

The Setup

SLIDE- Donald Trump

A month ago we talked about how pleased we were that Donald Trump was back in office. He and his team are producing evidence of a real shift in policy from the “ungodly” to the “righteous”

We celebrate that and we LOVE that he’s doing this. God loves it too. God celebrates when men on earth defend his handiwork of creating TWO genders and when men on earth stop celebrating their sin during things like “Pride” month – just 2 things that President Trump has moved to make right again. So it comes as good news that our President is acting in way that pleases God.

BUT

This morning I want to bring the other side of the coin to light. I want to share a perspective that points toward US and away from Donald Trump. I want to share how WE must be acting in alignment with our faith and the new direction that has been set for our country. You see, we still have a lot of work to do. In fact MOST of the work is in front of us and most of it was there before the election and without our intervention will remain long after Donald Trump is gone from office:

SLIDE- Ungodly List

A short list of the unrighteous and ungodly activities in our country right at this moment looks like this:

- ABORTION: Babies are still being murdered every day – yes murdered. Though no longer enshrined in federal law, each state is in the process of deciding which side they are on – Satan's or Gods
- APOSTASY: The same churches that were “woke” before the election are woke today and causing untold damage to the souls and salvation of seekers and believers. The Methodists are still ordaining gay clergy and putting their finger right in the eye of God by mocking his creation called marriage. We still have churches telling believers about the love of God but not his righteousness. We still have church leaders saying that there are many paths to heaven, not one path through Jesus Christ. We still have church leaders who will not speak about homosexuality or abortion from the pulpit for fear of “losing” church members.
- UNGODLY LIES: Our schools still have inappropriate, ungodly reading material and forced leftist/Marxist lies being taught within them. Our kids are being brainwashed right under our noses. Those same teachers remain in place and that material is still taught in the same way it was before the most recent election
- DEPRAVITY: The movie, television and world or the internet is saturated with ungodly content. Sexual innuendo, vulgarity, nudity, violence, homosexuality, hate, vengeance, rage, jealousy, lies, murder, idolatry are all on display and many times are celebrated as normal, expected and desired actions of human beings. The level of depravity is the same today and it was before the recent presidential election

SLIDE - Statistics

And the personal statistics are terrible:

- over 50% of Christians express acceptance of homosexuality
- over 60% of Americans think that abortion should be legal in all or most cases
- around 50% of evangelical Christian men are in sexual sin of some type
- around 50% of US Christians believe that sex between unmarried consenting adults is sometimes or always acceptable
- 68% of born again Christians say that there is such a thing as absolute moral truth
- 94% of American adults do NOT to have a biblical world view
- 75% of young Christians fall away from their faith after high school

The stats I just shared have NOTHING to do with the Federal government, our legislators or our president. They are all personal beliefs and decisions that an individual makes in how they think and be default, how they live their life.

I will suggest that ONLY WE can make America great again. ONLY WE can make America Godly again. ONLY WE can change our country because it doesn't NEED a change at the head or the top, it needs a change at the HEART. And ONLY Jesus Christ, present in the heart of born again believer can change that. NO law and no earthly leader has that kind of power

SLIDE – Change the Hearts

Want our Federal and State governments to outlaw abortion?

Change the stat that says that over 60% of Americans support it!

How do we change the statistics? Change the hearts of those Americans through the gospel of Jesus Christ

Want our Churches to follow the Bible as it's written?

Change the stats that Christians report because half of them support adultery AND homosexual lifestyles and nearly one third of them are unaware that the bible is truth personified!

How do we changes these statistics? Change the hearts of the church attending Christians so they desire the truth from their pulpits on Sunday's

Want our entertainment cleaned up?

Change the stats that say that 50% of evangelical men are in sexual sin of some kind or that over one third of Christian men use pornography on a regular basis. Change the statistic that says that only 6% of Americans have a biblical world view, because when you view the world thru the bible, you won't tolerate ungodly entertainment. What would happen if all 210 million Christians stopped watching this stuff?

How do we change these statistics? We change the hearts of the Christians that consume entertainment so they demand righteous and uplifting material instead of the absolute garbage called for today.

So exactly HOW do we do that? How should we go about changing the hearts and minds of men? And importantly, are we SUPPOSED to do that?

SLIDE – Matthew 5:13-16

Let's read from the scripture in Matthew and see what Jesus had to say about it:

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Jesus says we are “no longer good for anything” unless we remain salty. You see there is no way to know if salt is salty unless someone tastes it. We are to be Christians in such a way that we can be EXPERIENCED by others in the world. Others should be impacted and even changed by our saltiness.

Jesus goes on to say that we are the “light of the world” and we are to be a light shined before others and to do that we must get IN FRONT of others, in service, in love and in community. Jesus finishes by saying that others should then see our good works in order to give glory to God.

SLIDE – Be a Christian

The paraphrase of Matthew 5:13-16 is simple. Christians are commanded by Jesus to go into the world and represent the God they serve. We are to change others in the process by doing good works not for ourselves, but to glorify God.

The cliff notes version is up on the screen ...
“Be a Christian in the World”

SLIDE – Kirk Cameron

A few nights ago, I had the pleasure of hearing Kirk Cameron speak over in East Knoxville. It’s the 2nd time I’ve heard him share a message and the first time I had a chance to shake his hand and say hello.

In case you don’t know who Kirk Cameron is – check out the screen for a brief bio of his work. If you’re a baby boomer (like most in this room), then you are familiar with the Seaver’s family and Kirk acting role as Mike Seaver in the sit-com called “Growing Pains”

Kirk gave me something during our brief encounter. He gave me this buffalo nickel
SHOW THE NICKEL

In a few minutes I’ll share with you why he gave it to me because it’s directly related to our discussion.

During Kirk’s presentation he shared similar thoughts on the terrible state of the world we live in. He didn’t have all these stats, but framed his argument around how it “felt” to be a Christian in America over the past few years – not good. About 15 mins into his comments he asked us a question:

SLIDE – Setback or Setup?

Do all of the recent terrible events and bad political policies feel like a Christian setback?

Does it seem as if all of these events are rushing toward an end?

Maybe even THE end, as in the end of the world, the rapture and Christ’s return?

Does it make you want to distance yourself from the work of God in the world, hide in your home and wait for the (you just know it’s very soon) rapture??

OR ...

Is God using these terrible events to launch a people and our nation into revival?
In other words, if this is NOT a Christian “setback”, maybe it’s actually a Godly “Setup!”

He went on to explain that all revival that has taken place both in this country and around the world happened JUST AFTER a spiritually dead, hedonistic, God forgetting or God hating time period.

In other words it was at the darkest possible spiritual and cultural moment that God began to work within His people to bring about revival, restoration and resurrection of a Godly culture.

The entire premise of Kirk Cameron’s over 1 hour message hung on how you might answer this question:

Is the spiritual darkness we see today and setback to us as Christians OR is it a set-up by God himself to allow us to participate in His plans for revival

That question and his words struck me - hard.

This is a question about attitude.

This is a question that when answered produces Christian apathy or action

Here’s why it’s so profound:

If you view this question through the lens of “SETBACK” – you’re more likely to do nothing, to not engage. To sit on your hands and “wait for the rapture” because it’s “just around the corner anyway.” That inaction lets the world get darker and darker. It gives ground to an already defeated foe in Satan. That decision turns it’s back on the biblical challenge to preach and share the gospel to the whole world. It does nothing to help spread the salt, light and truth of Christ. Staying home, waiting for the rapture is not biblical and it’s not Christian

However, if you view this question through the lens of “SETUP” – you’re much more likely to do something. To engage in the spiritual fight with God as your partner and the sword of truth as your weapon. A setup is like a softball question during an interview. You already know the question is coming AND you already know your answer and you simply can’t mess it up! If you see the answer to this question as “setup”, then you see the unholy and ungodly things in front of you as opportunities for God to work through you to mitigate, modify or eliminate them. You see that below all of these ungodly things are PEOPLE who’s hearts need changing and you realize that while you are breathing on this earth that this is YOUR JOB. You are God’s partner in sharing the gospel. You are the spark that is fanned into the flames of revival. You and the Holy Spirit are linked to a mission to change the hearts of men from sin and disobedience to love and righteousness

What Kirk was getting at is VERY important to Men of Covenant because the bottom line is that how you answer that question, drives HOW you ACT within the world. A “setup” answer puts you on a path to accept your assignment and will of God to change the very world we live in. It drives you to engage with the culture in a way that boldly brings light and truth into the darkness. For a Men of Covenant this concept puts the meat on the bones of our mission. Remember our mission? It’s to “pursue holiness.” The Man of Covenant that sees the world around him as a setup is now able to expose the pursuit of holiness to the world. The Man of Covenant pursuing holiness under the precept that the current state of the world is a setup, not a setback will engage the world and deploy his growing holiness on behalf of the holy God he serves. His holiness pursuit will shift from a solely internal

struggle to one that changes the world around him. He has a revelatory moment where he can clearly see the broken world around him and say to himself:

“God detests that. God want’s that gone. God accomplishes what He wants done on earth through his people. I’m one of God’s people. I have the Holy Spirit within me to do God’s work. I have unique gifts given to me by God to do His work in the world. So today and every day after that: I will go and do, I will protect and defend, I will seek out and engage. I will not be silent and I will not sit still.”

BUFFALO NICKEL

What on earth would this coin have to do with Kirk Cameron and his message?

SLIDE – Indian Chief side

The buffalo nickel was minted for only 25 years – from 1913 to 1938. On one side there is an image of an Indian chief (Iron Tail – a Sioux, Big Tree – a Kiowa, and Two Moons – a Cheyenne). I’m stating the obvious but here goes anyway.

The Indian Chief on the front of the coin is considered the leader of the tribe – similar in position to our Presidency. Consider he’s the man at the top. The tribe wanted their chiefs to have wisdom, bravery and to serve the tribe selflessly. Though he was at the top of the leadership pyramid, the tribe often made decisions as a tribe or as a council rather than on the chief alone. Sound familiar?

SLIDE – American Buffalo side

Earlier we discussed that our “chief” can’t change our homes, our towns, schools, cities and country alone – he needs US and that brings us to the other side of this coin where we find the American Bison or as it is commonly referred to the “Buffalo.” For purposes of today’s discussion this side of the coin represents us, the people of the “tribe” of the United States. Men of Covenant fall into this tribe and just may be the most important members.

Though we need to be careful not to anthropomorphize animals (fancy word for giving them human characteristics) there are times where their example is helpful in teaching. With that in mind let’s examine how the Buffalo behaves when threatened. When it appears the most dark to them. When they feel like they are under attack by forces around them. What do they do?

Interestingly they behave in a very biblical way!

- When challenged they form a circle and in the very core of that circle are the babies
- Around all of the babies are the cows – the mothers of those same babies
- Around the cows are all the young, less experienced males
- Around those young males are the experienced warriors – the older bulls

These bulls are battle tested and wise the various threats that present themselves to the herd.

These bulls know how to fight both in a position of offense and defense.

When the need arises that will leave the edge of the circle and pursue the danger to engage it and neutralize it. They will attack and defend against ANY and all threats even to the point of sacrificing their own lives for the herd behind them.

Interestingly, the young males are clearly able to see this behavior and guess where they learn their future roles? That's right, from the older, battle tested bulls who are out in front of them demonstrating the necessary behavior. Doing what they are called do so that the younger males may one day do the same.

Guys most of us in this room are the older bulls. We have years of wisdom to guide us. We are here to protect our children, our wives and our families BUT just as the buffalo behave, so should we be here to protect the children and wives and younger men of our neighbors, friends and countrymen. The battle tested bull will sacrifice himself for any calf in the herd, just as quickly as he would for his own.

In the same way, we are called to be that type of Christian man. To get out into the world and engage on behalf of God. To do it for our families, for ALL families, for our Country and for ALL of our countrymen. We are never called to be inside the circle, huddled and waiting for the end. We are called to the edges of the circle. Right where the danger is, right where the need is and right where we can have the most impact.

Ben Yoder is a perfect example of seeing the setup as an opportunity and then stepping out onto the edges of the circle and leaving safety behind.

Ben knows God. God knew Ben before he was formed in the womb and ...

God made Ben a uniquely gifted man who knows RVs, knows how to fix them and how to haul them
For such a time as this ... the time of the hurricane Helene where a Godly man like Ben could help the most

And help he did!

Ben met angry and frustrated people with the unyielding love of Jesus Christ

Ben gave hopeless folks the eternal hope that is found in the gospel

Ben fed the hungry, clothed the naked and gave shelter to the homeless

The outcome of Ben's obedience to the "setup" of hurricane Helene?

A portion of the world in ETN and WNC became more Godly and more full of righteousness. People that encountered Ben are now more likely to align with God's biblical principals because they've seen firsthand one of God's men loving them in the most humble and unselfish way

One man, filled with the Holy Spirit, did that and it started with his decision to see the tragedy of Helene as a setup for him to "step-up" and do his part for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

SLIDE – Setback or Setup?

CLOSING

I'll close by coming back to the question:

Do you perceive the spiritual darkness we see today as a setback to us as Christians OR is it a set-up by God himself to allow us to participate in His plans for revival

If you see the answer to this question as "setup", then you see the unholy and ungodly things in front of you as opportunities for God to work through you to mitigate, modify or eliminate them. You see that beneath all of these ungodly things are PEOPLE who's hearts need changing and you realize that while you are breathing on this earth that this is YOUR JOB. You are God's partner in sharing the gospel. You

are the spark that is fanned into the flames of revival. You and the Holy Spirit are linked to a mission to shift the hearts of men away from sin and disobedience to love and righteousness.