

Colossians 2:8

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces^[a] of this world rather than on Christ.

Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

The Word of God for the people of God

Message Collide Week 1 – “Stand Firm

Since the advent of the Church, there have been people who have tried to spread false teachings about what it means to be the people of God. Paul considered these hollow and deceptive. He warned Christians to be careful what they believed to be true. We need to stand firm on the simple truths of the Gospel.

The world tries to water down the Gospel, and even spread false truths alongside it. Being aware of this is not enough. I have to make a choice to stand firm on the Truth of the Gospel.

These deceptive truths are very enticing. However, they will not provide us with the abundant life Christ came to bring.

Get into a rhythm of standing firm on the Gospel message. When you hear something deceptive or false, declare it as such and keep returning to the Word of God.

This week, we are beginning a brand new sermon series called “Collide.” Since the beginning, the Christian faith has been on a collision course with the culture around us. The values of the world do not align with the values of our faith. The priorities of the world do not align with the priorities of our faith. The kingdom of man is not seeking the same things as the kingdom of God.

Therefore, we shouldn’t be surprised when we experience conflict and tension. Instead, we should see the conflict and tension as confirmation that we are doing the right thing.

Have you ever been out on a hike or a walk and gone through a “rough patch.” You know the kind where every time you put your foot down you’re not sure if you’re going to roll an ankle or find solid ground. My favorite is trying to walk through a slippery creek bed. Any given step could send you airborne... It’s terrifying.

These types of perilous adventures are very much like walking through life trying to depend on worldly wisdom. You’re never quite sure you’re going to land on solid ground as principles and values are constantly shifting.

However, what we learn from Jesus is to trust in the eternally consistent teachings of scripture. If you have a Bible with you, turn with me to Colossians 2:8. I want us to read these words of Paul together.

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”

In this one verse, Paul warns us about the world’s logic and values. He calls us as believers to stand firm on a different set of values, those of Christ. But even when we choose to stand firm on the things of God, we will still be faced with the values of this world. How do we know when something we hear is worldly? How do we know when something we hear is Godly? How do we know when we are being led astray, or worse, being held captive by worldly principles and teachings?

As we get started I’d like to draw your attention back to the illustration I brought up a few minutes ago about going through a “rough patch.” Regarding worldly principles and teachings I said, *You’re never quite sure you’re going to land on solid ground as principles and values are constantly shifting.*

This is an important lesson to remember; *Worldly values are inconsistent.*

Let me help illustrate this point with something that we are all familiar with, one of the primary mottos of the kingdom of man;

Follow your heart.

Do whatever makes you happy.

These principles sound good enough, but the problem is they’re inconsistent, shaky, and contradict the teachings of scripture.

The word says in Jeremiah 17:9; *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”* The world says, *follow your heart*, but the Bible warns us the heart is wicked, deceitful, and confusing. (Who can understand it?)

Jesus says in Matthew 10:39; *“Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”* The world says that you need to make sure you’re happy no matter what but Jesus says we should lose our lives for His sake... meaning we trade all of the stuff that makes us “happy” in our kingdoms for His kingdom... where amazingly, we find deep abiding joy.

The heart is inconsistent, always changing, falling in and out of love with any number of things. Happiness is an ever moving target from one day to the next, sometimes an hour at a time.

Just be honest for a moment, how can you build anything stable off of these principles?

As you think about that last question flip over with me to Matthew 7:24-27. In this passage, Jesus is teaching His Sermon on the Mount. This is what He has to say about building our lives;

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. “The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

Did you catch that? Jesus Himself is commanding us to listen and obey His teachings. When we do, we will be standing on a firm foundation. Let me speak from personal experience when I tell

you that out of the many values the world will throw your way, none will allow you to stand firm when the going gets tough. They are shifting sands of inconsistency.

So why are they so attractive? Why does it sound so appealing to follow my heart, seek out whatever makes me happy, etc?

Worldly values are seductive

Another word for seductive could be “enticing.” Either way, the truth is, many things and words the world tries to give us and tell us can look and sound very attractive when we see and hear them.

Believe it or not, the Bible even talks about this.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.” 2 Timothy 4:3-4

You see, Paul knew many people would spend their entire lives searching for a truth that lined up with their lifestyle. In addition, many people reject the truth in scripture because it contradicts their lifestyle. They receive something meant to bring conviction and ignore it as useless. Therefore, we have to be people who continuously fill our ears and minds with the only truth we can find in this world, and it is in the pages of scripture.

The Bible is full of practical life principles that enable us to live the abundant life Jesus came to bring us. In John 10:10, Jesus specifically tells us this is the goal;

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

And what the devil can’t fully destroy, he will seek to distract. He will try to steal your time, treasure, and attention. That’s why we have to stand firm on the word of God. That’s why we have to abide in Christ (John 15:5). That’s why we need to have daily time in God’s word. And as you learn how to point out the worldly values that don’t align with the kingdom of God you need to also spend energy pursuing the values that do align with the kingdom of God.

Allow the Spirit to guide

It’s not enough to simply say “no” to the things and values of this world. We have to take it a step further and say “yes” to the things of God. Christ gave us the Holy Spirit to be a guide and a strength in this endeavor. Turn with me to John 14:17;

“He is the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

Jesus invites us to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us “into all truth.” Once we begin to follow God’s lead, we will be able to experience the best life possible. We will be constantly coming back to the only truth worth standing on at all, one that will never lead us astray.

There have been times in my life when I knew I needed guidance. The best place to find it is diving into the Word of God. I found that you cannot have distractions or noise around you for God to give you the true meaning of Scripture. There is so much distraction and commotion going on around us each day, we need to find some quiet time to allow Scripture to speak to us. It really does work and is simply amazing.

It takes devotion and effort to learn to walk in step with the Spirit as you follow the teachings of scripture. There will always be temptations to veer you off the path and go adventuring through the “rough patches.” But again, those temptations are only temporary, much like the rewards they promise.

Abundant life is found in the kingdom of God. And the Holy Spirit was given as a gift to help lead and guide the way.

The world is trying to draw you into values that are inconsistent, seductive, and at worse...*destructive*. But today, as we begin this new series, we all have the opportunity to invite the Spirit of God to guide us into scriptural truth...the one thing we can stand on, knowing it will remain firm.

The first step is to call out and recognize any false truths or principles you may believe in. I gave a couple of examples earlier, but for reference it would be things like;

- Follow your heart.
- Do whatever makes you happy.
- You are an army of one.
- You can become anything you set your mind to. (No matter how much I may want it I will never be the next linebacker for the Baltimore Ravens)

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The next step is admitting how enticing and attractive some of these principles are. It does you no good to pretend like they aren't... But it also does no good to think we can simply avoid the pervasive false teaching that is rampant in the world simply because we don't like it.

And finally, we must trust in the Spirit to lead and guide us into and through the truth.

Will you choose to take a stand today, and every day, going forward?

Will you choose to trust the leading of the Spirit?

Will you make a daily commitment to scripture?

Believe me, you will not be disappointed.