

Sift Wk. 3

We need to be careful about the advice we receive and the advice we give. When we do speak, we need to speak biblically. That is why we need to know theology (what the Bible says about God). **We need to know why we believe what we do.**

Speaking of popular phrases sneaking into our vocabulary, today we are continuing our series called “Sift” and are going to address the common phrase, **“sending out positive vibes.”** I see this everywhere, don’t you? How sending out good into the universe will result in getting good to come back around to you. It’s an eastern way of thinking and finds its roots in Hinduism and New Age philosophies. But like I said, it has become something that many people say because they want to tell others that they are thinking of them without praying for them because they don’t believe in God. It often comes up when someone is going through a hard time or is taking on a big challenge—you might have said, “sending positive vibes.”

Check everything against scripture

Let’s get back into Peter’s 2nd letter.

2 Peter 3:3 pg. 589

knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

Peter reminded the early church and us to sift—every thought and idea, every ounce of media we are consuming, the words we say, the worldview we are shaping in our minds, the teaching we are hearing, through the sifter of God’s Word. **Peter is urging us not to simply accept or adopt a certain way of thinking or speaking or acting without first checking to make sure it aligns with the Bible.** People have been twisting Scripture for hundreds of years. That’s why there have been so many cults. But it is also why there are so many “Christians” who don’t have a high view of Scripture. **By that I mean, they like that Jesus is loving, but they don’t accept all His difficult teachings.**

We can’t do that. This is called progressive Christianity and we need to make sure we are not swept away by a great communicator just because what they say sounds desirable, smart, or in line with the culture. **I even challenge you to check everything I am saying with the Bible. Please do not take my word for it, or Wikipedia, or YouTube, or TikTok. We need to sift.**

Sending out Positive Vibes

Ok, so recently I searched on YouTube, “sending out positive vibes.” I found a 3-hour long video that is supposed to “raise your positive vibrations and attract positive energy.” Do you want to hear it?

This is the description of that video:

🌟 Feel-good vibes from our positive energy music infused with binaural beats for positive energy. Let the waves of this positive vibrations frequency awaken inner joy and lightness.

Dive into the soothing currents of our customized sound therapy for the soul. Each note is carefully crafted to resonate with your energy system, flooding your mind and body with uplifting good vibes. This isn't just music, it's a journey to internal harmony. We've combined alpha and theta waves to amplify positivity through sound.

Our community loves the positive energy subliminal affirmations they feel while listening. The frequencies are more than sound - they're a promise of optimism and meaning.

🌟 Benefits:

- 🌟 Positive vibrations frequency directly tunes your energy system to joy.
- 🌟 Binaural Beats for Positive Energy harmonize your mind and body.
- 🌟 Positive Energy Music fills you with uplifting vibrations.
- 🌟 Positive Energy Subliminal unlocks your natural optimism.
- 🌟 Positive Binaural Beats elevate your mood and boost motivation.
- 🌟 Positive Vibes Music surrounds you with feel-good frequencies.
- 🌟 Good Vibes Music activates your inner lightness.
- 🌟 Positive Energy Guided Meditation journeys for internal harmony.
- 🌟 Positive Vibes reconnect you with hope and meaning.
- 🌟 Good Vibes help you embrace the positive in each moment.

🌟 Instructions:

- Find a calm space and relax when listening
- Use quality headphones for optimal results
- Listen daily or as needed for emotional cleansing
- Allow yourself to feel - this is part of the healing process

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PMa5AecnLs>

What?! 3 hours! This video has 2 million views! I spent 20 minutes just reading people's comments to see why people were listening to it. People are so incredibly desperate for hope and this New Age spirituality is not going to soothe the ache of sin or suffering that only the good news of Jesus can.

Here are some of the comments:

- Please send positive vibrations to me, going through a troubled time in my life and trying to figure out what my meaning of being here is. -Dennis
- To whoever reading this you are a very positive and the best and you'll achieve what you want.
- May this message bring you love, prosperity and abundance because you deserve it.
- I am sending everyone out there in this beautiful universe good vibrations and that they will achieve anything their mind puts them 2. I hope everyone will find peace with what they are dealing with and know that eventually it all will get better. Furthermore, I hope that everybody who reads this 2 will send me only loving and positive vibes, so we can all can make our dreams come true in this world we live in now. Many love Lola...

Now why have so many adopted the phrase "positive vibes?" Is it because we are using the phrase to describe the mood of a particular room, item, or friend group? That seems harmless. Are we saying it because we don't want anyone to challenge us or "bring us down" or give us feedback or initiate a discussion? Does it come out of a place of wanting boundaries with people? Like the t-shirts that say, "positive vibes only"? I get it, everyone's opinion is out there, and we can't escape them. Are we simply saying it from a place of innocence, where we want peace and for everyone to get along and we don't want negativity?

We don't realize how it comes from the New Age worldview and is not quite in line with a biblical worldview.

[Leader Note: Use my personal example or your own here by saying something like this: "My friend's friend from high school has an emergency surgery coming up. I looked at the Instagram comments on her post. So many people were saying, "sending out positive vibes for your upcoming surgery."]

Positive Vibes are Powerless

It's not all bad theoretically, to think loving or positive thoughts about someone and then sharing that you were thinking about them. That could be encouraging. It could lift their spirit knowing someone is thinking about them. **But it's also really sad. To be completely honest with you, in a moment of someone's deepest need, reaching to the "universe" is going to get you nothing.** And honestly it makes no sense if the people saying it are atheists who ultimately believe that life and death are meaningless. Sending positive vibes would be a placebo pill. It has no power; it just makes you feel better in the moment because you think it's doing something. It's a false sense of comfort.

[1]

But what if, instead of sending positive vibes to my friend, I could get help from Someone who holds everything together, the One who can give us the grace we need to endure hardship, the One who can do miracles, the One who is well acquainted with suffering? That One I'm talking about is Jesus! Jesus suffered. He suffered the worst possible death for our sakes; for ALL of our sakes. And yet, because He was fully man (the suffering) and fully God, He also had the power to defeat death. He is all powerful and yet in tune with the human experience.

Thinking positive thoughts is not a bad thing, per se. In fact, the Bible instructs us to think about such things...

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

But if we are simply thinking positive thoughts and taking God Almighty out of the equation, we are in la-la-land thinking anything could possibly change.

If someone has cancer and I simply send them positive thoughts and emotions, will my “vibes” travel across time and space and magically cure them? No.

Prayer is Powerful

And that takes us back to 2 Peter. It’s a letter written by Jesus’ disciple, Peter, with some final reminders before he was killed for his faith. He talked about how false teachers had come in and tried to make people believe that Jesus wouldn’t return.

And Jesus’ return is one of the great hopes we have as Christians, that brokenness and sin and pain and the injustice of this world will not last forever. We believe that one day, Jesus will come again and set everything right. **He will return and judge the wicked, not based on whether they sinned, but on if their heart trusted in the work of Jesus on the cross.** God is going to make heaven and Earth collide and there will be no more crying or depression or anxiety or divorce or disease or disaster or death.

2 Peter 3:3-14

3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” 5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

We are not like the naturalists or the humanists who believe that this life is all there is, and so they live however they please. We believe in God whose love for us was so big that He willingly absorbed His own wrath for us while we were still in rebellion to Him.

So, instead of sending positive vibes to a world that is desperate for hope, let's connect with the God of creation who is intimately involved with our lives through prayer. He exists eternally and not just in the here and now. **He is our hope for now and for after death.** He is the destroyer of death and the happy ending we all long for. Where do you think the idea of happy endings came from? It's too good not to be true.

[Leader Note: Tell a story here of how God answered a prayer in your life or in the life of someone you know either miraculously or in a way you didn't expect (the suffering remained but eternal hope was restored—this option might even be more fruitful long term). You could also consider shooting a video of a student or adult volunteer who experienced the power of prayer or have them share in person at your service.]

Prayer is a privilege of God's children. By it, we have full access to God as a father because of Jesus. Do you have a need in your life or the life of someone else? Do you need the comfort of God to hold you as you walk through a difficult situation? Pray.

I think of other Scriptures where we are reminded to pray.

1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

"Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares for you."

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NLT)

"Never stop praying."

Romans 8:26 (NLT)

"And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words."

I think we make prayer too complicated. We let busyness, or cynicism about whether God hears us or if it changes anything, or our own preoccupation with "me, me, me" keep us from praying. But **prayer doesn't have to be a 30-minute monologue.**

Charles Spurgeon was a famous preacher a long time ago. He said, "I rarely pray for more than 5 minutes, and yet I rarely go 5 minutes without praying."

Prayer shouldn't be a box you check to get a gold star. We should talk to God throughout the day for a moment here or a moment there as things arise in our heart.

- "Thank you for that, God."
- "Help me, Lord."
- "Give Grandma peace."
- "Help me have the courage to sit by a different group of people now to show your love."
- "Help me to love her even though she drives me crazy."

Unlike the New Age worldview that believes in the “law of attraction,” we do not have the power to change things based on what we think about, but our very personal God does have the power to change things.

[Leader Note: quickly show your students the way you pray. Use a prop if you can. Hold up your prayer journal or prayer cards or show them on a white board how you pray in a practical way.]

Prayer is powerful. You won't always get exactly what you are asking for because you are not God. But prayer will change us. Remember, we are sifting for the truth. Sending positive vibes is fool's gold.

Let's be people that pray instead, starting now.

[1] 12 Questions For The World's Largest Religion, Rebecca McLaughlin

Small Group Questions

Series Goal: In this series we want to help students learn to sift through our culture's distorted version of reality to uncover the truth. Addressing commonly held beliefs of our day, we will challenge students to use the Bible as their sieve, as they build their worldview. We do all of this in love, welcoming questions and doubts as they take steps to own their faith. Our heart is to also encourage students to love others well, even as they disagree with their friend's conclusions. This is a worldview, theology, apologetics, and identity series wrapped into one—addressing hard to talk about topics in a way that is both faithful to a high view of Scripture, but also with the winsomeness necessarily to reach the lost.

Common Worldview: Sending Positive Vibes

Scripture: 2 Peter 3:3-14, 1 Peter 5:7, 1 Thess 5:17, Romans 8:26

Get To Know Your Group: Spend 5-10 minutes asking students for a high and a low from the week and any prayer requests they might have.

Small Group Questions:

- What's the difference between thinking positive thoughts about someone and praying for them?
- Why do you think people are so drawn to the new age idea of "positive vibes and energy"?
- Why do you think people like the idea of sending positive thoughts about someone? Why do they think it would help?
- Why is this a "placebo pill" for those experiencing suffering?
- If you held an atheist or humanist worldview, what would be your response to suffering in your life? (Be honest if you are struggling with God's existence yourself.)
- What does the Bible say about suffering? What would walking through suffering look like for someone with a biblical worldview?

Divvy these verses up about prayer to your students and have them take turns reading them.

1 Peter 5:7

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Romans 8:26

- What doubts or questions do you have about God as it relates to suffering and prayer?
- How been your last resort instead of your first response?
- Charles Spurgeon said, "I rarely pray for more than 5 minutes but I rarely go 5 minutes without praying." How does this quote challenge you in the way you have practiced prayer?
- What's one new way you would like to incorporate prayer into your life?