

# Sermon Study Guide

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## Sermon: Showing Us the Way in a Post-Christian World

### **IN** *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. What surprised you about Pastor Brad's 'definition' of the 'post-Christian culture'? How does his definition compare with what you hear in the media today?  
What experiences have you had in this 'culture'?

### **UP** *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. Read Jeremiah 29:1-7, which is the background and the beginning of the letter to the Hebrew exiles in the city of Babylon.  
What question does Jeremiah answer for the exiles (vv. 5-9)?  
What did God say to them? How is this different from what the Israelites might have done?
2. How can God's directives (above) be an answer for us in our 'culture'?  
How do Romans 10:14-15; 1 Thessalonians 2:8 and Hebrews 13:2 also speak to how we should live?
3. What counsel did Peter give to prepare for the dangers and persecution that we might encounter? (1 Peter 2:11, 12)

### **OUT** *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter."  
— Charles H. Spurgeon  
What is your 'definition' of a 'missionary'? Has your understanding changed with hearing Pastor Brad's message? If so, how?
2. How can you serve as a 'missionary' this week?  
How can the principles of 'being embedded in the culture' and 'showing hospitality' guide you?
3. How can we pray for our city? How can the group pray for you?

### **Resources:**

Early Church serving during the Roman plagues--

<https://unityinchrist.com/LegacyOfLove.htm>

<http://www.alanknox.net/2011/01/the-christians-support-not-only-their-own-poor-but-ours-as-well>

*UP – IN – OUT* reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

### **THE WORD (NIV)**

#### **Jeremiah 29:1-7**

This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. <sup>2</sup>(This was after King Jehoiachin and the queen mother, the court officials and the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the skilled workers and the artisans had gone into exile from Jerusalem.) <sup>3</sup>He entrusted the letter to Elash son of Shaphan and to Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. It said: <sup>4</sup>This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup>"Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup>Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. <sup>7</sup>Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

#### **Romans 10:14-15**

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup>And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

#### **1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8**

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, <sup>8</sup>so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

#### **Hebrews 13:2**

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

#### **1 Peter 2:11, 12**

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup>Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

# Sermon Study Summary

On this Global Missions weekend, our guest speaker was Pastor Brad Morrice, the church planting co-ordinator specializing in new French churches (Montreal). He began with a statement from the movie, "Back to the Future," in which Marty McFly said, "I'm from the future." Our future is in a culture of post-Christianity. Yet God is preparing us to talk about Jesus in this post-Christian world.

## 1. The Problem

In our post-Christian culture, Christian values are eroding. Our world is becoming hostile to the Christian faith. Although Canada has a long tradition of Christianity, there is a broad and intense rejection of what we believe. This is particularly true in large cities. There is also a growing ignorance and misunderstanding of God, sin, scripture, even what a church is. People don't talk of faith as they did in years past. Christianity is perceived as evil. Pastor Brad had a ministry in a high school, and a journalist told him, "How dare you inculcate the high school with the evil value of Christianity!" Christopher Hitchens wrote the book, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*.

## 2. The Change Christians need to make

In the Old Testament, people drew others to God with "come and see"—come and see the tabernacle and later, the Temple. In the New Testament, Christ and the believers emphasized, "Go and tell" (Matthew 28:19-20, Act 1:8)—to be a missionary. A missionary means "one sent". Charles H. Spurgeon said that every person is either a missionary or an imposter. We all are missionaries. Paul asks the question, "How can they hear unless someone tells them? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? (Roman 10:14-15)

The mission-minded person goes to the people. We need to get "on mission" ourselves, adopting an intentional mindset, making disciples as we go about life. We need to become deeply embedded/ involved in the lives of people around us who need Jesus. We need to be a friend to people who calls us in their time of need, people who invite us to dinner. Jesus was mocked for being a friend of sinners (Matthew 11:18-19). A major way to do this is through hospitality, especially to strangers who don't know Jesus (1 Thess 2:8, Hebrews 13:1-2). Even in the early church, hospitality was required of elders (Titus 1:8). Share your home with others; invite them to dinner or to a bbq. Be authentic—be interested in their interests. Discuss what you both care about, what you love and hate. But most importantly, don't hide your faith. Share your life with Jesus and your faith—put a little pebble in their shoe.

You are the best evangelist your friends have. St Francis said: "Preach the gospel to every creature—and use words if necessary." Pastor Brad added: "words are always necessary."

## 3. The Change the church needs to make

Churches tend to react to a negative society in two ways: either they accommodate to the culture or isolate themselves from it—they're afraid or they lose their vision. However, God gives us a third way. He calls us to seek the peace and prosperity of our city (Jeremiah 29:1-7). People come to cities for a better life, education, job, a good time. And they come to exploit its services. Be a church *for* the city, loving it, serving it and seeking its well-being, not exploiting it. Love the city that will never love you back. Peter urges us to live such good lives, so that even if people accuse us of doing wrong and speak evil against us, they may glorify God because of our good deeds (1 Peter 2:11-12). Augustine of Hippo said that we should be the best of earthly citizens. As individuals, this means that we should be servants and do what no one else will do.

Take the example of early Christians. In 250 AD, the Plague of Cyprian spread through the Roman Empire. People fled the cities. Except the Christians. They moved in to care for plague victims. But they too died in record numbers. The atheist Emperor Julian wrote, "(Christians) support not only their own poor, but provide for our welfare as well as their own. All men see that our people lack aid from us." But notice: within 100 years, Christianity had become the most influential religion in the Roman Empire.

At the community level, we are to adopt and serve local organizations. Ask yourself: Am I loving and serving where I am? At work? In my neighbourhood? In my community? Those in a post-Christian culture won't see you as a missionary until they see your conduct. It will have a Gospel impact. The way forward is to serve. It seems so simple, but it's not easy. The central Biblical message was that Jesus showed hospitality and love to us even while we were His enemies.

The key is to have your heart melted out of gratitude by His hospitality, His service, His sacrifice on the cross. The response of a grateful Christian is to thank Him for the price He paid.

When Jesus said, "It is finished!" it meant we don't have to earn God's love. This enables us to be missionary servants. We are Jesus' hands and feet. Pray for Christ to permeate you and your family with His Spirit. Let others know your love and desire for them.

We are all called to be on mission. What is your calling and mission in the Kingdom of God? Ask yourself, "Where am I to be on mission with my family, community or beyond?"

What action step is God asking you to take?