Common Ground: The Quicksand of Evangelism and Missions

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Introduction—Some assumptions of modern missiology:
1. The inherent goodness of cultural ________________
2. The non-necessity of ________________ culture
3. A focus on ________________ difference, rather than sinful divergence
4. Exalting diversity over conformity as an ________________
5. Exalting a ________________-centered over message-centered gospel

My proposition today is that there is really ______ neutral common ground that we can build our proclamation of the gospel upon, and the search for common ground in many ministries and the assumption of common ground in many efforts has and will continue to prove to be dangerous for the cause of the gospel.

I. WHAT WE DO NOT MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT COMMON GROUND

A. We do not mean that we have nothing in common ____________ with unbelievers.

B. We do not mean that we should have nothing in common socially with unbelievers.
   1. As a matter of fact, we ____________ have interaction with unbelievers socially. (1 Cor 5:9-13)
   2. We sometimes have a misunderstanding
      a. This comes from the ____________ we all feel:
         ● We should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14)
         ● Friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4)
         ● We should not love the ________ nor things in it (1 Jn 2:15-17)
         ● We are not at ____________ in the world (Phil 3:20)
      b. This comes from confusing our purpose (9-10):
         ● We are not called to ____________ from society. We are called to penetrate society.
c. This comes from assuming a privilege that isn’t ours (12-13):

- We tend to pass judgment on sinners, not offer salvation from judgment

C. **We do not mean that we have nothing in common psychologically with unbelievers**

D. **We do not mean that we have nothing in common __________ with unbelievers.**

E. **We do not mean that we ignore _______________ differences nor that we do not try to assimilate into a new culture as well as we can.**

II. **WHAT WE DO MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT COMMON GROUND**

A. **A Definition:** Common Ground is an area of supposedly __________ fact that is accessible to both the believer and the non-believer by which the claims of Christianity can either be ____________ or verified (McCune, 51).

B. **Some examples of Common Ground:**

1. Pure _______________
2. Commonly Held _______________
3. _______________
4. Love
5. Historical and Archaeological _______________
6. Felt Needs
7. Religious teachings

C. **The Assumptions of those who do evangelism and missions on the basis of “Common Ground”**

1. The _______________ Autonomy of the Mind
2. The Commonality of _______________, Values and Morality
3. All _______________ is God’s Truth
4. That Good _______________ Will Lead to Good Conclusions
5. Often, the Inherent _______________ of People
III. WHAT SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND BIBLICALLY WHEN WE TALK ABOUT COMMON GROUND?

A. We should understand something about the __________ we represent

1. He is the __________ of heaven and earth (Gen 1:1).
2. He has made ______________ everything (Col 1:16)
3. He works ___________ things according to His counsel
4. He owns ________________ and all of life should serve Him
5. The God who created all things ____________ over all things
6. Everything must ______________ or be used to serve the Creator

B. We should understand something about the ______________

1. All men __________ ____________, even though they suppress this truth by means of their unrighteousness (Rom 1:18-20)
2. All men are sinners and therefore subject to the ____________ of sin (Gen 6:5; Rom 1:18,25l 2 Cor 10:5)
3. When it comes to mankind, there are two basic sets of presuppositions (Col 2:8)
   a. There is empty __________ according to the tradition of men
   b. That which is according to Christ
4. With mankind, there are two basic kinds of knowledge (1 Tim 6:20-21; 2 Tim 2:25)
   a. False knowledge that __________ from the faith
   b. Genuine knowledge based on true repentance and __________
5. With mankind, there are two mindsets in the world (1 Cor 12:3)
   a. Those who call Jesus ______________
   b. Those who say Jesus is ______________
6. With mankind, there are two masters that are served (Matt 12:30)
   a. 
   b. 
7. Based on what we know about God and Mankind, we can conclude:
   a. There is ____ neutral position allowed in the Scripture
   b. There is no subject we can discuss that is ________ of spiritual implications
   c. The examples of common ground often used are not really common ground at all.

IV. HOW SHOULD WE PROCEED IN EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS?

We proceed on the basis of what we called an “______________ Approach”

In Evangelism, this means:

   A. We have many points of ____________ with unbelievers. These are the things we do have in common with unbelievers that do not go to the point of being “common ground.”

   B. We speak with lost people in a way that __________ the anti-god way of thinking, believing and living they are involved in.

   C. We live in a way that is __________ and glorifies God, thus confronting their way of living that is wrong.

   D. We are always ___________, but also always showing how what we enjoy, how we think and behave is only possible in light of God’s existence.

   E. We are _______________ when our relationships fail to provide evidence of the “clash of worldviews” that exists.

In Missions, this means:

   A. We focus more on what all men have in __________ than their cultural diversity.

   B. We focus on how people from all cultures have _____________ from the truth through various expressions of sinful rebellion and godlessness.

   C. We live _______________ in a culture and learn about the culture so we can clearly express ourselves in an antithetical way.

   D. We communicate clearly the ______________ of the gospel, calling for repentance and faith in the Creator God using the Word of God.
Helpful Sources:

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\text{See Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*. Covenant Media Press, 1996, p 41 ff.}\]