

## **The Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less**

### Countercultural (Week 4) - Collaboration, Not Conflict:

1) The gold standard of research on healthy and unhealthy marriages is the Gottman Institute: they've identified "four horsemen" of a deteriorating relationship: a) criticism, not complaint, b) contempt, c) defensiveness and blame-shifting, and d) stonewalling or relational cutoff.



2) That gives us the interpretive lens by which we can conclude - America in 2021 has all the traits of a failing marriage.

3) That claim jives with what other cultural observers are finding - for example, that we have retreated into our own identity groups and have made two-dimensional caricatures of other groups with whom we disagree.

4) Similarly, we've chosen selective empathy - showing ourselves and those like us compassion and grace, but not those different from or distasteful to us - and we've regressed into adolescent black/white, either/or thinking.

5) The Christian way is the exact opposite of all this toxic, isolating, counterproductive behavior.

6) Whereas contempt is marked by negative, destructive speech, the Christian way is the intentional use of positive, constructive speech (see Eph. 4.29).

8) Whereas contempt assumes personal moral superiority, the Christian way assumes personal fallibility (see Matthew 7.3-5).

9) Whereas contempt is built upon a foundation of individual autonomy, the Christian way is the indispensability and necessity of others, in decision-making, community life, personal happiness, you name it.

## **A Prayer For The Week**

### From Celebrating Community:

*Gracious God, You have called us to be a new community in Christ, and yet we often remain divided. Forgive us for our fear, anxiety, and misunderstanding. Strengthen instead our common bonds and deepen our resolve to be unified as Your church.*

*Give us a thirst and hunger for communion with one another in faith, life, and witness. Keep us restless until we grow together in accord with Christ's prayer that we who believe in Him may be one, amen.*

## **A Devotional for Today**

Dr. Stephen Crosby is a retired pastor who now devotes his time to working with congregations nationwide on the hard work of Christian unity and togetherness. In one article, he uses the analogy of loving sausage vs. making sausage to describe what it takes to achieve unity in these divided times:

*"There's an old saying that if we ever saw sausage being made, we would never eat sausage again. Saying you believe in Christian unity and togetherness is like saying you love sausage. Anyone can wax eloquent about the wondrous taste of sausage. The question is, do you have the stomach for the process of making sausage?..."*

*"What separates sausage lovers from sausage producers is a willingness to implement, not merely talk about togetherness, and to embrace its cost. And, rest assured, unity is not for the faint of heart..."*

*"Unity must be transferred to us. One source has it; another doesn't, but needs it. Christian unity is transferred from God to earth. It doesn't start with us, it begins with Him. We will be able to unified with each other to the same degree that we are unified with God.*

*"Unity comes with a price tag. If my rights and ego...are more important to me than you, your pain, and your needs, than traveling together, arm in arm, toward one Kingdom future becomes impossible. The ingredients of real unity are personal sacrifice, humility, and accommodation of others.*

*"So are you and I sausage lovers or sausage makers? Are we serious about the hard work of Christian unity? Are we ready to give ourselves to the real thing, or are we going to settle for the less costly counterfeits?"*