



Counter Culture: Lesson 2

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Counter Culture

Lesson 2: Love God

Bible: Matthew 7:21-23

Bottom Line: The life of a Christian must be lived IN Christ, putting God first in every area.

OPENING GAME: Jailbreak

Have your group pair up (boy-girl) and have all but one pair sit in chairs next to each other with their arms hooked. Make sure the pairs of chairs are scattered through the room. If the number of guys or girls is uneven then either a guy or a girl will have to pair with the same gender.

One couple has to remain standing with no chairs.

Every guy in the couple gets a number 1-4.

Then the couple that is standing will either call a number 1-4 or JAILBREAK.

The guys whose number is called must get up with their partner and get to another set of chairs without letting their arms get unhooked.

If a couple becomes unhooked they will have to lose their chairs and stand up for another call out.

If the standing couple calls jailbreak, every one grabs a new partner and different seats.

TEACH

Today we will be looking at the words of Jesus at the end of His Sermon on the Mount; He is talking in this portion to those who believe.

Before the verses we will read today, we can see that Jesus was telling the people that they are identified by the fruit they produce.

He then goes on to tell the audience this. That although they may have thought producing fruit was nothing but a one-time conversion or an experience of works, those who do not listen and do not do the will of the Father will not enter the kingdom of heaven no matter how hard they “try.”

These verses are a hard saying from Jesus; He was not cutting corners or playing nice.

Jesus had a thing about always keeping it real, and He is telling us here that if we desire to love God it has to be more than lip service or just trying to win God’s approval.

*Have a student read **Matthew 7:21**.*

We see three things about loving God that Jesus is telling us.

1. It’s about Being, not just Claiming.

When the end of time comes, everyone will be there. Everyone will stand in front of God for judgment one day and be accountable for the life they’ve lived.

Part of the life we live is in our relationships. This includes our relationships with parents, our relationships with one another, our relationship with our finances, and our relationship with your future spouse and children.

You are also going to be accountable regardless of what you believe. If you say you’re an atheist, you won’t be any more after you stand in front of God for judgement.

Everyone will also recognize Jesus as Lord. Everyone will cry out “Lord, Lord” thinking that they too are Christians. But some people will be surprised. They will call Him Lord, but their actions will have proved otherwise. They will realize then that they have been clinging to the false hope of salvation by works.

It may be a sad thing to think about, but everyone will not enter heaven. This is a God-thing, not an us-thing.

These kind of statements make us feel uncomfortable; we do not like to think of people going to hell, but God holds us all to a standard because we have all sinned against Him.

These are people who lived their life thinking that they had a sure way into heaven.

Jesus is speaking here to “church” people, the people that thought they knew God, thought they did all the right “motions,” and thought that they were going to heaven because they played the good guy in life.

Just because you claim you are a Christian does not make it true.

You can claim to be a basketball player but not be able to throw a ball into the ocean if you wanted to.

You can claim to be a basketball player all you want - it does not make it true.

*Have a student read **Matthew 7:22**.*

We see a second point about loving God in this verse.

2. It's about Whose You Are, not just What You Do.

We try to “re-define” Jesus and make Him fit our own interpretations.

In a church, there was an altar call. A man came up and said, “I am Jesus Christ.”

The pastor told him that he couldn't be Jesus because Jesus was at the right hand of the Father and would not return until the end of time.

The man said, “Well, the plans have changed.”

For years the church has tried to re-define Jesus, to re-define salvation, to re-define what it takes to be a Christian.

One day at judgment we are going to stand before God and say “I think...” and He is going to say “I don't care what you think.”

We have this need to where we always want to be right, so we try to mold Jesus into what we want Him to be, and that's where our problem lies. It is sin and we know we are wrong, but we still feel a need to argue with Jesus.

*Have a student read **Matthew 7:13-14**.*

Jesus is talking to the “church” people of the time.

Jesus said that “many” will say...

Jesus says that many will go to the path of hell.

He was talking to the religious leaders of the day here, the people who were in the “pews” every Sunday, the people who were volunteering in the ministries of the church, the people who were in the youth groups.

Jesus is saying that a lot of people are going to miss eternity because they missed Him!

What have you done in this life for Jesus?

People have done some pretty amazing things (*Salvation Army, Goodwill, Samaritan’s Purse, working in a church ministry, homeless shelter, etc.*).

The people in **Matthew 7:22** preached, cast out demons, and performed miracles in Jesus’ name; looking from the outside in, we would think they would be a shoo-in to heaven.

But Jesus is saying that many of those people are not in.

The people who responded in verse 22 were more concerned with being in God’s PRESENTS rather than His PRESENCE.

At this point you may want to talk about Black Friday Shopping and how chaotic it is, or add your own personal story about the point of wanting the “stuff” of God without wanting to know Him personally; this lesson is designed with the concept of Black Friday and the idea of the pallets of “stuff” in the middle of aisles.

On Black Friday after Thanksgiving, millions of people go shopping.

Some people make a sport out of it, making a timeline of what time each store opens, making a list of the items they are to get and at what point of the store they are located.

Most stores have the sale items on big pallets, all wrapped up in shrink-wrap in the middle of the aisle; the hardcore shoppers sit around these items with a hand on the pallet, waiting for the time when the store employee comes by to cut the wrapping – then all chaos breaks loose!

We treat God the same way a lot of times. We have our lists of what we want in life, the stuff that we “need” to be happy, and we seek that stuff.

We want God's peace, so we seek it.

We want God's understanding, so we seek it.

We want God's blessings, so we seek it.

But in the midst of all of our seeking we forgot to seek God.

*Have a student read **Matthew 6:33**.*

Jesus says, "If you want My presents, you have to be seeking My presence."

Does this verse say to seek Him last? Or second?

It says to seek Him first and then it will all be added to you; in other words, God is saying "I will give you all of Me! You can have everything! If you seek My presence instead of the presents."

It is kind of silly that we would rather worship the creation instead of the creator, that we would rather worship the gifts, the things, the stuff that we receive instead of giving full and due glory and honor to the One who created it all.

When we seek God's presents instead of His presence, we miss God.

There was a couple on a date going to see a movie one night.

They found what movie, what time, and headed off; they had a GPS, but being a man, the husband said that they did not need it.

They drove around and around the road they knew the theater was on but never saw it.

It was too late to catch the movie, and it was the last day it was showing and the last time it was showing that day.

They drove back home, just to pass the theater as they were driving back; they just missed it.

Let's look at Judas, one of Jesus' disciples.

Did he help preach? Yes. Did he help cast out demons? Yes. Did he help perform miracles? Yes. Did he go to hell? Yes, because he missed Jesus.

We can live a lifetime of good works.

We can live a lifetime of going to church.

We can live a lifetime of doing all of the “rituals” of the church and still miss Jesus.

We miss Jesus because we do not have a relationship with Him; we merely have conversations that involve Him, but we do not have that relationship to where He knows us.

*Have a student read **Matthew 7:23**.*

There is a third point that Jesus is making here about loving God.

3. It's about a Relationship not just a Conversation.

We can have a conversation with Jesus, but He requires a relationship.

The people being cast out did great things, they did them in His name, and who is to say that they did or did not work.

But the issue is that they did it because they knew of Him, not fully knowing Him.

Jesus responded to them saying three things:

First, “I never knew you.”

The people in these verses did some really good stuff. All the things they did were positive. They thought that they knew Jesus. These people had a conversation with Jesus. They may have talked to Him, they may have sat in church and felt a pull on their heart, they may have wanted to talk to their pastor about becoming a Christian, but in the end they thought it was not necessary.

Jesus is saying, “We might have had a conversation, but we have never had a relationship.”

Secondly Jesus is saying, “Get away from Me.”

The only place you can “get away” from God is hell.

Thirdly He's saying, “You who break God's laws.” (“You evildoers” [NIV])

No matter what you are doing, there is still sin in your life, and we just cannot bring sin into the presence of God.

Tonight, I am asking you if you know Jesus. I am asking you if you have a relationship with Him.

When we meet Jesus, we change!

When people meet Christ, they change!

We can't meet Jesus and stay the same.

We're not always perfect, but there is a point in our journey (like the Prodigal Son in **Luke 15:17**) where no matter how far away we run from God, we come to our senses.

When we meet Jesus, we change!

We cannot come to church, pray a prayer, and go live however we want!

You might be thinking, "This is making me uncomfortable." Good. Because for so long we have become so comfortable that we have neglected the Gospel!

Because we are so comfy in our little religion, there are people who are going to go to hell because we cannot share the truth with them!

Jesus embraced uncomfortably on the cross; it is time that we got uncomfortable for Him.

You are either living for Jesus or for hell. There is no middle area.

*Have a student read **Ezekiel 36:25-27**.*

Being a follower of Christ is to believe that He died on the cross for your sins and that God raised Him up three days later.

Being a follower of Christ means that you will wear yourself out pursuing the things of God rather than the things of this world while you ask God to stamp His seal of approval on whatever you want to do.

Have you changed?

Do you have a relationship with Jesus or have you just had a conversation?

Being a Christian is so much more than just praying a prayer or going to church or being involved in whatever ministry you want to be involved in.

It is about a lifestyle, an everyday decision when you get out of bed each morning and say "Today, I'm living it for You, God."

You cannot go to heaven and live like hell.

One day you are going to face Jesus; we all are. What do you want Him to say about you?

You could be born in the church, could be a deacon's kid or a preacher's kid, and that will not save you.

You could be heavily involved in the church, in every ministry that there is, and that will not save you.

You could go to a camp and rededicate your life once a year every year, and that will not save you.

What saves you is a new heart; what saves you is fully trusting in Jesus every day you live, trusting Him to show you His righteousness.

What saves you is living every day for Him and Him alone; that is when He will say, "I know you."

So what would Jesus say about you?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has your life changed since you met Jesus?
2. How does Jesus change a person's life?
3. How do loving God and following Jesus go hand in hand?
4. What is Jesus talking about in **Matthew 7:21-23**? (*The end of time*)
5. Why do you think this saying of Jesus is counter culture?
6. In what ways do we claim to be Christians but not act like it?
7. What is the difference between a conversation and a relationship?
8. How can a person do all kinds of good things and still go to hell?
9. Why would God send people to hell?
10. Why do you think we make light of God's justice in our lives?
11. What are some way you could get to know Jesus better?
12. How can you be more concerned with God's presence than with His presents?
13. Do you think we all act like Judas when we do things that are against the will of God?
14. What things do you need to let go of to be closer to God?