

STUDENT BIBLE STUDY

A COMPASSIONATE CALL TO

COUNTER EVIL

IN A WORLD OF

POVERTY • SAME-SEX MARRIAGE • RACISM
SEX SLAVERY • IMMIGRATION • PERSECUTION
ABORTION • ORPHANS • PORNOGRAPHY

DAVID PLATT
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



DR. DAVID PLATT, President of the International Mission Board, is deeply devoted to Christ and His Word. David's first love in ministry is making disciples, sharing, showing, and teaching God's Word in everyday life. He has traveled extensively to serve alongside church leaders throughout the United States and around the world.

A life-long learner, David has earned two undergraduate and three advanced degrees. He holds a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Arts in Journalism (A.B.J.) from the University of Georgia, and a Master of Divinity (M.Div.), Master of Theology (Th.M), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He previously served at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary as Dean of Chapel and Assistant Professor of Expository Preaching and Apologetics, Staff Evangelist at Edgewater Baptist Church in New Orleans, and eight years as the Senior Pastor of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, AL. David has written several books, *Radical*, *Radical Together*, *Follow Me*, and most recently *Counter Culture* (to be released February 2015).

David founded Radical (Radical.net), a ministry devoted to serving churches and disseminating disciple-making resources toward the end that the gospel might be made known in all nations.

David and his wife Heather have four children, Caleb, Joshua, Mara Ruth, and Isaiah.

This Bible study is adapted from David Platt's book, *Counter Culture*, and from the teaching videos in this study.

SESSION 1

CULTURE

START

On popular issues like poverty and slavery, where Christians are likely to be applauded for our social action, we're quick to stand up and speak out. Yet on controversial issues like homosexuality and abortion, where Christians are likely to be criticized for our social action, we are content to sit down and stay quiet. It's as if we've decided to pick and choose which social issues we'll contest in our culture and which we'll concede. And our picking and choosing normally revolves around what is most comfortable—and least costly—for us in the culture around us.

What if the main issue is not poverty or sex trafficking, homosexuality or abortion? What if the main issue is God? What if the main issue is the glory of God revealed in the gospel? And what might happen if we made Him our focus instead? In a world marked by sex slavery and sexual immorality, the abandonment of children and the murder of children, racism and persecution, the needs of the poor and the neglect of the widow, how would we act if we fixed our gaze on the holiness, love, goodness, truth, justice, authority, and mercy of God revealed in the gospel?

If we did, we would recognize that the same heart of God that moves us to war against sex trafficking also moves us to war against sexual immorality. We would discover that the same gospel that compels us to combat poverty also compels us to defend marriage. We would discover that a number of apparently separate issues are, in fact, all intimately connected to our understanding of who God is and how God relates to everything around us. When our focus turns to God, our hearts shift from what is most comfortable. Instead, our lives are fixed on what is most glorifying to God, and in Him we will find far greater reward than anything our culture could ever offer us. To be students who radically follow Jesus with conviction, courage, and compassion, we must learn to live counter culturally.

For more insight on this week's topic, read the introduction and chapter 1 of David Platt's book *Counter Culture* (Tyndale, 2015).

WATCH

Complete the viewer guide below as you watch DVD Session 1.

TWO PRAYERS FROM ACTS 17

1. God, make us zealous for Your _____.

- _____ of the universe
- _____ of life
- _____ of the nations
- _____ of the needy
- _____ of each of us
- _____ over all of us
- _____ of the world

2. God, make us passionate for people's _____.

FIVE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL

1. _____ of God: God is the holy, just, and gracious Creator of all things.
2. _____ of man: we're each created by God, but we're all corrupted by sin.
3. _____ of Christ: Jesus alone is able to remove our sin and reconcile us to God.
4. _____ of faith: the way to be reconciled to God is through faith in Jesus.
5. _____ of eternity: our eternal destiny is dependent on our response to Jesus.

RESPOND

We live in a difficult time. The culture around us is increasingly resistant to Christ and the church. Too often Christians sit by silently as a war rages over social issues from abortion to homosexuality to sex trafficking and poverty. But we can no longer remain silent if we believe the gospel.

So how can we be a generation of students who are compassionate and courageous in this battle? We must begin by being zealous for God's glory.

In the Book of Acts we learn that Paul engaged in this war about cultural issues in the city of Athens. The city was filled with idols/gods and Paul's response in Acts 17:16 is clear.

"Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols." –Acts 17:16

Why do you think Paul experienced holy anger when he saw the idols in Athens?

How would verses like Isaiah 42:8 have impacted Paul's response to the idols in Athens?

When we truly believe that God alone deserves all praise and all glory, then something deep rises up in us, and we cannot stay silent when we see idols all around us. While the idols in Paul's context were literal statues representing false gods, the idols of our day can be much more subtle. Rather than statues of false gods, students today worship idols like self, sports, success, or money.

List at least five "idols" that you see students around you worshiping in place of God:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

As a result of seeing the idols throughout Athens, Paul could not stay silent, so he was driven into the synagogue, into the streets, and eventually up to Mars Hill, around the high philosophers of Rome. Before we look at Paul's response to the philosophers, we need to consider our response to the idol worship that goes on around us every day.

Why do we ignore those living in poverty in our community?

Why do we disregard orphans and widows?

Why do we tolerate or excuse abortion in our culture?

Why do we stay silent on homosexuality and so-called same-sex marriage?

The answer to each of these questions is rooted in idolatry. We ignore the poor because we idolize wealth, luxury, and comfort. How do the other issues listed show our idolatry?

ISSUE:
Ignoring those in poverty

IDOL:
Wealth/luxury/comfort

Disregarding orphans and widows

Tolerating abortion

Staying silent on same-sex marriage

When we recognize that idolatry lies at the root of all these issues, we realize that the reason we must fight these issues is because we're zealous for the glory of God. Are our hearts provoked with a longing for God to be glorified in our world? We fight these battles in our culture by connecting our desire for justice and mercy to His glory.

We must work for justice in the world...why? Because we want God to be exalted as the Judge of the world. We must show God's mercy to the world...why? Because we want God to be exalted as the Savior of the world.

Let's look again at Acts and see Paul's response to the philosophers of his day. Paul simply told the people of Athens about God and His glory.

Consider the seven characteristics of God that Paul shared with the philosophers in Athens. We touched on these briefly in the video, but let's make sure we understand the significance of each one. Read the following verses and list the characteristic Paul was highlighting:

Read Acts 17:22-24.

God is the _____ of the universe.

Read verse 25.

God is the _____ of life.

Read verse 26.

God is the _____ of the nations.

Read verse 27.

God is the _____ of the needy.

Read verse 28.

God is the _____ of each of us.

Read verse 29.

God is the _____ over all of us.

Read verses 30-31.

God is the _____ of the world.

Read Acts 17:32-34.

How did the people of Athens respond to Paul's message?

Paul's passion for God's glory ignited in him a passion for people's salvation. Like Paul, God gives each of us as believers a passion to see others come to know Him. We must learn to speak the gospel clearly as we move to impact our culture.

Use the following truths to clearly communicate the gospel message:

Understand the Character of God...

- God is the holy, just, and gracious Creator of all things.

Understand the Sinfulness of Man...

- We are each created by God, but we are all corrupted by sin.

Understand the Sufficiency of Christ...

- Jesus alone is able to remove our sin and reconcile us to God.

Understand the Necessity of Faith...

- We are reconciled to God only through faith in Jesus.

Understand the Urgency of Eternity...

- Our eternal destiny is dependent on our response to Jesus.

As we work through this study, my prayer is that in the process of seeing issues like abortion, sex trafficking, poverty, and homosexuality in light of the gospel, you and I would be provoked with a zeal for the glory of God's name and a passion for people's salvation. My hope is that we will speak the gospel clearly as we trust the gospel completely in the culture in which God has placed us.

REFLECT

Read Isaiah 40:28.

"In the beginning, God . . ." (Gen. 1:1). Because all things begin with God and ultimately exist for God, nothing in all creation or our lives is irrelevant to Him.

Let's take a look at who God has revealed Himself to be: "I am the LORD, your Holy One," God says in Isaiah 43:15. God is the Holy One, which means that He is wholly unique and absolutely pure. Everything God is and does is right. He is without error and without equal.

This holy God is also good. "The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made" (Ps. 145:9). God's goodness is evident from the beginning where everything He creates is "good," culminating in man and woman, who are called "very good" (see Gen. 1). The grandeur of creation testifies to the undeniable goodness of the Creator.

God's goodness is expressed in His justice. "The LORD judges the peoples" (Ps. 7:8), and He judges them perfectly. God justifies the innocent and condemns the guilty. As a good Judge, God is outraged by injustice. God's goodness is also expressed in His grace. He shows unmerited favor to those who could never deserve it. He is compassionate and patient, desiring all people to know and enjoy His kindness, mercy, and love (see 2 Pet. 3:9).

Because God is our Creator, we belong to Him. And we are accountable to Him as our Judge. All of this puts us in a position where we are desperately in need of His grace.

Now we see the offense of the gospel coming to the forefront. Tell any modern person that there is a God who sustains, owns, defines, rules, and will one day judge him or her, and that person will balk in offense. Any man or woman would—and every man and woman has.

In what ways does your understanding of who God is impact your daily life?

How is being offended by a social issue and being offended by the gospel different?

Pray that God will give you a passion for His glory and a heart to see the gospel spread to the community in which you live.

ENGAGE

Culture Shock

When it comes to impacting the culture for Christ, it is important to know what the Bible says on major issues. The Bible is the absolute authority and our primary goal as believers is to know what God says and prioritize that over opposing viewpoints. Before the next session, read and reflect on the following verses. Make notes about what each passage says and how it connects to major issues faced in our culture.

Poverty:

- [Matthew 6:3-4](#)
- [Matthew 25:34-40](#)

Human Life:

- [Matthew 6:26](#)
- [1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#)

Gender Roles:

- [Genesis 1:27](#)
- [Ephesians 5:18-33](#)

Racism and Diversity:

- [James 2:8](#)
- [Acts 10:34-35](#)

PREPARE

Read and respond to the following truths in preparation for your next group session.

Read 1 John 3:17.

The average American lives on more than ninety dollars per day while nearly half of the world's population lives on less than two dollars per day.¹ The standard of living which is common among us is extremely uncommon in human history. Economics professors Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert write, "At no time in history has there ever been greater economic disparity in the world than at present." Speaking specifically about Americans, they continue, "By any measure, we are the richest people ever to walk on planet Earth."²

This means that average, ordinary, middle-class, working Americans live extremely wealthy lifestyles in a world surrounded by billions of extremely poor neighbors. And God has called us to love these neighbors—as ourselves. Christ's command, coupled with the depth of poverty in the world and the reality of wealth in our lives, has huge implications for the way we live. When our eyes have been opened to conditions in the world around us, our ears must be open to the question God's Word asks of us: "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). This is a specific reference to followers of Christ caring for other Christians in need. However, the command of Christ in Luke 10 to love our neighbors as ourselves surely includes care not just for the believing poor but also for the unbelieving poor. If the love of God is in our hearts, then it is impossible for us to ignore the poor in our world. The gospel compels Christians in a wealthy culture to action—selfless, sacrificial, costly, countercultural action—on behalf of the poor.

What is your response to the reality of our wealth in light of the poverty in the world?

How does our understanding the issue of poverty impact our faith?

Pray that God will prepare you to see those in need and respond to them with the gospel as well as actions that show the love of God.

¹ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2007/2008 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 25.

² Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012), 41.

SESSION 2

WEALTH HURTS