

Standing Firm in the Culture of Compromise

How then shall we live?- 5th Sermon

Dated 07/10/2018

Here is a list of what we need to do to get started on being a person of influence in a culture of compromise in our society/circle of friends and the world at large.

1. Know our God-given identities
2. Settle our core values
3. Be ready to stand our ground in the tests of life
4. Worship the true living God
5. Give our lives fully to Jesus
6. Identify our pride
7. Put our feelings in their proper place
8. Give God full control of our lives
9. Understand the brevity of life
10. Focus on our priorities
11. Learn how to connect before we correct
12. Let God change us into his likeness

These elements are progressive in many ways, and we individually may not experience them in this order. But our attitudes & decisions gets challenged by these points. They need to be in our hearts and minds before we take on the world around us. They equip us in ways that simply cannot be attained through any other means. They compel us to grow closer to God and to use this closeness as the motivation for how we stand up in a bow-down world.

As God does a work in us, we become vessels that He can use to impact others. Loved by God, saved by His Son, and empowered by His Spirit. We can influence the culture around us in two major ways: **SPIRITUALLY & RELATIONALLY.**

We need first to be prepared spiritually, and then we can engage in cultural relationships with maximum positive impact.

Shining Light in the Darkness.

Human are triune beings: body, soul and spirit. It is the spirit part of us that is like God and will live forever. Because each and every person has a spirit and is made in the likeness of God, we will always be on a spiritual journey. Our spirits are continually in search of their Creator. This innate spiritual part of us explains why we are the **ONLY** part of creation that worships and it is also why we need to fight the culture battle spiritually.....How do we do that??? The same way Jesus did. He came face-to-face with the Devil when He was tempted in the wilderness (Matt 4, Luke 4), and every time the Enemy tried to tempt him, Jesus responded with a verse from the Bible. He used the Sword of Truth to defend himself from the Enemy's

attack. Think of it this way: Jesus didn't confront the Devil as God. He confronted the Devil as a man with the Word of God. We should do the same.

Here are **five Scriptures** for us to understand and pray for people that we need to influence in our circle of friendship and relationships.

1. Pray that the Father would draw them to Jesus—"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them" (John 6:44).

Father, I pray for the people around me, that you would supernaturally draw their hearts to you. Send your Holy Spirit to them and give them the desire to give their lives to you. Help them to recognize their longing for more as spiritual, as a thirst only you can quench. Open their ears to hear your voice.

2. Bind the spirit that blinds their minds—"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2-Corinthians 4:4).

Father, bind the evil spirits that are blinding the minds of the people around me in the name of Jesus. I pray that they would be able to see clearly, to recognize who you are, and to give their hearts to you. Remove all hindrances the Enemy would use to distract them from their truth. Open their eyes, Lord. that they might see Jesus.

3. Let loose the spirit of adoption (personal relationship with God)—"The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father". (Romans 8:15).

Father, I pray that people will understand how much you love them. Loose the spirit of adoption for the people around me, so that they come into a meaningful relationship with you. Stir in their hearts a longing to come home, to hear your voice, and see you welcoming them with open arms. Let them know you are always running to meet them and hold them close.

4. Pray that believers will enter into positive relationship with the lost, and pray that we will see the opportunities that come across our paths—"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"(Matthew 9:38).

Father, I pray for the lost around me to meet believers who will influence them in a positive way. Lord, let my life shine in such a way that people want to know the God I serve. Allow others to see my genuine love and concern for them in all that I say and do. Let me be your hands and feet to serve them and let them know just how much you love them.

5. Release the spirit of wisdom and revelation on them, so they may know God better—“ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better” (Ephesians 1:17).

Father, I pray for the people around me to experience the spirit of wisdom and revelation. I pray that they would truly understand their spiritual condition and see what Jesus did for them on the cross. Help them to have the information and experience needed to come to you, so they can understand all you have for them.

Confronting Cultural Challenges.

1. Keep your standards high and your grace deep.

We should do as Jesus did and keep the standards high and the grace deep. Everyone in Jesus' day knew the Ten Commandments and that adultery was wrong, but then Jesus came along and said what we read in Matt5:28. In one sentence, Jesus made an adulterer of almost every one in the audience. Jesus did not lower the standard. He pointed towards a higher standard, and then He refused to condemn those who fell short of it.

In other words He didn't cave in the cultural pressure so that He could be liked and accepted. Jesus did not say what people wanted to hear OR what would make them feel good. He pointed to a higher standard and then provided a way out for those who would repent. This is how we/church should engage the culture and its standards. Let us stick to God's way and God's Word. If the Bible calls it a sin, then it is sin-full stop.

2. Accept people without approving of their behavior.

Jesus confronted the culture around Him all the time. Remember the scene found in John 8 where a woman was caught in adultery by the religious leaders and Pharisees? See Verses 7 & 11. Jesus masterfully accepted and respected her without approving of her behavior. He showed compassion rather than join in with her accusers. He gave her a hopeful doorway out of her sinful life. There is no better model for how we engage those around us who are participating in behaviors God identifies as sinful.

3. Never get the tone get contentious.

Whenever a friendly, respectful discussion becomes a political debate, power struggle or theological boxing match, it feels like a personal attack. {A good Ref is Dan 2:14} The example set by Daniel and Jesus are clear, not to mention numerous others including Paul and James: our words matter because they reveal our hearts. Refer to Matt 12:34-37.

The moment we engage with people about “being right”, we need to stop and check our heart. Arguing with someone, let alone condemning them and their behavior as sinful, has never won a single person to the Lord.

4. Lead them to truth by identifying with their struggle.

In Jude verses 22-23 we read in NLT version “ And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives.”

When we display humility, authenticity, honesty or even humor when appropriate, we relate to others as human beings, person to person and eventually, heart to heart. Once that heart condition takes place, we will find people are much more willing to hear the truth. When they know us and trust us and see that we are for real, then they want to have what we have. They want to know Jesus.

5. Point the picture of what it looks like to come home.

No matter what someone had done or not done, its never too late for God to forgive them and to transform their lives. Our job is to make sure, they know this, to paint an accurate and vivid picture of what it is like to come home to the Lord. We must look for opportunities to build bridges and care for people every chance we get. This is the example we see throughout Jesus' life. When He saw someone's need, He met it and the He addressed the greater spiritual need. The goal is to always show a welcoming spirit of kindness, generosity and graciousness. This gives them a strong sense of the safe place for coming home to God.

Let's be the Daniel of our day, time and age.....stay blessed in Jesus' name. Amen