

TRANSCENDING TOXIC POLARIZATION



MATTHEW 5:9
— FELLOWSHIP —

Transcending Toxic Polarization

Matthew 5:9 Fellowship

Introduction

Polarization occurs when people divide themselves up into two or more groups, each holding on to different beliefs or values. This happens all the time, and in many cases, this is healthy for society. Polarization is a sign that a society has diversity of thought, and it can lead people to nuance and creativity.

However, sometimes, polarization can become toxic, and this can have a significantly negative impact on society. Toxic polarization occurs when people stop arguing about issues and start arguing about identities. Instead of debating what different sides believe, people resort to attacking and slandering their opponents on the other side.

What is the difference between healthy polarization and toxic polarization? This resource intends to examine three of the key markers of toxic polarization, and why the Christian gospel equips us to transcend each one. Groups with toxic polarization see outsiders as (1) binary instead of complex, (2) combative instead of complementary, and (3) evil instead of wrong.

What is Toxic Polarization? A Video Explanation



<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/859951406>

Toxic Polarization: Binary Instead of Complex

There's an insightful parenthetical statement in John 4 that is very relevant to the state of America today. Jesus is sitting at a well and asks a Samaritan woman for a drink. The woman responds with a question, and then the narrator explains the reasoning behind the question.

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)¹

According to the author John, the reason why the Samaritan woman was surprised by Jesus' request was because Jews had no dealing with Samaritans.

In those days, most Jews didn't associate very often with foreigners. Those who did were seen as tainted or compromised. Peter later hinted at this custom in Acts when he said, "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile."²

This phenomenon was even more salient when it came to Samaritans. Jews viewed Samaritans in particular as impure, idolatrous, and undignified. While other foreigners were seen as people who had never been among God's people, Samaritans were seen as people who once were counted among God's holy nation, yet they lost that privilege through idolatry and mixed marriages with foreigners. In fact, even the label "Samaritan" had become a way to insult another Jew—which is what Jesus' opponents sometimes called him.³

¹ John 4:9

² Acts 10:28

³ John 8:48

The Danger of Labels

As human beings, we all have the tendency to assign labels to people. At its core, categorizing groups of people in their relation to us is a basic human survival instinct. It is a quick way for us to know whom to trust and whom not to trust. And this has both positive and negative consequences.

For example, at an early age, many of us were taught not to trust strangers who drive big white vans. This skepticism of strangers with big white vans is partially grounded in reality—white-van kidnappings have certainly occurred.

However, the facts are that the large majority of kidnappers in America are not strangers, but actually family members or acquaintances. In 2021, only 8% of kidnapping victims were kidnapped by complete strangers. Additionally, there is no correlation between one's vehicle of choice and one's propensity for criminal activity. Hundreds of thousands of commercial vans are sold every year, and most of their drivers have no intention of committing crimes.⁴

Why do so many people fear strangers in white vans? One factor could be that many movies and TV shows have relied on this motif, causing their viewers to believe that the “white van kidnapping” phenomenon is much more common than it actually is. Additionally, some people might already have negative stereotypes of people who work in blue-collar industries, and commercial white vans are commonly driven by blue-collar employees.

Regardless, giving someone a label and assigning negative associations to it (in this case, not trusting big white van strangers) creates two results: it protects people from the very small minority who are actually

⁴ Among the 34,984 kidnapping victims in 2021, 2,701 were kidnapped by strangers. “Relationship of Victims to Offenders by Offense Category, 2021,” Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer, <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/>.

criminals, and it creates skepticism toward the very large majority who are actually not criminals.

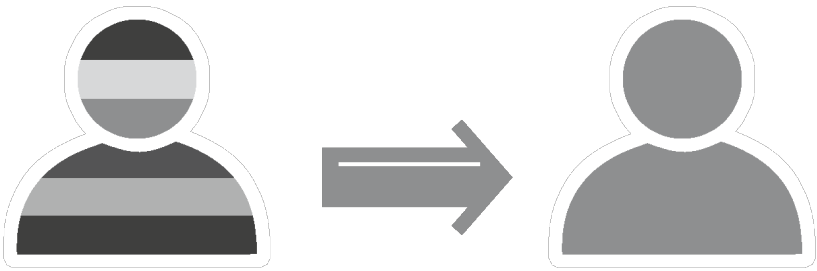
People apply the same reasoning to #BlackLivesMatter protesters, pro-life protesters, undocumented immigrants, vaccine skeptics, mainstream media news reporters, police officers, and so on.

With all of these groups of people and countless more, critics have looked at a small number of cases of criminal activity, and they use those cases as the basis to discredit the whole group. People are immediately sorted with a binary lens—does this person have this label or not?

To be clear, a critic can certainly make the case that a whole institution has systemic problems, which can potentially make it more likely for individuals within that institution to behave in certain ways. For example, one can argue that the “safe space” culture at many American universities incentivizes individual faculty members to be unwilling or afraid to speak their minds. Another can argue that many American police departments have too much military equipment and too little mental health training, which does not help individual police officers to operate effectively in crisis situations. However, this does not mean one should discredit all individuals who are academics, or all police officers. People are more complex and nuanced than the organizations and corporations they represent.

The Reduction of Identities

We are all a combination of various identities. Our sex, ethnicity, religion, country of origin, political affiliation, job, and so on all contribute to our uniqueness. This is no accident—our unique complexity stems from the fact that we have a creative God.



Where we go wrong is when we look at a certain individual, a complex person made in the image of God, and boil them down to a singular identity, along with the negative stereotypes we've attached to that label. Perhaps that identity is "academic," "police officer," "immigrant," or "evangelical." The possibilities are endless.

Within the church, this often manifests itself in the form of theological tribalism. Modern Christians have the tendency to divide up the church into two groups—Calvinists and Arminians, continuationists and cessationists, conservatives and progressives, complementarians and egalitarians, young-earth creationists and old-earth creationists, and so on.

In all of the above examples, some Christians are tempted to write off those on the other side of the theological aisle. They don't take the time to get to know the person's life, testimony, and character. They don't consider that an individual may be a worn-out single mother, or a man looking to heal from church hurt. All they see is a label.

This is also true of politics. Republicans and Democrats increasingly see people in the other political party as closed-minded, dishonest, immoral, unintelligent and lazy. In 2016, 47% of Republicans and 35% of Democrats said that those in the other party were more immoral than other Americans. By 2022, it got even worse. 72% of Republicans said

Democrats were more immoral, and 63% of Democrats said the same about Republicans.⁶

Additionally, 38% of both Republicans and Democrats would even be upset if their children married someone from the other political party.⁷ Unfortunately, many people have boiled down their political opponents to a label they despise. Their non-political qualities pale in comparison to the fact that this person is a registered Republican or Democrat.

The Countercultural Gospel

Jesus modeled a different way of life. Jesus saw people as they were—unique, nuanced image-bearers of God. Even though Samaritans were seen as corrupted and heretical, Jesus sat down at a well with a Samaritan woman and asked for a drink.. Even though tax collectors were seen as political traitors to Israel, he entered the house of Zacchaeus the tax collector to spend time with him. Even though a bleeding woman would have been seen as ceremonially unclean, Jesus allowed her to touch him still.

Over and over, Jesus refused the human tendency to reduce people to singular identities and sort them into binary categories. Regardless of the labels they wore, Jesus saw them as sheep in need of a shepherd, and he had compassion on them all.

But Jesus' countercultural compassion was not just an inspiring example for us. It was also the very means by which he would save us.

⁶ "As Partisan Hostility Grows, Signs of Frustration With the Two-Party System," Pew Research Center, August 9, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2022/08/09/as-partisan-hostility-grows-signs-of-frustration-with-the-two-party-system/>.

⁷ "How Republicans and Democrats Would Feel If Their Child Married Across the Political Aisle," YouGov, September 17, 2020, <https://today.yougov.com/topics/politics/articles-reports/2020/09/17/republicans-de/>.

The gospel teaches us that we were once worse than any negative labels we may assign. At one point, under the judgment of God, we all accurately wore the labels of sinner, children of wrath, and enemy of God. However, Jesus looked past those labels and saw image-bearers of God, destined for glory. And so he came to our world, associated with us by becoming a human himself, and, “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”⁸ Through Jesus’ sacrifice, we have now been adopted as children of God, and we now have peace with him.

The natural tendency of humanity is to look at people with judgment and to ask, “Are you in or are you out?” But not so with Jesus. He declared, “I invite you all to come in!”

But it doesn’t end there. Not only do we have peace with God, but we also have peace with other people. For if the great vertical divide between God and humanity has been bridged, then surely all horizontal divides between human groups can be bridged. The apostle Paul writes of the effect of Jesus’ death on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.”⁹

Since the dawn of human history, people have been constructing dividing walls of hostility. They have segregated into like-minded groups, sorting themselves by class, ethnicity, religion, and political affiliation. They have not only slandered their opponents, but at times they have even resorted to war and genocide.

⁸ Romans 5:8

⁹ Ephesians 2:14-16

But through the cross, the hostility that once reigned over humanity has been put to death. And now God has created for himself one new humanity, characterized not by division and strife but by unity and peace.

May we follow in the footsteps of our Prince of Peace. May we allow the reconciling power of the gospel to overflow into our relationships with others. May we associate with those who differ from us, spending time with them with love and compassion, for the good of our nation and for the glory of our kingdom.

Self-Reflection Questions

- Think about a group, whether theological or cultural or political, that you are a part of. What are some negative labels that members of your group may commonly assign to others?
- What can you do to ensure that you view other people in complex, and not binary, ways?

Toxic Polarization: Combative Instead of Complementary

In the 1700s, many of the British colonists in America had been exploring how the thirteen different colonies were supposed to interact with one another. It was undeniable that there was much that set them apart. For example, Massachusetts originally banned Catholics, while Maryland actually served as a haven for Catholics. Economically, the northeast centered on urban commerce, while the south focused on exporting tobacco and rice.

But as more and more colonists became unified with one another in their cause for political revolution against the British Empire, it became clear that they had to work together. They could not fight both the British Empire and each other.

Eventually, a certain Latin phrase started to become an unofficial motto of the American colonies: "E Pluribus Unum." It means, "Out of many, one." "E Pluribus Unum" signified that although there were thirteen different colonies, each with different cultures and values, they were to be united with one another. And that is why they eventually named themselves the United States.

"E Pluribus Unum" was later printed on the Great Seal of the United States, and eventually, this phrase was mandated by law to be printed on all U.S. coins. To this day, on the tails side of every American coin is written the phrase "E Pluribus Unum."

Why People Fear Diversity

However, achieving unity in diversity is easier said than done. It is natural for human beings to be loyal to those who are similar to us, and to distrust, or even fear, those who are different from us. This has long been recognized by sociologists. In 1906, William Sumner wrote, "The relation of comradeship and peace in the we-group and that of hostility

and war towards others-groups are correlative to each other. The exigencies of war with outsiders are what make peace inside... Loyalty to the group, sacrifice for it, hatred and contempt for outsiders, brotherhood within, warlikeness without—all grow together, common products of the same situation.”¹⁰ In other words, the instinct that causes us to declare our allegiance to our own tribe is the same instinct that causes us to declare our aggression to another tribe.

This concept of in-groups and out-groups was later labeled “social identity theory,” and it was popularized by social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s. They wrote that human beings are wired to divide the world into “us” and “them,” and they often exaggerate the similarities among the “us,” while exaggerating the differences between “us” and “them.”

They argued that we humans do this in order to ensure that we have an unshakable sense of belonging. As we self-categorize ourselves into specific social groups, those groups will gradually claim large parts of our identity, and then we start to protect the group’s identity as a way to protect our own identity. Instinctively, we may believe that if our group is infiltrated by “outsiders,” then our safety and stability are at risk. Therefore, defending the boundaries of our group and maintaining our group’s ideological or cultural purity are of utmost importance. And this causes us to be potentially combative toward those who are different from us.

This sociological phenomenon is why, when the early apostles sought to diversify their group with Gentiles, they ran up against so much opposition, both from within the church and outside the church.

After Peter went to meet Cornelius in Caesarea in Acts 10, he was criticized by fellow Christians for defiling himself with outsiders: “So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized

¹⁰ William Graham Sumner, *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals* (Boston, MA: Ginn and Company, 1906), 12-13.

him and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them."¹¹

And when Paul was giving a sermon to a mob in Jerusalem in Acts 22, the crowd remained silent and attentive until he mentioned one thing in particular that violently set them off: "Then the Lord said to me, "Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.""¹² The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, 'Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!'"¹²

Both of these groups, from within the church and outside the church, were concerned with outsiders coming in and diluting and defiling the church.

This mentality has continued on, even into today's church. While the types of purity make look different from community to community, many modern churches still have strict boundaries regarding who is in and who is out. According to a 2022 Lifeway Research survey, half of American Protestant church goers say they prefer to attend a church where people share their views on politics.¹³

But if that is the case, then how do we pursue unity? How do we resist our psychological impulses, which tell us not to trust those who are different from us?

¹¹ Acts 11:2-3

¹² Acts 22:21-22

¹³ Aaron Earls, "Churchgoers Increasingly Prefer a Congregation That Shares Their Politics", Lifeway, November 1, 2022, <https://research.lifeway.com/2022/11/01/churchgoers-increasingly-prefer-a-congregation-that-shares-their-politics/>.

The Gospel of Unity and Diversity

The world, in the pattern of toxic polarization, often seeks unity on the basis of uniformity. Only those who have enough in common with one another can be unified with one another. But the Christian message is different. It is full of examples of parties who are different from one another being united with one another.

At the heart of Christianity is a Trinitarian God—one God and three Persons—whose very nature is the mysterious union of unity and diversity. The three Persons remain distinct, yet each one is God.

Jesus is the union of two natures—both God and Man—which seem to be at odds with one another, yet neither takes away from the other. Jesus permanently took on human flesh without losing his divinity, and it was only by doing so that his death and resurrection could bring both God and humanity together.

Marriage is the union of a man and a woman, who often seem to have little in common with each other. But their commitment to one another despite their differences brings about sanctification and holiness.

One day, heaven and earth, which have been temporarily separated by sin, will unite again. Though they seem worlds apart now, they will become one.

The church is to live out a similar principle. Paul writes, “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”¹⁴

The Christian view of the world sees differences between parties not as a weakness, but as a strength. Differences should not be reasons to be combative, but in actuality, the different parts complement one another

¹⁴ Romans 12:4-5

to make the whole more beautiful. The church, therefore, should be the place that demonstrates to the world how unity and diversity can both happen.

Jesus once prayed, "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."¹⁵ In other words, the unity of the church is to be one of the evidences to the world that the gospel is true. It is the answer to the world's conundrum of pluralism.

Unfortunately, the church has also inherited the psychological impulse to segregate among the in-group and to reject the out-group. Paul recognizes both of these tendencies in 1 Corinthians 12.

To those who want to only be loyal to the in-group, Paul writes, "If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be."¹⁶ Paul exhorts us to also be loyal to those who are different from us.

To those who want to despise the out-group, Paul writes, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'...If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."¹⁷ Paul teaches us to not only welcome those who are different from us, but also to be so united to them that our emotions blend in with each other.

We all experience the twofold temptations of segregation within the in-group and rejection of the out-group. But neither option allows the

¹⁵ John 17:20-21

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:17-18

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:21, 26

church to properly grow. When we do not unite ourselves to those who are different from us, then we remove opportunities for growth and sanctification. The church is at its best when it embodies both unity and diversity.

D. A. Carson writes in his book, *Love in Hard Places*, “[The church] is made up of natural enemies. What binds us together is not common education, common race, common income levels, common politics, common nationality, common accents, common jobs, or anything else of that sort. Christians come together, not because they form a natural collocation, but because they have all been saved by Jesus Christ and owe him a common allegiance... In this light, they are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus’ sake.”¹⁸

Despite the differences we have, let us seek to love one another for Jesus’ sake, and in doing so, let us resist the toxic polarization that segregates and tears us apart.

Self-Reflection Questions

- Think about this statement from William Sumner: “Loyalty to the group, sacrifice for it, hatred and contempt for outsiders, brotherhood within, warlikeness without—all grow together, common products of the same situation.” Why do you think loyalty to insiders and hatred for outsiders sometimes grow together?

¹⁸ D. A. Carson, *Love in Hard Places* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 61.

- Read Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-21: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." How is your church community doing at living out this prayer? What steps can you take to bring it more into alignment with the heart of God?

Toxic Polarization: From Wrong to Evil

In 2022, John Inazu reported on how the public political language directed against the opposing side has gradually been shifting from using words like “wrong” to using words like “evil.” He writes, “The rhetorical shift from ‘wrong’ to ‘evil’ is deeply worrisome, especially in a pluralistic society with deep differences over important matters. Wrong holds out the possibility of persuasion. Evil usually calls for avoidance or annihilation.”¹⁹

And this is not just a theory. This has actually happened. Historians have noted that political polarization often leads to the erosion of democracy and the rise of political violence.

We’ve noted that toxic polarization sees individuals not as complex but as binary. We’ve explored how toxic polarization sees differences not as complementary but as combative. Finally, we will now talk about the tendency for toxic polarization to see “the other side” as not just wrong, but evil.

The Ends Justify the Means

For a moment, let’s explore the thought process of Haman, a man who saw his enemies as evil, in Esther 3: “Then Haman said to King Xerxes, ‘There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king’s laws; it is not in the king’s best interest to tolerate them.’”²⁰

¹⁹ John Inazu, “When ‘You Are Wrong’ Becomes ‘You Are Evil,’” *Some Assembly Required*, June 24, 2022, <https://johninazu.substack.com/p/when-you-are-wrong-becomes-you-are-mocrats-marriage-poll/>.

²⁰ Esther 3:8-9

Haman sought to completely annihilate the Jewish people, and he did so with much shrewdness. Note the various arguments in his presentation. Firstly, Haman displays no nuance or complexity—he presents the Jews as “a certain people,” in binary fashion. Secondly, he highlights their separateness. They have different customs, and they must therefore be viewed with skepticism and combativeness. And thirdly, they are evil. They do not obey the king, and their disobedience justifies his intolerance toward them.

Similar arguments were used to justify the Crusaders waging war to take the Holy Land from the Arabs, white slave traders purchasing black men and women off the West African coast, and Mao Zedong persecuting landlords, capitalists, and intellectuals during the Cultural Revolution: these people are evil.

Throughout history, the denouncing of opponents as evil has been one of the most effective ways of justifying violence. Most human beings have ethical consciences that prevent them from blindly killing another person. But when someone is branded as “evil,” then the moral equation changes. No longer is the killer a villain, but a hero. The one who is striking down an enemy is courageously doing what must be done in order to save others from evil. Although killing is wrong, the ends justify the means. Protecting the group from future danger warrants killing people in the present.

This was the reasoning of Pharaoh, when he decided to kill all Hebrew males in Egypt in Exodus 1. “‘Look,’ he said to his people, ‘the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.’”²¹ Pharaoh believed that if they did not resort to aggressive tactics in the present, they would have an even bigger dilemma in the future. So instituting a system of slavery, although wrong, ensured prosperity in the future.

²¹ Exodus 1:9-10

This manner of thinking still exists today. Although most people in the church are not open to violence, the basic framework of the ends justifying the means is still well and alive, and especially in the church.

In 2011, a PRRI survey was conducted asking Americans whether they would say that an elected official who commits an immoral act in their personal life can still behave ethically and fulfill their duties in their public and professional life. Practically, these folks were probably likely to vote for a presidential candidate who they found morally wanting at a personal level, even if that candidate accomplished political goals that were in alignment. 44% said yes. When breaking the stats down by religion, white evangelical Protestants had the lowest percentage—30%—while those who were religiously unaffiliated had the highest percentage—63%. That seems fitting—those who follow Jesus should have a higher standard for the moral character of their leaders.

However, by 2020, the results had changed dramatically. The percentage of Americans who said that an elected official who commits an immoral act in their personal life could still behave ethically in their professional life shifted from 44% to 57%. But notably, Christians rose at a more drastic amount than other religious groups. In fact, the group that had the highest concern for private moral character in 2011 now had the least concern for it. White evangelical Protestants went from 30% to 68%. Meanwhile, the religiously unaffiliated dropped from 63% to 53%.²²

What could explain this large shift between 2011 and 2020? One of the reasons may be that more and more Christians are adopting a “the ends justify the means” approach with politics. And this is ramping up our toxic polarization.

²² Suzanna Krivulskaya, “The Diminishing Importance of Personal Morality in Politics, 2011-2020,” PRRI, November 21, 2022. <https://www.prrri.org/spotlight/the-diminishing-importance-of-personal-morality-in-politics-2011-2020/>.

The Way of the Cross

In Matthew 4, Jesus was being tempted by the devil in the wilderness, and one of the temptations reads like this.

“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”’”²³

Jesus understood that the devil was offering him what he was going to achieve eventually, but without the cost. It was the ends without the means of the cross. But Jesus knew that the ends could not justify the means. He was called to walk the way of the cross, and to suffer and die for humanity.

The Christian faith teaches us that it’s not just about the destination. The journey to the destination is also important. Sometimes God calls us to walk in the valley before we reach the mountaintop. Sometimes suffering precedes glory.

Therefore, even if our opponents are truly evil, and even if our opponent is the devil himself, it does not give us the special permission to act out in immoral ways.

Is it possible that we would look like fools? Yes. But maybe even that is part of God’s will. After all, Paul writes, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”²⁴

When toxic polarization is on the rise, and moments of crisis seem to call for drastic actions, in which the ends justify the means, it may seem

²³ Matthew 4:8-10

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:18

foolish to choose the way of peace. But the way of the cross is wholeheartedly opposed to the way of toxic polarization.

Jesus looked at us, squarely positioned on the other side of heaven, and he chose not to condemn us to be annihilated. Instead, he chose to love his enemies, and to bless the ones who persecuted him, even to the point of death. Toxic polarization calls us to declare our opponents evil, so that we could justify killing them. But the way of the cross calls us to declare our opponents ransomed, so that God could justify saving them.

Jesus viewed us not in a binary fashion, in which our only identity was that of sinner, but he saw us as the complex image-bearers of God we were. Jesus didn't see our differences as a hindrance, but he sought to break down the dividing wall of hostility between us, for he knew that our diversity would make the church stronger. And though we were evil children of wrath, Jesus didn't condemn us. Instead he chose to be condemned himself, dying the death we should have died, and forgiving us of our sins. And then he commissioned us to be his representatives, to share the values of his kingdom, and to be his peacemakers on earth.

Self-Reflection Questions

- Think about the three markers of toxic polarization: viewing people as binary instead of complex, viewing differences as combative instead of complementary, and viewing opponents as evil instead of wrong. Which of these markers do you find the hardest to resist, and why?

- How does the way of the cross transcend toxic polarization?

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

The **Matthew 5:9 Fellowship** is a network of Christian leaders shepherding their communities to live out the gospel and to place their identity in Christ above partisanship and societal divisions. In the midst of today's contentious culture, we identify, encourage, and equip leaders in the American evangelical church to be peacemakers, not merely peacekeepers.

Learn more about us at matthew59.org.





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