

Introduction:

- Admiral William McRaven served as commander of the forces that killed the terrorist, Osama bin Laden. He served as a Navy SEAL for 36 years. He spoke at the 2014 commencement of the University of Texas in Austin, of which he is an alumnus. As he spoke, he gave advice to the graduates on how to **change** the world. His ten lessons for life were: 1. If you want to **change** the world, start off by making your bed. 2. If you want to **change** the world, find someone to help you paddle. 3. If you want to **change** the world, measure a person by the size of their heart, not the size of their flippers. 4. If you want to **change** the world, get over being a sugar cookie. 5. If you want to **change** the world, don't be afraid of the circus. 6. If you want to **change** the world, sometimes you have to slide down the obstacle head first. 7. If you want to **change** the world, don't back down from the sharks. 8. If you want to **change** the world, you must be your very best in the darkest moment. 9. If you want to **change** the world, start singing when you're up to your neck in mud. The ninth one made my mind go to the book of Acts, as missionaries Paul and Silas sat in prison, chained, in the dark, hurting and wound from being beaten. And at midnight, they sang praises unto God! (Acts 16:25) But notice the tenth lesson he presented to them: "If you want to change the world don't ever, ever ring the bell." He went on in his speech to explain this tenth admonition: "In SEAL training there is a bell, a brass bell that hangs in the center of the compound for all the students to see. All you have to do to quit is ring the bell. Ring the bell and you no longer have to wake up at 5 o'clock. Ring the bell and you no longer have to be in the freezing cold swims. Ring the bell and you no longer have to do the runs, the obstacle course, the PT — and you no longer have to endure the hardships of training. All you have to do is ring the bell to get out. If you want to **change** the world, don't ever, ever ring the bell." **Application:** When Jesus taught, in Luke 9:62, He said "*And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*" **Are we fit, or will we quit?** When things are hard, and our walk seems weary - don't ring the bell!
- Friday June 26, 2015 The U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that it is legal for all Americans, no matter their gender or sexual orientation, to marry the people they love. This decision by the court declares that states cannot ban same-sex marriage, thereby offering a landmark victory to gay activists.
 - While to some this may look good on the surface, it has greatly altered the course of the United States of America. Therefore, in this midst of such change how am I, as a believer, supposed to respond? I want to try to answer some of the questions you may be asking.

I. What does this recent Supreme Court decision mean?

- A. First, we know it makes it legal for LGBT to now get married in all 50 states.
- B. Second, we really do not know the answer to this question yet. But, we are seeing where it is going. In my humble opinion, this has just opened the floodgates of darkness into our nation.
 1. On Monday after the decision was rendered. A polygamist in Montana filed suit wanting the same rights as LGBT.
 2. This week a \$70 million dollar law suit was filed against Thomas Nelson and Zondervan publishers for undue stress put upon a gay man because of the word homosexual used in it Bible.
 3. The decision as rendered redefines marriage and it redefines family.
 - a) Because family is now redefined, public schools will now have to teach children the LGBT lifestyle. As kindergarten children they will learn this. 7-9 year olds will begin to learn adult things about LGBT lifestyle that shouldn't even be taught at all let alone at such a young age. It is about indoctrination.
 - b) The new law in America will demand the promotion of homosexuality throughout the public school system and it will criminalize those who resist it. New hate crimes bearing severe consequences will affect people economically, (the couple who would not make the gay

couple a cake. \$135k in debt now-legal stuff). Dept. of Family services and children. Jail time.

4. The way the decision was written sets up those who are in opposition to Christianity to much more easily file hate crime suits. It has the potential to wreak economic havoc in days to come for Christian families.
- C. The decision begins the further process of normalizing darkness. “...*all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.*” (Judges 17:6, NLT) Bad is good when worse arrives. This is the road we are on. This is what happens when the church sleeps. This has happened on our watch.
- D. This decision brings God’s judgement closer to us as well. Please remember God’s judgments are not meant to harm/destroy us but to remove everything that hinders love.
- E. In light of this decision by the supreme court I must remember some things:

II. I Must Remember, God’s Word Does Not Change When Culture Does Know this!

- A. One consistent message that I am hearing in the response of Christian leaders in our nation is this: “God’s Word has not changed.” God’s Word has not changed in spite of the change being made in our culture.”
 1. Look at Israel’s history. Israel’s history experienced multiple cultural changes but God did not change and neither did his Word.
 2. The Word of God is our eternal standard. “*Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.*” (Psalm 119:89, NKJV) This must be the position of believers. Not all are there.
 3. Avoid the confusion: Know the Word of God. Devour it. Christians today do not know the Word. Therefore they enter into confusion. Two points of confusion/two questions created by this:
 - a) Why are some of my Christian friends happy about this? Here is how a Christian could be happy about the decision: 1. They do not know the Word of God. 2. They have ‘drank the koolaid’ over the last 15 years as gay activists went mainstream in the media (we laughed at sitcoms until we accepted it as normal). 3. Their hearts genuinely go out to their friends who have endured some pretty hateful Christians. (They have a right heart with a wrong application).
 - b) Why are some churches o.k. with the decision? They left the accuracy of the Word of God. They are lead/trained by liberals who do not hold to standard of God’s word, and many do not even believe in God anymore.
- B. Because God’s word does not change in a changing culture... His two commands are still our mandate: Love God and love others.
 1. “Jesus replied, “ ‘*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.*’ This is **the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”” (Matthew 22:37–40, NLT)**
 2. Believers must grow into maturity in this. We are not selling a better lifestyle that comes from a better “rule book.” We are introducing people to a man called Christ Jesus. People want to know love and we need to introduce them to the best lover of all the universe! The choice is not hell or an empty life without love. That is just wrong! Introduce them to Love!
- C. Because God’s Word does not change in the midst of a changing culture... our mission does not change. We are still called to make disciples of all people.

- D. God does not change, His commands have not changed, and the mission has not changed. What has changed is the context/culture in which live this Christian life. The Bible is full of men and women who stayed true to Him when culture changed. Daniel, Joseph, Esther, Job, etc.

III. I Must Remember to Live The Christian Life

- A. Because the message and our mission has not changed I have a responsibility to witness:
1. I have to introduce people to the love of God through my life and sometime you have to use words to do that. We are introducing them to Jesus not a rule book.
 2. Sometimes love is in the form of a warning. Ie. Bridge out! Warn sinners of the danger ahead on the road they are on. Invite sinners to know the lover of their souls.
- B. Living the Christian life means that I have to hold to the values of the Kingdom of God while living in this world. Leads me to another question people are asking:
1. *Why are my gay friends/pro gay friends so angry at me because my thoughts are different?* It is called the clash of light and darkness/truth and deception. We now live in a culture that does not know how to live with those who disagree with us. (You could use the words ‘politically correct.’) It is a culture that is lacking standards therefore there is no plumb line to align ourselves with so that we know how to respond. People receive your position as rejection of them. They do not know how to process that you can love them and not agree with them at the same time.
 2. *How am I to respond? Do I stay silent? Do I argue? When do I get to ‘share’ my heart?*
 - a) We are to respond in love...meaning don’t get mean and angry with people. There are some conversation where you can be assertive (not aggressive). But keep your response Christ like.
 - b) We do not have to be silent for fear of rousing another’s anger. We should not be silent. But we should not be rude either. I do believe we need to be wise when sharing. There is a such a thing as ‘casting your pearls before swine.’ (In front of those that you know will only want to reject the message.) Jesus was saying look for those who are willing to listen and have a conversation. They will be the ones who let you share. I avoid arguing unless I know that we are actually looking for a solution.
- C. Jesus said we are lights. Therefore, do not hide the light. If I am being a witness in speech and action and I am motivated by love. I am getting the light out from under the basket. *“No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house.”* (Matthew 5:15, NLT) As believers we are called to set an example because often our actions speak louder than our words.

IV. I Must Remember, I May Be Called to Face Persecution Because of My Beliefs

- A. We may be called to face persecution. As believers we are not exempt. Daniel, Joseph, Esther, prophets, the apostles, and early church.
1. *“Do you remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you.”* (John 15:20, NLT)
 2. *“And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure;”* (1 Corinthians 4:12, NKJV)
 3. 2 Cor 4:6-ff. Paul lists what persecutions he went through.
- B. Daniel was persecuted because he believed in one God and worshipping only Him.

1. *“But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.”* (Daniel 6:10, NLT)
2. I do like how Daniel lived before the King and others. Distinguished himself, had an excellent spirit. Those who hated him could find no fault in him...faithful, always responsible, completely trustworthy.
- C. Peter and the apostles were persecuted because of what they believed and preached. They were told not to preach. But the mission from a Higher Authority told them to preach. *“But Peter and the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than any human authority.”* (Acts 5:29, NLT)
- D. When persecution comes whether threats/intimidation, economic, or physical we will need courage.
 1. Fear is a natural response when we feel threatened. This may be worth doing? Where you have fear, ask yourself what is it that feels threatened in me? What am I afraid of? Then look to God’s Word to find what He has to say so that you are filled with courage.
 2. Courage is the ability to act, to do what is right in the face of fear.
 3. The by-product of persecution is a glorious church. IE. China, Iran, wherever the church has been persecuted it has shined brightly. Persecution reveals those genuinely tethered to the Word of God and to the One who spoke it.

V. I Must Remember My Nation Pray For Its Leadership and Vote Responsibly

- A. There will always be a remnant of faithful followers who pray, serve and proclaim the Gospel. These ones have been used generation after generation to bring about spiritual awakening. Ezra, Jonah, Paul, Finney, maybe you!
- B. There are roughly 320 Million people in the US. 60 million of those are believers. 30 million are registered to vote. 15 million actually voted in the last two elections. We have a voice we must make it known.

Conclusion:

- Some things in life never change: The Word, The Mission, Mandate. Therefore, I encourage you this morning, “Don’t ring the bell.”
- Remember the surety of the Word. Remember to live the life of a Christian. Remember persecution sometimes comes to those who believe. Remember to always pray for our nation. Just don’t ring the bell!