

No Joy in Fittinginville

BY DAVID POSEY

We spent yesterday with about 70 young people talking about “the joy of not fitting in.” You’ll be hearing the same drumbeat today during the sermon. There is no joy in trying to fit in with a culture that does not value the teachings of Christ.

Why are we devoting so much time to this topic? I wish all questions were as easy to answer as that one. The Bible consistently tells us that Christians are not to love or become one with the “world.” To be “of the world,” is to be apart from God. To “fit in” with a “crooked world” (Acts 2:40) requires a severance from God and Christ.

There are a plethora of scriptures that support this point. Start with “world” in your concordance (online, <https://www.biblegateway.com>). You’ll find passages like this one: 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. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. John 17:14-16

There are many others, such as Rom. 12:1-2; I Cor. 1:20-21; 2:12; 3:19; I Jn. 4:15. Jesus said we are the light and salt of the world: both of those items are separate from the thing they affect. The word “world” (Greek, kosmos) means, the present condition of human affairs, in alienation from and opposition to God. It is human society, controlled by the power of evil, in opposition to God. Most often, of course, this “spirit” or attitude lives in human beings who are anchored to a worldview that rejects God and refuses to confess Christ.

As a practical matter, that means we cannot identify with that world — we cannot and should not “fit in.” Yes, we are in the world, but we are not of the world. To be “of the world” requires that we embrace the standards and values of the culture we live in. We can’t do that and expect to love the world or the things of the world (I John 2:15). All of our efforts must be directed toward fitting in to God’s kingdom, not this world.

But, like everything else worth achieving, that process takes a lot of focus and hard work. There’s a price to pay for not “fitting in.” Jesus said, If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

John 15:18-19

No one relishes the idea of being “hated,” for any reason. But Jesus promised that it will happen. So where’s the joy in that? No one can answer that unless they believe wholeheartedly that being identified with Jesus is the most important thing in their life. Whether or not we find joy in not fitting in with the world will depend entirely on where our affections are; and, where we feel most at “home.” If my affections are tethered to the things of the world, I’ll have a hard time dealing with rejection, loss and the inability

to acquire the objects of my happiness. That last issue is a “first world problem” — most people in the world can entertain no hope of getting whatever they want. And, in many parts of the world, their wants are really *needs*, like clean water and medicine.

But more importantly, *my affections tell me where my heart is, where I feel at home*. Am I at home with this world? If so, fitting in is everything. But if you abide with Christ, well... as we sing, “this world is not my home, I’m just a’passing through...” And fitting in? You’re a square peg, and the world is a round hole, right? So, as Dr. Seuss said, “*Why fit in when you were born to stand out?!!*”