

ARE WE AMERICAN CHRISTIANS PART OF THE PROBLEM?

Why the "Biblical" Worldview has been fading away in "modern" America

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The Simple WAY of Christ is Self-Sacrificing LOVE – only by Grace thru Faith, NOT human "good" Works

THE PROBLEM & THE NEED – Colossians 4:6; 1 Cor 9:19-23

The greatest *need* in the world today is for people to see Christ clearly. Therefore, the top *responsibility* for people who call themselves "Christians" is to clearly communicate and live the profoundly simple *WAY* of Christ the Good Shepherd, which is self-*sacrificing* love drawn only from God not ourselves (Acts 9:1-2; Romans 5:5-10). His way is simple enough for a child, yet often too profound for some PhD's. We Christians spend a lot of time talking about how the *world* is becoming increasingly anti-Christian. Yet very little time is spent thinking and talking about possible ways that our "traditions", attitudes, practices, and presentations might be part of the problem. Like politicians we too often simply teach "to our base", and either forget how or neglect to communicate to hurting souls outside of Christ.

CHRIST VS. CHRISTIANITY – John 14:6; Mat 21:12-17

Jesus focused His harshest criticism on the "*religious*" people and religious leaders of his day, not on the obvious "sinners". To the openly sinful, Jesus emphasized God the Father's love, forgiveness, and grace that are necessary for genuine transformation of the soul. In the 18th century during the trans-Atlantic African slave trading days, William Wilberforce, a powerful voice to help end slavery, wrote a book entitled: TRUE CHRISTIANITY. The book was a strong challenge to most "Christians" and "churches" of his day, because they grossly failed to reflect the image and character of the Christ they claimed to follow.

In many ways, the *World* today is drawing people, both young and old, but mostly the young, away from the "churches", from "Christianity", and sadly from CHRIST. Sure, I realize that many of the world's ways are attractive, because they appeal to some of the selfishly destructive desires of the human heart. Plus, they simply provide justifications and rationalizations for chasing after self-gratification. So, those cases are not the fault of modern, western "Christianity". But, whenever our "Christianity" fails to fully communicate and consistently reflect Christ's Way of self-sacrificing love in response to relevant issues of the day, it IS our fault when people leave the "church". When we fail in these areas, it leaves a cultural vacuum. Then *deceptive* alternatives arise to fill the void and suck in people, who are often *sincere* but *uninformed* and vulnerable.

A FEW EXAMPLES – (Luke 17:1-2; Acts 4:32-35)

Is it possible that our visible responses to the following issues are *less* than purely and clearly how Christ Jesus, the Good Shepherd, would respond? These are issues that huge numbers of youth and young adults are very passionate about. In fact, the Word of God's unique love, the Bible, also speaks passionately about these things, yet many Christians

and even some pastors don't know it. Christian *tradition* has too often eclipsed the truth of God, and ended up dishonoring Christ.

Here are just a few relevant issues to consider:

- Superficial answers to the **BIG** questions of life: *Origin, Purpose, Suffering, & Destiny after death*
- Hurting souls, marriages, and parent-child relationships that need practical **counsel** for healing and reconciliation.
- "**Churches**" resembling Christian *country-clubs* and *entertainment-centers*, not the "Body of Christ". He commanded the Church to sacrifice self for the lost and lonely in the world. (John 15:13; 1 John 3:16-18)
- Corrupt corporate and political misuse, abuse, and oppression of the **poor** and **needy** here and globally
- Corrupt corporate and political mismanagement of the **environment** here and all over the world
- **Racism** and its continued effect on the lives of many families, men, women, and children
- Struggles with **sexual-identity** and **desires** that are not the "fault" of the individuals.
- Treatment of God's *nephesh animals* in factory-farms and through some forms of inhumane hunting that causes unimaginable and *unnecessary suffering*.

Examples above are just a few of many serious concerns in the hearts of a growing number of people today. Such sincere people need to see that these are also burdens in the heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd, and to know how to receive and live out His profoundly practical Way of self-sacrificial love to deal with them.

SELF-EXAMINATION – (Matt 7:15-23; Luke 9:23-26; 2 Cor. 13:5)

When modern youth and adults look at us, at our American churches, at our use of the resources that God has allowed us to accumulate in this country, at our lifestyles, and at how we treat others, **do they clearly see Christ?** Could it be that some of our man-made *traditional* attitudes, practices, and presentations are seriously clouding the image of His character, which He commanded His *true* followers to reflect? The place to start is in our own heart, then spread it within our churches, and hopefully to some pastors and theologians who have forgotten that Jesus's way of leading is **Servant**-leadership, sacrificing self for the needs of others. Not using and sacrificing others for the desires and glory of self.

Matthew 20:20-28

