

“TRUTH IN THE LOCAL CHURCH DOES MATTER”

by

Dr. Lewis R. Woodard

*“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression...” **Isaiah 58:1***

“When amusement is necessary to get people to listen to the gospel there will be failure. This is not the method of Christ. To form an organization and provide all kinds of entertainment . . . is to be foredoomed to failure.”

G. Campbell Morgan

December 9, 1863 – May 16, 1945

God’s first and foremost method for communicating His Word to this generation is preaching.

Titus 1:3 says, *“But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour.”*

God has not chosen drama, movies, and concerts, but preaching as His primary means of revelation.

We have no right to dilute, delete, diminish, or dummy-down anything that God said in His Word. We are to declare it exactly the way He said it.

This God-hating, sin-saturated society needs authoritative preaching!

Dr. Tom Farrell

I. WHAT WE FIND IN OUR DAY

1. Biblical doctrine has become irrelevant (*not important*). (1 Timothy 4:1; 4:13; 2 John 1:9)

1 Timothy 4:1 *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*

God the Holy Spirit says in 1 Timothy 4:1 that those who say Biblical doctrine is irrelevant, (not necessary), are listening and teaching doctrines of devils (demons).

In 1 Timothy 4:13 Paul tells Timothy to pay attention (attendance) to doctrine. What doctrine? The whole council of God: the teaching of the scriptures.

1 Timothy 4:13 *Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*

Those who teach that the scriptures are irrelevant are walking on dangerous ground.

2 John 1:9 *Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*

What we find in our day:

2. Shorter messages to:

a. become more relative; (**changes with circumstances**)

b. draw bigger crowds.

One modern preacher has said “People will forgive even poor theology as long as they get out before noon”.

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IN OTHER WORDS:

3. It is better to keep the congregation:

a. comfortable (Acts 20:9) *(One person in the Bible got so comfortable that he fell 3 stories and died.)*

Acts 20:9 *And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.*

b. entertained (1 Corinthians 13:11; Luke 24:32)

1 Corinthians 13:11 *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

Instead of being entertained in church by the things of the world, we need to be interested in the things of God.

Luke 24:32 *And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? Our hearts need to burn and yearn for the heavenly manna from Heaven: The Everlasting Word Of God!*

c. interested (Psalm 122:1)

Psalm 122:1 *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.*

4. The modern church has grabbed the worldly philosophy of pragmatism.

IN OTHER WORDS:

“Concerned with results rather than principles.”

Well, that philosophy has worked for the Jehovah Witnesses, the Mormons, the Church of Christ, the Mega Anything Goes Church, etc. Pragmatism will work if a church wants to abandon the principles of God.

(I am not saying all “Mega Churches” have abandoned the principles of God.)

NOTICE SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT PRAGMATISM:

5. Pragmatism sucks the truth out of Biblical teaching more than any other scheme Satan has devised to date. (Matthew 7:26; 1 Corinthians 3:7)

Matthew 7:26 *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

A local church who forsakes the Principles of God, the Biblical teachings found in the Word of God, is likened to the person who builds a house upon unstable ground. Oh, the “church” may grow in numbers, but not for the Lord. Man can devise all the programs he wants, but it is God who gives the increase in His local church. God does not measure the success of a local church based on the number of people who attend. Success is not measured by numbers, but by doing God’s will.

1 Corinthians 3:7 *So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*

6. Pragmatism, evolution and secular humanism along with relativism have been very effective in crippling the church.

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7. Relativism says that there is no right or wrong - no absolutes – no truth or error. It all depends on the circumstances of the time.

Relativism says *“it doesn’t make any difference how you get them to church. We live in a new age. It doesn’t make any difference if you let ‘non-saved’ people take part in the worship service (music, advice to the congregation, etc.).”*

Relativism says that *“when you call sin, sin, in someone’s life, you are being ‘mean spirited, judgmental.’ ‘What you see as wrong (according to the Bible) may not seem wrong to someone else. Don’t tell someone to open their eyes to the unsound doctrine or heresy being taught in their local church. Don’t tell someone that unless they receive Christ as Savior they are going to Hell: that is being judgmental.”*

One person has observed: *“In the world it is called Tolerance, but in hell it is called Despair.. the soul that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die.”*

Relativism says *“you should never call attention to something that you see as wrong in a person’s life, even if what you see is wrong based on what the Bible says. After all, it’s only your opinion as to what you think the Bible says.”*

Relativism says that *“there are no absolutes in the Bible. When you see something in the Bible called sin, or wrong, it is simply your preference, or conviction concerning what the Bible says. After all, there are no absolutes found in the Bible.”*

II. WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE LOCAL CHURCH?

1. Satan's goal has always been to tempt men to trust their own feelings and methods over the Word of God. (Matthew 4:1)

Christ was even tempted by Satan to do things that were not right (Matthew 4:1).

Matthew 4:1 *Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*

With each temptation to give into human feelings Christ said: *“It is written”*. Written where? In the Word of God! Jesus quoted old Testament Scriptures.

When man is tempted to build a *“church”* on man’s methods instead of following God’s will, the right answer to the temptation is what Christ said: *“Get thee hence, Satan”* (Matthew 4:10). Temptation is not the sin. Giving *in to* the temptation is the sin.

2. The liberal *“church”* is discarding and downplaying preaching in favor of newer means such as: drama, dance, humor, comedy, variety sideshows, histrionics (**overdone emotion done for show**), pop psychology, etc.

3. *“Modern”* methods are being used to be more entertaining and to be more relate-able.

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III. THE TRUTH:

1. The Bible is **not at all** relativistic, it is **absolute** truth. (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16)

1 Thessalonians 2:13 *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*

2. Biblical and spiritual truth is not determined by testing what works and what doesn't. (John 17:17; 1 Peter 4:17; Acts 5:29)

John 17:17 *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

1 Peter 4:17 *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

Acts 5:29 *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

3. Spiritual and Biblical truth is tested by one criterion and one criterion only: “Does it match with what the Bible says or not?” (2 Timothy 3:16)

2 Timothy 3:16 *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

4. If we trust worldly methods and ways, we automatically relinquish the power of the Holy Spirit. (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:4)

John 16:13 *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

Paul said: 1 Corinthians 2:4 *And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:*

5. If we use man made methods of relying on gratuitous humor and entertainment and storytelling to soften the message, to appeal to the people at the expense of straight forward Biblical preaching, we are telling God “we want to do it our way and not His”. (see Proverbs 16:25; 2 Corinthians 6:17)

Proverbs 16:25 *There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

A local church should never attempt to build “a church” man’s way. Why? Because it leads to death. A local church that let’s God build His church, His way, will be more concerned with leading souls to Christ than with filling the building. Doing it God’s way means eternal life, not eternal death.

THE TRUTH IS THIS:

YES!

THE TRUTH DOES MATTER!

2 Corinthians 6:17 *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*