

LWMORG

LIVING WATERS MINISTRIES

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“Where Did Modern Church Growth Lead People Astray?”

In It's Beginning...

“Pop! Goes The American Church” - Losing The Anointing!

Before Rick Warren or Bill Hibels ever wrote the books on modern church growth the church was already in the tread of leaning upon the *“Pop” culture*. What started out as the “subculture” movement of the 70’s and on.. and the movement of the “Jesus People” which was on the west coast and it’s spread across the U.S., became the norm to be *incorporated, and imitated, the new foundation* of which was *to substitute the cultural treads* instead of the Biblical foundations for evangelism and conversion. Modern churches in need of growth seized upon anything that would promise them more people in their churches to the extent that the church in the years ahead would become *less functional* spiritually and biblically, yet more social, and more like its cultural surroundings. In these years the transitions have gone from making the church into a bar or coffee stop, to a clubhouse, or concert hall, whatever draws a crowd. I know one church that would advertise for a big name star (so-called) to be coming to the church in hopes of getting people into becoming members afterwards. This never worked, and neither did raffling off the bike to get people to join. But when all had failed... what was left was... what they already had... more church growth gimmicks. *Back to the drawing board*. Unfortunately as things have gone *continually backwards* the Spiritual and Biblical churches have suffered also having to choose a road *of less popular* among their congregations – one in which they have stayed the course in these times trying to *remain faithful* to the New Testaments model of a church. The article you’re about to read may surprise you since it was written well before these treads had taken hold. I was then a youth Pastor in a small church planting when the Lord turned my world right-side-up. Thank God.

Is the Church Captive To It’s Lusts?

The Church Captive To The Culture Vs. The Culture Captive To The Kingdom Of God

The American pop culture has invaded the local church. The emphasis is not about the Word of God and Scriptural doctrines any more; it is about an appeal for acceptance of the American church by the American culture more than it is about the necessity of discipleship. It is about what I feel more than what I should know from God. The many churches have circum to becoming merely culture clubs where people are following man centered whims that appeal to the flesh and low level spirituality, not building up of the inward man - the spirit to know God and to do spiritual exploits. Even prophecy has been changed to what sounds nice, not dealing with the real issues of the church.

This all started when the church began to look for acceptance in the world and not toward God. The Church today has transformed itself into a “David Letterman TV Show or a night club atmosphere. “Why, you may ask?” Because *the heart of those calling themselves the church are after something besides God’s approval*. (((Approval & Acceptance are Key Word Here!))) Church growth is about Approval & Acceptance.... that the church should embrace the world, be like the unregenerate world, live parallel lives, relate to the world by becoming more like the world....(embrace unregenerate cultural influences). The church says, “Hey we’re just like you world!....come join us!” This is their whole evangelism program!

The Invention of New Ideas

A pastor in the pulpit said one time; *“We are though... with the old methods of preaching the Bible against sins... that’s the outdated Old School Ideas! We have to relate to these people. So we have to come up with some new ideas that speak to them on their level. If we look like them they will relate. If we can be more like them so they can see we are just like them they’ll get with us, and our church will grow bigger.”* There is nothing wrong with using the media or modern technology affects, the arts, and music in bringing people the Gospel, I believe in that, however this new invention approach centers itself upon what this pastor said in his statement... *no more* challenging people to separate them from sin and no more delivering them from their sins... we now are just relate to them, and ask them if they would like to be included in our “club.” This new church is more about growth than carrying out the Lord’s Great Commission in the hearts of the

people. The church here has converted itself into a new enterprise system – a shopping center mall - one that treats its members as “casual shopping consumers” which now can pick over our Lord’s words as if they have a choice to omit what is needful **“to observe!”**

Matt. 28:20 *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:*

The pastor’s ideas here address the persons attending as “*enjoy your shopping experience!*”... and “*back come again sometime.*” The realism that some of these people will never have another chance to hear the real gospel message, and be saved from hell, becoming converted as true believers, never enters their minds. (?) I question these men, their real motivations and those who run with such churches. If they didn’t want to take the Sword of His Spirit and deliver the captives why did they *sign up* for the job in the first place? Do these type churches and their members hungry after God or are they hungry to fill themselves with the socialization of people (a mere social club), do they hungry for the deliverance of the souls of men or do they hungry to enjoy entertainment, the jokes and incredible special affects. While they are casting off the Old School model I think we need to take a good look at the operations which come only from being truly anointed by God’s Spirit.

Jesus tell us what the true anointing will bring.

Lk. 4:18-19 *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

This passage seems to me to indicate that His true anointing *delivers* the hearers when someone is preaching *His truth and real Gospel*. So... how can these churches be turning people back out into the streets without *changing them*, **IF** the true anointing is really in their midst? So how can these churches think that they truly represent His anointing when they don’t practice bringing spiritual *healing* to those who enter... bringing the *recovery of His truth* into the lives of those who enter... bringing *deliverance* from demonic oppression... bringing *recovery* to the poor in spirit... and most of hearing the pure message that Jesus, at the Cross, has taken their sins if they would place their faith in His sacrifice for them! This passage in Luke 4 shows us how the REAL ANOINTING operates!

We’re Though... With The Old Methods... That’s The Outdated Old School Ideas! (Now We Need A New System?)

What happened to the intercession meetings that brought results? These prayer meetings have been replaced by professionals who can tell us how to grow churches by state-of-the-art architectural designs and program topics that are less offensive toward sin, making the church “*sinner friendly.*”

Stop preaching against sin!!!!!!

Now, the Word of God says, **“*And thus are the secrets of (the visitors heart) his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you (God is in your church congregation) of a truth.” 1Cor.14:25***

Now that’s real Power.... Now that’s real Anointing! What a contrast to today’s churches! Can you see the compromise? His anointed power only comes to them who pay the price spiritually for it through abiding and prayer... but now that’s Old School isn’t it? Yup!

The Errors Of Tribal Evangelism

(The New Culture Club - Strange Fire Called... And The Cool Gospel)

I would like to share more with you on, “the freedom of not trying to relate to the young people.”

(Discussion) When I was a youth pastor I was taught to relate to the kids, so I would change my lingo, trying to use words to relate to the young people. I would act real cool, or so I thought, in order to persuade the youth over to God. In order to address my sermons to the youth, I changed them to fit what I thought would cause the kids to get into it. In general, I was creating a party atmosphere. While this seemed to prove successful, my kids, when it came to God, did not know Him, nor His Word. They barely even got into the Bible except for the youth meeting. I got totally frustrated at their spiritual growth. What was I trying to accomplish? Was I waiting on God for His methods – the fire of His burning bush? Or bringing

them a man made substitute – a strange fire (Jer. 32:34) to win them to Christ? The Pastor I was under told me I was doing a great job. He wanted pizza parties, out to the movies, concerts, etc.. Then when the next youth meeting came, I had prepared, opened the meeting, and was about half way through the sermon when God started rebuking me in the pulpit. His voice came to me saying, “*Why are you dressing me up in the clothes of the culture to make me palatable to these youth?*” I thought what does He mean, but I then realized that I had been dressing Jesus up in the clothes of the culture *to get them to except Him*. Jesus was not pleased with my presentation of Him as a Cool- Santa Claus type, or a party-animal type, or any other type outside the Bible. The Lord told me He doesn’t need anyone’s clothes to wear, that He has His own robe of righteousness and *that people need to see Him as He truly is*.

My Journey And Reeducation

After this experience, my trained concepts of winning people to the Lord were transformed. All my time training at the church I went to and their teaching about Hudson Taylor’s relating to the culture by tribal evangelism was wasted. I didn’t know then that other missionaries like William Carry in India were successful without this so-called tribal evangelism concept. Look at David Wilkerson who went into New York City and won the gangs to Jesus, and Teen Challenge that has continued to win souls and deliver many addicts. These examples are not small and their application in reaching the lost have been proven Biblical in their methods. They stress the Bible Jesus Factor (God’s Word) as the only source of their success, not gimmicks.

More Gimmicks? (No Real Hook Up With God)

What happens to one who is drawn to all those gimmicks? Are they *truly converted* or are they an *unconverted convert of the club*? When all the smoke and mirrors are removed from them in regard to them knowing the True Bible Jesus many think it was bait and switch, that the church lied to them. After leaving on account that the church fed them a line, many regard the church and preachers as those who you can’t trust! This kind of *distrust* certainly does not breed converts but isolates them from the “Real” Bible Jesus. If the church would just be more sensitive to hear the unregenerate’s observations we would be better off. Many times they can smell falseness....in the world in which they live. Why not approach them with the truth about who Jesus really is.....even if they don’t at first agree (because of their idolatry) at least there is a basis of respect built for future relations of your witness because it won’t be defiled through lies by making Jesus out to be someone he isn’t.

Making Real Spiritual Progress

Spiritual progression isn’t new cultural gimmicks to win the lost, it is looking to God for the Words or message that will shatter and pierce the darkness in the hearts of men to deliver them from the demonic cloke over them and shine the light into their darkened heart until they find Jesus Christ. Name any leader in the New Testament who used gimmicks to bring people to Christ. I’ll save you the time of looking. There is none. They shut-in with God though prayer, and spoke spiritual words of life to the dead. The Kingdom has its own culture of living for Jesus. Yes, people don’t relate to Christians at first, but our jobs are not to get them to relate through gimmicks, but reveal to them Jesus Christ and Him Crucified through His Word to show them real answers (solutions) to life’s (fallen world) problems, restoring them to the living God. *Let’s hook them up* boy.... that concept! – they need answers – they need the Bible - they really need the Bible revealed Jesus with them in life.

Giving the spiritual food out of God’s Word as it is written will always cater to the individual person’s needs if we are faithful to be diligent to give it out *as it truly is*.

What To Do When They Expect More

Now I remember one of my friends from my church was talking to me about *tribal evangelism*. He and I got into a debate. One day he told me how he would punk out and go to the Mall and hang out with punkers. He told me that because he was relating by dressing up as a punker, he could win souls where others could not. I told him that God didn’t have any limitation on His Word and that a Grandmother could get the punkers saved by merely sharing the anointed Word. He disagreed sharply. Two weeks went by. My friend and I were together one day when he reluctantly mentioned his latest experience at the Mall. He was surprised to admit my being right, when he told me about an unsaved girl that expected more than his hip clothes and hair. She asked, “You’re a Christian? You dress just like me. You’re no different than I

am.” He told her, “That’s right.” She related to him and said, “I expected more from a Christian – like the answers to life, a higher way of life or something.” It was then that he realized that relating by the culture became a hindrance, not a help to win unsaved people. In my experience and in my friend’s experience we received some adjustments from the Lord.

This Man Pleasing Gospel

As a youth pastor, I found out that the tribal evangelism (cool gospel) concept was just a façade for not preaching and teaching the Bible to the youth. It’s actually man pleasing to cater to the dictates of their flesh – what they want – which is idolatry. Many Pastors are successful because they sponsor or exalt the idolatry in people’s hearts, and therefore they are just what people desire to listen to reinforce their own lusts. The Scripture says; “ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap (gather) to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3).

The Real Remnant Follows the Bible Jesus And His True Gospel

As I applied what I had learned to the youth, some of them responded by learning God’s Word and growing spiritually. I had under- estimated the youth’s needs, hunger, and capacity for really knowing God like adults. Sometimes we are diverted to think youth can’t get spiritually deep things for maturity, but they are not to be underestimated. Instead of talking down to them, I began to consider their spiritual capacity and work with them at a different level. I was surprised to find out that they could take the deeper things of God readily. With this new concept, which I used first in my own children, I found out the truth and began to help make young mighty Christians for God.

The Kingdom Culture

God’s Kingdom transcends the immediate culture in any age or country by the Word of God. Because the Word of God is the means of Grace, it is not limited to tribal evangelism. Any person can minister by God’s Word and penetrate the darkness of any culture by the means of God’s Word and the Holy Spirit. The church is not to be captive to the culture, but the culture captive to the Kingdom of God! The church has it’s own culture to follow – “The Kingdom Culture.”

Jesus came down from heaven to introduce us to God’s culture, God’s ways. Jesus didn’t come to become equal or neutral to the culture; He was living out the Kingdom Culture!

Who Dictates To Whom?

Since when does any culture dictate to the church? The church receives from their Headship - Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Lord and King of His own Kingdom!

As the hymn says, “the kingdoms of men become the Kingdom of Christ.”

Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

The church is not dictated to, but is dictating to the world the “True Gospel and Kingdom Culture of God!”
“The Kingdom of God is at hand,” is the church’s message.

The Origins Of Culture (This Fallen World)

When we are talking about culture, what we are talking about is largely for the most part what ungerenerate fallen men *have chosen to become exalted* as “cultural norms.” Since man is fallen, culture is meant (an attempt) to fill up man’s empty void for God. When men are searching for God it is not enough to fill them with *more empty pleasures* of mere fallen culture which do not satisfy. Man is looking for *something more to sustain him*, he is looking for the void filling Savior! Seasons change in men’s lives, and once the emptiness of this life and its pursuits *are tasted*, they are *still searching* to be filled with more (endlessly). Vanity of vanities.....emptiness.... Solomon says.

Filling the Void

Only the Word of God will fill that void. Only the Cross of Jesus Christ can make the difference. The Cross of Christ is revealed; God’s Word is the means of Grace, Light, Truth, and Salvation for the soul. Finding God is a matter of finding the Bible Jesus and His Cross by the written Word of God. The Spirit

and the Word are one. *It is impossible to live as a Christian apart from God's Word.* When we exalt the Kingdom Culture of God *we are exalting the ways of heaven over the ways of fallen men – exalting the ways of a perfect God who* made man and designed him to have a new nature within and follow *a new way of living life.*

The Book Of Acts Our Pattern, Example And Methodology

Christians are not to use a unregenerate fallen man-made culture in winning the lost. Fallen men who hunger and thirst after something more are looking for the higher ways of God. The book of Acts has been given to us as a pattern, example and methodology *of what the Holy Spirit is willing to work with* to bring souls to Christ! The church should be the place where sinners can clearly see this displayed; “Kingdom Culture!”

Special Note:

God's Spirit is so faithful when I think that this article was written some time ago through the inspiration of His Eternal Truth and Spirit which does not change and brings out this discernment of where the modern church is today. I hope and pray that you will consider prayerfully how being apart of these trends subvert the Gospel's message and will cause you to be undermined in your beliefs system to accept a counterfeit Jesus. Come out from among them and be separate unto the Lord and become a member of His true church.

2Corin. 11:4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus(a different Gospel), whom we have not preached(that's not what you received when we preached the True Gospel to you), or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel(anything other than this is another Gospel), which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him(he is telling them they have sinned because they tolerated these false ones who had come in bringing another Gospel taught by another spirit, producing another Jesus, a total counterfeit!

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