

# CHRISTIAN

## It's Not What You Think Session 3 – Insiders, Outsiders

People who aren't followers of Jesus and don't consider themselves Christians often expect more of us than we expect of ourselves. They say we don't act like they imagine Jesus would. So there's this tension.

Walter Isaacson, in his biography of Apple founder, Steve Jobs, includes this observation from Jobs: "The juice goes out of Christianity when it becomes too based on faith rather than on living like Jesus or seeing the world as Jesus saw it."

Jesus said that the defining characteristic of those who follow him is how they love one another—not simply what they believe. It's a challenging assignment. When Jesus gave it to us (in John 13:34–35), he was speaking primarily of loving those within the Jesus community.

But how should Jesus followers treat people who aren't Jesus followers—those who are outside the faith?

### DISCUSSION STARTER

When it comes to Christians judging those who are not Christians, what has been your experience—either as the one judging or the one being judged?

In your own church and perhaps other churches in your community, to what degree have you seen Christians wrongly judging those who are not followers of Jesus?

### VIDEO OVERVIEW

#### For Session 3 of the Video

At the end of the gospel of Matthew, as the followers of Jesus were gathered on a hillside before he left the earth, Jesus gave them their marching orders: "Go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). He didn't say, "Go make Christians."

His closest followers obeyed this command and developed Jesus communities. They lived their lives and spoke about Jesus in such a way that others were drawn to him and became his followers as well.

This movement grew dramatically for the first three hundred years. Then the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as its official religion, and things went bad. Now the church had earthly power. They decided not to leverage love anymore, but to leverage other things.

So the marching orders began to sound more like this: "Therefore go and impose Christian teachings, values, and worldview on everyone." That's the message of a group that's in control. But it wasn't the message of Jesus or of the New Testament.

Anytime the church leverages anything other than love, we go backward, not forward, in our influence.

Earlier, Jesus followers had understood that their goal was to win others to the faith. Paul was the ultimate example of this. He wanted to create Jesus followers out of people who had no interest in that— people who had their own religions and ways of life, their own world-views. And they weren't looking for a new one.

Here was Paul's approach: "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible" (1 Corinthians 9:19). He didn't "power up" or become judgmental; rather he made himself the slave of others—in order to win them. Paul said that around Jews, he became like a Jew to win them to Christ. Around Gentiles,

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he became like a Gentile to win them to Christ. It was all to win as many as possible. Paul knew this was the only way to cause others to become Jesus followers.

We learn more about Paul's approach in 1 Corinthians 5. In addressing a situation of gross sexual immorality by a man who was part of the church at Corinth, Paul stated that while we should not divorce ourselves relationally from those who aren't Jesus followers and whose behavior or morality we don't agree with, we are to discipline those inside the Jesus community when their lifestyles are inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus. That discipline may include distancing ourselves from them relationally.

***We're not to judge outsiders; we are to judge insiders.***

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In your community, what expectations do people who aren't Jesus followers have of those who are?
2. In what ways do you see Christians trying to leverage anything other than love to try to influence culture?
3. What are the essential requirements for "winning over" someone to a whole new way of thinking or believing?
4. What words and actions and attitudes of Christians cause others to feel threatened or coerced?
5. What are the most common ways that Christians come across as judgmental toward those who are not followers of Jesus?
6. If we have no business holding unbelievers accountable for their behavior, how does this free us in the way we relate to them?

### MILEPOSTS

- Whenever the church leverages anything other than love, we go backward, not forward, in our influence among outsiders.
- The only effective way to cause others to become Jesus followers is to win them.
- Followers of Jesus, as part of his church, are given moral standards from God to be accountable to. But we must never seek to impose these standards on outsiders. We're to judge insiders, never outsiders.

### MOVING FORWARD

Have you been guilty of judging the actions and behavior of those who aren't followers of Jesus? Do they tend to sense judgment from you instead of love and concern? Do you have a tendency to try to impose your standards on them? Make the decision now to keep others free from any such burden you might want to place on them. Commit yourself to doing whatever it takes to truly win them to the love of God.

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## CHANGING YOUR MIND

In these words, Paul reminds us that our calling to those in our world who are not followers of Jesus is to lovingly win them and not to judge them.

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. 1 Corinthians 5:12–13

## PREPARATION FOR SESSION 4

To help you prepare for Session 4, use these suggested devotions during the week leading up to your small group meeting.

### Day One

Read Matthew 5:1–5. What do you see as the main points that Jesus is teaching his disciples?

### Day Two

Continue reading in Matthew 5 and reflect on verses 6–9. Again, what do you see as the main points Jesus is teaching his followers in these verses?

### Day Three

Reflect today on Matthew 5:10–12. As we begin to take these teachings more seriously, what effect is it likely to have?

### Day Four

Look today at the word picture Jesus gives in Matthew 5:13. What does he want us to understand most from this?

### Day Five

Today, reflect on Matthew 5:14–16 and the word picture Jesus gives there. What is Jesus asking us to do—and how can it actually be accomplished?