

*Sermon Title: Called to Culture*

*Main Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23*

---

## **WELCOME & INTRODUCTION: A QUICK TOUR**

Good morning, Church! I'm happy to be with you this morning. My name is Jeff Sparks. This is my second Sunday at Colonial as the new Assistant Pastor at our SKC campus and will also be facilitating our Discipleship pathway at both of Colonial's campuses.

If you have been attending Colonial for less than five years, I may be a new face to you, however, my wife, Julie, may be more familiar to some of you: she is a KC native, a Shawnee Mission East graduate ("Go Lancers"?). Julie had been a member of Colonial since she was in Jr. High in the 1980s.

*My job for many years had been in RETAIL MANAGEMENT so we moved around a lot, but brought us back to Kansas City and so we came back to Colonial.*



I had sensed God's call on my life into pastoral ministry for some time, but obstacles, past failures, and lingering doubts had left me questioning this sense of call.



During this time, Pastor Jim invited me to lunch. It was a lunch hour that would change the entire trajectory of my life. Pastor Jim prayed with me and encouraged me to lay aside the doubts and pursue the call God had placed on my life.

- In 2018, I was ordained into pastoral ministry right here at Colonial—during the same service when Pastor Mark and Pastor Tami were ordained, and Pastor Greg installed.



Weeks after my ordination here at Colonial, Julie and I experienced a profound call by GOD to GO and SERVE St. Luke Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Newton, Kansas.

- St. Luke is a smaller church in a smaller town, 30 miles north of Wichita.
- And that's where I have been serving as pastor and Julie as worship leader for the past 5.5 years.

As Our time at St. Luke concluded I learned that a new pastoral position was opening here at Colonial and, God in His Grace has called us back to our home church.

**When pastor Jim invited me to share a message with you this morning, I selected for my text 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.**



I later learned that Pastor Mark had JUST preached on this very same text two weeks ago [here at the Overland Park campus]!

**But you know, that's okay . . . we know God's Word is inexhaustible.**

**IN FACT—I am confident that a pastor could preach on 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 . . . every single Sunday . . . for an entire year . . . and never exhaust this passage of its riches!**

*Because here . . . in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 . . . Paul offers to us a rare glimpse into his strategy for bringing the GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL to all people.*

*After all, we may know **WHAT** PAUL DID . . . but there are only a handful of passages in the New Testament that **SHOW US HOW** PAUL DID WHAT HE DID, **HOW** PAUL carried out **HIS GOSPEL STRATEGY** in a practical way and 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 is one of these passages.*

With this in mind, let us stand and read God's Word together:

*19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.*

## **PRAYER**

Father God, *"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD"* (Ps. 19:14). *I ask this in JESUS' NAME.* Amen [You may be seated].

## **NEWTON, KANSAS**

In 2018, when Julie and I departed for Newton, Kansas, we entered a very different culture than what we were used to here in Kansas City.

Now, you might not think it's possible that a town of 19,000 people just 3 hours away from Kansas City could be too different culturally, but it was a pretty unique town.

### **Here, let me show you:**

[slide: Mennonite Historical Marker] First, Newton is, historically, a Mennonite town. Mennonites, like their Amish cousins in the area, have a unique cultural identity that has shaped Newton, Kansas.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT MENNONITES, that's okay; I didn't know much either when I arrived in NEWTON: I learned that the Mennonites were German-speaking religious refugees fleeing religious persecution from Russia in what is now the Ukraine. Many of these refugees fled to towns throughout South-Central Kansas.

And they shaped even the culture of Kansas. For instance:

[slide: Wheat Harvest] We learned that when the Mennonite communities left Russia and came to south-central Kansas, they brought with them trunks of wheat grain they grew in Russia. . . RED WINTER WHEAT.

*We can thank these Mennonite communities for making Kansas "The Wheat State."*

Just like any other ethnic community, the Mennonites had their culinary traditions that permeated the area.

[slide: Pepper Nuts] "Pfefferneuse" (or Pepper Nuts) is a staple of the Mennonite culture and every household in Newton seemed to have their own way of making Pepper Nuts—these Insanely small, but incredibly delicious, cookies!

*[If you have never tried Pepper Nuts, worry not! We made a run to Newton this week to bring some for you to try - - the Pepper Nuts will be available for you to try after service].*

[slide: Varenika] Another cultural food item that is more popular in Newton than BBQ is in Kansas City is **Varenika**. The recipes for these little Potato and onion dumplings are guarded by rolling-pin-wielding grandmothers even today!

[slide: OU Church Sign] Perhaps the most interesting cultural difference Julie and I encountered in Newton, was a shockingly large number O.U. Fans!

[slide: Jeff and Julie in OU outfit] If there was an unofficial dress code at St. Luke, on any given Sunday, it was the Crimson Red T-shirts of the Boomer Sooner faithful.

## **WISE WORDS: “These are your people.”**

But before we departed Kansas City to go to St. Luke and Newton, Kansas, Pastor Jim took me aside and offered wise counsel, and words that I have never forgotten, **AND** what he said to me could easily be straight from our Bible Passage this morning:

Pastor Jim said: *“Jeff, you are going to your people. They are your people.”*

### **#1 Paul demonstrates his Gospel Strategy**

#### **APPLICATION POINT:**

When The Holy Spirit calls any of us to GO and be the ambassadors of Christ, to share the Good News with all people that Make Disciples—whether that call is to the other side of the world, the other side of the State, or the other side of the Street.



When Christ Jesus commands us to “GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES,” implicit in the dynamic of how that will actually happen is an understanding that we’re not only PREACHING THE GOSPEL to those God sends us to **but also to** “GO AND LIVE THE GOSPEL” out with someone we are Discipling.

How do we know we are to do this? We can see that this is exactly what Paul does as he explains in the next verse, v. 23

*23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.*

*Just as Pastor Jim said, "They are your people."*

And that's a pretty good summary of Paul's Gospel Strategy described here in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

Paul explains,

20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews . . .

21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law . . . that I might win those outside the law.

22a To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak.

22b I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

## #2 Paul helps us understand the Great Commission here.

**Paul's GOSPEL STRATEGY in 1 CORINTHIANS 9 helps us understand how we are to implement The Great Commission, which is found in Matthew 28:19-20. There, Jesus said:**

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you—

## THE GREAT COMMISSION GAP!!

For a long time I struggled to understand HOW the GREAT COMMISSION was suppose to be carried out.

It seemed very odd to me that no one ever talked about what appears to be a GAP in the GREAT COMMISSION. What I mean is, it seems like something is missing.

[slide: Point A to Point C] Why didn't anyone else seem to notice that in the Great Commission Jesus seems to go from POINT A . . . to POINT C . . . from "GO" (Point A) to "Make Disciples" (Point C).

## BUT WHERE WAS POINT B?

THE GREAT COMMISSION

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 **teaching** them to observe all that I have commanded you—

## **SO THERE ARE 3 IMPERATIVE COMMANDS that JESUS presents to us in the GREAT COMMISSION:**

### **the 2nd and 3rd commands are pretty easy to spot**

**Baptizing & Teaching** > both are Imperative Commands of Christ.

- But for some of us, figuring out which is the 1st Command is not so easy.
- Because the way we use English, the word “GO” seems like a command to us.

But that is not the 1st Command of Christ—in fact, it’s not actually a command at all. It just means “continual action.”

So Jesus is saying, “as you are going” or “as you are going about”.

“GO” COMES BEFORE THE COMMANDS . . . there is an activity happening and in that activity, THE COMMANDS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION take place.

SO . . . where is the EVANGELISM ACTIVITY? Where is the sharing the GOSPEL?

WHERE IS POINT B? It’s in the word “GO” . . . as you are going about.

AS YOU ARE GOING ABOUT YOUR CALL, YOUR PEOPLE, YOUR PLACE, GO TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO AS MANY AS YOU CAN THAT YOU MAY WIN SOME TO CHRIST.

THERE is nothing missing from the GREAT COMMISSION . . . what’s missing is how we understand the “GOING”.

JESUS GIVES US THE THREE COMMANDS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION . . . MAKE DISCIPLES, TEACH, and BAPTIZE. BUT IT IS Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9 that demonstrates what it means to GO.

20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews . . .

21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law . . . that I might win those outside the law.

22a To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak.

## **PAUL CONCLUDES WITH THIS:**

22b I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

No matter what CULTURE we found in Newton, Kansas . . . the GOSPEL never changes.

The little church of St. Luke in Newton, Kansas took B.L.E.S.S. from COLONIAL and everyone practiced it.



Every week we shared our BLESS stories . . . no one stood up in front of the church, instead, each Sunday morning we gathered around and shared the stories over coffee, donuts, and Bible Study.

It became the St. Luke way to talk walk through BLESS in all we did. The people of St. Luke, with OU shirts and flip-flips mightily shared the GOSPEL with so many people. WE prayed and lifted up and saw the HOLY SPIRIT guide the congregation to a SPIRITUAL DEPTH and MATURITY.

GO TO YOUR CULTURE my friends . . . wherever the HOLY SPIRIT IS CALLING YOU, TO WHOMEVER HE IS CALLING YOU . . . GO . .

BUT "GO" like Paul in our text this morning . . . THAT BY ALL MEANS YOU AND ME MIGHT SAVE SOME.

Amen