



## START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

For the new 'Off The Record' teaching series, we asked people to submit their questions or topics they would like to hear addressed from a biblical view. What topics would be at the top of your list?

## SHARE

Welcome to our teaching series called "Off The Record."

Have you ever wondered about certain topics that never seem to be talked about in church? Topics that stand like elephants in the room, yet the church seem to shy away from? Many times we like to talk about these things 'off the record,' because we are either too afraid of what people might think of us or many times, we are not sure how to answer tough topics that are difficult to answer. As a church, we believe that we are accountable before God to bring the full counsel of the word of God and that we can't shy away from the truth.

The truth is we are all broken, we all struggle, and the life Jesus offers us is better; better than anything else the world offers. So during this series, we are going to be full of grace. Every one of us needs grace, so there is not one of us who should point the finger at another broken person, for we are all at the table of grace thanks to Jesus Christ. We will allow the Word of God to speak to us and trust that even if we differ in opinion at times; we can trust the Holy Spirit to do what He does. It is the very spirit of God that will bring change and conviction, not a domineering argument.

As we talk about our struggles, lifestyle choices and convictions, we need to remember that we are talking about real people with names, faces, families ... some of whom may even be in group with us. People who are dealing with difficult struggles, people who have a mom, dad, a brother, a sister, a friend, or co-worker who gives a face to the brokenness. So we are going to talk with humility, grace, and understanding. Let's be quick to listen and let love dominate the conversation.

As Shawn mentioned last week during the message on marijuana, first and foremost, we are going to focus on some important truths about unity:

**Let's start by reading Romans 14:1-4**

**Why do you think we are warned not to treat people with contempt?**

**Let's continue reading Romans 15:1-7**

**What does it mean to 'bear with the weak?'**

**Regardless of our struggles, we need to accept others just as Christ accepted us. Have you experienced that type of acceptance within the body of Christ? If you have had those types of accepting relationships, how has it personally changed you?**

## **GROW**

The more things change, the more they stay the same. One thing that is constant in our world is that culture is an ever-changing organism that is pushed and pulled by countless influences; many of them are hard to define. Some cultural changes bring powerful awareness to issues like poverty, sex trafficking and medicine, helping those in need of immunization across our world. Such advances are good and help humankind flourish together. Other cultural shifts can seem to promise freedom or advancement, but when we look back on thousands of years of history, we realize it brought even more brokenness or bondage and people did not flourish. Historical ideas that were supposed to bring progress and advancement instead brought devastation, racial oppression, and brokenness.

So how do we know what cultural changes will bring human flourishing and which won't? How do we know if we are on the right track, the right side of history? Is there a fixed point in the horizon in which we can determine our direction? King Solomon, the wisest man to ever live once said, "there is nothing new under the sun." Meaning that for thousands of years, we have seen history repeat itself. When we read scripture, we see that God always tells us the truth about ourselves. Since the garden, our perfect relationship with God was fractured by sin, even creation itself was broken and since that moment humanity has been groaning for redemption, healing and for a return to a perfect world. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life..." that he is the way we have been looking for. It is Jesus, God himself who is our fixed point on the horizon for a culture that seems to constantly shift.

As Christ followers, we know that when we trust the truth found in scripture, it brings life, healing, wholeness and human flourishing to a broken world. We trust that what God says is true and that his love is better. We should not be ashamed of the gospel; it truly is good news for everyone.

**Let's read Romans 1:16-32**

**Why do you think Paul starts out by talking about 'being ashamed of the gospel?'**

Paul says they 'exchanged the glory' of God for images, 'glory' meaning God's unique majesty

of which fallen humankind has lost sight and substituted deities of their own creation. God then 'gave them over' meaning that God will allow a person to go after what they think will bring them fulfillment outside of him. God allows sin to run its course as an act of judgment.

**Have you ever thought about God's judgment as God allowing us to chase our desires outside of him?**

In R. H. Mounce's commentary on "Romans" he talks specifically about sexual sin:

Again it is stated that "God gave them over" (cf. v. 24). God's anger against sin leads him to withdraw from the sinner who willfully continues in wickedness. The penalty for sin is sin itself with all its inevitable consequences. Because people failed to glorify God and give him thanks, God gave them over "to sexual impurity" (v. 24). Because they exchanged the glory of God for a lie, he gave them over to the "passions that bring dishonor" (v. 26).

Romans 1:26–27 contains the clearest teaching in the New Testament on homosexuality. In this section Paul described the practice as "shameful," "unnatural," "indecent," and as a "perversion." By contrast, the Greco-Roman society of Paul's day tolerated homosexuality with considerable ease. Among some advocates it was viewed as superior to heterosexuality. Barclay notes that "fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors were homosexuals."<sup>31</sup>

In Jewish culture, however, it was regarded as an abomination. Barrett comments that "no feature of pagan society filled the Jew with greater loathing than the toleration, or rather admiration, of homosexual practices." The Old Testament specifically prohibits homosexuality. Leviticus 18:22 says, "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable." The penalty for both participants was death (Lev 20:13). In 1 Cor 6:9–10 Paul specifically said that "homosexual offenders" will not "inherit the kingdom of God." Against this background it is difficult to understand why some contemporary teachers—even some who claim to be biblical—make allowance for a practice clearly condemned in both the Old and the New Testaments.

**In today's culture, do you see a large contrast in viewpoints about homosexuality like in Paul's day?**

**As a society, we like to focus on pointing at other's obvious sin to try to justify our own. As we read in verses 28 – 32 we realize that none of us are exempt from sin. Do you see any that you have personally struggled with?**

**Let's read Romans 2:1-4**

**We are not to hypocritically judge, condemn or look down on others, when we ourselves also struggle with sin. Why do you think Paul points to 'God's kindness' leading people to have a change of heart and not fine-sounding arguments?**

**How kind and loving are you to those you disagree with?**

## **MOVE**

Regardless of your past, regardless of the baggage that you bring or the things that you struggle with, there is a God who is bigger than those things. The gospel of Jesus Christ is good

news for everyone and sometimes to fully understand the good news, we must first face the painful bad news. The bad news is that we all have been diagnosed with a sin problem that leads to death and apart from Jesus Christ we have no hope. The perfect law of God is like an MRI machine and reveals to us where we fall short. We don't then sit in despair staring at the MRI results; we look to the great physician. It points us to our need for the cross of Christ. It is at the foot of the cross that we must all bow a knee for God has provided a way for every one of us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus took our place and in exchange we get life, salvation, and forgiveness if we have chosen to follow him. That is amazing news!

As we wrap up this week's study, we want to encourage Red Rocks Church to be the type of place where there is space for everyone to come and struggle well with the battles they face. That we are a place where we put on humility, extend kindness and love to those we disagree with, and are unified around the cross of Christ and the one and only gospel that sets us free. Paul gives us a picture of what a church can look like and talks about the types of people that should be found in the body of Christ:

### **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

**Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

Paul helps remind the church in Corinthians of what we all need to remember, that a church is composed of people that we so easily label. We must remember that we are those people and have been washed, sanctified and justified because of Jesus Christ. The church in Corinth reached out to everyone and they found a place at the table regardless of their background.

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|--------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| • Wrongdoers       | • Homosexuals | • Adulterers         |
| • Sexually immoral | • Idolaters   | • Greedy people      |
| • Alcoholics       | • Slanderers  | • Shady sales people |

**Has God brought to your attention a group of people you need to pray for, show love and kindness to that you may currently feel contempt for?**

### **PRAY**

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into mens and womens groups to talk more freely.

### **TO GO**

Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but to save it. It is God's love that sent Jesus. You are loved.

### **John 3:16-18b**

**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned...**