

## How Did Jesus Preach to People?

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In October, 2007, a Kansas Baptist church was fined 11 million dollars for picketing the funerals of American soldiers. "God is judging America for harboring homosexuals" the accused pastor declared. And there are the sincere people carrying signs screaming: The End is near- Repent! Or, God Hates Faggots. Or the screaming evangelist describing what happens to a sinner one minute after death. Was this negative attack the way Jesus approached people with the gospel?

T.D. Jakes said: "The gospel has not changed, but the method of delivery has." Today's successful church is probably seeker sensitive – meaning we cater to their wants- including rock music, rap, disco bouncing lights, extreme casual dressing and enclose the drummer behind a plastic cage. Sadly, it reminds me of my before-Christ dance band days when I played in smoke filled, dimly lit honky-tonk bars.

The general explanation is: We need to reach the post modern youth which rejects authority and doesn't trust leaders or preachers. It prefers coaches to pastors and text messages to sermons. It's a restless crowd wanting to be entertained with LOUD music and stage presentations. To them doing church is pray and pay. Several Christian magazines including *Christianity Today* and *Charisma* have published articles on this controversy and the downward transition from biblical Christianity.

*How did the Lord Jesus present the gospel?* Did He adjust His message for their acceptance? Hardly! At one time after the crowds had deserted Him He asked His disciples, "Will you also go away?" Three primary principles are evident in His ministry: He never *condoned sin*; He never *condemned* the sinner, and He always offered a *change*.

For example: When the Pharisee's caught a woman in the act of adultery they dragged her to Jesus and asked for His decision. According to Moses' Law adulterers were stoned to death. He looked at the frightened woman and started at the angry self-righteous leaders, but said

nothing as He knelt and wrote something in the sand. No one knows what He wrote, but I surmise it may have been the secret sins each accuser had committed, or, where is the man she was with? Whatever, it worked and slowly they sulked away.

Jesus said to her, "Where are your accusers?" There were none. Then He said, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." He did not condone or excuse her sin and He did not condemn her even though she had four husbands and the fifth was a live-in companion. Instead, He offered her a new and better life.

*What did Jesus mean when He preached repent?* Repent means to "change your thinking." He challenged people to stop thinking the old religious ways and believe the new hope of the Kingdom of God. Forget the old and embrace the new. There was no condemnation or accusation, but there was always an open invitation to "enter into a new life."

The world is waiting for a demonstrated message motivated by the goodness of God since it is God's grace and goodness which leads to repentance. Less than 2% of England attends church and there are expensive church buildings everywhere. Europe is spoken of as post-Christian and could become Muslim within ten years and it was the birthplace of the Protestant Reformation. Organized religion has become a meaningless ritual rejected by the masses because it doesn't meet anyone's needs.

Christ's Church isn't seeker sensitive or soft on sin and it doesn't repackage Christ's Lordship with a parameter today's rebellious youth will accept. The mega church which pioneered the seeker sensitive church methodology grew with thousands of members attending, but after a thorough study concluded it did not produce disciples or church attendees. The seeker sensitive approach does not work. *The Church changes the culture; the culture doesn't change the Church.*

To understand Jesus' attitude towards people three things should be kept in mind. 1) *People are God's highest priority.* Christ died for people; not for trees, animals or fallen angels. 2) *People are God's biggest problem,* yet He loved them so much He sent His only begotten Son

to die for them. Everything in the universe is programmed for a particular function, but only people, created in the likeness of God, have the ability to obey or disobey. 3) *People are God's principal way to answer the problem.*

Christ constructed His Church to continue and fulfill His mission of Redemption for all men and that is our commission.

Luke 9:10 tells us Jesus took His disciples aside and went into a deserted place – far away from people. Although He loved people and came to minister to them the crowds had taxed and drained Him and He needed time alone with God. However, verse 11 says, the multitudes followed Him out into the desert. Why? Because His Words were life and met their needs while Judaism left them empty and unfulfilled. He was Life and they wanted Life so they followed Him.

*What did He do?* Did He close the office, get an unlisted number, or refuse to see anyone for a few days? No! He received them; He spoke to them and He healed them. He acted!

He was exhausted and needed bodily and mental rest, but He received them. His attitude said “I’m glad to have you near Me.” He didn’t tell them how selfish they were or correct their erroneous doctrines or berate their dead religion. He spoke positively about the Kingdom, His primary and only message. He challenged them to change their thinking and believe the good news. They can start over again without the hindrances of manmade religion.

What the post modern culture *needs to hear* is not a short sermon or drama or professional story that tickles their ears, but that God really loves them and proved it on the cross and He has a wonderful fulfilling plan for their life. They want hope and here it is.

*The post modern culture questions the Bible absolutes*, but what they have don’t answer or satisfy. That’s why they substitute drugs and alcohol to dull their deep pain and pierce their body with trinkets and tattoos for recognition and acceptance.

Jamie Buckingham told an incident when he researched an article on the accessibility of city church pastors. When he asked for an appointment with the Senior Pastor of a large Atlanta

church the secretary told him “his schedule is filled for the next two weeks.” He returned the next day and apparently the secretary didn’t recognize him so the same scene was repeated a second time. “The Pastor is very busy and his schedule is filled for two weeks.” Jamie, a determined writer, returned a third time. This time the secretary recognized him and asked, “May I ask the nature of your need to see the Pastor?” He replied, “I’m doing an article on the accessibility of pastors of large churches.” She quickly left her desk and entered the pastor’s closed door. A few moments later the smiling Pastor approached Buckingham with his outstretched hand: “Sir- it is good to see you.” Amazing how available he suddenly became.

*He spoke to them about the Kingdom. Someone said, “Inferior people talk about things; most folk talk about people, but superior folk talk about ideas.”*

*And He healed them because He was interested in their needs. He was tempted, tested and tried in every point as we are so He personally experienced man’s fears and unfulfilled needs. He did not trade healing for acceptance of the gospel. He did not say, “Before I heal anyone you must promise to attend a synagogue and live according to the Law of Moses.” He made no deals, nor did He require a level of righteousness before He healed them. He met their needs because the needs were there. He accepted the unacceptable and loved the unlovable and He still does. That’s why He accepted you and me.*

Jesus told the story of a party loving Jewish boy who wasted his inheritance on having a good time. Finally, when he was broke and stooped to feeding hogs he came to his senses and returned home. His father, a type of our heavenly Father, did not condemn him, but lovingly accepted him back home and into the family by preparing a great feast. The story is not about the son’s loss, but the Father’s loss: MY son was lost and is found.

That still is Jesus’ attitude toward people, good or bad, worth or worthless. He accepts them where they are, as they are and offers them an exciting new without any sense of guilt or condemnation. When unbelievers hear and see this message manifested and confirmed when

the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk and the dumb talk, they too will believe. It's the Jesus way.