

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Lesson Guide
January 18, 2015
"Relationship of Disciples to the World"

Memory Verse: *"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."* John 17:14

Last week's lesson was about the Relationship of Disciples toward other Disciples. We discussed how that our different backgrounds, personalities, and preferences can cause us to be hard for other Christians to love, sometimes; however, we know that God is sanctifying us in love and He is growing us more and more so that we can show true love, patience and forgiveness to our brothers and sisters in Christ, and that the level of our love for other disciples is THE key indicator that proves that we belong to God and are serving Him as our Lord.

So... did you find another Christian brother or sister this week that maybe you aren't very close to, or maybe you feel like you have a hard time showing love for, for whatever reason? Did you find a way to show them love?

THIS WEEK we'll be learning about the Relationship of Disciples toward the World.

- 1) Disciples must go into the world, not expect it to **come to us**.

Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus didn't leave much room for discussion on this. *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."* Mark 16:15. As a contrast, Jesus DID tell his disciples to wait in the city (Jerusalem) for the coming of the Holy Spirit, the comforter, the gift that the Father and Jesus had promised, but that was the only thing they were to wait for. After that, they were to go. And Preach the Gospel. And make disciples. Out there. In the world. All the world. The ends of the earth. None of those descriptions sound like "just go to church every Sunday morning and we'll get them "saved" if they happen to walk in." Face it. We interact with the lost, backslid, and generally unchurched every day of our lives. If we say we want to be disciples of Jesus, then let's do what He said and bring His message OUT of the church and into the world.

- 2) Disciples must **LOVE** the world.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Just to clear this up really quick: the world we're talking about here is not the evil carnal, "world" or the influence of the devil and his kind "world", or the 'don't be conformed to this world,' "world". We're talking about the lost and dying world, "world." The For God so loved the world, "world." That world. The language can be confusing, but what we mean is "The Lost." The unsaved, unconverted. The pagan, the sinner. Lost and undone without God or His Son. That world.

Why would we love them? Well, we used to be them! We've worked with them, lived with them, grown up with them, been taught or even raised by them. We are connected to them and we should care for them. Maybe we

don't remember so good and maybe we've kept ourselves apart too long and maybe God has blessed us so much that we don't remember what that time in our lives was like. Some of us may have committed to Christ before we even had a chance to understand fully the hopelessness of being dead in our sins with absolutely no ability within ourselves to escape judgment. But the Lost will understand, if not now, then one day in the future. It will be sad and shameful, and on that same day, if we remain complacent and unloving, we will be forced to admit that we did not do all that we could have to love them, to tell them the Gospel. Is that a guilt trip? Maybe. But if you're feeling guilty, I'm not really the one who drove you there.

You want a better, more positive and exciting reason to love them? Jesus did! He loved them so much that He died for them. God Almighty demonstrated His love for them by taking their punishment for them, in their place! Jesus said, *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."* John 15:13 ESV. Jesus says "Those guys over there with the tattoos and the scars and drug habits and arrest records, and the liquor on their breath and the cigarette in their teeth... THOSE are my friends and I died for them just as much as I did for you, and before I saved you, you were just as much a pagan as they are!" Amazing pity, grace unknown and love beyond degree! You want to be like Jesus? You want to be a disciple? Show pity, compassion, grace and love to everyone... especially those who you might think deserve it least. Meet their needs. Sacrifice your time or your pride or your money and give them the hope of everlasting life by telling them about Jesus and showing them that somebody really cares about them. Somebody told you about Jesus when you were lost. Time to return the favor and show Christ's love to the world, to the Lost.

3) Disciples must go into the world and yet remain separate from it.

John 17:14 *"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."*

Next up, while we are in the world, preaching, making disciples, meeting needs, showing love to those in our community who need it the most, we must remain separate from the world. Jesus said of his disciples as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." Jesus is acknowledging that He and his disciples, as obedient followers of God, are not like the world around them. Now the disciples were all 100% human. They were born and died on Earth. So Jesus didn't mean they were supernatural or extraterrestrial; they weren't Superman and they weren't Aliens. He meant that because they were being "sanctified by the truth of God's word" that they no longer had the same desires of the people around them. Sinful, carnal, selfish desires were slowly being chiseled away by their relationship with Jesus, the Son of God. Their eyes were being opened to the Kingdom of God, and that made them as different from the world as night from day...

So, while we are fulfilling our commission, we need to be careful that we don't sacrifice our spiritual integrity in the process. Jesus was the greatest, most compassionate friend to sinners that has ever walked the Earth, but not once did He let them drag him down into their sin. Not once. Jesus taught us that we must be distinct, we must stand out. We must be the salt of the earth and a light on a stand to light up the world. (Matt. 5:13-16). If we lose our distinctiveness in an attempt to be more hip or relevant, we are voluntarily dousing our own lights and losing our saltiness, Jesus warned that salt that's not salty is pretty much just as valuable as dirt to be walked on.

(Paraphrase of Matthew 5:13 *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot."*)

4) Disciples must be **patient**.

Galatians 6:9 *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*

When we interact with a lost world, we don't need to throw up our hands in disgust when we don't get the reaction we want. When we invite our neighbors to Sunday school and church and they don't show up, the last thing we need to do is to get bitter and quit. Every act of evangelism doesn't end in a conversion. Paul describes evangelism in 1 Corinthians 3:6 – *“I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused it to grow.”* Planting the seed of the Gospel is not a Chia pet, and spring up overnight, every time. Sometimes God in His grace DOES let the first time of hearing the Gospel be sufficient to bring a sinner to salvation... but from what I understand those times are relatively rare. Evangelism and disciple-making, like farming, take time, effort, a relationship, a personal investment, sacrifice. The thing is, if we are willing to give up OUR plans, OUR schedule and OUR expectations about where, when and how the lost OUGHT to respond, and instead just do good, just plant, just water, just Lift our part, God straight-up, Capital “P”, Promises that we will reap a harvest when HE says it's time. We just have to trust Him enough to be patient, and love our neighbor enough to keep going and not give up.

So What? (Application Time)

- This week: share your faith. Yeah, I know you don't have time or you're scared or you're embarrassed or you're busy... Make time and do it anyway. Find one lost person to share your faith with. Ask God to put someone in need in your path this week. He might show you somebody in your family, or one of your friends or coworkers, or a cashier or waiter you've never met.
- Start a relationship with them by showing you care. Try to meet some of their needs. If they need gas money, or sound advice, or a shoulder to cry on, do that! Bring them to Sunday School. Bring them to church. Show them hospitality. Treat them like Jesus would have treated them: sacrificial compassion and love.