

Practical Christianity Session One (Target Practice)

We are kicking off a new series today, Practical Christianity", basically talking about applying our faith to our Daily lives...

Because the truth is, we don't live in church services...

- We aren't always around other Christians...
- But we are always examples of

The Bible calls us "**Ambassadors**"

II Corinthians 5:20

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”

- Our job, to **lead people to Christ!!**
- **And it's a 24/7 job**
- **Ambassadors are usually positioned in hostile environments...**

So, as we are ambassadors in a hostile environment for Christ, we need to be prepared, so I felt this is a good place to start...

I Peter 5:8

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

I believe The Bible is God's Word and truth...

And I do believe every verse and chapter are strategically positioned for times and events in our lives, in order to prepare us for victory!!

This particular Bible verse is a very direct warning, telling us to be deliberate about our lives in serving God, because **our enemy is trying to distract us and make us fall.**

That leads to this next verse...

Romans:23

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

The simple truth, everyone lets God down at some point and time...

If we don't fall into the trap of justifying our actions, we can clearly see that we all sin much more often than we would like to admit...

- **Thank God for grace!!!**

Sin can be a tricky word when trying to define...

Some say the definition is:

- **Transgression against God** (transgression means violation of law)

Some say the definition is simply:

- **Missing the mark**

I'm good with that second definition as long as you know what the mark is (**Holiness**, living a life pleasing to God)

We are going to build from that definition today....

- Missing the mark

How many in here have ever shot a pistol?

Here's some simple steps to **target shooting**

- Stand facing the target, feet slightly apart for good balance
- Draw your pistol, bringing the sights up to your eye
- Front sight on the target, back sights centered with the front

Important note...

All this time, keeping your finger off the trigger through this process
Only putting your finger on the trigger when you are on target and ready to fire

- Because once you pull that trigger, that bullet is going somewhere.
- It's either going to hit the target
- Or end up somewhere it shouldn't be!!!
- (Missing the mark) kind of like sin....

It takes some practice to learn how to hit the target (the mark) every time

And that's without distractions!! (**Story about Matt at shooting range**)

Now imagine you are lining up your shot...

- Centered in on that **bullseye**...
- Put your finger on the trigger, ready to fire...
- And just as you're about to pull the trigger,
- **A lion sneaks** up beside you and let's loose a roar right in your ear!!!!

Where do you think that bullet's going to end up?

- (I sure don't want to be close by!)

This is how sin happens....

Even if you are being very careful, distractions from our enemy can pull you off target!

That's why it's so important to be vigilant and sober...

Let's call that living intentionally...

- That's how I define Holiness...
 - "Intentionally (purposefully) choosing to live a life pleasing to God"
- If you're not doing that, you don't have a target (mark) to aim at, so you're sure to miss!!

So, is the devil actually going to sneak up as a lion?

- Probably not

But here's some practical things to look for

You're trying to quit smoking for both your health and you witness...
He will come as that smoker always offering you a cigarette

You gave up drugs or alcohol

He will be that life of the party telling you one drink, one line, one needle, won't kill you, it will just help loosen you up!!

You're committed to a healthy marriage, maybe you've hit a few bumps in the road

You better watch that co-worker giving out all those compliments, or that person on social media that suddenly started sending those private messages...

The devil has one job...

- To cause you to miss the mark

Demonstration...

- Stand with target at a distance and show how easy it is to miss (nerf gun)
- Get closer and show how much easier it is
- Very close, you can't miss..

James 4:7-8

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

It really is that simple

- You have to distance yourself from the devil!!
- You have the authority to tell him no!!
- You have to get as close as possible to God!!
- Purposely staying clear of sin

Be vigilant...

- pay attention to you surroundings
- be determined
- put on the armor of God

Be sober

- keep the mind of Christ
- Don't let your judgment be impaired
- Don't be fooled into thinking that the enemy isn't out to get you...

Closing:

The enemy's out there seeking whom he may devour...

I want to close with all of the families coming together at these altars and praying....

We have to re-establish "The Family Altar"