

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 representⁱ*

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 1:18,25; 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:

Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*. Covenant Media Press, 1996.

Cornelius VanTil, *The Defense of the Faith*. P&R, 1955.

Rolland McCune, *Apologetics*. Class Syllabus.

ⁱ See Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*. Covenant Media Press, 1996, p 41 ff.