

**SERIES: RELATIONSHIPS**

**SERMON: YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD**

**3-19-23**

**OPENER:**

Interacting with non-Christian friends and family members has always been a balancing act. We long to share Jesus with them, but we don't want to push them away. We work to maintain a good relationship AND tell them about the eternal life God offers. It's always been difficult. But recently, our fast-changing culture has dramatically intensified the challenge.

These days, simply talking with non-Christian friends and family members can be as tricky as navigating a minefield. Every topic is more controversial. Every issue is more polarized. An "us against them" attitude blankets our country. One wrong step and BOOM. The conversation blows up. Somebody walks away. And the relationship itself may be forever harmed.

I believe, as Christians, we can maintain healthy relationships with those we love without compromising our faith. And, we can also take advantage of the opportunities God gives to share Jesus with them.

So, how do we navigate the minefield of these "unequal" relationships?

> *Should Christian parents of a gay son attend his wedding?*

> *How do we respond to a friend who's had an abortion?*

> *What is the best thing to say to a family member who has joined a religious cult?*

I don't have all the answers. But, God has given us timeless, spiritual principles in His Word. Principles, that with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can apply to any and every situation we might encounter.

**EXAMPLE:**

*Daniel Chapter 1*, gives the story of Daniel, Shadrach; Meshach; and Abednego. These four young men were among the captives that were taken from Israel by King Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon as slaves. They were among the Israeli youths singled out to live and serve at the Babylonian Court.

These young men were privileged and had the opportunity to take advantage of their position to satisfy the desires of their flesh and gain wealth but they decided to set boundaries in their lives so they would not hurt their relationship with God. They refused to partake in the portion of the king's delicacies and choice wine that were set before them daily because they didn't wanted to be defiled.....

*Daniel 1:12-20* <sup>12</sup> *"Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water," Daniel said.* <sup>13</sup> *"At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's food. Then make your decision in light of what you see."* <sup>14</sup> *The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days.*

*<sup>15</sup> At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. <sup>16</sup> So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.*

*<sup>17</sup> God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams.*

*<sup>18</sup> When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup> The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service. <sup>20</sup> Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.*

**THEY WERE IN THE SYSTEM BUT NEVER ALLOWED THE SYSTEM TO TRANSFORM THEM.**

**THESE YOUNG MEN GIVE US A GOOD EXAMPLE OF HOW AS CHRISTIANS WE SHOULD RELATE WITH THE WORLD.**

**THEY LIVED IN A UNGODLY, FOREIGN LAND, WORKED DILIGENTLY WITH ALL HONESTY, THEY EXCELLED AND WERE ELEVATED, BUT THEY NEVER LOST TRACK OF WHO THEY WERE.**

**THEY WERE IN THE BABYLON SYSTEM - BUT NOT OF THE SYSTEM.**

*Jesus' prayer.....*

*John 17:14:18 I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup> I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They do not belong to this world any more than I do. <sup>17</sup> Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. <sup>18</sup> Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.*

**JESUS SAYS THAT WE DON'T BELONG TO THE WORLD.**

**HE EVEN SAYS, THE WORLD HATES US.**

**YET, HE SENDS US INTO THE WORLD.**

**SO, WE ARE IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF IT.**

#### **ILLUSTRATION:**

**Being in the world is like being under the water. We are in the water but not of the water. The sea is not our natural habitat. It is not our home. We are not a fish. So, in order to survive we have to put on underwater gear.**

**TWO THINGS WE SEE IN THE LORDS PRAYER FOR US.....**

## **1. WE ARE TO GUARD AGAINST THE WORLD**

***Romans 12:2 says "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"***

Though we are in the world, we are not to be of the world.

We are physically present in the world, but we are not to be part of its values. We are to be set apart, holy and righteous.

We are not to engage in the sinful activities of the world.

We are not to have the same corrupt thinking that the world has.

We don't buy into the devil's agenda for the world.

So, how do we guard against conforming to the world?.....

### **> FIRST: UNITY IS OUR BEST DEFENSE**

***John 17:11 Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are.***

Our best defense against the constant attacks of the world is to stick together. As every African antelope knows, there is safety in the herd.

### **> SECOND: THE WORD OF GOD IS OUR SCUBA GEAR**

***John 17:16-18 Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. <sup>18</sup> Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.***

***<sup>19</sup> And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.***

***How do we stay pure and unpolluted in toxic water? How do we survive in this world? By reading, meditating, speaking the Word of God.***

**THE WORD MUST BE OUR DAILY BREAD - OUR DAILY MANNA.  
IT IS LIKE MEDICINE TO OUR SOULS TO HEAL US FROM THE SPIRITUAL  
TOXINS IN THE WORLD.**

**IT IS LIKE CLEAN WATER POURED OUT UPON OUR MINDS TO REMOVE THE  
POLLUTION OF FALSE BELIEFS AND  
THEOLOGY OF THE WORLD.**

***Hebrews 4:12-13 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. <sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.***

## **2. WE ARE TO GO INTO THE WORLD**

***John 17:18 Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.***

***Matthew 5:14-16 “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.***

Light cannot be anything other than what it is. It's bright; it dispels darkness; it enables people to see what they are doing. God is light, and since He sent His Holy Spirit to live inside believers, so are we. Jesus tells us to “let our light shine before others,” calling us to live an active faith, not a passive one. Put your light on its stand. Christ-followers give light to those around them by doing and saying what Jesus did.