

# Orthodoxy in an Age of Ideology<sup>1</sup>

Turn with me, if you have a bible, to [Colossians 2](#). [If you weren't here last Sunday](#), I'd highly encourage you to go back and grab the podcast. Because last week, we kicked off a new series called *City on a Hill*. And the big idea behind this series is that we as followers of Jesus are called to be different *from* the world, for the sake *of* the world. That is *the* task Jesus has given his people. And in light of that, we're spending the *rest* of this series discussing a handful of specific *ways* that we are called to do that. Particular ways that we can be *different from* the world, for the sake of the world. And I've gotta be honest with you guys: as excited as I am about this series as a *whole*, *this morning*, I need to give a teaching that I do not particularly *want* to give.

[As some of you know](#) already, we have a [team of people](#) who help us craft, shape, edit, and whittle every teaching that ever gets given here on Sunday mornings. And when I brought the idea for *this week's* teaching *to* that team about a month and a half ago, I was honestly hoping they would say in response, "no, do not give that teaching. We don't need to do that." And instead, much to my *horror*, they *actually* said *yes*. So then I said "great. On an *unrelated* note, I forgot to mention that I'm going to be out of town that week—who do y'all think should teach it?" And then *they* said, "we'll move that week to whatever week you're here, because it was your idea." And I said, "who—me? I didn't have any idea. I don't have *any* ideas, ever." And they said lying is a sin. So here we are.

But in all seriousness, [here's how I would put it](#). *Sometimes*, when we open up the Scriptures, it's like a *feast*. It's like the table is *set* for us with these unbelievable promises and realities about who God is, and we get to pull up to the table and just *enjoy* it all. Sometimes, we get the theological equivalent of steak and bacon and rich, delicious food. [At one point, David says that God's words are like honey on his lips.](#)<sup>2</sup> *Sometimes* that's how it feels when we open up the Scriptures. ...And then there's *other* times. Times where it feels a little like eating steamed broccoli. Like not the *good* kind of broccoli where it's been cooked slow and coated in butter, but just normal broccoli, with nothing on it. [In the New Testament, John says at one point that God's words felt bitter in his stomach.](#)<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, the bible is more like *that*. [And no offense if you happen to like broccoli—but also you're wrong, so that's kinda on you.](#)

But [sometimes, there are things](#) in the Scriptures that we [need to digest](#), whether or not we particularly *want* to. There are things that are good for us to hear, regardless of whether or not we *like* hearing them. And even if we *enjoy* those things *less*, they're just

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<sup>1</sup> Significant portions of this teaching were inspired by [this teaching](#) from John Mark Comer at Bridgetown Church.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 119:103

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 10:10

as *helpful* for us. Today is one of *those* days. This morning, I need to lay out some things to you from the Scriptures that may not be *fun* or *enjoyable* to hear, but I think they are really, really *necessary* for us to hear. Today we're gonna eat some broccoli. Make sense? Okay. So now that everyone is on edge just a little, I'm gonna *pray*, and then we're gonna hop in. [*Pray, briefly*]

Okay. **Before we get into** any of the difficult stuff *directly*, I want to show you clearly *why* I'm bringing the difficult stuff *up*. And to do that, I want to just unpack some of that passage we just read a few moments ago, **Colossians 2**. **If you're newer to the bible**, the majority of the books in the *New Testament* are actually *letters*, written from leaders of the early Church, to individual communities of Jesus-followers in the ancient world. So **when we read books like *Colossians*, we are quite literally reading someone else's mail.**

**Which means to fully understand** what these letters are *saying*, you need at least a cursory understanding of what was going on *in* that place, at that time. So **that's what we need to do**, briefly, with *Colossians*. Paul is writing *this* letter, at least in *part*, because Colossae is a city where there are lots of other *religions, philosophies* and *ideologies* floating around in society. *There was everything from Gnosticism to Jewish mysticism to Cynic philosophy to Platonism. There was even a cult that worshiped the archangel Michael as a god—haven't we all?*

Colossae was **also known for** something called **syncretism**: which is where people would take two or more of these religions and philosophies, put them in a blender *together*, and then follow and believe whatever came out. And partly because of that, **we don't know exactly which** ideologies Paul was concerned about for the Colossians in his letter—it could've been *one* of those, *several* of those, or *all* of those. But **we do know that all of those ideologies were at least partly at odds with the way of Jesus.** And Paul is writing to make sure that the Colossians *realize* that, and therefore aren't being co-opted into believing things that aren't true. So with that background in mind, **let's read** starting in Colossians 2, verse 1:

**1 I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea** (evidently Paul is concerned for *them* too), **and for all who have not met me personally. 2 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

So we *think* Paul here is **taking a shot** at some of these mystery religions and ideologies in the city. Many of them would claim to offer their followers *hidden, secret* “treasures” of “wisdom and knowledge.” So here Paul's saying, in essence, ‘yeah—treasures of wisdom and knowledge are great. You need *all* of that. And the best place to *find* all of that is in Jesus.’ ~~He's not saying he wants the Colossians to just close their eyes and stop up their ears when they hear about other worldviews. But he is saying that all these ideologies around them are, at best, partial understandings of the world. And he wants them to have full understanding, through Jesus.~~ He *continues*, v. 4:

**4 I tell you this, he says, so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.**

The word translated “fine-sounding arguments” there, *could* be *literally* translated “**persuasive speech.**” Paul doesn't want the Colossians to be deceived by *persuasive speech* coming from all these different ideological directions. You see, Paul knows that the most *dangerous* ideologies aren't the really *bizarre* ones. **It's not the ones where people believe the government is run by lizard people or that birds aren't real. Feel free to look it up. Actually, don't look it up. But it does exist.** But in Paul's mind, **those aren't the ideologies** you have to warn people about. Because *they* generally attract the people on the *fringes* of society and pretty much nobody else. You don't usually have to warn *intelligent* people about *those*.

**The ones you have to warn people about** are the *persuasive* ideologies. The ones that appeal to people's strongest, most *fervently held*, desires. The ones that seem like they prioritize the right things and accomplish good purposes. Those ideologies, if they aren't *sound*, are the most dangerous. Because they can deceive anyone and *everyone*. Even intelligent, *thinking* people. So, Paul says, ‘see to it, that no one *deceives* you with *those*.’ Continuing in v. 5:

**5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. 6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him** (more on that here in a bit), **7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.** And then he circles back to his caution from earlier, v. 8: **8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.**

So evidently, **the problem might be even more severe** than Paul mentioned earlier. Evidently, **not only can followers of Jesus be deceived and tricked by these**

ideologies; they can actually be “taken captive” by them, in Paul’s language. They can be swept up *in* them. The *image* Paul uses here is the language for when an animal predator captures its prey.<sup>4</sup> So, for you nature documentary watchers out there—the three of you—think of when that hawk captures a snake or a mouse, and then just carries its lifeless body off into the brush to chow down. *That*, according to Paul, is what these deceptive philosophies and ideologies can do to a person. They can sweep people up in their thinking *entirely*. To the point that they become a shell of who they used to be.

And **specifically**, in the life of a follower of Jesus, these ideologies **can infiltrate** how we think in a way that *corrupts* and *deforms* our faith from the inside out. **Paul’s concern isn’t necessarily that the Colossians will wake up one day and all of a sudden abandon their faith; that’s generally not how it happens. His concern is that they will begin to blend together these various ideologies with their faith, to the point that they eventually are unable to distinguish between the two.** That is the nature of deceptive ideologies: they *persuade*. They *deceive*. And *eventually*, they carry people off as *captives*. Are you following so far?

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**Now—at this point** in the teaching, you might be thinking to yourself, “okay, that sounds terrible. And that sounds like a real *problem* for people living in first-century Colossae.” **But at least that we know of, Jewish mysticism and angel cults aren’t super common in 21st century America.** Most of us probably don’t know a ton of people wandering off into Gnosticism in their spare time. We just don’t *exist* in the same kind of society that the *Colossians* did. We live in a *pluralistic* society, to be sure. But we don’t live in a world where really bizarre, cult-like religions are taking people captive like that. At least not *en masse*. ~~And on some level, maybe that’s true.~~

But I would **encourage you not to think for a second** that we don’t need this instruction from Paul to the Colossians. We just might need to *apply* it in slightly different ways. A Christian author named **Lesslie Newbigin**, writing almost forty years ago, predicted that **the less central religion became to life in the public square in America, the more politics would come to occupy the space religion once did.** In his words, “Human nature abhors a vacuum. The *shrine* does not remain empty.” And he anticipated that people’s *political* convictions—whether that was loyalty to a candidate or a party platform, or just to particular political *causes*—would take on an almost sacred, *religious* type of *zeal*. That people would begin to form entire communities, ostracize opponents, and construct an entire worldview, purely on the basis of their political ideology.

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<sup>4</sup> In Greek, συλαγωγέω. [Read more here.](#)

He **also predicted** that this type of thing wouldn't just happen out *in the world, outside of* church communities; but **within religious communities** themselves. **That followers of Jesus would be swept up in these political ideologies and causes. That they would attempt to merge together their faith in Jesus, and their political allegiances.** Or worse, try to *baptize* their political ideology in *religious language*, such that they feel like *their cause is God's cause*. Newbigin forecasted that *all* of that would happen in America's not-so-distant future.<sup>5</sup> **So obviously, he had no idea what he was talking about.**

Nope. Turns out **he was spot-on.** *That is precisely* what has happened in America, particularly over the past decade or so. **The ideologies that are now deceiving the most people and taking the most people captive are often political in nature.** And just as he predicted, they aren't just taking captive those *outside* the Church, but *within* the Church as well. // So, in case you didn't realize it already, we've now arrived at the uncomfortable part of the teaching. Here comes the broccoli. **I want to talk about some ideologies taking root in our day and age.**

First, take a look with me on the screen at some **photos from the U.S. Capitol** on January 6, 2021. **(Next Slide)** This was a day that will not be soon forgotten in our country's history. **(Next Slide)** Thousands of people descended on our nation's capitol—some of them simply to *protest* what they believed to be a stolen election, and some of them to actively *prevent* the peaceful transfer of power to a new president. **(Next Slide)**

There is, to be sure, **a lot we could say** about that day from a *historical, societal, and political* standpoint. But I am not a historian. I'm not a political commentator. I'm a *pastor*. So what stood out most to *me* about that day was what *felt* like an abundance of *Christian* imagery on display. Like *this*. **(Slide)** A cross, where people were praying to Jesus while protesting. Or *this*. **(Slide)** A portrait of Jesus, donned in a MAGA hat. Or *this*. **(Slide)** People clutching bibles as they bypassed barricades and made their way onto the Capitol steps.

That day, there was a **bizarre mash-up** of American, and Christian imagery that I don't even fully *understand*, much less agree with. **People who claim to worship a Jewish Messiah wore signs and symbols of white supremacy. People who knew Jesus' commands to love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you came ready to destroy, harm, and even kill anyone who stood in their way. People who know the New Testament's command to submit to the governing authorities used American flags to assault police officers. Most of it made no sense at all.** In fact, in the aftermath of all of

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<sup>5</sup> See Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, specifically starting around p. 115.

this, a **group of over 500 pastors** in the U.S. banded together to release **a statement**. In it, were these words:

*...there is a version of American nationalism that is trying to camouflage itself as Christianity—and it is a heretical version of our faith.<sup>6</sup>*

I **tend to agree** with them. You will not find *any* support in the bible for this brand of Christianity—unless you choose to rip a few select passages completely out of their context. **This is not the movement of Jesus; it is something else entirely.** And no follower of Jesus, regardless of what your political preferences are, should have a problem acknowledging that.

**But** here's the thing. **If I had to guess, nothing I just said** bothers very many people in *this* room. *Maybe if our church existed in some of the more rural parts of Tennessee, I'd be kindly escorted out of the building after saying something like that. Or not so kindly. Or quietly asked to resign.* But we're a *downtown Knoxville* church. We're relatively young as churches go, and tend to be more politically moderate and politically *apathetic* than we are *hyper-conservative*. So I would imagine that even if the last few moments were *uncomfortable*, most of us here today probably have no problem condemning those sorts of things. **And because of that, I need us to realize that that is not the only ideology at work in our society right now. Not by a long shot.**

Let me **show you another, very different set of photos.** Like *this* one. **(Slide)** Or this one. **(Photo)**. Notice the Christian imagery integrated *here* as well. As well as here. **(Slide)** *This one, to me, is especially interesting. Because that is a clerical vestment and a clerical collar, both displayed in Pride colors. The reason that's interesting to me is that if you know anything about the history of clerical vestments like these, the idea behind them has generally been that those vestments set a minister apart from the world. Specifically, they sometimes signify their purity—with some of them even taking voluntary vows of lifelong celibacy as a form of spiritual consecration to God.*

And **whatever you think** about the Pride *movement*, I think most would agree that words like *celibacy* are not very descriptive of that movement. Nor would people *within* the movement even *want* that word *assigned* to them. **So something like clerical vestments, originally intended to set a minister apart from the world, are now being used to proclaim how supportive that minister is of one of the world's ideologies.** That, at minimum, feels a little *dishonoring* to the tradition itself.

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<sup>6</sup> Link [here](#).

But let's **take a look at a couple more**, just in case we weren't *uncomfortable* enough yet **(Photo)**. Notice the use (or *misuse*) of Scripture to make a passage from the bible say something it most definitely does not mean. Same thing here. **(Photo)** And finally this one **(photo)**. There's a *lot* going on *there*, but there at the top we see a Pride flag draped over the cross itself. So once again, we have example after example, after example of Christian symbols, Scripture, and imagery being enmeshed with other ways of viewing the world, as if they are one in the same. **So what if we applied that quote from earlier to the other side? What if we said, "...there is a version of American [progressivism] that is trying to camouflage itself as Christianity—and it is a heretical version of our faith"? Couldn't we say that too? Or are we less comfortable saying that?**

Now, before we go any further, allow me to clarify a couple things. First, **by bringing up these two** movements, one after the other, I'm actually *not* trying to insist that they are equal and opposite dangers. I'm not trying to *equate* them with each other and say that they're both just as dangerous, just as destructive, just as given towards acts of violence as the other one. There are *differences* and *nuances* between them *and* their adherents. So don't hear me saying something I'm not saying. But I am trying to say that **they are both**, at their core, **ideologies**.

And increasingly, *these two ideologies in our world* have **almost become religions** in their own rite. *They each have converts with conversion stories. They each have people that they've "exiled" for being heretics and people they venerate as saints. They each have rules and doctrinal statements you have to live by if you want to remain a part of the movement. They each have a narrative about the problem with the world and a prescribed solution to that problem. They each have a vision of the ideal future and prices that must be paid to get there. And obviously, they each have quite a bit of religious zeal.* So I'm not trying to say they're virtually the same, but I am saying they are both ideologies.

**Second**, by calling these movements "ideologies," I am **not trying to insist that neither** of these movements **contain any good ideas**. I think *both* of them do. *For instance, can followers of Jesus be grateful for America, and want good for America? Absolutely they can. In fact, I would argue that Jeremiah 29 actually encourages God's people to do something very much to that effect.<sup>7</sup> We should care about the society we exist within, and even want good for it. That can be a great thing. But when gratitude for America and America's success becomes all that matters in life? Becomes all-encompassing? When it becomes the thing that matters? As a follower of Jesus, I can't go there.*

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<sup>7</sup> v. 4-8, specifically v. 7

When America being *successful* and *prosperous* requires me to violate things the Scriptures *clearly* teach—like love for my enemy, compassion and hospitality towards people from *other* places—then, I’ve wandered away from Christianity and into something altogether different. I’ve been taken captive by an *ideology*. The Scriptures never teach that loyalty to an earthly country should take precedence over all else. **We have people at City Church who I would consider to be very patriotic, people who have served as current and former members of the U.S. military. But they have the maturity to understand that their loyalty to America is never to *supersede* their loyalty to the kingdom of God.**

And it’s similar with *the other side*. As followers of Jesus, should we *treat members of the LGBTQ+ community* with dignity and respect and compassion? Should we *insist* that they not be *threatened* or made to feel *unsafe* simply because of who they are attracted to? *Absolutely*. The bible is clear that *all* people are made in the image of God and are deserving of dignity and respect—there should never be *exceptions* to that based on a person’s sexual orientation. But when it is increasingly insisted that I not only must *accept* a person’s sexual preferences, but that I must *cheer them on* and *celebrate* those choices? As a follower of Jesus, I can’t go there.

There has *been very little debate for 2,000+ years* over what the Scriptures teach about sexuality: that sex is reserved for the context of a marriage between a husband and a wife. I personally try to read *widely*, and I have yet to hear a biblically compelling case otherwise. *But even if you disagree with me on that*, I would still argue that the Pride movement’s perspective on sex differs *substantially* from the movement of Jesus, in *more* ways than just what they think about marriage. **We have members of our church who would identify as “gay” or “same-sex attracted.” And yet, they have the discernment to realize that being a sexual minority does not *force* them into blind allegiance to the Pride movement and all it represents.**

**So again, the problem *isn’t* that ideologies *never* contain any good ideas. Sometimes, they *do*. The problem is when those *ideas* become *everything*. When they become *the guiding* philosophy for all of life, all of society, all of humanity. **That’s when an *idea* becomes an *ideology*. And to *that*, I firmly believe Paul would say to us as followers of Jesus *today*: “see to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy.”****

**Because in a number of different ways, *both* of these ideologies find themselves at *odds* with the movement of Jesus. And they *both*—at least at our present moment—are just as capable of “deceiving” and “taking captive” followers of Jesus who get tangled up in them. **They are *both* just as capable of *disguising* themselves as Jesus-adjacent****

for long enough to win people to their cause, and then eventually demanding the ultimate allegiance of those people in return. For example, if you are sitting in this room right now and are very, very *glad* that I called out *one* of those two ideologies, but very, very *upset* that I called out the *other* one, I think that demonstrates just how much of a *grip* these ideologies can have on our hearts.

Because as Paul says, **that's what ideologies do.** Many of them *start* with good, noble, respectable ideas—but then they carry us off to a place that is completely at odds with what we believe. To where we will even *demonize* people we would otherwise identify with, simply because they took aim at our ideology. **And to make matters worse, there are churches out there** that will try and get you to believe that there are *only ever* dangerous ideologies on one side or the other. Some churches will say that all the dangerous unbiblical ideas are on the political *Left*. So the further you move to the *Right*, the better off you'll be. *And increasingly*, there are churches popping up that will say just the *opposite*: they'll try and convince you that there are *only ever* dangerous ideologies on the *Right*. So the more that you move to the *Left*, the better off you'll be.

But **here's my take: I highly doubt Satan cares** which *side* of the tracks you fall off, **as long as you're not on the tracks.** I highly doubt Satan cares whether you are heretically *conservative*, or heretically *progressive*—as long as you're not living by the true gospel of Jesus. **So to me, the response** to all of this actually *isn't* “do I need to move more to the Right, or more to the Left?” The question is to ask whether or not I have been deceived or taken captive by an ideology, and if so, what to do about it. Does that make sense?

So **for the remainder of our time** together, **that's what** I want to try and help with. *Maybe some of you have already checked out on this morning's teaching. Maybe some of you have decided today was your last day at City Church. And that's your decision to make.* But I would imagine that's not *most* of us. *Most* of us have the humility to realize that if people back *then* were vulnerable to empty philosophies and ideologies, there's at least a chance that we are vulnerable to it *today* as well. And because of that, most of us want to do our best to make sure that doesn't happen to *us*. Or even to *evaluate* if it is *currently*.

So **for the rest of our time**, I want to try and give you some ways to evaluate and address all that. **How can we know if we are being deceived, or even “taken captive,” by certain ideologies? And if we are, what do we do about it?** First, let's talk about...

## The Signs of Ideological Drift

What are ways to know if an ideology has taken root in us, and is *influencing* more and more of the way we think? I'll give you **a few questions to ask yourself**, that you may want to sit with some later on. One would be to ask: **who do I feel the most kinship with?** Specifically, do I feel more *camaraderie* with a non-believer who *aligns* with me on a certain issue, than I do with a *believer* who *doesn't*? Whatever party you support, whatever issue you're passionate about, do you have any of that going on? If so, that's generally a sign that something has gotten misplaced in your heart and mind.

Second, **is my friend group an echo chamber?** This is a slightly different way of asking the *first* question. But do pretty much all of your friends see social and political issues precisely the same way *you* do? Are your friend groups fairly *homogenous*? And if someone *new* comes along, spends time *with* your friend group, and thinks *differently* than the rest of you, are they fairly quickly made to feel *ostracized* from the group as a result? If so, that's probably a sign that a particular ideology is shaping too much of your life, including all or most of who you hang out with.

This also impacts **how you view other people**. **What tends to happen** is that when we become entrenched in an ideology, we think *we* came to *our* conclusions as an autonomous, critically-thinking individual. But those *other* people over *there*? Well they are just blindly following the crowd. *They* don't know how to think for themselves. They're just dumb and unenlightened. When in *reality*, **the truth is probably somewhere in the middle. The other crowd probably thinks more critically than you're willing to give them credit for, and you are probably far more formed by forces around you than you realize.** But that's probably a teaching for a different day.

Anyway, here's the third one. Ask yourself, **what do I most readily "evangelize" about?** What is the thing that you talk most eagerly and freely about with others? What convictions and opinions do you most readily vocalize to others? **Specifically, for followers of Jesus: are you far more eager to express your passion about any number of sociopolitical issues, than you are to tell the story of how you've been changed by Jesus? To you, is it cheesy and tacky to wear Christian t-shirts, but totally cool to wear a t-shirt with your candidate or your political cause on it? (My two cents is that they're both tacky—but you didn't ask me.)** But this would be another sign that ideology may have gripped your heart and mind in disproportionate ways: *what do you most readily "evangelize" about?*

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I would encourage you to **spend some time with those three questions** this week. Maybe on your own, maybe with a few people close to you who can help you answer those

questions honestly. Consider if there are any signs of ideological drift in your life. But then *from there*, let's talk about...

## The Solution to Ideological Drift

Here's the most *important* thing you need to know about all of this: **the solution to ideology is *orthodoxy***. *Orthodoxy* simply means *right belief*. If you've still got your bibles open to Colossians 2, look back with me at verses 6-10. **This is what Paul says is the alternative—the solution—to being taken captive by ideologies.** Verse 6:

*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.*

**Paul says the way** the Colossians can avoid getting deceived and swept away by the philosophies and ideologies of their day is to *cling* to Jesus. "Live your *lives* in him," Paul says. "...*Rooted and built up* in him." Instead of letting go of Jesus to go after whatever the ideological flavor of the year is, *cling* to Jesus, and let the ideologies fall where they *may*. Now, that of course raises the question, *how* do we cling to Jesus? *How* do we hold fast to orthodoxy in an age of ideology?

Here's how. First, **look at your inputs**. By "inputs," I mean the things that you allow to speak into your heart and mind on a regular basis. What things most consistently feed you *ideas* about the world around you and how to think about it? **For the bulk of us, it's probably whatever *media* we consume the *most*.** Social media, YouTube, Netflix, Cable news, news outlets, music, movies—the list goes on and on. **One way or another,** you and I are regularly face-to-face, ear-to-ear with dozens of different "inputs" every day. And *all* of those inputs are relaying a variety of different mindsets and belief systems to us. Some of them are *compatible* with a Christian worldview, but many of them *aren't*. **And that's okay; as Christians we shouldn't require or expect everything we watch, listen to, and interact with to cater to our worldview.**

**But we do have to** be *honest* with ourselves about the impact those sources are having on us. **So listen, just as plainly as I know how to put it:** if you are reading the bible for five minutes a day, and consuming five *hours* of TikTok a day, one of those things is going to *form* your mind and your heart more than the other. If you are *conversing with God* for a

few minutes when you think about it, but watching Fox News from the moment you get home from work until you go to bed, one of those things is gonna win out. I think sometimes we'd love for it to be more complicated and nuanced than that, but sometimes it's just *not*. And I realize it's probably unrealistic to think that most of us are going to spend more time in the Scriptures and in prayer than we do entertaining ourselves.

So **knowing that, bare minimum,** at least do this. Let's **become critical consumers.** Become *critical* consumers. Don't *passively* consume the media you consume. And you might say, "but that's the thing: I watch that stuff in order to turn my brain off." Okay, fine: turn your brain off. But sometime *after* you consume it, turn your brain back *on*. Practice asking yourself, "what are those *inputs* teaching me to believe?" That reel on Instagram I just watched: what is it teaching me to think about my *marriage*? That show I just watched: what is it teaching me to believe about *sex*? That news segment I just saw: is it teaching me to *love* people different from me, or to *hate* them?

I **want us to practice taking all of the media** we consume, all of the inputs in our life, holding them up to the Scriptures and asking, *is that true? Is that right? Is that consistent with the teachings of Jesus? Or inconsistent?* And how does that shape the way that I live as a follower of Jesus? That, to me, is precisely what Paul means when he says, "just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught..." It's by doing *that* that we resist being formed by every philosophy and worldview and ideology that floats our way. And we persistently allow ourselves to be formed by *Jesus* instead.

Over in **Ephesians chapter 4,** Paul says that when we do *that*, we will no longer be...tossed back and forth by every wind of teaching and philosophy, but instead will grow to *become* the mature body of Jesus himself.<sup>8</sup> Now *that* is a *staggering* statement if you stop to think about it. Because Paul just said that living in this sort of way turns *us, collectively, into* the very body of Jesus. When we hold fast to *orthodoxy* in a world of *ideology*, we put Jesus on *display* to the world around us. We become that "city on a hill," a "light in the darkness." People see that, and are drawn to the way of the kingdom as a result. People see *that*, and then glorify our Father in heaven."<sup>9</sup> That's what we're after.

~~So if I could just clarify one more thing, and I know we're running long, it would be this. If you are here this morning and you feel like we've just made you our enemy, I would ask that you go back online and listen to this teaching again. Because here at City Church, we aren't in the habit of making anybody our enemies. As Paul says, our enemies are~~

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<sup>8</sup> See Ephesians 4:14-15

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 5:16

~~not flesh and blood, but the principalities and the powers over this present darkness.<sup>10</sup>  
No matter where you fall on the political spectrum, no matter what ideology you are  
prone to, we are not against you. We are for Jesus, and therefore we are against  
anything that leads people away from Jesus. And that's because we believe that when  
we were Jesus' enemy, he made us his friend. That's what the cross was all about.~~

So those of us that know and follow Jesus are going to go to the tables throughout this room and remember the moment that Jesus made all his enemies into friends. We're going to remember the broken body and spilled blood of Jesus that brought us into his kingdom. If you're a follower of Jesus in the room, you're invited to do that with us, as we ask that Jesus would establish and strengthen us in the message of Jesus. To become *different*, for the sake of the world.

So let's ask for his help, shall we?

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<sup>10</sup> See Ephesians 6:12