

\*\*\*Cue Film Clip of Thunder Pants (about acceptance)

**\*\*\**Hmm... "Jesus accepted everyone on the spot, although he didn't necessarily approve of everyone's behavior. WE must do no less!"***

**Vineyard Church)**

**Steve Sjogren (founding pastor of**

**\*\*\*Ex) Error! Objects cannot be created from editing field codes.** Last Sunday, we had our Fall Fair Outreach! We (90 volunteers) reached out in a tangible way to our community. We provided a safe place where some 66 families and 131 children could celebrate (in true Pagan fashion lol) the holiday that most Christians shun...Halloween!! I say this in this way because when Pastor Jim (my husband) approached some other local Pastors about joining with us, they declined stating that it would be too much of an endorsement of Halloween to have the Fall Fair on the same day.

---I am in no means, judging anyone for their personal convictions, but we **at Real World**, if we hold true to our vision statement, don't have this luxury. WE must present ourselves

**\*\*\* as Real People...in \*\*\*Real Life scenarios...serving a \*\*\*Real God!** And that very well may mean that we emerge from our caves of disdain on Halloween night and hand out some candy to a three year old witch or a five year old kid in a devil costume!

If we are determined to follow Jesus' example, we've got to reach out to people even when we can't approve of their behavior. The church at large wants to reach the lost. But is the church at large willing to reach these lost people in the gutter where they are? Or are we putting up a church sign and hoping that by some spiritual osmosis they are going to come in droves through our front doors, looking like us, smelling like us, and behaving like us?

--**We must stop turning a blind eye to the people that are coming across our path.** For this reason, today's teaching is called,

**\*\*\*(Title Page) Error! Objects cannot be created from editing field codes.**  
**Random Acts of Blindness-*Barriers to Reaching Out***

**\*\*\* Definition: What is Outreach?**

Outreach is reaching out to people and verbally sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with non-believers to win souls for Christ.

**---But there are barriers to us doing this effectively. Internal and External. There are more "Random Acts of Blindness" on our part than there are "Random Acts of Kindness."**

**---It may be that we're just tired of people looking for**

**handouts.**ex) Story of young guy that I knew, asking for money in a parking lot because he was "hungry". After offering the other half of my sandwich or that I would go get him one, he turned it down and said, he would just get one later, he had made \$18.00 already that day and didn't want to leave while he was on a role!

**---How many of us have been jaded by people just like this...the jobless, homeless, hungry cardboard signs we see by the side of the road. The guy in the parking lot who says he has a car broken down 4 miles down the road and has to get to Philly to see his dying mother. WANT TO GET HIM TO BACKTRACK IN A HURRY? Offer to take him to his car and buy a car part for him.**

Ex)---Worse yet, a guy in front of my gym was approaching people in the parking lot with a Jesus tee-shirt and handing out cards that said "Jesus loves you" and asking for money. I was horrified!!!

**---The thing is, we cannot let ourselves become jaded because of the "fakes" that the enemy has planted. There are real needs out there and we must not throw the baby out with the bath water. If we don't love, they won't know we are Christians!**

**---IN LUKE 8- JESUS TALKS ABOUT THE the parable of the sower that Jesus spoke of, he didn't say that after the seed that the sower threw fell on rocky soil or blew away in the wind, that he stopped sowing. He kept on sowing. It is not our responsibility where the seeds we sow fall. Our responsibility is to keep on sowing, otherwise we have become blinded to the needs around us and we're not walking as a child of God.**

**\*\*\*1 John 2:3-11**

<sup>3</sup>By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup>The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; <sup>5</sup>but whoever keeps His

word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: <sup>6</sup>the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

<sup>7</sup>Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. <sup>8</sup>On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. <sup>9</sup>The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now. <sup>10</sup>The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. <sup>11</sup>But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

### **\*\*\*Random Acts of Blindness**

**Random Act of Blindness #1- Pharisee Syndrome-** pride or contentment that we are “good enough” Christians doing what we’re doing.

*<sup>3</sup>By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.*

**Commentary by Matthew Henry:** *Young Christians are apt to magnify their new light and applaud their own knowledge, especially if they have been suddenly or in a short time communicated; and old ones are apt to suspect the sufficiency and fulness of their knowledge; they lament that they know God, and Christ, and the rich contents of his gospel, no more: but here is the evidence of the soundness of our knowledge, if it constrain us to keep God’s commandments. (Exodus 20)*

**\*\*\*Random Act of Blindness #2- Hypocrisy** (saying one thing-doing/not doing another)

*<sup>4</sup>The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;*

**Commentary by Matthew Henry:** *A careful conscientious obedience to his commands shows that the apprehension and knowledge of these things are graciously impressed upon the soul; and therefore it must follow in the reverse that he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him, [v. 4](#).*

*(In other words, that person would be a Hypocrite)*

---pastor's Corner that I wrote speaks of Hypocrisy, but you'll notice, I am not talking about a Christian who makes a mistake or commits a sin. WE are looking at a person who says one thing, claims Jesus, but has a lifestyle of doing something else.

**\*\*\*Random Act of Blindness #3- Trying to "love" people in your own strength-won't last.**

*<sup>5</sup>but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:*

**Commentary by Matthew Henry:** *To keep the word of God, or of Christ, is sacredly to attend thereto in all the conduct and motion of life; in him that does so is the love of God perfected. Possibly, some may here understand God's love to us; and doubtless his love to us cannot be perfected But the phrase rather denotes here our love to God;*

--- **Point-** we can't expect to love people like Jesus' loves them, but we can love like we're lovin' on Jesus. So next time that person who doesn't look too good needs a touch from the Lord, just say to yourself, "you're lookin' a lot like Jesus"

*<sup>6</sup>the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*

**Commentary:** *The Lord Christ was an inhabitant of this world, and walked here below; here he gave a shining example of absolute obedience to God. Those who profess to be on his side, and to abide with him, must walk with him, walk after his pattern and example.*

---**John 15:14, Jesus calls us His friends if we do what He asks of us and do as He has done!**

**\*\*\*Random Acts of Blindness #4- Apathy**

*<sup>7</sup>Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.*

*<sup>8</sup>On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.*

**--Read-Message Bible Version:** <sup>7</sup>*My dear friends, I'm not writing anything new here. This is the oldest commandment in the book, and you've known it from day one. It's always been implicit in the Message you've heard. <sup>8</sup>On the other hand, perhaps it is new, freshly minted as it is in both Christ and you—the darkness on its way out and the True Light already blazing!*

- even the most seasoned Christian needs the Commandment to love renewed in his spirit. That's why John states here that maybe this commandment should be a renewed even though you've heard it a million times to further constrain us to our duty in loving others.

---Even the most mature need a refresher course in how to share the Gospel with people, because culture changes. **If Jesus were here today, he wouldn't be doing the things the way we do them! He would be going where the people are hurting the most!!**

**\*\*\*Random Act of Blindness #5- Prejudice and Hatred** for other ethnicities, religions, even age groups. Hatred is darkness and sin. It will cause our own negative spiritual destiny. **Where that darkness dwells, the mind, the judgment, and the conscience will be darkened**, and so we will not understand the way to eternal life.

<sup>9</sup>*The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.*

<sup>10</sup>*The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.*

<sup>11</sup>*But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

**Commentary:** *It is proper for sincere Christians to acknowledge what God has done for their souls; but in the visible church there are often those who assume to themselves more than is true, there are those who say they are in the light, the divine revelation has made its impression upon their minds and spirits, and yet they walk in hatred and enmity towards their Christian brethren; these cannot be swayed by the sense of the love of Christ to their brethren, and therefore remain in their dark state,*

**Commentary:** *“No cause for stumbling” he will conscientiously beware that he neither induce his brother to sin nor turn him out of the way of religion, **Christian love teaches us highly to value our brother's soul, and to dread every thing that will be injurious to his innocence and peace.***

Ex) **Early Racism in Paul:** Paul, Himself, had a flaming temperament towards people who he felt were ignorant. There was a time when he *called for fire from heaven upon poor ignorant Samaritans* who received Him not, [Lu. 9:54](#). As he grew in God's love and maturity, he had nothing but feelings of good will towards others.

### **\*\*\*So How are we Going to turn Our Random Acts of Blindness into Random Acts of Kindness?**

Besides asking God to help us overcome our fear and intimidation we are going to have to understand the following...

#### **\*\*\*1. *The Ministry of Reconciliation: 2 Corinthians 5:18***

*<sup>18</sup>Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,*

Understanding the ministry of reconciliation is understanding why God sent Jesus to save us, and how we in turn have to help others to be reconciled to Him by sharing the good news of Christ with them.

Ex) In some poor remote villages in Africa, it's not unusual for a community to come together to send an academically brilliant student to college, when the student's parents can't afford it. The story was told of a young man sponsored to college by a community, hoping that when he graduated from college, he would in turn do the same for a less fortunate student. But this young man, upon graduating from college, got a job and moved to the city, forgot about his people, and forgot to do for others what was done for him.

God sent Jesus, His only begotten Son, to die for the sins of the world, and reconcile us who were dead in trespasses to the Father, and then told us to reconcile others to Himself, by going into the entire world and preaching the gospel to every creature in every nation. But like the young man in the story, most of us Christians fail to do for others what was done to us.

2. ***Have to understand that Outreach is Lifestyle not just a ministry...*** Now, even though outreach may be one of the ministries within a local church, does not mean that it is a ministry for certain kinds of people with certain kinds of gifts. Outreach is for every believer. Outreach is a lifestyle not a ministry!

On the other hand, if we see outreach as a lifestyle, i.e. what Jesus required of us, and what we should spend the rest of our Christian lives doing, then it doesn't matter whether we are a part of the ministry or not, it's something we'll do at every opportunity the Lord presents to us, and there are many of those.

- c. ***WE Have to Use Words Too!: Matthew 5:16 tells us to let our light so shine before men that they will see our good deeds and praise our Father in Heaven!*** Lifestyle witnessing is a great means of being a light in dark places, but we actually do need to speak up when the opportunity arises.

Also, we Christians don't witness verbally because we are more comfortable witnessing with just our lifestyle than witnessing with our mouths. By lifestyle witnessing, I mean just living holy and trying to be the examples to others, hoping that our families, friends and co-workers come to know the Lord. We are comfortable with lifestyle witnessing because it's easier than standing at street corners sharing the gospel. It's easier than standing on the bus or at the shopping mall, apartment buildings, etc. sharing with strangers, God's plan for salvation.

Now, don't get me wrong. We ought to witness with our lifestyles. We ought to let our light so shine that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. But it's not enough. We have to back it up with verbal witnessing. We have to get out of our cozy shell and go out and win souls for Christ. Ask yourself, how many people have come to know the Lord, just by watching your lifestyle without you having to say something?

Besides, if anyone qualifies to witness with his or her lifestyle alone without verbal witnessing, it will be Jesus Christ – the perfect One. Yet, He did not leave it to just lifestyle witnessing, rather He taught the people and shared the gospel with them.

**Neither did He tell His disciples to just witness with their lifestyle, but charged them to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15) If souls are going to come to the Lord, we are going to have to open our mouths and witness.**

As believers, outreach is our way of life not a ministry!

**\*\*\*Conclusion:** *“We exist to Love our city into relationship with Christ.”*  
*Steve Sjogren.*

**(Repeat over and over!!!!)**

*We need to stop see outreach as a ministry and see it as a lifestyle. Grab a rake when a neighbor has leaves too high to see over. Give out bottles of water at the football game on Friday night-or better yet, some hot chocolate. Help people to their car on a rainy day with an umbrella. Put someone's cart back for them.*

*Ex) Two young mom's in ohio decided to give out toilet paper door to door.*

**Plan for the next several months:** We will be giving you opportunities for Outreach on a regular basis. Whether it is in your small group or the ministry you're involved in or whether it is church wide (like the short outreach opportunities we'll present you with on Christmas eve after our one hour service). Don't be surprised if they are a little over the top or outlandish. We are going to remain humble and bendable as we slowly but surely love this community into relationship with Christ.