

That The World May Know - Faith Lessons Of The Early Church - Session 2 – The Salt of the Earth

God Has a Strategy for His Witnesses

God has always intended for his people to live in the midst of culture and to live in such a way that the world would come to know who he is. The Israelites were his witnesses as they possessed the Promised Land. The disciples and early Christians were his witnesses as they went out and began to share the good news of Jesus in the cities and synagogues of Asia Minor.

1. What was the mission of the Old Testament followers of God?
1 Samuel 17:45 – 47
Isaiah 43:10 – 12
2. What was the mission of the early Christian missionaries?
Acts 1:8
Acts 10:37 – 43
3. Wherever he went—in homes, on mountainsides, along the roadside, in towns and villages—Jesus often taught crowds of people who came to see Him. In which other locations did Jesus teach?
Matthew 13:54
Mark 14:49

What might have been His purpose in teaching in those places?
4. The early Christian missionaries also taught in many varied places. Why did they go where they went?
Romans 1:16
Acts 9:17 – 21
Acts 13:1 – 5
Acts 13:13 – 16
Acts 14:1
Acts 17:1 – 4

Sent Out to Challenge a Human-Centered Worldview

As the early Christian missionaries spread Jesus' message, they encountered views of the world and the nature of truth that differed greatly from their own. The conflict between a God-centered worldview and a human-centered worldview remains to this day—just as it has since the Garden of Eden. Will people acknowledge God as the supreme being in the universe, or will they insist on claiming to be their own authority? Do humans determine truth, or is God the source of all truth?

1. According to the worldview presented in the Bible, who is the ultimate, sovereign authority in the universe?
Psalm 22:27 – 29
Isaiah 29:13 – 16
Romans 9:19 – 21
2. Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden.
Genesis 3:1 – 7

In which ways did Satan's tempting offer to Eve challenge a God-centered worldview?

Which alternative worldviews did Satan offer?

How is this conflict played out in our world and your life today?
3. In what ways does Paul's message challenge a Hellenistic worldview?
1 Corinthians 1:18 – 30

Consider his view in your own culture.
4. Paul was so effective in challenging the Hellenistic worldview in Athens that he was asked to address the Areopagus (the city council). He spoke respectfully yet

thoroughly to refute the assumptions of a Hellenistic worldview. What do you learn from this that can help you present a God-centered worldview in your world?
Acts 17:16 – 34

5. John makes it clear we cannot live with a Godly worldview and some other worldview.
Romans 1:18 - 32

What happens when people consider something or someone other than God to be the ultimate authority?

Satan has always attacked God's supremacy by seeking to eliminate the God-centered worldview and tried to replace it with his own. What is significant about this conflict?
Jude 3 - 8

Standing for God in a Pagan World

Every Christian is called to stand for God in the midst of culture, but it is not easy to do. Being involved enough in the culture to display our faith also puts us at risk for compromising with the values of the culture we are supposed to influence. We can, however, learn some things that will help us display our faith without succumbing to the beliefs and values of our everyday world.

1. God has often placed his people in the midst of evil cultures and called upon them to reflect his righteousness in those cultures. What terminology did God use to describe Israel's neighbors who worshiped pagan gods?

What words of caution did he give his people?
Exodus 34:15 - 16

How did Paul describe the worshipers of pagan gods in his day?
Romans 1:21 – 25

How does God describe the beliefs and values of “neighbors” in your culture?

2. Where does a Christian’s true citizenship lie? How does this affect our role in our culture?
Philippians 3:17 - 20
2 Corinthians 5:16 – 21
3. What did Jesus Christ recognize as the great risk of being his ambassador, and what did He pray for His followers as they fulfilled their role in the world?
John 17: 13 – 19
4. What was Paul’s commitment to proclaim and live out his faith, and how did he go about doing it?
1 Corinthians 9:19 – 23

What freedom did Paul claim in order to live out his faith?

5. Although Paul was willing to “become all things to all men” for the sake of the gospel, he also specified certain kinds of people with whom a believer must not associate.
1 Corinthians 5:9 – 11

Under which specific conditions should a believer separate from people who practice such behaviors, and to which people did Paul say this prohibition does not apply?

How do the distinctions Paul makes help you understand what it means to be “in” the world but not “of” the world?

Live Up to Your Reputation!

This history of Sardis and the archaeological discoveries made there provide valuable insights into the meaning and significance of the apostle John’s warning to the church in that ancient city. His warning also applies to us and our faith communities as we face the challenge of living for God in our world.
Revelation 3:1 – 6

1. What paradox existed concerning the church in Sardis? In what ways may the church that was later built in the Artemis temple reflect this?
Revelation 3:1
2. What did John tell the Christians of Sardis to do?
Revelation 3:2
3. Which specific steps toward reconciliation with God did John mention?
Revelation 3:3
4. Which consequences did John say would be forthcoming if they did not change their ways?
Revelation 3:3
5. What have you learned about some of the Christians in Sardis? What hope did John promise to them and others like them?
Revelation 3:4 – 5

Living for God in Your World

Today, just as during the days of the early church, God calls Christians to be witnesses of Jesus Christ through our words and deeds. It is not an easy task, but the words of Peter are a powerful reminder of who we are, what God has done for us, and how we can live in such a way that others will come to know God.
1 Peter 2:9 - 12

1. How do Peter’s words present a worldview that is in opposition to a human-centered worldview?
2. What makes Christians “aliens and strangers in the world,” and how does this terminology help us focus on living out our faith in everyday life?
3. What role does the obedience of God’s people play in how the world recognizes and responds to him?
4. How are you being “salt in the world?”
5. How are you avoiding the world?

References

Genesis 3	Genesis 50
Exodus 34	1 Samuel 17
Psalms 22	Isaiah 29
Isaiah 43	Matthew 5
Matthew 13	Matthew 28
Mark 14	Mark 16
Luke 14	John 15
John 17	Acts 1
Acts 2	Acts 9
Acts 10	Acts 13
Acts 14	Acts 17
Acts 18	Acts 19
Romans 1	Romans 9
Galatians 2	Galatians 3
Galatians 5	Ephesians 2
Philippians 2	Philippians 3
1 Timothy 4	1 Corinthians 1
1 Corinthians 5	1 Corinthians 9
2 Corinthians 5	James 4
1 Peter 2	1 John 2
Jude 3 – 8	Revelation 3