

LET'S TALK TO WORLD RELIGIONISTS

Mark 16:15, 16

INTRODUCTION:

1. There is no doubt; we live in a diversified nation.
 - A. Anthropological, cultural and religious diversity is found at every corner.
 1. The American Community Survey Report, as quoted in the U.S. Department of Commerce Census Bureau Report of 2010 "... estimated the number of foreign born in the United States to be nearly 40 million, or 13 percent of the total population."
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/acs-19.pdf>
2. With the arrival of these many foreign born people comes a wide range of diversity inclusive of dress styles, language and religious beliefs.
 - A. As the New Testament church, we are vitally interested in each of them, knowing they are eternal beings that are in need of salvation more than anything else.
 1. The commission is still there to "preach the gospel to every creature" - Mark 16:15.
3. The Christian religion, as laid out in the New Testament, is "suffering" today as we see its adherents dwindle in number.
 - A. In 2003 Mac Lynn reported that 32% of members of the church of Christ attend congregations of less than 100 members.
 1. Around the same time, Bailey McBride revealed that 11,500 of our 13,000 congregations in the U.S. are less than 200, and over 5,000 are less than 50 in membership.
 - B. All of this, while the population of the U.S. increases.
 1. The 1950 U.S. Census indicated the U.S. population was 150,697,361 people.
 - A. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1950_United_States_Census
 2. In 2010, the U.S. Census indicated the population had increased by 158,048,177 to 308,745,538 people living in the U.S.
 - A. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_United_States_Census
 3. This represents more than a 100% increase in the U.S. population in the past 60 years while the church has had little or no numeric growth.
4. So, what are we to do about this?
 - A. There are not many choices.
 1. We can do nothing.

2. Or, we can busy ourselves talking to those about us that are outside of Christ.
 - A. Which means we will have to confront those of religions that we know little or nothing about.
5. In this lesson I want to suggest some things that will help us talk to those of the religions that we may not even had heard of only a few years ago.
 - A. One thing we need to keep in mind as we speak to people of “other faiths,” regardless of what their faith might be we are not interested in winning an argument; we are interested in winning them to Christ.
 1. So often in such confrontations we win the battle, but loose the war.
6. Needless to say, with this lesson we can only touch the fringe of the hem of the garment due to time constraints.

BODY:

1. WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT THEY BELIEVE

- A. Christians need to better equip ourselves to defend the faith and share the gospel with others - 1 Peter 3:15.
- B. We need to safeguard ourselves against false teaching - Acts 20:28.
 1. Biblical ignorance runs rampant in the church today.
 - A. Few people are prepared to deal with the “milk” of the Word, much less the deeper things of God - Hebrews 5:11-6:3.
 - B. And even fewer are prepared to deal with matters connected with the doctrines of the religions of the world.
- C. We need to test beliefs and teachings in light of the Scriptures - 1 John 4:1.
- D. We need to take a Scriptural approach to exposing religious error as we contend for the truth - Galatians 2:5; Jude 3.
- E. Good books are available that will provide us with information on the varied religions existing today.
 1. Religions of the World, Lewis Hopfe & Mark Woodward.
 2. Some Modern Cults, Sects, Movements and World Religions, Garland Elkins, Thomas B. Warren, editors.
 3. The Kingdom of the Cults, Walter Martin.
 4. BTSOP Class Notes
 5. Many others are available that take a more individualized

approach.

2. THE APPROACH TO TAKE

- A. First, we need to understand their religion.
- B. Secondly, we need to understand that common terminology among those that embrace Christendom is often different from those that embrace world religions.
 - 1. For example, references to God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit do not mean the same, if they mean anything to some.
 - 2. Likewise, the use of words like heaven, hell, salvation, sin, and worship do not necessarily mean the same thing to us as they do to them.
- B. Thirdly, we need to understand what they believe about Christianity.
 - 1. As we do so, we need to recognize that those of many of the world religions do not share our beliefs.
 - A. Many do not share the concept of the fall of humanity as seen in Genesis 3.
 - B. Many do not share the view of the world-wide flood in the time of Noah as seen in Genesis 6-9.
 - C. Many do not share the view of a transcendent or immanent or any other type of God - Exodus 3:14.
 - D. Many do not share the need for a personal savior whose death enabled individual salvation - John 3:16.
 - E. Many do not share a belief in the God-man savior who was born of a virgin, crucified, resurrected and ascended to heaven - Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 23:33; Luke 24:1-6; Acts 1:9.
 - F. Many do not share the belief that salvation is achieved through specific beliefs and works of obedience - Mark 16:16; Hebrews 5:9.
 - G. Many do not share the belief in the power of prayer - James 5:16.
 - H. Many do not share the belief in eternal life spent in either a heaven or hell after death - Matthew 25:46.
 - I. Many do not share the belief in the return of the Savior at some time in the future - John 14:1-4.
 - J. Many do not share the belief in the end of the world as we know it - 2 Peter 3:10-12.

- C. Fourthly, we need to develop a respect and friendship that will aide in breaking down the barriers that will then provide opportunities to share our faith.
- D. Fifthly, we need to pray for our efforts and the efforts of others.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. People outside of Christ need the gospel more than anything else, no matter where they are found.
 - A. If they are Atheists, they need the gospel.
 - B. If they are denominationalists, they need the gospel.
 - C. And if they are world religionists they need the gospel.
- 2. We have been a commission - Mathew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16.
- 3. You may be here today and are outside of Christ,
 - A. You need the gospel as the power of God - Romans 1:16.