



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Don't Shoot the Messenger

Pastor Stephen Hayes

November 19, 2017 – Mission Sunday

Main Idea – When Jesus ascended back to Heaven, He left His followers behind to be used by God for His purposes on the earth. We should not separate ourselves from the world but should engage in, and support, God's work both locally and globally.

Jesus is the best example

- Jesus is the best example of how we should engage ourselves in the world without becoming part of the negative things of the world.
- As God lifts us up in our spiritual development, we want to be able to give more to help others.
- We want a “cup runneth over” anointing so that we will receive more – not for our own benefit – but to use to help others.

Excuses we use

- Because the world is sometimes a frustrating place, we occasionally make excuses to not get engaged.
- One typical response to negatively-tainted media news is to say, “I’m shutting off all news reports because the news services are focusing on the negatives.”
- Another common response is, “I don’t have enough time to engage the world. I’m too busy with my own interests.”
- Jesus did not use any excuses to avoid engaging in his day and time.
- “Burning out shortens your life, but checking out makes you cynical.”
- “God prepares in private, but proves in public.”

“Don’t shut it all out, but you can’t take it all on.”

- As we observe the world’s foolishness, we can be tempted to disengage – to cut ourselves off - from participating in world events.
- **“If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.”** Mother Teresa
- Jesus shows us the proper balance of how to stay engaged.
- **Galatians 6: 9-10 – And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**
- **Matthew 9: 9-13** tells of an instance where Jesus sought out, and dined

with, people who were considered evil and distasteful.

- We should get outside our comfort zones and engage others who are from different backgrounds and who are actively part of the world system.
- God has put a light in us we are to shine in the world as we live in the world. **Matthew 13: 24-30 is the parable of the wheat and the tares. In this story we see that God let the good wheat live among the weeds. Likewise, we today live in an environment that has been damaged, but we are not to remove ourselves just because our environment has “weeds.”**
- **Psalm 23: 5 – You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.**

Jesus has prepared us to go into the world

- Life was not always easy for Jesus, yet he stayed engaged even when it was hard to do so.
- One example of this is told at the beginning of Matthew 14. Jesus had just found out about the death of his cousin John the Baptist, and desired to be by himself to deal with his grief.
- However, the crowds followed him nonetheless. Even though Jesus clearly would have preferred to be alone, he still engaged the people with compassion.
- **Matthew 14: 13-14 – When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.**
- Before He ascended back to Heaven, Jesus prayed a long prayer to the Father where He lifted up his friends and followers – asking that they be protected and stay unified as they remained on the earth.
- **John 17:11 – “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom you have given Me, that they may be one as We are.”**
- This directly shows we are in the world for a reason. If Jesus had wanted to take them (and us) to Heaven, we’d be in Heaven already.

Realize your purpose

- If we disconnect from society we will miss our purpose for being here.
- Like Jesus, we should engage and have compassion for others.
- Even though we can’t solve all the world’s problems, we can do our part by helping those we are able.
- Each of us can work to do what we can. **“Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone.”** Andy Stanley

Reflective Questions for Don't Shoot the Messenger

1. Have you seen the 2017 Covenant Church Missions Sunday booklet (or the online version) that highlights some of the ways our giving has helped people during the past year? If you personally know about any of those stories, or participated in our missions outreach this past year, perhaps you can share a testimony about that project.
2. Have you ever experienced the feeling of rejuvenation one gets when one helps someone else?
3. Did either one of the excuses people commonly make to avoid engaging the world - that Pastor Stephen mentioned in this message - hit home with you?
4. How, do you suppose, Jesus had the ability to serve others even at a time he was experiencing personal grief (the Matthew 14 story of John the Baptist's death)? Does it inspire you to continue helping others in need, even though you simultaneously have your own problems?
5. What does your faith tell you is the right amount of support you should provide to Covenant Church's missions work this year?