

## Friday: *Busting Stereotypes...*

**Read:** John 20:21 <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

### Reflect:

Don’t make the mistake of quickly glossing over these words. Jesus was the only sinless person who ever lived but the most sinful people flocked to Him (cf. Monday). While we are not perfect (i.e., we’ve already sinned – and will in the future) we can be proactive in busting stereotypes people have about Christians.

E.g., 91% of 16-29 year olds think Christians are anti homosexual – meaning that Christians are focused on “fixing” them or leveraging political power against them. 87% say Christians are too judgmental – meaning Christians say they love people...but really only judge them. Not surprisingly, 85% believe Christians are hypocritical.

What is (likely) the most effective thing you can do to enhance the ability of others to “hear” you when sharing Jesus with them? Bust the stereotypes people have of Christianity. Jesus didn’t come to be served, but to serve (Mk10:45). How then can we do anything less? Jesus associated with everyone – why should we shun people? (Please note, I’m talking about in day to day life...)

### Respond:

In case you are wondering, in the survey that produced the %’s to the left, choices like “loving” and “serving” were also options...

Do you see the importance of why we are serving others as a body? Will you continue to participate in and support those events?

Who is a non-Christian you can serve today? What will you do?

What other Christian stereotypes need busted?

**Pray:** Pray for Prairie View Christian Camp; another mission New Life regularly supports. Ask for the Holy Spirit to convict you of any “stereotype” against Christianity of which you are guilty – ask for help to obliterate it. Pray for Bob Griffin, Larry Hayes, and Roy Andrews – elders of New Life. Continue to pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

## Saturday: *What’s Your Story...Reason...*

**Read:** 1 Peter 3:15 <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

### Reflect:

Peter tells us our lives ought to be the type that prompt others to ask questions. Wow, that would make evangelism easier wouldn’t it? If people ask you a direct question you’re far more likely to talk about God than if you had to initiate that conversation (at least if you’re like me).

This is why the previous days are so important. A person “from Monday” may ask, “Why do you spend time with me?” When someone sees you engaging in acts of serving they might ask “Why are you doing that?” When these and other scenarios happen...what will you say?

**Please,** write out your own “reason for the hope” and practice it. As you heard on Sunday – have a 60 second and a three to five minute version ...and practice them. God is seeking people; the actions of people seeking to follow Him will prompt others to notice – the only variables are your willingness to follow and your readiness to speak...

### Respond:

Have you already made your own 1 and 3-5 minute stories? Have you practiced them?

Read Luke 15 – do you think ‘internalizing’ that story is a good way to be able to talk to someone about “grace”?

Do you believe God desires you to be successful in any and all attempts you make in evangelism?

**Pray:** Pray for the National Missionary Convention; a mission New Life regularly supports. Pray those being prompted by the Holy Spirit to come to our building tomorrow will come. Pray for Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, and Mike Haag – deacons of New Life. Pray for our worship to be pleasing to God tomorrow (and today).

# What Do We Do?

May 24 – 30

It's not just young people losing their religion, many people my age (50) are dropping out of the megaplex churches, where very little is done for the poor and the widows. Churches look more like country clubs now and are in themselves monuments of great irony. Young people see the hypocrisy in raising money for a new gym or luxury bus, while the homeless are growing in numbers in their city. They see through the big screens, flash pots and contemporary services, designed to bring them in. Once they are there, they find no substance and no relevance to Jesus and his message, so they leave. And they are not the only ones leaving. My dad , who is in his 70's admitted he only goes to church now because he really enjoys his circle of friends in his sunday school class. He filled out a survey at church recently that asked, "Why have we lost so many members?" He wrote simply - the church has gotten away from the bible and has gotten too political and too commercial, we are spending money on things that we shouldn't and ignoring things we should. (As a side note: his church just tried to close down the free day care it provides for working single mothers - some members said the children were making a mess in the "newly carpeted" rooms). Heaven forbid people actually USE the church for people who need it - no wonder it is getting more and more empty. Will the last person out please turn off the lights.

- Online comment after an article titled “Young Americans Losing Their Religion”.

The Christians of the world somehow think that their beliefs give them the right to tell everyone else what to do and they use religion and morality to bully others into doing what they want. It's bad enough when you encounter these people in everyday life, but it's especially repulsive when these people have infiltrated our political system and seek to tyrannize all of America into doing things their way. If you don't think and do as they do, then you are less than them and will be treated as such. Think how many "issues" would go away if Christians would just learn to mind their own business and let others live their lives. It's no wonder people find it repulsive and don't want to be around it.

- Another comment after “Young Americans Losing Religion”.

It would be a mistake to write off those two commentators as “off the wall” or “fanatical” or anything else. While it would be nice to ignore their comments and write them off as untrue – the problem is there is truth in them...

The younger generation is very disgruntled with the church. I don’t think that’s a huge surprise to any of us. However the older generation being just as turned off was (somewhat) news to me, although it shouldn’t have been...

Let me pose a possibility; are people of all ages leaving “the church” because the church is not fulfilling ‘her’ mission? No county in the U.S. (read that again) has more Christians today than 30 years ago. In other words, don’t go through this week’s guide and think “my children/grandchildren are safe – we’ll pass the faith along to them...” Statistics indicate that doesn’t happen as often as we like to think it does...

When it comes to our faith we need to “Show & Tell” (not “Tell & Force”). Our culture is very good at it; millions are buying what it has to offer (via “Show & Tell”). Do we not have Someone better?

**Monday: A Friend of “Liberals” & “Homosexuals”?**

**Read:** Matthew 11:19a <sup>19</sup> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’

<p><b>Reflect:</b> If you have ever read through the gospels you certainly could not have missed how people flocked to Jesus. I think that raises an interesting question for us. Do people who are “tax collectors” and “sinners” flock to the church today?</p> <p>Please note, today’s title of “Liberals” and “Homosexuals” is <b>not</b> intended to equate those <i>group labels</i> (which is a terrible thing to do – cf. Thursday) with the “tax collectors” and “sinners” of Jesus’ day. Yet they are two groups with whom many “conservative” Christians have difficulties. (On that note, many “conservatives” may in fact think “liberals” are betraying their country...like Jewish tax collectors working for the Roman government; also some homosexuals do long for God – but think they have no access to Him – or simply don’t know Him).</p> <p>Also please note that the deeper issue isn’t whether or not “Liberals” and “Homosexuals” are flocking to the church or not. The deeper questions are – “Do you know any?” and “Are you friends with any?” and “Do you at least spend time with ‘them’?” Do you think Jesus would? I think the gospels are clear...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Do you know anyone who is truly “far from” God?</p> <p>What groups of people do you see as particularly “far from” God in today’s culture? How would Jesus interact with them?</p> <p>Remember, <u>you</u> (i.e., “we”) are the church. Therefore the issue becomes, do “sinners” feel comfortable with you? Do you love them?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for the CEA; a mission New Life supports. Pray for the Holy Spirit to continue the work started (or continued) in our lives yesterday. Pray for your desire to get to know people who are “far from” God. Continue to pray for workers in God’s Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

**Tuesday: The Rubber Meets the Road...**

**Read:** John 3:16-18 <sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world...<sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

<p><b>Reflect:</b> Famous words those of John chapter three verse 16 are. Quite possibly that verse is one of the earliest portions of Scripture memorized by people when they enter into a covenant relationship with God. It’s rather natural I suppose – they appear to be light, fluffy, care-free – they basically sound nice...</p> <p>Yet it is a travesty to ignore verse 18. Please understand, I’m not thrilled that verse 18 exists – but we cannot ignore it. Well, I suppose we can...but then verse 16 does not make any sense – i.e., if Jesus had to save us, it makes sense that He had to save us <b>from</b> something...</p> <p>I wonder if the reality of verse 18 is why we often do not verbally share our faith with those we love (or anyone for that matter). Think about it; if we believe the Bible is true (which includes Jn3:18) and we share about Jesus with someone and they say “No” – what does that lack of belief indicate about the person?</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> How much truth is there in the last paragraph of “reflect”?</p> <p>How many friends do you have that are not Christians? Are you praying for them?</p> <p>Will you enlist the help of someone you know to pray for you so that you verbally share Jesus with others? How can that help?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for Lincoln Christian Seminary, Manhattan Christian College, and Ozark Christian College; missions New Life supports. Pray for a growing desire to talk about Jesus with others. Pray for the Unity and Purity of New Life. Continue to pray for God’s people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

**Wednesday: The Ultimate Seeker...**

**Read:** John 4:23 <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

<p><b>Reflect:</b> It seems contemporary Christian culture ought to redefine some terms. E.g., many churches try to be “seeker sensitive” by appealing to those who are “seeking” God. There seems to be few problems with that: <b>a)</b> here Jesus says God is the seeker, and <b>b)</b> those who are already Christians ought to be the biggest seekers there are – seeking to know God better and follow Him more closely; seeking to live fully for Him.</p> <p>I wonder if another reason many Christians don’t verbally share their faith more often is because they don’t think they are “worthy” or “good enough” to share it. The reasoning would be similar to, “I’m not a good example; I know I have sin in my life; etc.” Fortunately, the Bible does not say you have to be perfect to share your faith...</p> <p>Furthermore, we cannot deny that God is seeking people. Seriously now, do you think you came to believe in God merely because you’re that smart? I know I didn’t – but maybe that’s only me. God seeking after people is a reality. This must be why Jesus sent us out into the world (e.g., Jn20:21); God knows people are “lost” without Him.</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Do you hunger for God more now than when you became a Christian?</p> <p>If you think you’re not ‘worthy enough’ to share the gospel read 1Tim1:15. Does that change anything?</p> <p>What did it take for God to ultimately “find” you?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools; two missions New Life supports. Pray for a growing hunger to know God more intimately. Pray for God to help you overcome whatever sins hinder you (Heb12:1). Continue to pray for God’s Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

**Thursday: People Are...**

**Read:** Genesis 1:26-27 <sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

<p><b>Reflect:</b> Perhaps another reason why many people struggle with verbally sharing their faith is because we don’t take these verses in Genesis seriously. Every single human being who has ever been born – and/or ever will be born – is made in God’s image. This means that everyone is worthy of our love and respect.</p> <p>How should this help us with Evangelism? It means that everyone has worth in God’s eyes. God cares about poor people, serial killers, “liberals,” terrorists, “juvenile delinquents,” – you name them and I guarantee you God cares for them...everyone needs Jesus. Also, do not forget about ‘rich’ people either – they need Jesus too.</p> <p>Chances are extremely good that you’ve thought about talking to someone about God/Jesus only to mentally talk yourself out of it. You thought, “Nah – their life seems to be OK...” or “Nah – I don’t think they’d be interested...” That last statement may be true – perhaps they are not interested in the “gospel” you have to share if you’re questioning someone’s likelihood to be interested in it...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> How can you show love today for someone who may be “unlovely”?</p> <p>If you don’t have any non-Christian friends; what can you do to make some?</p> <p><b>Will you make an effort</b> to pray, “God, please give me Your heart for this person” in any human interaction you have today?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for Cookson Hills; a mission New Life supports. Thank God you’re made in His image. Pray for Brent McCrory; preaching minster at New Life – pray He is truly led by God. Continue to pray for open doors to share God’s Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so.