

Week 6: Strangers in this Strange New World

NCAC Adult Sunday School

December 11, 2022



Key Resource: *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution* by Carl R. Trueman (Crossway, 2022)

Course Goal: To better understand how a changing concept of self has led to this “strange new world” in which we now live and to consider what Scripture teaches about how we should respond.

²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.”

²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³ When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. (Acts 5:27-33, ESV)

Why do Peter’s words in Acts 5:27-33 enrage his audience?

How does the Christian message contradict the current views and beliefs of many in our culture?

Our world is increasingly enraged by the Christian worldview. How should we respond to this?

TRUEMAN'S SIX SUGGESTIONS FOR RESPONDING TO OUR STRANGE NEW WORLD

1. Consider our own complicity—and then repent.

“The first thing that we need to do is understand our complicity in the expressive individualism of our day...we need to examine ourselves, individually and corporately, to see in what ways we have compromised the gospel with the spirit of this age. Then, we need to repent, call out to the Lord for grace, and seek to reform our beliefs, attitudes, intuitions, and practices accordingly. Nothing less is required for a true reformation at this point.” (*Strange New World*, p. 170)

▪ **We should ask ourselves: “How have we embraced aspects of the world’s ideology?”**

*“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **Do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2)*

What are some ways the church in America has been “conformed to this world”? What will it take for us to resist this trend?

▪ **We should ask ourselves: “How have we failed to love our neighbors?”**

*³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and **when he saw him, he had compassion.** ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, **“You go, and do likewise.”** (Luke 10:30-37)*

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, despite the tension between their two groups, the Samaritan sees the Levite as a real person and treats him with love. How might Jesus tell believers to relate to those who are part of the LGBTQ+ movement?

▪ **We should ask ourselves: “Have we become complacent about sharing the Gospel and making Christ known?”**

*“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, **that you may proclaim the excellencies of him** who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)*

The New Testament makes clear that one reason God saved us was to go and make Him known. How might we reignite our passion for being lights in this world?

2. Learn from the early church about the value of building a strong Christian community.

"It is clear from the New Testament and from early noncanonical texts like the Didache that community was central to church life. The Acts of the Apostles presents a picture of a church where Christians cared for and served each other." (*Strange New World*, p. 174)

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ **Love one another with brotherly affection.** Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. (*Rom. 12:9-13*)

The Bible continually calls us to think of ourselves as part of the people of God. How should it affect us to think of ourselves as part of the *people* of God rather than just as individuals? What could we learn from the LGBTQ+ movement about becoming a stronger community?

3. Teach the Whole Counsel of God so our theological foundations are broad and deep.

"One of the temptations at a time of tremendous flux and change is to fixate upon the immediate challenges to the Christian faith. Now, it is surely not a bad thing to prioritize the most pressing problems the church faces and address them with a degree of urgency...Yet there is a danger here: we can become so preoccupied with specific threats that we neglect the important fact that Christian truth is not a set of isolated and unconnected claims but rather stands as a coherent whole...In short, we can stand strong at this cultural moment and address the specific challenges we face only if our foundations in God's truth are broad and deep." (*Strange New World*, p. 178)

²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God...²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. (*Acts 20:24, 26-27*)

**What might keep us from being people who know and teach the whole counsel of God?
What will help us stay "broad and deep" in our understanding of God's Word?**

4. Allow worship to shape our thoughts and desires so that our hearts conform to God's heart.

"Expressive individualism in the form in which we find it in contemporary society is problematic for the ways in which it places individuals and their own desires—we might even say their own egos—at the center of the moral universe...We need to reform our corporate church lives in a

way that forms our inner lives appropriately. And that means choosing worship songs that do not indulge in emotion for the sake of emotion or press upon me that my needs and my desires are the reason God exists. No, we need songs that allow us to understand and express our feelings honestly, but in a way that always leads outward to God and to his truth." (p. 180)

5. Teach our youth about the rationale for God's ways and commands.

"Take, for example, a young Christian wrestling with whether homosexuality is right or wrong. A pastor might point such a person to certain biblical texts that indicate it is wrong because it contradicts God's will with regard to the purpose of sex. That may well be enough to convince the young Christian, but I suspect that he might still wrestle with a further question: Does God forbid homosexuality simply because he is a mean tyrant? Is it just that he does not want my gay friends to be happy? Why has he prohibited such behavior? Older Christians can no longer assume biblical ethics make sense to younger Christians because the social imaginary in which they operate is so different to the one many of us grew up in. And that means we need to work harder at explaining not simply the content but also the rationale of Christian morality." (p. 184)

6. Face the world with Christian hope, avoiding both unhealthy despair and unrealistic optimism.

"...the church needs to respond to this present age by avoiding the temptations of despair and optimism. To fall into the former would be to fail to take seriously the promise that the church will win in the end because the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. To engage in the latter is simply to prepare the stage for deeper despair later. And both will feed inaction, one out of a sense of impotence, the other out of naivete. There is an alternative...Hope." (p. 185)

*"...I will build my church, and **the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**" (Matthew 16:18)*

*"Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors,
remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,
declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and **I will accomplish all my purpose...**'" (Isaiah 46:8-10)*

*"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, **waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...**" (Titus 2:11-13)*

*"But **our citizenship is in heaven**, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." (Philippians 3:20-21)*