

Hold The Line

Introduction

- A. I have watched with some surprise, frustration and disappointment as the Chic-fil-a drama has unfolded for the last few weeks.
 1. A comment by Dan Cathy, president of the restaurant chain, about supporting the “biblical definition of the family unit” has led to a firestorm of criticism.
 - a. He’s been accused of attacking the gay community and fostering hatred.
 - b. Politicians threatened to block new Chic-fil-a restaurants in their cities.
 - c. The comedian Rosanne Barr even tweeted that anyone who eats at Chi-fil-a deserves to get cancer.
 2. You see, our right to free speech gives her the right to make such offensive statements, but does not give Mr. Cathy the right to express his personal opinion about marriage. It’s an odd world we’re living in, isn’t it?

- B. But it’s also a changing world. I’ve thought about that for the last few weeks.
 1. Twenty-five years ago when I first began preaching, I didn’t mention homosexuality in my sermons. It would have made people uncomfortable even to mention it.
 - a. If a politician spoke in support of homosexuality, it would have marked the end of his political career in most places.
 - b. If a political party defended homosexuality as part of the platform, every candidate they put forward would have been defeated.
 - c. If a business owner had promoted homosexuality in the advertising and used openly homosexual celebrities as their spokesperson as J.C. Penney is now doing, it would not have survived.
 2. A lot has changed in twenty years. A majority of Americans now believe that homosexuality is morally acceptable, about a 15-point turn around in the last twelve years (Gallup, May, 2012).
 3. What has happened? The line has moved. What was once judged as morally wrong is now morally acceptable. The line has moved.
 4. And this is only one area of moral compromise among many we could cite.

- C. But this presents all of us with a challenge: as the line moves, will we move too?
 1. Make no mistake, the past couple of weeks has taught us that we will face enormous pressure to move with our culture. Mr. Cathy has been viciously attacked and his business threatened because he dared to share his opinion on this one controversial issue.

2. As disciples, we will face countless moral and spiritual issues where the thinking of a culture is a long way from what the Bible teaches.
 - a. As our culture drifts, will we move too? Will we cave to the pressure of our culture and compromise where we stand and what we teach to curry favor with our community or to avoid criticism and persecution?
 - b. Or, will we hold the line – uphold God’s standard, no matter how far our culture drifts and how much God’s principles are ridiculed?

- D. I shared with you a few weeks ago that I’ve had on my heart some things I’d like to say to the Dowlen Road family before my time here draws to a close. This is one of those things.
 1. Over the last nine years, one of the things I have appreciated most about our family is the appreciation you all have for sound, plain preaching. I’ve never had the slightest concern about how I would be received by this audience, even when I’ve addressed very controversial issues.
 2. But I know that all of you understand that, as a culture drifts, standing for truth and speaking truth will become more difficult. There will be enormous pressure to move the line...which brings me to the admonition I want to give you tonight.
 3. When that pressure comes, you need to hold the line! We need to stand for what is right no matter how far a culture drifts from it (**I Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 1:6-9**).
 4. This is the admonition I wanted to share. With the rest of our time, I want to identify some specific areas where we need to anticipate that our stand for truth will be assaulted...and where we need to hold the line.

Hold The Line On Bible Authority

- A. Bring up the subject of Bible authority and I’m afraid that a lot of people are ready to turn off their brain. I fear that the way we have taught on this subject has left many convinced that the whole subject is really confusing and too difficult for them to decipher. Let me say two things about that.
 1. First, Bible authority really isn’t that complicated. It simply involves figuring out how God communicates His will in the Bible.
 - a. Sometimes it comes through direct statements (“don’t commit adultery), sometimes through examples of what the early disciples did right; sometimes from things that are implied by the text.

- b. Actually, when you examine each of these closely, there is nothing new or unusual in all of this. God is simply communicating His will in the same way that we communicate with each other all the time.
 2. But let me add secondly, that this is all very important. Doing the will of God is vital (**Matthew 7:21**). If we are to do His will, we must recognize that this is how God is telling us what He wants us to do.
- B. But you need to anticipate that people will come along with other ideas about Bible authority.
1. There will be people who will argue that our whole approach was made up and is being forced on the Bible. They will suggest that we need a new way to understand the scripture, a new approach to Bible authority.
 2. But let me tell you where they will end up...it's always in the same places.
 - a. In the end they say things like baptism isn't really necessary for salvation; instrumental music is okay; divorce and remarriage is not sinful, etc...
 - b. You see, all of this talk about a new way to understand the Bible is not really about understanding the Bible. It's about men getting their way and doing what they want to do.

Conclusion

It will not always be easy to demand Bible authority for what we believe and practice, especially in this time when so many are looking for a way around Bible teaching. But if we are to help people get to heaven, we have to hold the line.

Hold The Line On Divorce And Remarriage

- A. Again, you will encounter people who want to convince you that Bible teaching on this issue is difficult and complex. It's not (**Matthew 19:1-9**). Notice three things in this text.
1. First, when you marry, God joins you together and you're not supposed to separate (**v. 6**). When married people divorce, they violate the law of Jesus.
 2. Second, when they marry someone else; they commit adultery (**v. 9**).
 3. Third, the only exception to the rule is when one puts away their spouse because they have been unfaithful. Pretty simple, right?
- B. It is...until you start dealing with actual people and the messes they create. Then, emotions get involved and reasoning is clouded and people want to change the rules.

1. So, what will we do when...it's our daughter who is married to a man who does not treat her right and she decides to leave him and move back home? Will it still be a violation of God's law; or will the line move?
2. What happens when she divorces that guy and meets a "spiritual man" and remarries? Will it still be a violation of God's law; or will the line move?
3. What happens when this congregation withdraws from her from unlawfully separating from her husband or entering an adulteress marriage? Will we stand with God's people as they follow God's law; or will the line move?

Conclusion

It will not be easy in a culture like ours with four out of ten first time marriages ending in divorce. But no matter how much the world may frown at us, no matter how many choose to go elsewhere because they do not like the stand we take on this issue. We have to hold the line and stand with Jesus.

Hold The Line On Instrumental Music

- A. We are known for it.
 1. If people in Beaumont know nothing else about our group, they know that we are the people who don't have instrumental music accompanying our singing when we worship.
 2. I think it's the right thing to do.
 - a. It's never been okay to worship in just any way (**Genesis 4:3-5**). We must allow God to tell us how to worship (**John 4:24**).
 - b. And, when we examine what God has said, we find several references to singing (**Colossians 3:16**); and no references in instrumental music.
 - c. Those who claimed to follow Jesus understood this for a thousand years.
- B. But times have changed.
 1. Most every denomination has some form of instrumental music as part of their worship, from a piano or organ to a complete orchestra.
 2. So when they came here and we have nothing, that is strange. When they learn that we are actually opposed to using instrumental music, then we've drifted into the bizarre.
 3. There is pressure that comes with this feeling of being out of step with everyone else and being viewed as odd.
 4. I think some begin to cave to that pressure and start looking for ways to fit in with the religious world.

- a. To be specific, there are going to be voices that say things like opposing instrumental music is just our tradition and there is no biblical basis for it.
 - b. Some will say that, if we just knew the Greek better, we would discover the instrumental music is authorized in the New Testament (although no translator ever concluded this).
5. But we must remember what is truly driving this. It is not the desire to be true to the text or honor God; it's about taking away the stigma that comes with being different.

Conclusion:

We must not allow pressure from the religious world to move the line on the issue of worship (**John 4:24**). If our worship is going to honor God, then we must follow His instructions. If we do that, we will not use instrumental music. We need to hold the line and stand with Jesus.

Hold The Line On Alcohol

- A. I've chosen to make my point about alcohol.
 1. The truth is, I could have made the same point about a number of moral issues (immodesty, gambling, pornography, dancing, etc.).
 2. There was a time where followers of Jesus drew a line about this stuff. They rightfully saw this conduct as contrary to what Jesus taught us to be and largely left it alone.
 3. But times have changed...and line has moved...and an increasing number of disciples are less certain about these things...and less tolerant of plain teaching on these subjects.
- B. Drinking is a great example.
 1. I hear an increasing number of people – especially young people – who argue that the only thing the Bible condemns is drunkenness and that there is nothing wrong with having a few beers with their friends.
 2. While I do not want to be unkind or unduly general, I don't think this change has been provoked by a desire to honor God or from a careful study of His word on this issue.
 - a. I don't encounter many people who say, "I've carefully studied the Bible and concluded that the way God wants me to honor Him is by hanging out in the club and drinking with my friends."

- b. I think it's a whole lot more about the pressure of our culture and wanting to fit in with the crowd.
3. This is simply the wrong motivation (**Romans 12:2**). We ought to be led by God as we make decisions about these moral questions. We need to look at what the scriptures say.
4. For example, if you examine what the scriptures say about alcohol...
 - a. How the word wine is used
 - b. What is condemned in scripture
 - c. The alcoholic content of what we drink today
 - d. All the warnings about wine (Proverbs 20:1)
 - e. Why the Bible gives these warnings (Proverbs 23:29-35), etc., you will not be making the argument that God does not care if you have a few cold ones with your friends.

Conclusion:

I've appreciated the strong stand this church and its leaders have taken on moral questions like these. I appreciate the support you have given to the preaching of God's word on these issues. But the devil is not done with you. And as the line in our culture continues to shift, the pressure to bend and mold with culture will increase. So, I want to say to you tonight, hold the line and stand with Jesus.

Conclusion: Wherever God draws the line...

We've identified four areas where we need to hold the line. The truth is, these four points could be replaced with countless others. It really boils down to this, wherever God draws the line, we need to hold it there. My prayer is that this will always be true of this congregation.

Is it true of you? Have you been respecting the lines God has drawn in your own life? If you are a disciple, have you been allowing God's word to lead you in everything?

If you are not a disciple, there is another line that will be drawn one day, the one that separates the lost from the saved. You need to get on the right side of that line.