

Missionary Mindset: Open Eyes pt2

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Open Eyes / 1 Peter 3:8–17

When we enter into another country for the purpose of sharing the Gospel, the first thing that goes thru our minds is this: I am a guest here. I need to make sure to not offend anyone so that I don't hurt the cause of the Kingdom.

That may not be everyone's thought, but it is a thought that goes thru the mind of every missionary, because what they are thinking is true...the reputation of the Kingdom is on the line in every interaction.

Why don't we think that way when we walk out of our front doors?

We live in an a culture that is increasingly unfamiliar with the claims of the Gospel. We talked last week about seeing people the way Jesus sees them, and this week I want to flip the script and ask you: how do the people we are seeking to reach see us? And what does that say about the Gospel?

Hard truths about how our neighbors feel about us are hard to hear, so I want you to brace yourselves for a moment to hear some stats that are not just "not great" but pretty awful when we consider what we are called to do.

Overall, only 28% of Americans have a favorable view of evangelical Christians in the US. And when the question is put to those who just outside our camp (non Christians) the stat falls to 18%. That's not great.

And when you look at unfavorability...we are liked less than Mormons, atheists, and Muslims. Ouch. So other religions, and those who have no

religion are viewed, reputationally, in a better light than followers of Jesus.

Now the first reaction to this is probably, well that's just because of the media. We are portrayed so poorly (I do think there is an anti-Christian bias in Hollywood. As soon as the David character in "The Last of Us" started reading from the Bible I knew that he was going to be a horrific villain. Could there be a Bible-reading preacher on a show who is actually loving and kind?- Rainn Wilson)

But sadly that actually isn't the case. "Respondents who reported personally knowing an evangelical "are slightly more likely than those who do not personally know an evangelical Christian to express a *negative* view of evangelicals (35% vs. 29%)," to quote the Pew study."

(<https://religionunplugged.com/news/2023/3/24/new-pew-survey-finds-americans-have-polarized-views-of-evangelical-christians>)

We have a problem.

And it is not just a favorable opinion problem. It is a trust problem. This from Lifeway research: "Pastors and Churches Face Historic Lack of Trust

"In 2009, 52% of U.S. adults said they had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the church as an institution. That was the last year a majority of Americans held that belief. In 2018, confidence levels dropped below 40% for the first time. They edged above that mark in 2020, only to fall back below in 2021 and now even further in 2022. In addition to small businesses and the military, the church currently ranks behind the police (45%) and the medical system (38%), both of which also saw their confidence levels fall 6 points this year. Despite the drop in trust in the church, it still ranks above 11 other institutions in the latest survey, including public schools (28%), the Supreme Court (25%), newspapers (16%), and Congress (7%)—the only institution falling into the single digits."

Being disliked is one thing...but not being trusted...friends that is a huge problem. And when you combine that with being disliked more when people know you...something has to change, and it starts with US, as individuals and as church bodies making a conscious shift to living as missionaries and not culture warriors.

So what can we do? Well last week I introduced the term “missionary mindset.” And this week I want us to start exploring what it looks like to start to think and behave like missionaries. To do that, let’s start with [1 Peter 3:8-17](#).

So notice that Peter starts with some actions that would set us apart in this day and age.

1, 2 Peter, Jude (5) Conclusion: Live a Godly Life (3:8–12)

When we look at all five words together, **we see that obeying these exhortations would lead to smooth relationships within the church (and with outsiders in most cases)**

Unity of mind- we need to have a singular focus. We may not agree on everything, but we agree on one thing- that our world needs the Gospel and Jesus is our only hope

Then he lists 4 mindsets that result from the purpose:

Sympathy- a heart of compassion for others (sound familiar from last week?)- *caring deeply about the needs, joys, and sorrows of others*

Thomas R. Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 163.

Brotherly love- a sense of family- *Their common relationship with Christ inducts them into the same family, and one evidence of genuine Christian faith is a warm love for others as brothers and sisters*- ibid

Tender hearts- a concern for the situation of others- *full of compassion to those who are experiencing pain...rooted in the mercy experienced in the forgiveness of sins. Again, one of the marks of the Christian life is compassion-* ibid

Humble minds- seeing ourselves as servants of others, not seeking to be in charge- *Humility means, of course, that others are considered more important than oneself ([Phil 2:3-4](#)) and that pride does not fill one's life . Humility was scorned in the Greco-Roman world, and hence the distinctiveness of Christian vision for the moral life emerges-* ibid

1, 2 Peter, Jude (5) Conclusion: Live a Godly Life (3:8-12)

Harmony and humility belong together, for the primary means by which harmony is disrupted is pride and self-assertion. Sympathy and compassion are closely related and even hard to distinguish from each other. Brotherly love is the middle term, showing that it is the most important of all the virtues and that the other virtues are embraced in the call to love one another as a family

Then in verse 9, Peter adds to this posture...we are to be people who do not seek revenge and who do not respond to harsh words or criticism with a similar response.

1, 2 Peter, Jude (5) Conclusion: Live a Godly Life (3:8-12)

These admonitions, of course, are rooted in the teaching of Jesus himself. For example, **in Luke 6:28-29** we find this exhortation: "Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic" Peter's wording does not match the Pauline or Jesus tradition exactly, but it is closer to the Pauline than the Matthean or Lukan tradition. Perhaps Paul and Peter drew upon the same Jesus tradition here

Stop and consider this for a moment. How different is this? How would this set us apart? And what kind of reputation would we have?

Why would this be important for a missionary? Because when you are a missionary, the first thing you want in a culture is credibility. Without that, without trust, why would anyone from a foreign place listen to us?

And make no mistake, we are most definitely foreigners in this culture when we are pursuing Jesus.

Which is why our response should be so different. When we are cursed, not only do we not retaliate, but we bless the ones who curse us.

1, 2 Peter, Jude (5) Conclusion: Live a Godly Life (3:8–12)

By “blessing” Peter means that believers are to ask God to show his favor and grace upon those who have conferred injury upon them.

The reason believers should bless is now explained (“because, hoti).

They have been “called” to bless others

How would those stats I shared earlier change if, as followers of Jesus, we were constantly looking for ways to bless people, rather than for reasons to be angry with them or hate them?

Peter then uses v10-12 to provide a reminder from [Psalm 34](#).

He hammers home this truth and this calling from the OT so that the people who he is writing to can see **the consistency of God’s calling as well as being reminded of what has ALWAYS been expected of them.**

That’s what some of us have forgotten in our decades of cultural dominance. We moved into that position because followers of Jesus before us had been people who had lived like this. Now not all of them and not all of the time, but many of them. Christians had been people who brought good things to cultures- healing and education and emancipation and care for the sick and orphans...go and look at history and see that Christians have been great forces for good.

But when we are bad, we have been very bad. And that is the problem, when we begin to forget the high calling we have been given, we use the gifts and positions God has given us for our own ends.

And we are seeing the results of that in our culture today, which is why we have to pivot and return to a missionary mindset. **We have wasted our opportunity to leverage our cultural position for the Kingdom.**

Now I know what some of us will say in response to this- but look at how sinful these people are! Look at what they have become! And how they treat us when we tell them what they are doing and advocating for is evil! We need to meet that response with force!

Do we?

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It is also imperative to note that Psalm 34 focuses on suffering and the Lord's deliverance of those who are afflicted. Peter already had alluded to it in 2:3 and now returned to it again. **The psalm was not selected arbitrarily since it addresses the issue faced by Peter's readers.** The psalmist reminded his readers that the Lord rescues his own when they suffer and that he will judge the wicked. Meanwhile the righteous display their trust and hope in the Lord by renouncing evil and pursuing what is good. **It is not difficult to see that themes that are central in 1 Peter are evident in the psalm: the suffering of God's people, their ultimate deliverance, the judgment of the wicked, and the notion that a godly life is evidence of hoping in God.**

What did Jesus tell us to do? Turn the other cheek. Pray for our enemies. Give them our cloak.

We are not to become like them. That just convinces them they are right. We have to be the opposite, but never stop speaking truth. In love.

That does not mean syncretism- that is just as bad as vengeance. It means staying true to who we have been called to be.

Missionaries have always been attacked by cultures they sought to reach. Often because they were not understood. Or because they threatened the power structures. Why should we be any differently. (Jim Eliot example- Ecuador- killed by people they were evangelizing)

And let's be honest, what is our momentary discomfort compared to what will happen to people who do not know Jesus when they die. And yes that is what is on the line. We are willing to lay down our lives so that people can be saved.

So what do we do? We have these attitudes, how then do we behave?

Look at vs13-16

Be zealous for what is good

1, 2 Peter, Jude (1) The Blessing of Suffering for Christ (3:13–17)

Peter was not promising, then, that believers would escape rejection and harm in this world. Some understand Peter to say that usually the righteous will escape harm but occasionally they will encounter suffering. This view should be rejected, for Peter did not suggest that sufferings are rare. Suffering stalks the believer until this present evil age comes to an end. Instead, Peter assured believers that nothing can ultimately harm them if they continue to walk in God's paths, that the pain inflicted on them now is only temporary, and that they will be vindicated by God on the last day

Do not be afraid

1, 2 Peter, Jude (1) The Blessing of Suffering for Christ (3:13–17)

The reason fear is prohibited relates back to vv. 13–14a. Since no one can ultimately harm believers and since even their suffering is a sign of God's blessing, then it follows that they should not fear what others can do to them

Keep Jesus first and do not worship anything else

1, 2 Peter, Jude (1) The Blessing of Suffering for Christ (3:13–17)

The heart is the origin of human behavior (cf. 1:22; 3:4), and from it flows everything people do. Hence, setting apart Christ as Lord in the heart is not merely a private reality but will be evident to all when believers suffer for their faith. **The inner and outer life are inseparable, for what happens within will inevitably be displayed to all, especially when one suffers**

Be ready to share the Gospel with gentleness and respect

1, 2 Peter, Jude (1) The Blessing of Suffering for Christ (3:13–17)

We have already seen in the introduction that *the persecution in 1 Peter was sporadic and informal* and does not represent the kind of state-sponsored persecution under Pliny and Trajan (see introduction). Hence, the text does not address primarily formal legal situations. *It envisions instead informal circumstances when believers are asked spontaneously about their faith.* This interpretation is supported by the words “everyone who asks you”, suggesting that believers respond to a wide variety of people, not exclusively in court situations.

1, 2 Peter, Jude (1) The Blessing of Suffering for Christ (3:13–17)

This does not mean, of course, that every Christian is to be a highly skilled apologist for the faith. *It does mean that every believer should grasp the essentials of the faith and should have the ability to explain to others why they think the Christian faith is true.*

1, 2 Peter, Jude (1) The Blessing of Suffering for Christ (3:13–17)

The implication is that unbelievers will recognize by the way believers respond to difficulties that their hope is in God rather than in pleasant earthly circumstances

1, 2 Peter, Jude (1) The Blessing of Suffering for Christ (3:13–17)

When believers encounter a hostile world and are challenged concerning their faith, the temptation to respond harshly increases.

Defending a position could easily be transmuted into attacking one's opponents. Hence, Peter added that the defense must be made "with gentleness and reverence

Keep your actions holy, so even when you are slandered those who do not even believe will defend you

1, 2 Peter, Jude (1) The Blessing of Suffering for Christ (3:13–17)

Peter continued to emphasize that the conduct of believers is related to the Lord, where all conduct is in the sphere of Christ. Further, Christians should only be abused for their "good" conduct. **Believers are to live righteously so that those who abuse their good conduct will "be ashamed"**

How much Kingdom impact could we have if this was our posture in every area of our lives? What would the reputation of the Church be if this was how the majority of followers of Jesus lived?

And then finally, we would know that if we were suffering, it would be for righteousness sake, rather than because we were trying to justify evil to make ourselves feel better.

A missionary mindset is about putting others first, living lives above reproach, and being willing to suffer for the sake of the Kingdom.

You cannot do that apart from Jesus, but you CAN do it because of Jesus!