

# Making evangelism a way of life.

## The Criticism

### PODCAST OVERVIEW

#### Introduction

To critic the world we find ourselves in, is to *call it what it is*. When the world we find ourselves in moves outside of God's plan, we may feel at odds with the values and culture being practiced around us. The church may see itself in the position of telling the world what is wrong with it; "don't do this, do that." However, this stance is neither helpful to the world nor does it advance the Kingdom of God.

The Promises and The Criticisms belong together. Living as Exiles means constantly navigating through life, working out how and when to embrace and bless this world while at the same time resting it.

#### The Exiles practiced criticism

Daniel's criticism was very subtle whereby he participated in the king's menu requirement but offered an alternative of raw veg and water, rather than objecting to the king's menu. Daniel, while in exile, practices a dangerous criticism of the culture he was in and still remains true to the values of Israel.

A second example is when the king builds an idol that all the nation need to bow to. In this situation, Daniel and friends show participation in as much of the culture as possible, but will not bow to another king. There are things that they just cannot do even if thrown into the flames.

Daniel's friends were delivered from the flames but there must have been 1000s of Jews that were not delivered from the fire. This is the same now, all over the world, where Christians practice criticism even if they are persecuted. This is the call of the exile.

**The call of the Exile is to criticise the culture or worldview, whether or not God steps in to deliver us.** It is not a decision based on a favourable outcome, it's a decision made regardless of persecution. The call on us as exiles is to bless and participate fully in the culture that we live, but also to stand against the things that are contrary to the Gospel. It is important that we spend time in the stories of Jesus and see that He does not spend time trying to stop people from sinning, but rather spends time setting people free

(from religious control, civic control, physical and spiritual oppression).

### **Jesus passes on this way of being in the world to us.**

In Hebrew culture, a father would store away wine each year of his daughter's life which would be opened and shared at her wedding day. This would mean that 16+ barrels of wine would be consumed during the wedding celebrations. After some time (possibly days) of celebrations and wine drinking, the wine has run out. Mary decides on a solution based on her stories of Jesus' childhood and life so far. Note the importance of stories of Jesus, in the heart of a follower.

Jesus turns huge urns of water into wine. The water in these was the purification water that enabled a Jew to live in the world. Jews would bathe in this water to make themselves clean after contact with a gentile, to make themselves clean again from the world. Jesus takes the symbol that represents the separation of the holy and unholy (sacred and secular), and turns it into wine. Jesus himself is tearing down barriers between holy and unholy.

We have a mission to bring the Holy of God into that which is unholy. We become the ones that turn water (barriers) into wine (fellowship). We find the barriers and change it so that no one can be separated from unholy (inequality) or holy (encountering God).

### **How do we do that?**

The Gospel is a blessing, but is not about having more. It is about laying down our lives and taking less so that there is something greater for everybody. Without this filter, we are in danger of adopting the value of "more" which is closer to consumerism than Kingdom value.

Are we willing to share our homes, wallets, cars and clothes with others? There is nothing that we own, everything is a gift from God and it still belongs to Him. How are we using everything that He has blessed us with in order to make the world a better world, to bless it and to use it to make a statement saying: "we are not going to live according to this world".

All of this is a form of criticising the world we live in. It challenges the worldview. Too often we have used criticism as a negative telling off of the world, rather than a positive stance practicing the alternative.

Gordan Wislon criticised the world without telling it off, he instead chose to live according to the Gospel that blesses the world and practices an alternative way of living. Some people did not like that he practiced forgiveness, we can expect the same from some of those closest to us who will react badly to the Gospel values lived out.

We need to have the courage to call out things for what they are. This gift of the Spirit is one that we could ask from more frequently, in order to take up what Jesus has asked of us.

## REUNION GATHERED

The space that reunion creates needs to be;

1. **Welcome.** A sense that you and the others belong.
2. **Safe.** Otherwise who'd ever take a risk. Practice confidentiality.
3. **Significant.** God's call on you and on the others is significant. Your time and presence is valuable so speak and do the things that come from or arrive into that which is significant. Treat everyone as present even if they can't be with you.

## EXTRA TO THE PODCAST

1. Do you understand? If not ask, either in your group or get in contact with Neville.
2. As time goes by on reunion you will be reaching moments where you know what you next need to do in mission and evangelism. Self commitment is tough and often withers from pressure or distraction so who in your reunion community can you ask to check in with you? It won't always be the same person, it's the one who resonates with your 'action plan'. They don't hold you accountable, you hold yourself accountable. They are there to challenge you when you don't bother with your commitment, to call you on when it feels to hard. To laugh with you when it goes wrong. To pray for you throughout. Time bound it so it isn't a for life thing!
3. If committing to an action what are your 4 or 5 next steps. The best way to write these and share them is to think what will it look like so I know it is happening?
4. Paul in Acts 15 describes a decision as seeming good to them and to the Holy Spirit. Keep checking in, teasing things out with your reunion community and with God.