



My View Of Today's Christianity

What is today's Christianity? That's a good question to ask. After all, many people who don't go to church, or who may have gone at some time but have quit, would tell you it is an organization of hypocrites. I can't say that I entirely disagree with that evaluation, although the truth is we are all hypocrites in transition. The problem is that many who are the hypocrites spoken of here, don't realize they are being that way (or don't care).

Another evaluation is that people who attend today's Christian churches are just a bunch of holy rollers caught up in a lie about some invisible god of some kind. This is one of the statements made by atheists, and those who support the "Theory of Evolution", or Darwinism, as its called. Although I know for myself that God is real, I have to admit that within many, if not most, Christian churches these days, there is very little evidence of the existence of God that shows to the people outside the body of Christ (or inside it, for that matter).

I know that anyone can rant and rave about a problem, and do nothing more than stir up issues. My intent is not to just point fingers, but rather, to make people stop and think. This commentary is written with the hope that those who read it will judge themselves, and help others see problems that should be obvious to us all. It isn't that I'm upset with certain ministers, but that I see a world of professing Christians who really don't know or understand God or His truth, and who consequently live their lives completely contrary to what He desires of us. This way of living worldly lives shows a glaring example to non-Christians, who then don't see the benefit of living their lives any other way. We can't fix a problem if we don't face the problem head on, so this commentary is meant to help us do precisely that.

So what seems to be the problem? The answer, in a nutshell, is HUMANS! We are the problem, and we can't see it. The truth of the Gospel of Christ has been so broken and disputed by people that its almost unrecognizable any more. We've managed to break it down into little pieces and have argued with each other over details that really don't matter. To us they matter, because we tend to always see things from the physical perspective, and forget that we are not physical beings with a spirit, but rather, that we are spiritual beings in bodies of clay. The reality is that we are not the bodies we see when we look at each other. We are the life inside that shell!

This leads to all kinds of problems and causes us to be unable to answer even the most basic questions asked by those who are seeking the answers we're supposed to have. Instead, we make up something our preachers at church have said, without ever taking the time to research the question to find good, true and complete answers.

We Fail to Answer:

Here is one of the major issues with Christianity today. Most Christians, when asked about the bible, or their faith, or why they do certain things, they either don't know the answer, or they're answers are so weak and lame, that the one who asked the question finds it difficult to accept faith in God. When you look at how most Christians live their lives day to day, you find very little to evidence of God in their lives, so they appear to be just like everyone else in the world. Consequently, when they try to answer a question posed by someone seeking answers, their answers don't make much sense, and don't show the love of God.

Christmas:

At the time of this writing, Christmas 2008 is fast approaching, and once again people are asking me questions about whether or not Christians should be celebrating this season. For many Christians, the argument that its a pagan holiday sounds substantial, and causes them to ignore this season. To those who celebrate the Christmas holiday, these arguments are either unclear or just not enough to stop them from going ahead and participating in the season and all it's trappings. Basically, they argue that its a season of giving, and God not only approves of giving, but encourages us to give continuously. They're support for celebrating Christmas is simply that the pagan ties to the season are in the past, and they celebrate it for Jesus by doing things God approves.

This major flaw in a proper understanding of the Christmas holiday, and the biblical teachings surrounding it, have caused a lot of confusion. Even those who celebrate the season don't see how they've confused facts, which then appear as glaring flaws to those who are seeking answers. I've tackled this argument in another article where I set the facts straight, and show the truth about the pagan origins of several Christmas traditions, and I hope you'll take the time to read it. It's on the Articles and Lessons page under Christmas.

Marriage:

One of the truly damaging campaigns against Christianity has been the attacks on the institution of marriage and family. Unfortunately, a major part of the problem is an almost complete lack of understanding of what marriage really is, and the blame for this failure falls squarely on the backs of today's ministers at all levels!

Many Christians (or at least those who claim to be) have fallen prey to the misconceptions about this God-ordained institution. To the world, marriage is a contract, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Marriage is definitely not some sort of legal agreement between two people! Marriage is a covenant relationship, which is radically different from a contract, and falls into the God level of involvement, not man's level, and should be treated as such. However, because many (if not most) Christians see marriage as a contractual relationship, the church itself is fractured by divorce, and sexual immorality. Please read my article titled "Marriage: What Kind Of Relationship Is It?" on the Articles and Lessons page.

Sex:

This subject ties directly to the previous subject of marriage, and is an off-shoot of a misunderstanding of marriage and proper relationships. Most people in society (American anyway) handle this subject in a very reckless way. Again, a major problem is the lack of understanding within the body of Christ of what constitutes sex and how it relates to proper relationships. Yes, sex in the bible is addressed as being between a man and a woman, and homosexuality is condemned. Also, sex outside of marriage is prohibited, and God gives this as the only acceptable reason for divorce. But is that all there is to it?

When young people ask why, all we tell them is that it's in the bible, God commands it, and so it's how it should be. And, yes, they're right about all that, but what about the infamous question, "Why?". Doesn't God want us to answer this question? Why is a sexual relationship acceptable only between a man and a woman? Why is sex wrong outside of marriage? Why is it wrong to have sex with someone you love, and to whom you're engaged to marry, and who you actually do later marry, and don't have babies until after the marriage?

And the biggest question of all, "What is sex?" What constitutes a sexual relationship? How far can I go and not commit adultery? Okay, so what is adultery anyway? Really, what really constitutes committing adultery (back to how far can I go and what is it anyway)? Are the answers to these questions variable depending on who asks, and what their circumstances are, or is there a clear cut guideline?

We all know what Jesus said during His infamous "Sermon on the Mount". He expanded on the Commandment against adultery by saying that to even look at a woman lustfully is adultery. But is that all he said about adultery? Jesus also said that a "... wicked and ADULTEROUS generation seeks after a sign...". So was he saying that everyone in that day was having sex with anyone they chose? No, he wasn't, because real adultery involves more than just sex. True spiritual adultery is being involved in any relationship, in any way, or to any degree, in which you have no business. That relationship could even be something inanimate and not a human being at all... such as money, or business, or politics, or your job, or in the case of human involvement, giving unnecessary hugs to your neighbor's wife, or even being flirtatious with someone with whom you are not married or engaged (although some flirting happens when two people are attracted to each other – not all flirting is wrong – it's one of the few circumstantial things). All of these things constitute adulterous behavior.

Obviously, from the way this world is going, the church has failed miserably to answer these questions, so the church is filled with people who commit adultery on a regular basis, and may not even believe they are. For instance, if they live together, as though they're husband and wife, and their relationship is monogamous, but they've never actually gone through a marriage ceremony, are they committing adultery? What if they say they're "common law" married? Is that valid?

There are also those who say they will abstain from sex outside of marriage, but when the strongest temptation hits, they fail to keep that promise. This is especially common among the younger people. What happens is that they know God's law says not to do that, but they can't really understand why that applies to them under whatever circumstances they're facing at that moment, so they go ahead and do what they know in their hearts they shouldn't.

Our youth need to know the deep answers to their questions, so they will be able to make right decisions. However, I've yet to hear a sermon or read a lesson that really explains this necessary information in a clear and concise manner that leaves no room for doubt. As a result, extramarital relationships are prevalent in today's Christian churches, and the divorce rate inside the church is keeping pace with those outside.

Entertainment:

Oh boy! This is a big one! Our society is replete with examples of improper entertainment! We watch movies that are filled with immoral activities, and we listen to songs that are not good for Christians to hear. We tell "slightly" off-color jokes and listen to some questionable dialogue day after day. Our children get wrapped up in the world's entertainment values and their Christian (?) parents do nothing about it most of the time. They consider it "just a phase", not realizing the influence this type of medium is having on their minds.

What really gets me upset is to see the way Christians fall right in line with the rest of the world in fashion apparel as well. It's appalling to see how many women and young girls attend church every week dressed in see-through blouses, and mini-skirts. I've seen teenage girls who had to tug at the bottom of their skirts when they sit down so their underwear doesn't show while their sitting!

Boys are just as bad, by wearing trousers, shirts and hats that are representative of the world's view of life – things like gangs, rock bands, violent video games, etc. Parents are reluctant to take a stand against this type of behavior, so the kids just keep doing the same things all the other kids in the world do, and we expect them to live their lives in a godly manner, especially after they're grown and on their own? We've got to be kidding!

Wrong entertainment creates wrong thoughts and attitudes, and creates worldly-thinking people... period! It's not enough to just pray, and hope God brings them around some day. What happens is that when they aren't taught properly as youth, they fall into a variety of temptations, and end up with numerous problems that weigh heavily on their lives later. The problems need to be stopped before they get started. Unfortunately, again, most parents have no idea how to handle this without seeming like over-bearing authoritarians. They've never learned the truth about God themselves, so how are they going to teach it to their children? And this leads us to my pet peeve!

Being A Christian:

The question here is, "Are you really a Christian?" To answer this question properly, we need to look at the facts and the evidence.

A national poll, taken some years ago, stated that at least 85% of those living in the United States, considered themselves Christians. When asked why, they simply replied that they believe in God, and the bible says that if you believe in God you're a Christian. But does it?

The scripture they focus on is, "...for all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Having gone to the front of a church during an altar call, or having secretly asked God to "come into" their lives, these people feel that they are saved. Part of the problem here is that most believe their sins are forgiven forever (meaning those in the future after the time they were "saved" as well as their sins of

the past) so they believe don't need to worry about how they live, because they'll be in heaven with God when they die anyway since they've been "saved".

What happens is that they attended a church somewhere and the pastor gave a sermon, then had the congregation or choir sing a sad, tearful song while he pleaded with the people to come forward and be saved. Once the tears started flowing, they stood up and went forward, said the "prayer of dedication", whatever form it may have taken, and been pronounced Christians. Later, they appeared to be baptized, and it was all official. However, 99% of the time, that's where it stopped. No follow up, no counseling, no lessons, no guidance, just the thrill of having "saved another lost soul" is all that mattered.

This kind of teaching and practice leads people to believe that all they have to do is "confess Christ" and they're heaven bound. They honestly believe that if they maintain that they believe in God, then no matter what they do, they're forgiven and will be in heaven with Jesus after they die. What's really strange is that sermon after sermon tells us that we need to live our lives for God, but the same pastors who preach this from the pulpit will pronounce the person a valid Christian at their funeral, no matter how they've lived, and assure the grieving family that they will see their loved one in heaven because at some point in their lives they were "saved".

My point is that the emphasis in Christian churches is to "get people saved", and not on teaching and encouraging them to live godly lives. This all stems from a misunderstanding of what the mission of the church really is. Yes, we are to go into all the world and preach the Gospel and baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but nowhere in that statement does it say we are to get people saved. Yes, God wants everyone to come to a knowledge of the Truth and have their sins forgiven, but not by coercion!

I've heard preachers say that if a person doesn't come to God with tears, they question their conversion. Personally, I feel exactly the opposite. If you have to get them to crying first, then did they come forward because of the tears or because they really want God? I believe that if a person really wants to follow God, they may or may not be in tears, depending on each one's circumstance. I personally believe that programmed alter calls are nothing less than coercion, and are not what God intended. Yes, alter calls can be valuable and valid, but not when you have to plan the music to be sad or have someone up front start the crying sequence. When that happens, I believe the old saying that, "one who is convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." In other words, I think it's the situation and not the truth that brings them forward.

As a result of this alarmingly neglectful method of conversion, I believe that if 5% of the USA is Christian, I would be pleasantly surprised. Even those who are at church every time the doors open are usually there because they believe they're supposed to be there every chance they have. And here we go into a basic understanding within Christianity that really makes a mess of things... the Sabbath and the 10 Commandments.

Christian Law:

Now we wrap things up with the legalities and disclaimers. Here's the part that really makes people boil inside. Tell a Christian that you don't believe God intended that we hold up the Ten Commandments as the standard for Christian behavior, and cover yourself, because the sparks are going to fly! You will be reviled, ridiculed and accused beyond your wildest nightmares! You will be labeled as anything but a Christian!

Nevertheless, its the truth... the Ten Commandments are not a proper standard for Christian behavior. They are NOT the law to which we should look for our guidance in living our everyday lives. Don't get me wrong, we're not allowed to break them, but at the same time they are not our standard. They were intended for an entirely different audience; one less knowledgeable in spiritual matters.

The Ten Commandments, and the other Laws of Moses were given as a type of guardian until the time when Jesus would come and reveal the Father to us. All the Mosaic Law, including the Commandments were a shadow of things to come, and, as Paul said, Jesus is the substance of that shadow. Once Jesus arrived, and gave his life on the cross, the Mosaic Law – ALL OF IT – was no longer binding on the followers of Jesus and those known today as Christians.

The Ten Commandments get Christianity into a lot of trouble here. First of all we tell people they are God's standard of behavior, then when they show up in church, we tell them we are not under the Law, but under Grace. Then we turn around and tell them they must keep the Ten Commandments. The questions is, are we under a Law or not? Which is it? You can't have both. Either we must obey the written ordinances or we're not required to adhere to them as a standard of behavior.

If we are, then what about the fourth Commandment. It says the 7th day is the Sabbath, but we go to church on Sunday, the first day of the week. Well, the church has conveniently rewritten the Commandments to reflect modern consensus on this matter. We've changed the wording to just say "Keep the Sabbath" and teach that it simply means a day of corporate worship must be observed. Nope, sorry, that's not the truth, and we humans do not have the right or the authority to change the Commandments to suit our way of thinking.

I'm going to make this as plain as possible.

1. Sunday is not the Sabbath
2. Saturday is not the Sabbath
3. Monday is not the Sabbath
4. Tuesday is not the Sabbath
5. Wednesday is not the Sabbath
6. Thursday is not the Sabbath
7. Friday is not the Sabbath
8. Yes, the Sabbath still exists today, and a true follower of Christ will keep the Sabbath as God intended.

We need to quit teaching fairy tales as truth, and start being brave enough to speak the truth as God intended. Had we been doing this all along, perhaps this world wouldn't be in the mess its in. But therein lies the problem... HUMANS.

We've so confused the Gospel that its almost unidentifiable these days! We're so intent on maintaining the status quo and so desperate to not "rock the boat" that even those who suspect the errors in Christianity don't dare say anything publicly.

I'm here to do what I can to set the record straight. I believe God intended I do this, to whatever extent He has in mind. I believe that a dream I had in approximately 1979 (give or take a year) was meant to tell me what my future might hold if I stayed with Christ. I've wandered off the path many times, but God has brought me back every time.

Most recently I strayed so far off the path I was afraid that even God couldn't find me to bring me back, but I know there's nothing he can't do if we listen to him, and repent and turn ourselves around. I'm doing that here, and am going to pursue this effort with all my heart and soul. I am not tied to any denomination and am not bound to any particular religious creed established by men, so I will speak as the Holy Spirit leads me no matter what others may think.

I hope you will read the other commentaries I'll be writing, and will delve into the articles and lessons I'll be putting on line. If you have a question on a particular subject, go to the contact page and write to me. I'll do my best to provide a quick and accurate answer.

God bless you as you seek His truth.

AMEN -