

Cigarettes on Campus

Sermon #0948

Study by W. D. Frazee—November 23, 1979

I have something very interesting and very important for you tonight. But I warn you in advance, it can be misunderstood. So be careful that you don't miss understand it. The only way you can keep from misunderstanding it is to listen carefully and ask the Holy Spirit to help you. If you find something in it that you think shouldn't be there, maybe you misunderstood it. Listen carefully.

I am starting not with a text, but with a pretext. I was walking along one of our trails and I spied on the trail a cigarette. That is, what was left of it. The rest, you know what had happened to it. I got to thinking about it. I have thought quite a bit about that cigarette on the trails. A cigarette on a Wildwood trail. What do you think we ought to do about it?

Well, there are several attitudes that could surface. I want you to think about it a little. Perhaps I ought to tell you in advance, I am not thinking particularly of cigarettes when I am talking tonight. I am thinking about a dozen other subjects. You might be thinking about them while we talk about the cigarette on the trail.

At any rate, the cigarette was there. Three dimensions. Here it is right here. And my reaction could be, "Certainly not on this campus! We ought to have rules, and they should be enforced. No tobacco!" No tobacco.

There is another reaction that somebody could have and that is "If that fellow can smoke around here, I guess I can too. Why should I have to be deprived? If he can smoke, I can." Is that a possible reaction? Yes.

Here is another one. Quite different. "Well, if he wants to kill himself, that is his business. And Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men."

There is still another reaction. "Oh, I wish I could have one. I am just craving one and the very sight of it just sets all my nerves to tingling." Is that a possible reaction? Yes. Would it happen with some people? Certainly. All these different reactions come in human hearts as they see that little white remnant lying on the trail.

Well there is another reaction. Another response. Another attitude. That is this. "I am so glad that there is a place where men and women who want help to get away

from this thing can come and find with doctors and nurses and health educators, health guides, chaplains, and others help in getting away from it. And I want to do all I can to help whoever it is that is having that battle. If they are struggling and they fall, I don't want to kick them out, I don't want to kick them down, I want to help them up." What do you say? Are you with me in that?

And will you agree with me that none of those earlier attitudes that I have mentioned will help me help them? If my attitude is such that the poor fellow that is having a struggle with tobacco can't even get close because he might pollute the air I breathe, I won't be able to help him, will I? It might keep me from lung cancer, but it won't save him from lung cancer, will it?

I have thought of the blessed Jesus coming down to a polluted world. Was it polluted? Yes. Did He hate all sin worse than any of us hate tobacco? Was it repulsive and nauseating to Him? Yes. But He came where people were. He mingled with publicans and sinners. Why? He was seeking to lift them, to lift them He had to reach them.

And scolding this man won't help him, will it? No. Holier than thou won't help him. And joining him in smoking won't help him either, will it? If I just come up to him and say, Buddy, give me a light. And I join him, that won't help him get away from it. And feeling sorry for ourselves because we aren't allowed to do it, that won't enable us to help him. Will it? No.

A sense of the great love of God toward us will awaken love in our hearts toward our fellow men. And it is love that lifts. You see, dear friends, the Lord Jesus Christ is longing to deliver us from something more than tobacco or liquor or cursing, or any other outward habit of sin, transgression. The Lord is seeking to deliver us from sin itself in all its manifestations. Christ's burning denunciations of sin included the Pharisees. In fact, focused on the Pharisees. Why? Because in spite of their proud professions they were nurturing in their hearts the plants of wickedness, malice.

They didn't do the grosser sins, many of them, that they looked with disdain and contempt on others about. But in their hearts they were selfish, grasping, critical, proud, domineering. They didn't know God. And no greater evidence of a lack of a love of God in our hearts can be had than a disposition to show contempt toward those who are struggling in the battle against sin.

Jesus commended the good Samaritan because he came where the man was that had been wounded and left by the road side, and at the risk of his own life rescued him, administered first aid, took him where he could get more help, and paid the bill. That was love, wasn't it. That was a picture of what Jesus has done for us, and a picture of what He wants us to do for others.

As I said, a while ago, I trust you are thinking of something more than cigarettes. I trust you are thinking of anything and everything that can awaken in our hearts any of these attitudes, favorable or unfavorable, good or bad. What is your attitude, my dear friend, toward your fellow man who is having some struggle over some habit? Perhaps it is in the matter of diet. Maybe you have a friend that is overweight, but you are not. It could be that you are tempered. It could be that your intemperance manifests itself in skinniness, rather than in overweight. It has happened. It won't do to self-righteously condemn the one who is overweight and say, "I wouldn't do that." You don't know what you would do, my friend.

The first question that should come in our minds about anybody who is doing something that we think there is a better way is how can I help them? How can I help them? We cannot help them by contempt. We cannot help them by criticism. Neither can we help them, friends, by joining in that which is not for the best. The ability to stand for truth, for righteousness, the ability to demonstrate the better way and do it in a way that wins rather than repels, this is what we want.

Do you know what will enable us to do it? Love will, dear friends. Love will. Love did it with Jesus. Christ never compromises, and He never condemned. He drew men. It is true He didn't win everybody. It is true that three and a half years was all His own people could stand Him, and they nailed Him to a cross. But friends, He won everybody that was, to coin a word, winnable. He got everybody that would respond, He got them. Oh I want to learn to be like Him. Don't you? Amen.

Let's turn over to 1 John 3:14-16:

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren" 1 John 3:14-16.

Jesus did what? Laid down His life for us. Why? Because He loved us. And if we love our fellow men, what will that love lead us to do? Lay down our lives for them, to do anything and everything that will enable them to partake of that love.

I repeat, friends, I want to learn more of that lesson. What do you say? Amen.

This marvelous book *Ministry of Healing*, which we believe is inspired has a most wonderful chapter beginning on page 161 entitled *Helping the Tempted*. If you want to follow up this study we are having tonight and get some more wonderful things, read this chapter. I want to glean just a few sentences here and there in this chapter.

“Every human being is the object of loving interest to Him who gave His life that He might bring men back to God. Souls guilty and helpless, liable to be destroyed by the arts and snares of Satan, are cared for as a shepherd cares for the sheep of his flock” *Ministry of Healing*, page 162.

Remember, friends, Jesus left everybody in this universe that did it right and came to the place where people did it wrong. He didn't do that so He could be saved, He did it so we could be saved. He didn't give up all the bad things so He could be saved, He gave up all the good things so we good be saved. It is a wonderful thing to enter into that spirit of loving interest for others.

“He ... sees in every human being a value that exceeds finite computation” *Ibid*.

That is how much you are worth. A value beyond any money figure that could be put on you. That is how much your cigarette smoking friend is worth. Or the one that is falling or failing on any other point, or any other subject, that is how much he is worth. He has a value that exceeds finite computation. And God has given you and me the privilege of sharing with others the help that Jesus has shared with us.

In fact, that is all we can share with others is the help that He has shared with us. Has He helped you with something?

We were mentioning this matter of diet. I heard Dr. Mervin Harding, a dear friend of mine connected with the Loma Linda University, say this one day when he was giving a lecture on health to a group of people. He said, what is the real object of all of this. Isn't it to make us more like Jesus? To make us easier to live with? Then he asked a question. He said, “Are there some of you that used to eat white bread entirely and now you have learned the value of whole wheat bread, and you eat whole wheat bread?” He said, “Tell me, are you easier to live with than you were before?” Then he smiled and said, “If not, maybe you had better go back to eating white bread.” Of course, you know what he meant, don't you?

Reform, my friend, should not make us bigoted, narrow, exclusive. True reform springing from a love for Jesus will enable us to stretch out our arms wider than ever before and take in as many as possible to share with us the better way. Have you found something better in diet, in dress, in music, in reading, in the way you spend your time, in your work habits and exercise?

What do you do with it? Do you share it with others in a way that inspires them with the joy of it? Ah what a pity it would be a to stand apart in exclusiveness and say, “I don't want anybody around me unless they see this the way I do it and practice it the way I do it.” I heard a friend of mine say, “I don't want you to sin unless you sin the way I sin.”

“Don’t puff cigarette smoke in my face. I don’t like it.” Ah, that God may help us to be willing when necessary to go into a smoke-filled room like a fireman to pull somebody out. What do you say? That doesn’t mean to go in there to have a picnic. It doesn’t mean to go in there because we enjoy it. It means that we go in there, not because we enjoy it, but because we love people, people for whom Jesus died.

“The inhumanity of man toward man is our greatest sin” *Ibid*,
page 163.

Tobacco is not our greatest sin, friends. Overeating is not our greatest sin. Drinking whiskey is not our greatest sin. Swearing and cursing is not our greatest sin. Our greatest sin is the inhumanity of man toward man. Failing to reveal the love of Jesus. Oh I am so glad some people have loved me through the years enough to put up with a lot of things that I am sure were a worry to them. I am glad they loved me enough. Thank God for Christian friends!

Then on page 164, this gem, listen:

“We need more of Christlike sympathy; not merely sympathy for those who appear to us to be faultless, but sympathy for poor, suffering, struggling souls, who are often overtaken in fault, sinning and repenting, tempted and discouraged” *Ministry of Healing*, page 164.

Shall I read that one again?

“We need more of Christlike sympathy; not merely sympathy for those who appear to us to be faultless, but sympathy for poor, suffering, struggling souls, who are often overtaken in fault,…” *ibid*.

“Oh, that ought to learn better!” Yes. Yes. They should. And poor souls they want to, but did you ever misspell a word more than once when you were going to school?

“We need ... sympathy for poor, suffering, struggling souls, who are often overtaken in fault, sinning and repenting, tempted and discouraged. We are to go to our fellow men, touched, like our merciful High Priest, with the feeling of their infirmities” *ibid*.

And remember, friends, the way to show that sympathy is not to get in and smoke with them. That won't help them, will it? No. No. I think of the struggles that many of our young people and older ones too have with this music question. It is quite a problem to many people. Some people are hooked on some kinds of music just as much as this man was hooked on the cigarette.

We need a love and a sympathy, not to act as if all that music is ok, certainly not to aggravate the problem by bringing more of the same, but friends, loving sympathy to help people even if over again and again they have fallen into that habit. To encourage them with the good news that there is something better, and that we will pray with them and for them, and help them find a better way.

Some people are hooked on this TV habit. The best answer to some people

have found to the problem is not to have one around. But dear ones, do you know there are multitudes of people who live in a house where the only way they could get away from it would be to go and move somewhere else, and they can't do that? They don't control the situation.

Do we have sympathy? Do we have such love that we can pray with them and for them and help them to learn as Joseph did how even when surrounded by the sights and sounds of Egypt to be as one who sees and hears not? Can it be done? Yes. Daniel did in Babylon, Joseph did it in Egypt. And those who today are placed in circumstances where contrary to their one desires and wishes, they are surrounded by temptation can claim the power of Jesus, not only to be victorious themselves, but to reach out in sympathy to others.

Why when Paul went as a prisoner to Rome, he so lived and preached the Gospel that among the very members of Caesar's household, souls were won to Christ. Isn't that wonderful?

Ah my dear young friends, God help you to sense your privilege as heroes of the cross, to stand up for Jesus. Not in a Pharisaical, bigoted way, not in a compromising way, but in a way that lets others know that you have found the better way, the way of real satisfaction and that you are ready to help others to find it. Jesus will help you to do that.

I am especially interested in the matter of our parents and their children in the things I have studied tonight. It is a wonderful thing, dear parents, when you have the vision of training your children to be to this generation what Joseph was to Egypt and Daniel was to Babylon. It is a wonderful thing. But you will have to have children who are willing to be different. That is a gift to pray for. And if you, don't miss this, and if you as parents have the slightest idea that the only way you can develop that kind of children is to find a place where nobody ever does anything to tempt them, then you will be disappointed.

There are cigarette stubs on our trails. But do you know what that tells me? That tells me that we are reaching people that want help, that have a problem. And so it is in this matter, dear parents, of training your children. All around you are other parents with their children that are longing to find a better way. If all you do is join in that which you know is wrong, you won't be helping anybody. You must be willing to be different, willing to stand alone, but to do it in love and sympathy, to combine firmness and mercy.

Who is sufficient for these things? Everybody that has love. Let's read another verse in John.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. ... Herein is

love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” 1 John 4:7-8; 10-11.

What do you say? Amen. Did Jesus wait until you had learned all that you needed to know and were doing it before He stretched out His hand? Ah, no. He took you where you were. He is still doing that for me day after day. I am sorry I have been so slow, but I am thankful that my slowness is more than matched by His patience. I want to be that way with others. What do you say?

Now what did I tell you at the beginning of this study tonight? It could be what? Misunderstood. Can you see any places where somebody might misunderstand it? There are a dozen places where it could be misunderstood. But listen, I hope you will take the pecans out of the shell and not insist on choking on the shell. I hope you will get the part that is sweet meat. I hope you will get the nourishing, helpful part. I hope you will make up your mind that Jesus can help you to be like Him, light in a dark place, love in a selfish world, a true reformer in the midst of compromise for we are in a world that is full of it. It has seeped into God's church. God pity us. God is looking for men and women who will hold up the standard, but will do it in the spirit of love and sympathy, in a way that wins and draws.

Will you do it? Oh that God may help us to do it.

Shall we bow our heads?

Precious Lord, we thank Thee for Thy call tonight. We are so glad to be in a program where there is help for everybody no matter how weak they are, no matter how unworthy, no matter how far they have fallen, and how often they have fallen. We take courage as we remember how lovingly Thou hast dealt with us, and Thou art still dealing with us. Teach us how to reveal that love to others. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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