's a figure of speech, but mixed in among the community. When people encounter anyone who's an agent of the community of Christ, they should see something very much like what they meet when they meet any other member of that, including the head, Jesus.

If they met Jesus, it shouldn't be too much different. Paul was able to say, the followers are imitators of me. As I am of Christ.

I remember a pastor I used to listen to. He, when he came to that verse, he said, hey, don't, don't imitate me. Just imitate Christ.

Well, what a shame, pastor. Why can't I imitate you as you imitate Christ? Well, he'd have to say, because I don't imitate Christ. You know, I don't imitate Christ perfectly.

Of course, nobody does. But I would like to be able to say to anybody, you don't know what Jesus looks like. Do things the way I'm doing them.

And you'll be pretty close. You know, I mean, that might not sound very humble, but it should be. We should all be able to say that.

That's what Richard Wurmbandt said when that guard who had beaten him and was now dying of tuberculosis, Richard Wurmbandt, the pastor who had been tortured by this very man was now ministering to him, washing his feet and taking care of him in prison. And the man said, what, what is Jesus like? Pastor Wurmbandt, he said, he's a lot like me. What a wonderful thing for Christians to be able to say, what a terrible thing that the church has become such that we can't say that as often as we should.

We should be able to say Jesus. Oh, yeah, he's a lot like the Christians. Instead, we say, don't look at the Christians, please.

That's not OK. The church has got to be Christ like and or at least aiming at it. No one's going to be perfect, but everyone should be going that direction.

And that's not what most people say when they see the church. And part of that is because the church is full of people who aren't Christians and shouldn't be there. That's why church discipline is commanded in scripture, although churches often don't do it.

I have a friend who's a pastor who when he was not yet a pastor, when he was in Bible college, his wife left him and moved in with another guy and joined a church of their denomination. And she had a great voice. So she sang solos in the church.

And my friend, who was the jilted husband, went to the pastor of the church. You may not know this, but that woman you have seen is my wife and she's she's left me for no biblical grounds. She's living in fornication.

And you have her sing in your church. And the pastor said, in this church, we don't practice any church discipline. We don't kick anyone out of this church.

And he might as well have just said, we don't obey Jesus here. We're not interested in what Jesus said about that. Jesus might be the head of the church, but we're not the church because we're not following that head.

You see, the church that follows the head has got to do with the head said. And that includes practicing church discipline. Well, let's look at this complex, long statement.

I made this thing, you know, for such a counterculture to emerge, there first must be a consensus of radically Christian alternative society, which requires the existence of a radically Christian society. Which requires radical Christians, you can't have a radical Christian community if there's no radical Christians to make up its constituency. And for

you have radical Christians that requires they have been radically converted.

They haven't just been brought into the church on some kind of promotion and they've and they've become comfortable in the seat that the pews have conformed to the shape of their buttocks. And so they sit comfortably there. They need to be radically converted or else they're not Christians.

And if they're not Christians, they're not gonna be part of a Christian community. You need a radically Christian community made up of radical Christians who've been radically converted. And that is through radical evangelism.

Followed up by radical discipleship. OK, now those are things that all existed in the early church that do not in any consistent sense exist in the modern church. You'll find exceptions.

Thankfully, it's very refreshing when you do. You'll sometimes find a little church here or there where there actually are doing things right. But they are so, you know, so outnumbered by churches that are not even attempting to do things biblically that the testimony that little group there, it's just all watered down.

I mean, they're not having an impact on the society because for every person who meets one of them and sees their community is impressed by it. You know, 50 people see these other Christians who are giving the opposite message. We need to see eventually if Christ's goal is accomplished, a consensus among Christians who are all converted and following Christ.

Now, I don't have time to talk about all these in detail. There's quite a few verses given here, but let me talk about some of these things. I don't know how much time I'll have because I use a lot of my time on things that aren't in the notes.

And then when I come around to the notes, I don't have time to take all the things that are in the notes. But what do I mean by a consensus of radically Christian society? That's what culture is. Culture is simply consensus.

A group of people in a society all kind of agree on certain values, agree on certain practices, agree on certain political ideals, agree on certain goals, certain morals. A consensus is just where a group of people believe in the same way or feel the same way about things. Every culture, secular or otherwise, is made up by the consensus to whatever degree a consensus exists.

Now, Christians should have a consensus. But here we run into problems immediately. Christians are very much divided over many things.

You hardly find one thing that all Christians agree about. Where are you going to find consensus? Where are you going to find a situation where every Christian agrees with

every other Christian so that people can say, oh, there's a collective, a collective social dynamic here among the Christians, that they all are on the same path. They're all thinking the same way.

Here's the thing. I think all Christians wish for unity in the body of Christ. But many people see it this way.

I've heard pastors say something essentially like this. We're going to have unity in this church. And that means everyone agrees with me.

Everyone does things my way. Or in a denomination, our denomination stands for these things. We want unity in the denomination, so all of our congregations, all pastors teach these distinctives of our group.

What if you don't believe the distinctions? Well, you go find another group. You mean I can't be part of your group? No, we're going to have unity here. And unity means uniformity.

No, unity does not mean uniformity. One thing Paul taught very clearly is it does not. One of his strongest teachings about unity is in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, which is his classic passage describing the body of Christ.

He says, you know, the eye is not the same thing as the hand. There's not uniformity there. They look different.

They they do different things there. They're not the same as each other, but they're part of one body. Therefore, they're in unity.

The whole body is following one head. Each part has a different thing it does. Each part has different features and different functions.

Each part looks different than the other parts, but they're all part of one body, Paul said. That's what unity is. Unity is not uniformity.

If the eye were the hand, that wouldn't help. If all the body were an ear, where would the smelling be, Paul said? If all was an eye, where would the hearing be? Each part of the body is really different. I mean, your eye looks so different.

It doesn't have any of the same characteristics as your ear or your nose or your finger or your kidney or your heart. The parts of your body are not interchangeable. You can't use your nose to do what your ears do.

You can't use your heart to do what your head does, your brain. You can't use your liver to pump the blood like the heart does. Everything has a different function because everything is different.

They're designed for different things. Now, Paul said people are like that in the body of Christ, too, different gifts. Some people prophesy.

Some people have gifts of help or gifts of giving or gifts of service or showing mercy or teaching or some other thing. Everyone's different. And we might also include what is self-evident, though Paul didn't say it this way, but we know this, and everyone has different opinions about some things, right? The only way you will get it so that everyone has the same opinion is if everyone lets one man do the thinking for them all.

That is a cult. My own private definition of a cult, since there is no official definition that everyone will agree on, I've had to come up with my own. My own definition of a cult is two people who agree on everything.

Because if two people agree on everything, one of them isn't thinking for himself. He's letting the other one think for him. Because people just don't agree about everything.

We don't have the same perspectives. We don't come from the same upbringing and education and background. We don't come, not all Christians come from the same political spectrum.

I mean, we think they should. Of course, all real Christians should be conservative Republicans, but that's what conservative Republican Christians think. And I do see a sense in it, but you know, liberal Democrats who are professing Christians, sometimes they can't see how a Christian could be a Republican.

How could a Christian support war, they think? How could a Christian not want to see all the poor fed by the government and so forth? Now, of course, the Christians have different ideas about that. I'm conservative, but I understand how some Christians are liberal. They're wrong, but actually, I think they're wrong, but they think I'm wrong.

But the point is, what I think about those issues springs from my understanding of what I think the Bible teaches. What they think about those issues springs from their understanding of what they think the Bible teaches on those issues. Both of us are trying to serve God.

I'm not saying all Republicans and all Democrats are, certainly not, but there are true Christians on both sides of the aisle. And the true Christians, in every case, are doing what they think is right. Now, we know they're not both right.

Someone's wrong. But I can't just say, when you come to see it my way, then I'll recognize you as a true Christian. I'd say, well, you know, you may be a true Christian.

You may have all the evidence of being a true Christian, and you haven't seen the political issues my way yet. I don't know what's wrong with you, but you're just not there yet. Or maybe you're right, and I'm not there yet.

The point is, getting there to a point of total agreement on every point isn't the prerequisite for being brothers. It's not the prerequisite. I mean, do you have a family? Do you have siblings? Do they all agree with you about everything? Some, you might say, yes.

You know, we're all pretty much Christian, conservative, Baptist, or whatever, you know, and we chase more power to you. But many families are made up of people who've gone different ways philosophically and politically and religiously, and yet they come together for Thanksgiving, and they're all still brothers and sisters, and they're still family, right? Why can't Christians be family with other Christians who don't have the same opinions about everything? Well, we're required to, actually. Well, let me show you something Paul said.

There needs to be a consensus about something, but what? In 1 Corinthians 1, you see, denominations, some people say, we've got to get all these denominations to disappear and just have one body of Christ so we don't have a divided church with all these denominations. Well, I'm all for that myself. I'm all for that.

But how are you going to go about it? Let's take the Baptists and the Presbyterians. They both believe in conservative Christianity. They believe in the gospel.

But one of them says you baptize infants. The other says you don't. You baptize only believers.

How are these people going to fellowship together? How? Well, the only way they possibly could is if they said, you know what? You're a Christian. I'm a Christian. How about you baptize infants if you want to, if that's what you feel you should do, until God changes your mind about this.

I'm going to work on you about that. And I'll baptize. I won't baptize my infants.

I'll only baptize people that have come to the Lord. We can still go to the same meetings, can't we? I hope so. And you can try to change me over to your way if you think that's a good, you know, if you think your way is more biblical.

I think my heart. Let's let's dialogue about that. See, what happens is instead we say we can't sit in the same pews with people who don't baptize the same way we do.

Why? Well, because we disagree. Well, does that does that keep you from going to this job where you disagree with people under the same employer? Do all the people who you work with have the same political views and the same philosophical views? Probably not. But you go to work, don't you? I mean, why would the Christian family be the only place that you're intolerant of others about and of their right to think for themselves and make up their own minds? Well, because my views are sacred.

These are not just me. It's God that's at stake. Well, how do you know? How do you know God agrees with you? Well, I read my Bible.

Well, so does that other person. We have to we have to say, OK. I'm not personally the standard by which all others have to measure themselves.

There is a standard that we all have to measure and I have to be measured by, too, and that is Jesus Christ. And the main thing that we have to all have consensus about is that Jesus is Lord and together we are all his disciples. And we for some reason have seen a great number of things differently from each other.

But the only way we're going to fix that is by fellowshiping together, dialoguing and letting the Holy Spirit lead us into all truth. Instead, if you believe in infant baptism, I don't. And I say, OK, you go meet with other people who believe in infant baptism.

I'll go hang out with the people who believe like I do. We'll never have to dialogue. One of us is wrong, but we'll never find out who it was because we're not going to talk to each other.

I'm going to be with the people who already agree with me. We're not going to change our mind. You're going to be with people who already agree with you.

You're not going to change your mind either. We're going to be in our little ghettos, theological ghettos where we don't ever have any intrusion or challenge from people on the outside. But if we're in the same body, fellowshiping together, then we're confronting each other all the time.

And if we love each other, then in the context of loving each other, we can also learn from each other. And that doesn't mean you're obligated to believe what I tell you or I'm obligated to believe what I tell you. But if we all love the truth, we'll all be looking to see what do you see that I'm not seeing here? You know, I personally don't believe in infant baptism, but I grew up a Baptist, you see, and they don't believe in infant baptism.

But when I got older, I thought, well, I wonder why. I used to just make fun of pedo-Baptists, people who baptized. I was just like, there's not a verse in the Bible about that.

You know, we even had a tract I handed out once on the cover. It says, all the verses in the Bible about infant baptism, you open up, it's a blank page. And, you know, it was kind of like making fun of people who believe in infant baptism.

So, but when I got older, I thought, I wonder why those people do believe that. So I got some books by Presbyterians on baptism and I read it. I thought, oh, I see.

I don't agree with them, but I see why they believe it now. They've given me something to think about. They think that baptism is like circumcision and as the Jews circumcised

their babies, so we should baptize our babies.

I see what they're getting at now. I don't think they're applying it to the way that I would, that I could be convinced of. But now we can dialogue.

Now I can respect that you have a reason, at least for what you think. And if I don't find it persuasive, well, at least I can give you the respect of being an honest person who's seeking to follow the Bible the best you know how. And in that context, I might actually listen to something you have to say.

And you might, if you love me back, you might even listen to something I have to say. And one of us may actually learn something. Maybe we both will.

But if we don't, we'll still love each other and therefore we can live forever and die together on different sides of the aisle on that subject and many, many other subjects. And the world will see we have a consensus about something. The Roman Catholics have a consensus, they say.

They really don't. I mean, there's lots of different views among Catholics, but they claim to. They have a consensus, at least about the Pope being Peter's successor.

And they believe that when it comes to theological subjects, they can always go to the Pope and the bishops and so forth and they can get an authoritative answer that everyone should follow. But of course, Protestants don't see it that way. Protestants believe that everyone should be able to just search the scriptures like the Bereans and follow the scripture, not what some human authority or tradition says.

And the Catholics look at the Protestants and say, look at the fruit of that. There's only one denomination of Roman Catholicism. There's 5,000 denominations present.

That total divisiveness of denominationalism is the result of letting people think for themselves. Well, not really. Denominations are not the result of letting people think for themselves.

Denominations are the result of people not being mature enough to love people who think differently than they do. I remember back in the early days of the charismatic movement, talking to many Baptist pastors who said, you know, because I was a Baptist background, and we'd talk about the subject of tongues. And they'd say, you know, I'm not totally against tongues, but he says, I just don't want any of that in this church because tongues divides the church.

He says, I know a pastor where some of the people in the church began to speak in tongues, and it got so divisive that the church split over. And I just don't want that in the church. And I said, well, you know, speaking in tongues doesn't divide the church.

I know that because I've been in churches where some people speak in tongues and some don't, and there's no division. So it can't be that tongues divides the church. So what does? Immaturity does.

Church is not divided by some people speaking in tongues, some people not. Churches are divided by people being immature. I look at First Corinthians one.

I told you, look, look at First Corinthians one. Verse 10 and following. Now, I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing.

Now, this is an interesting command and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, I'm a Paul or I'm of Apollo's or I'm of Cephas or I'm of Christ.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you or were you baptized in the name of Paul? Now think about this for a moment. Paul says at the very outset here, I plead with you that you all speak the same thing and that you'd be perfectly united together without divisions. Now, that is certainly not what we see in the church today.

There are divisions by the thousands. There truly are over there's over 5,000 precedence denominations. And that looks like a lot of divisions.

It looks like a sin because Paul said there should be no division. She said, I'll say the same thing. Now, suppose we decided to repent and be and conform to what Paul's suggesting here.

Let's say, God, we repent. We have not all been saying the same thing. We've divided.

We will now all say the same thing from now on. What thing? What things should we all say? It's you can be quite sure that, you know, the Pentecostals would say, well, the thing we should say is that people need to be baptized in spirit and speak with tongues. And the baptismists say, no, the thing we should all say is that you need to be water baptized after conversion, not before.

And the Presbyterians are going to say, no, what we all should be saying is that we recognize the five points of Calvinism or whatever. How are we going to get everyone to say all those things are all say the same thing? Which same thing? What is the thing that everyone's going to have to say to you guys? It seems impossible because even Christians that want to be united with other brethren and are not judgmental of others who have a different opinion still can't bring themselves necessarily to just sacrifice what they believe to be true so that they can mimic what someone else says. How do you bring about that circumstance of everyone saying the same thing and have no divisions? Here's what it is.

He's not saying we have to say all the same thing about everything. But in the context, he's saying some of you are saying I'm a Paul. Some of you are saying I'm of a policy.

Some of you are saying I'm of Cephas and some are saying I'm of Christ. That's not all the same thing. That's four different things.

You should all be saying one thing of those four options, which should everyone be saying I'm of Christ. Stop saying those other three things. Stop saying I'm a Paul or I'm a policy.

You should all be saying the same thing. I am of Christ. It doesn't mean you have to say the same thing about every theological thing that there's a controversy about.

God will work with us to bring us closer to each other if that's important to him on those points. But what is essential is that we all say the same thing. I am of Christ.

And it's clear that Paul's saying that because he says, was Paul crucified for you? Who were you baptized in the name of Paul? What he's saying is no one should say I'm of Paul because Paul wasn't crucified for you. Well, who was Christ? Then you're of Christ. You weren't baptized in the name of Paul.

Well, who's whose name were you baptized in? Christ. OK, then you're of Christ. Instead of saying I'm of Paul, say I'm of Christ.

Everyone should say that because we're all baptized in the name of Christ. Christ was crucified for us all. We have only one thing that we can all say with integrity as Christians.

I am of Christ. Now, if you say that, too, and you're right, you're telling the truth and I'm telling the truth, then we are of one body and we need to act like one body, one family and not allow us to be divided. But what divides us, not our opinion, certainly.

Division happens because of our failure to love each other. It's our demand. It's our placing demands on each other that you must agree with me before I will say you're OK.

That's I have no right to make that demand on you. And as long as I'm immature and carnal and unloving, if we can just get past that. Then we'll we'll have a united church, not not a united organization as one statement of faith that everyone signs on to all these points.

But if we all stand on the one point, I am of Christ. I'm going to follow Jesus. How about you? Oh, you are too good.

What do you think about eschatology? It doesn't matter anyway. You know, I mean, you don't have to agree with me on that. You may be wrong.

I may be wrong. But if we walk together, fellowship together, we'll have a chance to find out who's wrong. If I just hang out with the people who agree with me, we'll never discover if we're wrong because we're all affirming each other in this one little position that we all hold.

Let the body of Christ come together like like stones in a rock tumbler. And then start tumbling. Those stones are confined in a place they'd love to get out of because they're bumping against each other and they're trying to get out of the cancer with the walls of the cancer, keep them confined in.

They have to bump against each other until they're all smooth. If we can say if the rocks can get out of the chemistry, I don't get along with this guy very much. Let me go over here where I won't have to bump against him anymore.

That's comfortable, but I'll never get smooth. I'll never be perfected. God has us in a in a body where we're commanded to love and fellowship with each other, but we don't want to.

If this guy's opinions, I find them obnoxious and he finds my opinions obnoxious, we just want to go. I'm getting out of that cancer. I'm going to go into a cancer with people that I don't bump up against so much.

And then none of us ever improve. We're just fighting against what God has ordained. We're not all uniform.

Unity is not uniformity. And diversity is not disunity. Diversity is what a body has.

But the body is one, and therefore all the parts of the body have unity. Look what Paul said in first Corinthians three here. I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people.

The Corinthians were not spiritual enough for him to treat them like they were spiritual, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. OK, what was wrong with these people that they were? Paul had to regard them as carnal and babes in Christ. He tells us.

He says in verse three, for you are still carnal for where there is envy, strife and divisions among you. Are you not carnal and behaving like men for one? One says, I'm a Paul and another I'm of a Paulist. Are you not carnal? As long as you're saying I am in the group that follows Paul or I'm in the group that follows a Paulist, you're babes, you're spiritually carnal, you're worthless as a testimony of Christ, because you're not recognizing that those who follow Paul and those who follow Paulist, if they really are following them, are following Christ.

Paul said, be followers of me as I am of Christ. You follow a Paulist as he follows Christ. Paul and Paulist are fellow workers in Christ's vineyard.

He says, I planted a Paulist water. God gave the increase. This is not my field.

It's not a Paulist's field. It's God's field. A Paulist are just laborers.

We're on the work crew. We're not the foreman. This is God's vineyard.

This is God's field. Yeah, a Paulist has done you good. Paul has done you good.

The teachings of this teacher or that teacher may have done you good, but you're not of him. You're of Christ. And therefore, there needs to be consensus.

We need to all say the same thing. Namely, I am of Christ. Now, in future weeks, I want to talk about these other points.

What does it mean? A radically Christian community, which requires radical Christians. What's a radical Christian? What does it mean they've been radically converted? What is radical evangelism? Now, remember the word radical is a word that comes from the Latin word root, to the root. Something as radical goes to the roots.

When I talk about radical evangelism, I'm not talking about, you know, bizarre things. I'm not talking about commando evangelism. I'm not talking about some kind of weird evangelism.

I talk about radical. Radical means going to the root. What is the root of evangelism? The true gospel in the Bible is the root.

Radically evangelism has to go back to the gospel as it is in the Bible. Now, I've got some surprises for some of you because every one of you believes that the gospel you heard that brought you into Christianity is the true gospel. And maybe it is.

I don't know. I don't know exactly what components were presented to you. I can't say that it wasn't the right gospel.

All I know is that a lot of the gospel preaching I've heard isn't a gospel that resembles the gospel in the Bible. And I'm not just talking about the health and wealth gospel. You know, we know that's a strange gospel compared to what the Bible teaches.

But I'm talking about the gospel that I heard as a Baptist, as an evangelical, that I've heard sometimes from crusade evangelists. Not Billy Graham as much as some. Billy Graham's better than most, I think.

But there are popular presentations of the Bible that almost all evangelicals have learned and mimicked. And yet, when you look for the elements of those presentations in the Bible, they are not found. They're not found in the presentations of the gospel in the Bible.

Now, this surprised me as much as it will surprise some of you when I read it. I mean, I learned this some years ago when I was teaching through the Book of Acts and paying particular attention to the sermons preached by Peter and Paul to non-Christian audiences. I figure those are the best models we have of evangelism since Pentecost.

You know, Paul and Peter. And I analyzed their sermons. Well, what is it they were saying? What did they say to this audience? What did they say? What are the components if you outline their message? I thought, wait a minute.

Their message doesn't have any of the points that I was told were the essential points to make. I'll talk more about that in another lecture. Suffice it to say that I was told growing up that you preach the gospel first of all by telling people they're sinners.

And then by explaining about the atoning work of Christ, that he died for our sins and so forth, and for our forgiveness, and that we need to accept Jesus into our heart or else we're going to go to hell. And if we accept Jesus into our heart, we'll go to heaven. Now, what was surprising to me is when I read the sermons in the Book of Acts, and you'll have a whole month before I'm here again that you can check that out.

Not one of the preachers when they're preaching to the lost started out by telling them they were sinners. In some cases, I was shocked by Peter in the household of Cornelius. He started out by telling Cornelius that Cornelius was okay with God before he was converted.

When he started in the household, I was offended by Peter when I read this, because I was always told you've got to tell them they're sinners and then they'll want to tell them they're sick, then they'll want the medicine, you know. But Peter goes into the house of Cornelius and says, you know, I used to judge people like you, my Jewish background, it forbids me to come into the house of a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone unclean and that in every nation, those who fear God and practice righteousness are acceptable to him.

Hang on. Wait a minute. That's not the gospel I heard.

This is really something. Chapter 10 of Acts, verse 34. Then Peter opened his mouth and said, in truth, I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him.

Then he starts talking about John the Baptist and Jesus and so forth. Now, what's interesting there is that he's talking about Cornelius when he says people from other nations, any nation who works righteousness is acceptable to God. Now, you don't go to an evangelistic situation and tell your audience you're acceptable to God.

God has shown me you're okay. You're supposed to tell them they're not okay, right? So they'll know they need to accept Jesus. And this was very strange to me.

But you see what I found out as I studied the book of Acts and for that matter, Jesus sermons too, is that I had come at gospel presentation with the starting assumption God is not on the side of the sinner. God is angry at the sinner. Fortunately, Jesus is nicer than God.

God wanted to wipe out the sinners, but Jesus came and he was the nice guy in the Godhead. He's the one who came to rescue us from God. He's the one who said, no, father, don't hurt them.

Let me go and die for them. I'll fix it. I'd make this all right.

And so in spite of the fact that God is against us, Jesus is for us. I mean, no one ever put it quite that crassly when I was growing up, but that's the impression I got. And I think many people have.

It never occurred to me that the verse we quoted most often refuted this, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son. It wasn't God was angry at the world and Jesus was on our side and said, let me save them. God loved the world.

And so he sent Jesus and Jesus tried to get out of it. Father, if it's possible, let me let this pass from me, but not my will, but yours be done. The father did not let Jesus off the hook because he cared about us, because he was on our side.

You see, the idea that we start out with the idea you're a sinner and God's not on your side isn't really what I think the Bible says. Certainly, a sinner is facing the judgment of God. There's no question God's a righteous judge.

He's got to judge sin. But God is on the side of sinners. He's a friend of sinners.

At least Jesus was. And Jesus said, if you've seen me, you've seen the father. Jesus said, you need to do good to your enemies and love them and bless those who are Christian, then you'll be like your father, because he's good even to the ungrateful and the unholy.

Is it Jesus taught that the father loves sinners? And that's why Jesus loved sinners. And that's what the gospel tells us. It's a starting point.

The starting point is not that God's angry at you and you're in trouble. You might be in trouble. Indeed, if you're in rebellion against God, you are in trouble.

But it's not because God's against you. He's for you. You're against him.

You need to come around to be on his side because you're you're it's not gonna be good for you to be, you know, fighting against God. But God is on your side. And Peter started out with talking to Cornelius.

He didn't say, you're a pagan. You're a sinner. You're going to hell.

You need to come to Jesus so you won't go to hell. He said, you know, I used to think those things about you Gentiles. But I see now.

You're you know, you're you're working righteousness. You're you're you're seeking God. And even though you're a pagan, you know, God accepts that from you.

Now, that's not all you need. You see, here's the important thing. Even though God is for us, that doesn't mean we don't need something more.

We need to follow Jesus, not so God will stop being against us, but so that we will stop being against God. See, we always we always present a man centered gospel. Unfortunately, we portray it as though the issue is this.

You're in trouble with God, except Jesus, so you can go to heaven instead of hell. Not one of the sermons in the book of Acts mentioned heaven or hell or the next life. When they evangelize, they never mentioned it.

Now, the Christians believed in heaven and hell. We know that from their epistles. Those were written to Christians.

But when talking to non-Christians, we never find an instance where Paul, Peter, Stephen, any of the preachers in the book of Acts ever mentioned either heaven or hell in their sermons. Well, then how did they motivate people to come to Christ? They weren't trying to motivate them selfishly. Selfishness is the sin that we have to be saved from.

That's what makes us sinners, is that we're selfish. The gospel is calling us away from being self-centered to being God-centered. The gospel is not you're in trouble.

Come to God so you'll be better off someday when you die. The gospel is you've given God a lot of trouble and he doesn't deserve that from you. You need to repent so you can start giving God the glory and the honor that he deserves.

And he has appointed his son to be the king. You need to submit to that king. Why? Because if you don't, you're not doing what God wants you to do.

That's why. And if someone says, well, why should I care what God wants me to do? Well, you're not in a position to become a Christian if you don't care what God wants you to do. If you care only about yourself and not about God, you can't come to God on his terms anyway, because coming to God means you stop putting yourself first and you put God first.

If anyone come after me, Jesus said, you have to deny yourself. That's the first part. You stop putting yourself first.

You take up a cross and you follow Jesus. You put God's interests first, not yours. And yet

we have, because of our Madison Avenue approach to evangelism, we've tried to sell Jesus like we sell products.

You know, this will be good for you. Come to Jesus, it'll be good for you. Well, it certainly will.

No question about that. But that's not the message they preached in the book of Acts. The message they preach is God has appointed Jesus to be the king.

And you really owe him something. And he's not getting it from you until you repent and become a follower of Jesus. Then then you'll be giving God what you're supposed to be giving him.

It's all about God. It's all about Jesus. It's not about you and your sorry skin being saved.

It's about it's about God getting what you owe him. That is surrender, love your love for him, your faith. You're supposed to trust in him.

You're supposed to love him. You're supposed to obey him. That's what they called people to, to embrace Christ as Lord, to embrace Christ as king.

Now, once you do that, you'll be saved. That's good for you, too. That's what Paul said in Romans 10, 9. He said that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.

And believe in your heart that God raised and said, you'll be saved. There's something in it for you. But it's in it for you only after you're concerned about what's in it for God.

Once you recognize Jesus is the Lord, and that doesn't mean just the person that you grudgingly have to obey so you can get into heaven. That's the person who has every right to your total devotion and total obedience. And that you should be living for his glory, not for your glory.

Say, I mean, people say, I want to go to glory when I die. Well, you will if you're a good Christian, but you're not supposed to be living for that. You're supposed to live for God's glory.

Whether you live or die, whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God. Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. Paul said, everything's for the glory of God if you're a Christian.

And we haven't preached that radical gospel. We haven't preached to people that they've got to stop being about themselves and start being about Jesus. And until they do, they're not really a follower of his.

And I realize if we preach it that way, there's not going to be as many people coming to our church. There won't be as many tithes going into the basket. And we won't be able to

have such a big building and such good salaries for the pastors and all that stuff.

We may have to have it more like it was in the early church. Pastors might have to work for free. They might not be able to have buildings.

They didn't have any in the early church. They might not have any overhead because they might not have any more money after they've helped the poor in their ranks. There might not be anything left for buildings and parking lots stuff.

And, you know, we might say, well, some things are improvements, aren't they? I mean, some things have changed since biblical times. Do we have to really give up all that stuff? I'm not saying that we have to give up stuff, but if that's what comes of preaching the gospel right, then we should be glad to see it go. Remember the pope that was counting his gold and one of his ministers came in.

This is a true story, I understand. And the minister saw the gold the church had, and he said, boy, we certainly can't say silver and gold have I none like Peter did. The church can't say that anymore.

And the other said, true, but neither can we say like Peter did arise and walk in the name of Jesus Christ. You know, the church has changed in some ways. Some might be seen as improving.

We got a lot more silver and gold than they had, but we don't have very many people rising and walking at our command. It may be that revival would be better for us than prosperity. It might be that radically Christian testimony of a radically Christian community would be more desirable than big, fat churches that have big television budgets.

You know, I mean, we I'm not saying whether we should have television or big churches. I'm saying we need to preach the gospel in such a way that it may endanger those things simply because it's faithful, because it's a faithful testimony. Then we'll get real Christians converted instead of people who think they're Christians but don't even know what the message is.

They don't even know what God expects of them because we haven't told them. Anyway, those are some of the things that are in this, implied in these notes. There are a lot of scriptures here that we didn't get to, and I don't know if we're going to take some of them in the next lecture.

If I move further on, you have the scriptures before you can look them up on your own. Sort out. You don't have to be told everything you can find out more than I know just on your own.

I hope you will. But these are the things that I consider when I'm thinking, how do we

get? And I'm not the expert about this. I'm interested in it.

I'm exploring this. How do we get from where we are to where the early church was in terms of having a radically Christian counterculture? And certainly some of the things that have to be in place are the things you have to have real Christians for a change. And you have to preach the real gospel to get them.

And you've got to have the church be the church, a self-disciplining community that has a consensus of that. We're all marching after Jesus. We're not marching after this teacher, that teacher, that teacher, that denomination, that denomination.

We're following Jesus. We might actually go to churches of different denominations, and that's okay, I suppose, as long as those aren't some kind of hermetically sealed ghettos of like-mindedness of theology. I mean, I can fellowship in a Methodist church or Presbyterian church or Baptist church or Pentecostal church.

I'm comfortable there. I don't know if they're comfortable with me being there, but I'm comfortable there. They're my brothers if they are.

And if they are, there shouldn't be any problems. I'm not sure why we have to have the labels on the cans, but as long as the same contents are in the can, we're all eating the same food, I guess. Anyway, the church will be united not when everyone comes to conformity of belief on every point, but when everyone comes to the same conviction that if you're following Jesus and I'm following Jesus, we are one and are commanded to live and love in community with each other and as a testimony to the world.