Series Road Map: Less is More

**Series Overview:** We hear it all the time, “less is more”. We all that one guy who has way more than us already but always seems to get more. But then we find ourselves wanting after everything around us, too. When we don’t have Christ as our very center, we attach ourselves to insane amounts of stuff. We crave things that we don’t need, and that we don’t even enjoy. Jesus calls us to simplicity, because the answer to our cravings is actually quite simple: Jesus.

**Weekly Overview:**

 **The world is going to tell you what you need to do and what you need to be. As a Christian, we are called to be the light in a dark world. We are called to be in the world but not of it - but how? We must reflect Jesus in everything we do.**

**Grab the Room (Intro):**

**Tension (What’s the Struggle): We will be rejected by the world if we don’t conform to it**

**Text (+ Supporting Text): John 15:18-21**

**THP: Less of the World is More of Jesus**

**Supporting Points (Not Required):**  **Galatians 2:20**

**Application (Call to Action):**

* **Identify the things you are doing in your life that don’t align with your faith, but instead with what the world encourages (write it down)**
* **Thumbtack/Sticky Note these things to a cross at the end of service**

**INTRO:** There are 3 things that we innately desire as humans. Meaning, that at our core as a created beings, we individually seek these things: safety – an instinctual pull towards things that keep us from harm, belonging – a pull towards a person or groups of people that accept us as who we are, and mattering – a desire to live of life of contribution and significance. There are other things we WANT in our lives but those can all be dwindled down to the three categories listed above. Each are of equal importance but there is really only one that directly relates to the people we surround ourselves with and what we do on a daily basis.

Story of when you did something you shouldn’t have to “belong”

Throughout high school, I was the typical ‘good kid.’ I was always on time to school, homework was always done and done well, I got good grades, stayed out of trouble both inside and outside of school, I went to swim practice every day, came home, ate dinner, did my homework, hung out with friends/family and went to bed. I had my group of a few friends that I did life with and I didn’t need much more than that. This continued all four years of high school. Yes, you’re allowed to say that I was boring. But that was just how high school Devyn did things. Never drank, never smoked anything and kept my nose clean. Then college came. My closest friends got busy with school and work as did I, and my community was pretty lacking compared to how it had been just months prior. I felt like I didn’t belong anywhere because I had been in my routine for so long and now everything was seemingly flipped on its head. I needed people so I ended up joining a fraternity on campus and met some new people and BAM - all was fixed, right? Well, these new friends of mine all participated in some very different forms of recreation than I was used to. And I don’t mean just some of them, no; ALL OF THEM. So, in order to not lose my newly found community of guys, I joined in on their recreation so they didn’t think less of me or exclude me from hangouts. I wanted to belong.

**BUILT TENSION:** I’m sure that many if not all of you in this room have been in a very similar situation. Maybe not all of you consisting of the same activities, but you get the idea. You are thinking of that one time you snuck out of your house to hang out with that guy or girl your parents told you to stay away from. You are thinking of that time you sipped from that red solo cup at a party so the people around you didn’t think you were a goodie-two-shoes. Or maybe about when you joined in on making fun of or gossiping about someone to make people like you. Whatever it is that you’re thinking of, chances are it was in the name of being accepted. **PAUSE** Belonging. Many of us in this room, including myself, have a fear of rejection and we will stop at nothing to gain the approval of others. This doesn’t always have to take the form of DOING something. A lot of times this can be adopting a mentality as well so you don’t seem like the black sheep or the odd one out left supporting an ‘outdated ideology while everyone else is adopting the new ‘truth.’ Some of our greatest fears evolve from not wanting people to hate us.

But how can be pursue acceptance by others while boldly living out our faith in Jesus? How can we live both lives of blending in with what is happening around us while living by the commands set before us by God? Honest answer - we can’t. Those things are mutually exclusive from each other. We choose one or the other, we can’t have acceptance from the world AND be set apart from the ways of it. Let’s see what God’s Word says about it.

**TEXT:** Go ahead and open up your Bibles to John 15:18. The book of John was written at the end of the first century, about 40 years or so after Jesus’ ascension into heaven. The purpose of this book was to oppose the twisted accounts of Jesus that had arisen since his return to Heaven in an attempt to justify ways of life not conducive to that of following Jesus. John recalls his first-hand account of Jesus speaking to His disciples about what to expect from the world. Here’s what it says:

John 15:18-21

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.”

This is all the answer that we need to that question I asked just a few moments ago. There is no way to be loved by the world if we are to live in accordance to Jesus’ teachings. Jesus is saying here that if the world loved us, there would be something terribly wrong with how we are living. But how do we know if we are loved/hated by the world? Let’s just take a look at what is trending through our nation. If you hold the viewpoint of marriage being JUST between a man and a woman, you are told by the world that you must hate members of the LGBTQ+ community. You are told that if you believe that every created being’s life matters, that you must hate and oppress women. We are told that we are stupid for relying on the name of Jesus more so than the historic, scientific and medical advancements of the technological age. There is a clear divide in our world that people have adopted of either getting on the world’s proverbial bus or get run over by it if you aren’t going to agree. This has resulted in moral compromises of people claiming to follow Jesus. There is a misunderstanding in the world and by certain people that claim to be Christians that we can both adopt the ways of the world while still holding onto Jesus in our pockets. This isn’t the case. We must make a choice of who we want to represent in our lives, of who we want others to see when they look at how we live and speak. The world, or Jesus. There is a direct correlation between us turning away from the ways of the world and towards a life following Jesus’s footsteps.

We have to understand and believe that **LESS OF THE WORLD IS MORE OF JESUS. (REPEAT)**

Last week we talked about less IN the world being more of heaven which dealt with material possession idolization – AKA all the STUFF we love and want in our lives and how that can sometimes interfere with our pursuit of Jesus. And there was a challenge issued to those of you here last week to compile one thing each day over the last 7 days and bring it with you tonight. Look at all of the decisions that were made to surrender our stuff to God. Take a moment and see what we have done as a ministry community. And just so you know, we are going to take these things and give them away to people in our community that might not have much to give their kids for Christmas. Just take a minute to celebrate what God has been able to do through us!

But here tonight we are getting at the roots of the fundamentals of being a human and living in 2022 and beyond. Will we put on the face of the world or the reflection of Jesus? **PAUSE**

The idea of ‘less of the world is more of Jesus’ is simply a call to each of us who claim to be believers and followers of Jesus Christ to live as an alternative to the world. We are called to be set apart from the ways of how culture tells us to live and be a vessel or a tool for God to use to reach people here on earth. We must be willing to sacrifice our personal status in this world and approval by man for the glorification of God. This means that we don’t compromise on what we believe to be truth about the inherent value of a created life. It means that we keep our brothers and sisters accountable when they stray off the path of following Jesus. It means that we go out into a secular and broken world to spread the name of Jesus at risk of being mocked. It means we treat every person with compassion and kindness regardless of any difference between us. It means we surround ourselves with men and women who love Jesus and will challenge you to become the man/woman that God created you to be instead of the person the world wants to shape you into. **LESS OF THE WORLD IS MORE OF JESUS.**

I have to say to you as clarification, this is not a call or a challenge by me to surround yourselves ONLY with people that look, think, act and believe like you. A community that you can relate to on a deep personal level has a very important role to play in our lives and is crucial to our faith journey. But it can be easy to get caught in that bubble and not go outside of that. This is also not an excuse to separate yourself from the world we live in. We have an obligation as followers of Jesus to go INTO the world and spread the news about the savior of the world. This can’t be done by getting yourself into a little bubble of security and letting the world around you pass you by. The world wants nothing more than for Christians to sit down and be quiet. The world wants you to keep your opinions to yourself and to ‘stay over there’ while they live and believe how they wish. We must fight that as well.

**BIG** Matthew 5:14-16 says: You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.”

YOU are called to be the light of the world. YOU. Not to conform, not to dim yourself, and definitely not to hide yourself. You are created with a purpose and for a purpose which is to go out into the world and shine the light of Jesus onto others. THIS is how we are called to live. THIS is what will result in the world hating us. You will be called racist, sexist, homophobic, and many other names because they will HATE you. But this is the way. But more so than anything, we are called to be the light into the world from a place of love. We are not out on a journey to prove people wrong. We are not out to show how righteous we are to everyone else. We are called to go and share the best news of human history with other people in hope that they too will want to belong to God’s family because they are fearfully and wonderfully made by the same God that made you and me. We are called to the ends of the earth to step up and live as an alternative to how the world is living. You can either belong to God’s family or to the world.

Story of what your commitment to Jesus moment looked like

I told you I had compromised my morals and had started doing things I never wanted to do. I made my decision to belong to the world. But God didn’t stop pursuing me. I was not ‘too far gone’ despite how I felt. November 1st 2018, I decided to accept the challenge of being the light in the world. That I wanted to belong to God’s family more than I desired to be accepted anywhere else or by anyone else. The moment I chose that for myself I was at an event called Fields of Faith headlined by Tim Tebow. He offered a salvation moment and I willingly accepted even though I didn’t know what it meant. Afterwards, a guy that I didn’t know turned to me and said “welcome to the family,” and I knew that I finally belonged to a family that I desired to. Later I got involved in a guy’s life group and started to be sent out into the world and be that light.

Now, I have to tell you, my life did not magically all of a sudden get better overnight. Things I was struggling with were still there when I woke up the next morning. I am still an imperfect person surrounded by other broken people all living in an imperfect world. The church isn’t perfect either. Because it is run by BROKEN PEOPLE. But that’s also kind of the beauty of the whole thing, right? We gather as a community of broken, sinful people that fall short of the mark set by Jesus. This family serves as a place where every person can belong.

Where do you belong? Whose approval are you chasing? I have a challenge for you. Find that desire to belong to something that is important. Belong to something that is bigger than yourself. Maybe you’re in the room and you are skeptical about church. Some of you in the room have been hurt by the church personally or know of someone who was. There can be a misconception that you have to behave and believe what we believe in order to belong at church. But the opposite is true. What if I told you that you belonging here comes first? Then that is followed by believing what we believe and behaving how we are called to behave from a place of willing obedience to a God that gave it all for you and me.

Identify what you are currently doing to gain the approval of people that aren’t pointing you to Jesus. And make a shift. Maybe you don’t know why you would want to belong to God’s family. Maybe you have never been told the good news. That Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, came down from the right hand of God in heaven to live and model how God’s people are meant to live in a broken world. That he was so hated by the world that he was brutally whipped, flogged and nailed to a cross by 3 spikes and left to hang between two criminals until he died. That he was then buried for 3 days while darkness overcame the world and all hope was seemingly lost. Then 3 days later, Jesus was raised from the dead, proving that he was truly God; over sin and death. Offering hope to a broken world and the way to eternal life for those that will believe in Him.

Salvation Moment

**APPLICATION:** Celebrate the decisions to follow Jesus. Offer Bibles, Journey Books, etc

For everyone in the room, followers of Jesus and to those that are skeptical, we can all do better of going out and spreading truth. We can all do a better job of making better decisions. Each of you have a notecard and pen under your chair - I want each of you to write down something you have been doing or a way of thinking that has been fostered from the broken world. I want you to write it down and then come up when you’re ready and leave it at the foot of the cross while we worship in song. **LESS OF THE WORLD IS MORE OF JESUS.** Amen.