

Are you Having a “Nice” nap?

Francis Schaeffer in the “Shelter” said, *“We are locked in a battle. This is not a friendly, gentleman's discussion. It is a life and death conflict between the spiritual hosts of wickedness and those who claim the name of Christ.”*

As a great segue last week, Pastor Mike spoke very pointedly about the deception of the enemy and of how we need to know the deception that is out there and the great deceiver who wants to take us captive with his tactics.

I want to start out by saying some of you will be offended today. Some of you will be offended because truth hurts. But My job is like the job of the [mailman](#).

Please stand if you are able as I read the Word of God.

1 John 2:28-29 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. **29** If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who **practices righteousness** has been born of him.

Pray

It is often said that Practice makes perfect. As Pastor Mike has said many times it is not the practice of a thing that makes it perfect. It is the perfect practice of a thing that makes it perfect. Practice something wrong as many times as you can and you will never get better at it.

We need to know what the right way is before our practice is of any value.

I'm going to take the better part of the sermon to focus on a spiritual issue around this idea of practicing righteousness. If we are ever going to be in the right place spiritually we are going to have to know what practicing righteousness looks like.

In order for us to “practice righteousness” we are going to have to first dispatch with what I believe to be the biggest misunderstanding that is surrounding it.

The biggest offender and where I want to spend the majority of our time today is in the word “nice”. I believe it to be one of the most dangerous words that is infecting the church today.

Sticking with the theme of truth in love throughout first John, I want to quote a few scriptures that will lead me into where God would have us spend our time today.

Rom 12:9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil and hold fast to what is good.

What that means is Love hates what is evil. It loves what is good. To simplify, Love what God Loves and hates what God hates.

We are to **fight** against the doctrines and deceptions of this world and stand for the righteousness that is found in Christ alone!

Jude 1:3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you **to contend** for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Contend =(to pit ones self against)

Story of the Mormons

That wasn't very nice pastor.

Don't confuse loving with nice.

You see, there is no shortage of heresies in the Christian world today. If you want to adopt some sort of blasphemous, perverted version of Christianity, you will find plenty of options. There is a church for whatever it is that you want to believe. You can sift through all the variations and build your own little pet version of the Faith. It's like a Home Town Buffett style of Christianity: Take what you want and leave what you don't. And, of all the heretical choices out there probably the most common — **and possibly the most damaging** — is what I have come to call the “Doctrine of Nice”.

The propagators of this Doctrine of Nice can be seen and heard from anytime a Christian takes a bold stance on any cultural issue, uses harsh words of any kind, condemns any sinful act, or fights against evil with any force or conviction at all. As soon as he or she stands and says ‘This is wrong, and I will not compromise’, the heretics swoop in with their trusty mantras.

Those who come against, insist that Jesus was a nice guy, and that He never would have done anything to upset people. They say that Jesus came down from Heaven to preach tolerance and acceptance, and that He **would not** have used words that might lead to any hurt feelings. They confidently sermonize about a meek and mild Messiah who was born to this Earth, on a mission to spark a *constructive dialogue*.

Those who believe in Nice Jesus are usually ignorant of Scripture, but they do know that He was ‘friends with prostitutes,’ and once said something about how, we shouldn't get too mad about stuff, and well.....whatever.

In his book “No More Christian Nice Guy”, Paul Coughlin writes, Quote “Whats wrong with being nice?! That all depends on what we mean when we use this deceptively adaptable term. Think about the “nice” people in your life, then ask yourself, for instance: Do they stand up to injustice? Do they fight against what they know to be untrue? No! They don’t have it in them. “Nice” can’t confront this world’s sources of pain, the way Jesus did and commanded us to do as well. Niceness makes people agreeable, not good. Somehow we have mistaken niceness for righteousness, when the Bible says that the righteous are as bold as lions.

The meaning of the word nice is as unreliable as the people it describes.

Today it is synonymous with pleasant and agreeable but it can also mean “effeminate”, “unmanly”, “unable to endure much”, “dainty” “reluctant”, “ignorant” and “difficult to please”. Remarkably Christian men can be shunned in church and home if they are not unfailingly pleasant, agreeable, and in possession of impeccable manners. These attributes of niceness are taken to be expressions of a Spirit-filled life, yet none of these words or concepts are biblically mentioned as part of the spirits fruit.” End quote.

So let me ask, what would you do?

You are in a small group of friends that begins gossiping about someone marriage. You know it’s wrong but instead of telling the group to stop gossiping you find a way to excuse yourself from the group so as not to be mean and call it what it is.

Some people think that Jesus taught, “Be nice to others, they’ll be nice to you, and we’ll all be happy. Isn’t the ‘whole message’ of Christianity?

Unfortunately I don’t recognize “nice” Jesus.

This moderate. This pacifist. He’s not the Jesus that we read about in the Bible.

By contrast I read of a strong, manly, stern, and bold Savior. Compassionate, **yes**. Forgiving, **of course**. Loving.... **always**. But not particularly nice. He **condemned**. He **denounced**. He **caused trouble**. He **disrupted the established order**.

On at least one occasion he used violence. This Jesus saw the money changers in the temple and how did He respond? He wasn't polite about it. He wasn't PC about it. I'd even say He was downright intolerant. He fashioned a whip (**this is what the lawyers would call 'premeditation'**) and physically drove the merchants away. He turned over tables and shouted. He caused a scene. **[John 2:15]**

If it were today Jesus would have been brought up on charges: Assault with a deadly weapon. Vandalism. Disturbing the peace. Worse still, intolerance.

Jesus was **not nice**.

Not nice at all.

Can you imagine how some moderate, pious, 'nice' Christians of today would react to that spectacle in the Temple? Can you envision the proponents of the "Doctrine of Nice", with their wagging fingers and their passive aggressive sighs? I'm sure they'd send Jesus a patronizing email, perhaps leave a disapproving comment under the news article about the incident on their Facebook page reminding Jesus that Jesus would never do what Jesus just did.

Personally, I've studied the New Testament and found not a single instance of Christ calling for a 'dialogue' with evil or seeking the middle ground on an issue. I see an absolutist, unafraid of confrontation. I see a man who did not waver or give credence to the other side. I see someone who never once avoided a dispute by saying that He'll just 'agree to disagree.'

In **Matthew 23:33** I see a Christ who calls the Scribes and Pharisees snakes and vipers. He labels them murderers and blind guides, and ridicules them publicly. He undermines their authority. He insults them. He castigates them. He's not very nice to them.

Jesus rebukes and condemns. In **Matthew 18**, He utilizes crazy imagery, saying that it would be better to drown in the sea with a stone around your neck than to harm a child. Had our modern politicians been around two thousand years ago, I'm sure they'd go on the cable news shows and shake their heads and insist that there's 'no place for that kind of language.'No place for the language of God.

Jesus deliberately did and said things that He knew would upset people. He stirred up division and controversy. He provoked. He didn't have to break from established customs, but He did. He didn't have to heal a man's hand on the Sabbath, knowing how it would disturb others and cause them immense irritation, but He did, and He did so with 'anger' [**Mark 3:5**]. He could have gone with the flow a little bit. He could have chilled out and let bygones be bygones, but He didn't. He could have been diplomatic, but He wasn't.

He could have told everyone to relax, but instead He made them uncomfortable. He could have put them at ease, but He chose to put them on edge.

He convinced the mob not to stone the adulterer [**John 8**], and you'll notice that He then turned to her and told her to stop sinning. Indeed, never once did He encounter sin and corruption and say: "*Hey, do your thang, ya'll. Just have fun!*"

The followers of Nice Jesus love to quote the 'he who is without sin throw the first stone' verse — and for good reason, it's a beautiful and compelling story — but you rarely hear any mention of the exchange that occurs just a few sentences later, in that very same chapter. In **John 8:44**, Jesus rebukes unbelieving Jews and calls them 'sons of the Devil.'

Wow.

That wasn't nice, Jesus.

Didn't anyone ever tell you that you can catch more flies with honey??

Of course you'd catch even more flies with a **pile of garbage**, so maybe 'catching flies' isn't the point.

While we're often reminded that Jesus said, 'live by the sword, die by the sword,' we seem to ignore his other sword references. Like when he told his disciples to sell their cloaks and buy a sword [**Luke 22**], or when He said that He 'didn't come to bring peace, but a sword' [**Matthew 10**]. Now, It's true that He is God and we are not. Jesus can say whatever He wants to say. But we are called to be like Christ, which begs the question: what is Christ like?

Well, He is, among other things, **uncompromising**. He is **intolerant** of evil. He is **disruptive**. He is sometimes **harsh**. He is sometimes **impolite**. He is sometimes **angry**.

But He was always loving.

Christ was not and is not a cosmic guidance counselor, and He is not mankind's best friend, nor did He call us to be. He made dogs for that role — our destiny is more substantial, and our path to it is far more challenging and dangerous.

And nice?

Where does nice factor into this?

Nice has nothing to do with Christianity. I've got nothing against nice — nice is nice — but even serial killers can be nice to people. They generally are exceptionally friendly, except when they're murdering. That means they're nice to, like, 99 percent of everyone they meet. I guess they're following Christ almost all of the time, right?

I hope you guys are catching my drift here. Nice is not a fruit of the spirit. Nice doesn't mean you are a Christian. Following Christ does.

But let me pause for a moment and address something that many of you may be thinking. Well Pastor Dan, the Bible may not use the word nice but it does use the word kind and that is a fruit of the spirit.

You are correct the Bible does use the word kind...but what is the difference? Let me take a moment and describe the difference to you. I believe that we as Christians need to be more intentional about the words we use and so I will choose my words carefully.

Generally a

Nice is fear

Kind is strong

Nice is selfish

Kind is self less

Nice is narcissistic

Kind is compassionate

Nice is concerned about what people think

Kind is concerned about what God thinks

Do you see the difference? Nice has to do with you while kindness is all about others.

Nice is the world Kind is Christian.

I want to pose some hypothetical situations to you that I think we all have been involved in and ask you, what would you do?

You are in a small group of friends that begins gossiping about someones marriage. You,

A: participate as to not be looked down upon.

B: know it's wrong but instead of telling the group to stop gossiping you find a way to excuse yourself from the group so as not to be mean.

C: rebuke the group for gossiping.

You are with a friend who is weaker in the faith than you are. They say something like....All roads lead to God.

You:

A: agree and say, Jesus is my road and I let him take the wheel of my life.

B: You know that isn't true but you don't want to be perceived as mean so you say something that can be misunderstood as affirming.

C: Tell them that Jesus is the only way to salvation.

A good friend who you know professes to be a Christian keeps using God's name in vain. You:

A: don't want to hurt their feelings, so you say nothing.

B: Punch them in the face and say, don't ever talk about my Lord that way.

C: Remind them what scripture says about our speech.

As we see from these scenarios the right way is the hard way. It is easier to walk away from these situations rather than engage them. It is easier to agree than to tell someone that are wrong and why.

But that is what Jesus did and that is what we should do too. It probably would have been easier for Jesus to just walk into the temple area as people were being ripped off and stolen from and just let out a big "passive aggressive" sigh and walk back out. He didn't. He got angry and flipped some tables over.

Obviously I'm not suggesting that anger is automatically, or even usually, justified. Christ exhibited *righteous* anger; righteous anger is the sort of anger that naturally fills our soul when we confront the depths of depravity and sin. It is wrong to seethe with rage because someone cut us off in traffic or gossips about us behind our back, but it is also wrong

to feel **no anger** when babies are murdered and the institution of the family is undermined and attacked.

Anger is good when it is directed at things that offend **not us**, but God. Just as Christ's intolerance, like the intolerance we're commanded to have, stems from a desire to save souls and defend Truth.

Even when we have righteous anger, we do not have carte blanche to act on it in anyway we please. But, according to the Bible, there *are* times to use strong language, there *are* times to cause a scene, there *are* times to hurt people's feelings, and there are times when we might need to use some physical force.

Jesus told us to turn the other cheek when we are personally attacked; He never told us to turn our backs entirely and let lies spread and evil grow.

So, enough with the niceties.

Christians in this country sound too similar to the the Golden Girls theme [song](#), and not enough like the [Battle Hymn of the Republic](#). There's too much 'thank you for being a friend,' and not enough 'lightening from His terrible swift sword.'

We're all hugging and singing Kumbaya, when we should be marching and shouting Hallelujah.

We're nice Christians with our nice Jesus, and we are trampled on without protest.

Enough, already.

I think it's time that Christianity regain its fighting spirit; the spirit of Christ.

I think it's time we ask that question: 'What would Jesus do?'

And I think it's time we answer it truthfully: Jesus would flip tables and yell.

Maybe we ought to follow suit.