

## Can You Live Consistently With Your Own World View? [Slide 1]

We finish our world view series today with the question: Can you live consistently with your own world view? We are living in a culture that is departing from Christian truth and morals which will force you more and more to live like a first century Christian. The simple answer to the question is that you can live consistently with the Christian world view in this age because Christians have been able to do it throughout history. Our present decline is not necessarily an indication we are near the end times because even here in America we have experienced times of falling away from God's truth and God brought us back through revivals of the church and awakenings in the general populace. Whether we are nearing the end times or not, our call to live faithful lives as lights in the world does not change.

Today I want to provide some general principles for relating to people who have different morals and beliefs than you do. Then I want to specifically address applying these principles to other Christians, to your extended family, and to your workplace.

[Slide 2] The first general principle is that you are to judge believers, not unbelievers. I invite you to turn to 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 in your Bible or you can look on the outline. 1 Corinthians is in the New Testament. It is the seventh book in the New Testament. Let me read that passage. Read. Paul's basic argument is that you judge professing Christians. You don't judge non-Christians. You don't isolate yourself from non-believers but you do disassociate with Christians who refuse to repent of their sin.

Notice that Paul in verse 11 refers to these professing believers not by the sins they commit but by the person they are. He doesn't refer to someone who commits immorality, he refers to an immoral person. He doesn't refer to someone who commits idolatry, he refers to an idolater. He doesn't refer to someone who reviles but a reviler, and etc. The distinction is important. These people have become so habituated to sin that it now defines who they are. In other words they are not someone who may struggle with this sin, may want to end it, but find themselves failing at times. Rather these are people who are defined by a sin because they have embraced it as part of their identity. They are not repentant. They are not struggling to overcome their sin.

God can forgive any sin. Christians should forgive any sin. But we cannot fellowship with those who will not repent, who will not confess their sin and seek to be rid of it. God makes it clear in verse 13 that we are to remove an unrepentant, professing Christian.

We are not to judge outsiders. That is God's responsibility and role, not ours. What does it look like to judge someone? It means to declare their crime and punishment. Never, ever tell someone they are going to Hell for any reason, because then you are wrongly judging someone. People go to Hell because they refuse to turn to Jesus Christ and trust him as their God and Savior. You won't know until they die whether they did that and even then you might not know, because they may have turned to Christ in their last moments or at a time you were not with them. You can never proclaim with final authority someone's eternal destiny.

You let the Bible or the Holy Spirit be the judge. You can say: The Bible declares that if you do not repent and trust in Jesus that you will face God's condemnation in Hell. You are not making a judgment then, because you are not proclaiming judgment on them. You are simply declaring the truth of what the Bible says.

Likewise, don't tell a non-Christian that they are sinning by doing such a thing because then you are pronouncing judgment. Rather say something like this: "The Bible declares that such and such a behavior is a sin." Let the Bible be the judge, not you.

If they ask you whether you think they are sinning, don't answer that question. Tell them that the Bible declares such behavior to be sin. It doesn't matter what you think and it is not important what you think. What is important is what God's word declares.

People who are not saved do not have the power to change. It is unfair to expect them to change without the power of Christ. Instead, we need to point them to Jesus. When it comes to salvation, all sin is equally wrong in God's sight, so their sins are no worse than your sins when compared to the righteousness of Jesus.

So, when it comes to non-Christians, our focus should not be on informing them of the sinfulness of any particular behavior, but rather pointing them to Jesus who can make us acceptable to God regardless of the particular sins we commit.

[Slide 3] A second general principle is to be gracious and kind toward those outside the faith. I invite you to turn to Colossians 4:2-6 in your Bible. If you are still in 1 Corinthians turn five more books back to the end and you will reach Colossians right after Philippians. In Colossians 4:2-6 Paul urges believers to be kind and gracious toward outsiders. Read.

Pray for opportunities to proclaim Christ. Paul urges the Colossians to pray that God may open up a door for the word so that Paul and company may speak the mystery of Christ. Pray that for yourself and for other Christians. There are certain times when people's hearts are open to God's truth and other times when they are closed to God's truth. You want to pray for those timely moments when a person is willing to hear God's truth. Only God can open that door of opportunity. Paul asked the Colossians to pray that Paul could speak clearly God's word.

Do you have non-Christians for whom you are praying? I hope that before you share truth with them that you pray for them.

Paul urges us to conduct ourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity when it comes. Paul clarifies in verse 6 part of what it means to conduct yourself with wisdom toward outsiders. You do it by always speaking and treating them with grace and kindness.

Be kind and gracious. Treat them with the same courtesy with which you want to be treated. Consistent kindness and graciousness is how you earn the right to speak truth later on. Most people cannot and will not change when they feel attacked. People change when it is safe to change. That means they have to perceive you as a friend who cares for them rather than as someone opposed to them or disgusted with them. This is how the most holy man ever to live, Jesus, was the friend of sinners. Sinners recognized Jesus as their friend even though they realized he did not agree with certain things in their life.

Don't worry that by treating people nicely and not bringing up their sins that somehow you are condoning their sin. People should be treated as God's creatures, not as the embodiment of a certain sin. We're all in the same boat. When you treat me nicely that does not mean you're condoning my selfishness and pride. We all have sins we wrestle with. You're not condoning anyone's sin by treating them with compassion just as Jesus did not condone sins by treating people with kindness.

[Slide 4] The third principle is that when truth is questioned or denied, speak the truth kindly. I invite you to turn to 2 Timothy 2:23-26. You will need to flip toward the back of the Bible from Colossians, but only four small letters until you reach the second letter to Timothy. Let's read those verses. Read.

Paul first warns us not to engage in foolish and ignorant speculations because they produce quarrels and quarreling is not our goal. It is foolish to argue about what Trump might or might not do once he is President. Let's just wait and find out. It is foolish to argue whether liberal progressives or conservative evangelicals are more biased. It is foolish to argue about other people's motives because we cannot know anyone's heart. We should avoid useless arguments.

Instead we are to demonstrate patience, kindness, and gentleness when we attempt to correct those in opposition to God's truth. At times people say things or post things that are simply not true or that encourage sin. I think we should be very careful about starting arguments, but once someone has spoken falsehood or encouraged immorality in a public sphere, then I think we have the right to respond with the truth. I don't know that we are always obligated to respond. I think you still need to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance on whether you should respond.

Paul says that in correcting those in opposition that God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, to come to their senses and escape the snare of the Devil. People need to hear the truth. It is how they escape the snare of the Devil. There are times when we must speak the truth for the sake of others, so that they might have the opportunity to repent before God and escape the Devil.

Our primary role is not to convince people, but rather to witness to the truth. The Holy Spirit does the convincing. We do the witnessing. Let me encourage you to think about how you can frame your response in terms of the goodness of God. For example, in the whole gay marriage debate I would say that God gives us laws in order to protect us from doing things that will harm us or others. His laws are an expression of his love. He has declared both in the Old Testament and the New Testament that homosexual behavior is wrong. Because God is by nature good, he would not withhold a good thing from us. Therefore homosexual behavior must be in some way damaging and destructive either physically, emotionally or spiritually to those who practice it. Therefore we oppose gay marriage and the encouragement of gay sex because we believe it will damage those who practice it.

Be ready to respond to those who criticize you appealing to the Bible as your moral authority by asking them what moral code they would use to replace the Bible. The Bible has guided Western Civilization for two millennia. If they are going to appeal to something besides the Bible, let us know what moral code they want to substitute and challenge them to explain why it is superior to the Bible. Of course, most of the time they don't have any substitute moral code. All they have is their personal feelings and opinion, in which case we can ask why they think their personal opinion should guide civilization.

[Slide 5] Let me close with some specific applications. First, what do you do with professing Christians who defend immorality or falsehood? If they claim to be followers of Christ, you have every right and responsibility to challenge them. Remind or inform them that followers of Jesus submit to the Lordship of Christ in all areas including beliefs and behaviors. Christians cannot advocate gay marriage, which is institutionalized sin, and still love Jesus. You love Jesus by obeying Jesus. You are not obeying Jesus when you dismiss what the word of God teaches. Jesus put the question this way in Luke 6:46: Read. Jesus is your Lord only if you obey him. If you're not living by the word of God, you're not following Jesus and you should stop claiming to do so.

It's a cop out for people to claim that since Jesus never said anything in the Gospels about homosexuality, that therefore he is not against it. That's an argument from silence which can also be used to claim all sorts of absurd things. Jesus never spoke about rape, genocide, or sex trafficking, so do you think he also doesn't oppose them? The truth is that Jesus said in John

16:12-15 that the Holy Spirit would come to the apostles and teach them the things Jesus did not address during his earthly ministry, which is how we got the New Testament and its teachings against homosexuality among other things. I don't expect non-Christians to be faithful to God's word. I do expect that from Christians.

[Slide 6] A second specific application has to do with extended family. How do you handle family gatherings, weddings, people visiting your home when they are a gay couple or a couple living together or engaging in some other kind of public sin?

Unless you are required to compromise your own convictions, I believe you should love them and accept them like everyone else. Would I invite a gay couple to one of my children's weddings? Yes, my doing that does not condone their choice any more than condoning the sinful choices of any of the other wedding guests.

Would I attend the wedding of a gay couple? No. I believe that those who attend a wedding attend as witnesses of the covenant being formed and who approve or endorse the forming of that covenant. Since I believe the forming of a homosexual marriage covenant is an act of rebellion against God, I would not attend the wedding. By the way, I have also maintained this standard with divorce and remarriage and marrying unbelievers. I have not attended the weddings of some extended family members where because of the divorce circumstances I could not endorse the remarriage. I also would not attend the wedding of a believer to a non-believer. I understand that other Christians might view these situations differently, but the bottom line is that you don't sacrifice your Biblical convictions.

Attend family functions and be kind and gracious to everyone. I would personally not bring up the issue, but if you are asked what you think about Bob marrying Bill, then I think you should say something like I said earlier, that God out of his goodness, has forbidden homosexual behavior.

If I invited a couple to my house who is either gay or unmarried to spend the night, I would communicate along with the invitation that I would require them to sleep in separate rooms while staying with me out of respect for my convictions. In communicating this I would try to communicate that I care for them and want to be as hospitable as I can, but I also have to honor God with his possessions. Having people in your home for a meal and for conversation or games is not the same thing as providing a bed for them to sleep together. Needless to say, these kinds of conversations are difficult ones to have and subject to misunderstanding. If you have a track record of kindness and graciousness before this conversation, that will certainly help your message.

[Slide 7] What about your workplace? The same principles apply, I believe. Treat everyone with kindness and respect. Only if you have to do something that implicitly supports sin do you have to make a stand. If you are asked to support the local GLBT group either financially or by joining it or by other means, then you have to take a principled stand for Jesus and decline. If you are asked your honest opinion about that group or about having sex reassignment or whatever, then you need to speak the truth. Silence will often be seen as agreement. You can't agree with sin.

Companies are not churches. We cannot expect them to uphold Biblical truth. I don't know that God expects you to speak out against company policy unless the company is actually asking for your opinion. Only when you are asked or forced to endorse sin or required in some way to violate your Biblical convictions, do you need to refuse. At that point you probably need to look for another job if they don't fire you first. Realize that you may have to pay the price for your loyalty to God's truth. All these things I have said, you need to filter through with your own

prayers for guidance, because the Holy Spirit may have specific guidance for you in any particular situation.

Jesus said, “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Whether it is in your family, among your friends and acquaintances, or at your workplace, you may have to suffer for loyalty to Christ and his truth. Make sure that you have done everything you can to love those with whom you disagree, to show respect, to demonstrate kindness, and to do good, so that if people do persecute you, you are being persecuted for righteousness sake rather than for being unkind, mean-spirited, and judgmental.

These kinds of challenges are going to increase. That is why we need the community of Christ for support, for wisdom, for encouragement, and to be a safe place to come when the world starts to beat you up. In these times do not neglect the assembling of the saints. It is vitally important that you stay connected with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. That may be what you need to live consistently the Biblical world view.