

Sermon Growth Guide

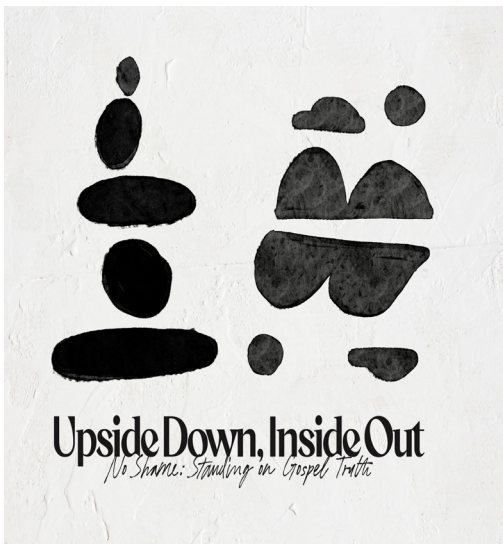
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Upside Down/Inside Out | Romans 1:21-32

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Key Verse: “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” - Romans 1:21

Big Idea: When we worship ourselves rather than God, our worlds – personal and corporate – fall into chaos and decay.



Foundations

Paul is solely focused on the gospel of Jesus Christ, but this good news is not just one approach to life among many equal alternatives. It is the only saving power and it's available in Jesus. If it is good news, however, then people must have been waiting to hear some good news. That means there is also bad news that needs to be answered.

This passage describes in great detail what the bad news is. It is the destruction that is a consequence of ignoring or rejecting God.

John Henry Newman in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* writes: ...the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator.

Paul is clear that the consequence of ignoring or disobeying God is to feel what happens to us when we go our own way. God “gives us over” to our desires. We live for ourselves and so does everyone else. That is a recipe for conflict, chaos and death. It is also, however, a lesson in our need for God...for the power of the Holy Spirit to restrain evil and to help us understand our need for good news – a Savior.

We are captive to our own desires, and we know it. Only the good news, the gospel of Jesus can break those chains.

Understanding God's Word

Read the extended text – Romans 1:18-32. We are told that by just looking at creation we can know something of God and yet still ignore or deny Him. According to Paul, that leads to humanity's degradation, which begins with ingratitude (verse 21). Why do you think ingratitude is the beginning of humanity's descent?

Applying God's Word

Verse 21 says that rejection of God affects our thinking, i.e., our thinking becomes futile. For Paul, that is not just muddled thinking. It is also moral refusal of God's invitation and commands. When you think about verses 18-32 and relate them to the Greatest Commandment (Mark 12: 29-31), how can we avoid the kind of thinking that turns everything Upside Down and Inside Out?

Witnessing God's Word

The words of this passage are gravely harsh and have often led Christians to be judgmental of those who engage in the sins described. But these sins are symptoms of a deeper, deadly condition – a lifetime apart from God. As well, we are also guilty, so our challenge is to relate to others as Jesus relates to us. As you have engaged this topic, in what ways do you think you need to change attitudes and approaches to others?