

**A LOOK AT THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH
DOES THE CHURCH STILL HAVE
WHAT IT TAKES TO GET PEOPLE TO JESUS**

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ABSTRACT

This research paper will take a look at the state of the Contemporary church and assess if possible its power and ability to meet the needs of this generation. Why have they found themselves unable to perform the miracles as Jesus did in His ministry? It will try to seek out according to the Bible, if the church is fulfilling the commands of Jesus or have they become too quiet concerning the real purpose of the church? Has the church taken heed to the message of fasting and praying or have they intertwined their theology and that of the new age thinking to make this generation comfortable in their way of life? Is the focus of the church still Jesus?

In short, this research seeks to evaluate if the plan of the church is in accordance with the Word of God?

This research is driven with purpose as it seeks to expose the problem of the missing pieces. Something is missing and before this missing piece grows deeper and darker, this research will endeavor to bring together the puzzle.

The focus scriptures for this research paper will be the following, as this research will base all investigations, questions and findings on these foundational truths. 2 Timothy 3: 1-17 and 2 Timothy 4: 1-4 affirms:

3. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ²For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; ⁵Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. ⁶For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ⁷Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. ⁹But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was. ¹⁰But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, ¹¹Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium,

at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. ¹² Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. ¹³ But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. ¹⁴ But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; ¹⁵ And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3: 1-17). KJV¹

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:14) KJV²

1. *Holy Bible*, King James Version

2. *Holy Bible*, King James Version

INTRODUCTION

The word contemporary can be described from dictionary sources as existing, occurring, or living at the same time; belonging to the same time: and of the present time; modern: Therefore this contemporary meaning is generating synonymic words such as instant, modern, present day, current, latest, mod, and now. These words are hard pressed against the forms of tradition and its meanings which anchors on something to be handed down or relating to or characteristic of the older style. The traditional is joined by words such as classic, common, conventional historic, old, and long established. We can certainly see a meaningful difference as it relates to those things, ordinances, lifestyles, and more particularly our everyday churches and church services which incorporates the people of the era, those that embrace the contemporary and those that shun the traditional. This includes the scope of our older generations and certainly the ‘Millennials’ as well.

Our contemporary church is breaking into the traditional ties that bound them to the first century church. In an essay, written by Dr. John H. Armstrong he states that “the contemporary plan is plain... create a worship service (none dare call it liturgy) that is fast-paced, light on doctrine and very heavy on music and drama. We are preoccupied, with being “trendier-than-thou.”³ He notes that one church advertises, ‘Church like You’ve Never Seen It Before’ while another in which this author has observed advertises, ‘Changing the Way We Do Church.’ So we can ask why are we looking for a church likened unto one we have not seen before and or one that is not based on the principles, doctrines or standards that has been taught by Jesus. Did not Jesus proclaim that “upon this rock I will built my church and the gates of hell will not prevail

3. Dr. John H Armstrong, “” “The Contemporary Church” - albatrus.org, www.albatrus.org/english/church-order/worship/contemporary_church.htm.

against it” (Matt. 16:18) KJV The church that Jesus presented and described should be our paradigm. One question that prevails and in our race to have the biggest, and most captivating sanctuary, or church building that the church, unchurched and millennials have ever laid their eyes on, is our thought as to what the church looks like to its Pastors and leaders, and ‘does it look any different as to what Jesus says the church should be?’ Many questions come to the forefront as ‘what is observed by those outside of the buildings in which many worship,’ and ‘how the church which is not the building is being presented worldwide?’ C. Peter Wagner writes that ‘church growth thinking leads to a methodology that is “phenomenological” not “theological.”

“That approach (i.e. phenomenological) may appear altogether too subjective to many traditional theologians...As a starting point, church growth often looks to the 'is' previous to the 'ought.'...What Christians experience about God's work in the world and in their lives is not always preceded by careful theological rationalizations. Many times the sequence is just the opposite: theology is shaped by Christian experience.”⁴

When we look at the Contemporary church, there appears to be a disconnect in communicating the foundational truths of the New Testament texts to what is also known as a new age church that is in search of its own truth. Can there be a meeting of the minds, or does one point of view need be considered as right while the other is considered wrong? The Contemporary church seeks to be inclusive of all people, and finding a new means of making all who enter into its doors very comfortable. Are they finding their own niche into a newly developed spiritual environment that is lacking and is leaving out the teachings, preaching, and the moral and spiritual fiber of the Bible, and the practical principles cited in the Pauline texts?

⁴. John MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010), 79.

Are they thereby painting a very vague message for the ‘truth seekers’ of the Contemporary church to engage themselves?

The internal growth of the existing church and the apparent frenzy to plant new churches under some denominational title will be seen in positive light in regards to this research, if the outreach embraces the true Gospel message. Creativity in this outreach is healthy if the church will base its foundational truth on the principles of the Scriptures. However it has been seen far too many times the quick establishment of the new movements that lack doctrinal truths, Despite it being important that as the Gospel is spread to every nation and people, it should make sense that more locations should be acquired to accommodate the people that will be drawn to the faith.

But problems arise when there is confusion between the clarity of the Gospel message and the increased trending to overlay or set as priority the emphasis on building a mission for monetary gain and prestige with secondary emphasis on making disciples. Has the power that the church should possess been misplaced? Are the days of really seeking the face of God a thing of the past, because again in this fast paced society, there is no time to pray? That may be part of the missing pieces in this puzzle. Jude reminds and warns in this book that the faith of the believer is threatened, not only from outside the church, but from within the church. But his direction comes in verse 3, “³ Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). KJV The Scriptures establishes for growth, principle and order, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). KJV

There is a tendency, because of the technological age in which we live to compromise and restructure the Contemporary church and its worship service to focus on the culture of people, with which we desire to attract, otherwise they will take their business elsewhere. At the communities fingertips are advertisements of many of the different menus of worship in which they might choose to fit their liking or that which appeals to their circumstances. As stated by one of the focus scriptures to this research that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth” (2 Tim. 4:3-4a). KJV

Knowing this factor as it relates to the Contemporary church, the traditional membership and this age of millennials, it causes one to consider the message that is being put out there, locally, universally, socially and technologically. “Meeting needs does not always satisfy needs; but it often strokes further ones and raises the pressure of eventual disillusionment...Need is subject to consumer fashion and become shallow, plastic and manipulative.”⁵ The drive to meet ‘felt needs’ can cover up the ‘real need’ that the truth of the Gospel expresses separation from God.

LIVING ON THE EDGE

As we live in this fast pace society, the church has also stepped up its game plan. It is simply understood that in order to appeal to this high powered culture it must make Christianity attractive and palatable to this generation, while endeavoring to still link some traditional aspects of religiosity. The numbers game is also apparent in the church that is striving to gain more members, pressing the people for more finances to build bigger houses of worship, where they don’t really bring the true worship, and making disciples is low on their agenda. To keep up a

5. Os Guinness, *Dining with the Devil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Hourglass Books, 1993),

positive image, they may say souls are their number on objective, but in reality, it is not. The church world needs to incorporate its belief systems and interpret the Scriptures and its Biblical principles without damaging or compromising the Word of God. But it has been a task that has brought the church close to the edge. Take a look at their music, their dress, their dance, their sermons (what are they talking about), and the length of their offerings, and then look at their time given to prayer. When we put it all together it is almost crystal clear what the unbeliever will encounter. Often times Jesus is nowhere in the service and what the church has asked the sinner man to join, looks and sounds just like the place the church has asked them to leave.

We have asked this new age of millennials to ‘draw nigh to God’ and to ‘come out from among them,’ when the church itself has reduced its standards. The church says now that ‘it doesn’t take all that to live Holy’ because God Graces us with His loving kindness and tender mercies. What will the grandmothers say to this Contemporary Gospel? It seems clearly that it is out with the old and in with the new, but is this how we ‘contend for the faith?’

As the older members watched closely over this sensitive area they knew it would be a difficult task in ministry to distinguish and dialogue between their wisdom and the strength of theological liberalism. Living a Godly and Holy lifestyle will obviously take more than the Contemporary church is presenting to the public, because God has not changed His mind or lowered His standards. The Pastors, preachers and teachers have now the ominous task of setting the stage for these truth seekers, the new age children, millennials to pattern. Developing a message that is not too strict for their public to hear and agree with, but creating a methodology that also does not place the Word of God in true obscurity. They will have to be present with clarity a doctrine that reveals Jesus to unbelievers, so they can make the decision “to come out from among them” that they can be “in this world and not of it.” This has not seemed to be the

road the church has chosen. Of sorts they have become trendy, looking to meet what is a 'felt need' and not the need that will be satisfied for an eternity. It is an edgy agenda that represents a line helpful talks that are inclusive of this generation and the standards of the New Testament and Pauline texts. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). KJV

Webster writes "if we are serious about the power of the Holy Spirit, we are going to be living constantly on the threshold of God's new and powerful work. We will not only have to live with change, ambiguity and opposition: we will want to, just as the early church did in Acts. The church was not meant to be a stagnant, tradition-bound institution but a dynamic, Christ-centered household of faith."⁶ If the church wants to be powerful again they must stand up and stand out and then count the cost. This can be done when the church understands building a church on Christ and making of disciples, rather than just being concerned with gathering church members, or the marketing aspect for monetary gain and deceptive agendas. Because of the powerful message of Jesus Christ the church should be aware that "it can make the gospel interesting without entertaining, and convicting without condemning...It is a place where peer pressure, self-centeredness, anonymity and affluence are resisted."⁷ The Contemporary church cannot waiver in its course but must stand on the tenets of the faith in Christ Jesus. They must not remain lukewarm in their decisions, but steadfast according to the power that works inside of it. As the Scriptures clearly tell us:

,¹¹ Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

¹³ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. ¹⁵ I know thy

6. Douglas D. Webster, *Selling Jesus: What's Wrong with Marketing the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2009), 11

7. Douglas D. Webster, *Selling Jesus*: 13

works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:11,13,15-16). KJV

The Contemporary church needs to raise its consciousness taking us back to the faithful and what are the standards and the commands of Jesus. The church first needs to know what is required of them in order that they may bring the unbelievers into the realm of safety and out of the grips of Satan’s trickery and temptations and bring liberty in the Spirit. The author Barna notes that “oblivious to the deteriorating spiritual condition of our country, the church is losing ground to the secular alternatives. The ‘encroachment of secularism’ and the reversal of values from spiritual to material are catching us off guard.”⁸ In his book he also discusses the kind of Pastors and leaders which should be leading the flock are accountable, discerning people of God who spend much time in prayer They should be bringing ‘impactful messages’ to the people which lead them not to edgy public opinions but to confessions about ‘who Jesus is’ and be compelled to follow Him.

When we understand that the drawing card to this fast paced society of truth seekers and millennials is to preach Jesus only and to bring the message that will lead them to the way of the cross. Following any other methodology than lifting Jesus out of the pages of New Testament Scriptures and the Pauline texts leads to a generation of limited and confused people who cannot answer the same question Jesus asked of His disciples, “But Whom say ye that I am?” (Mark8:29) KJV Webster adds that “Biblical preaching was God-centered, sin-exposing, self-convicting and life-challenging the direct opposite of today’s light, informal sermons that

8. George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle: What Christians Need to Know About Life in the Year 2000*(Ventura, Calif., U.S.A.: Regal Books, 1990), p. 22

Christianize self-help and entertain better than to convict.”⁹ It tells us that many preaching styles are just simply motivational speaking and not Bible based sermons.

9. Douglas D. Webster, *Selling Jesus*: p.48

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